

HON3000.2: Humanities Seminar (1 unit)	Location and Time: Bond 155 Thursdays 6:00pm-7:50pm
Robin D. Lang, MLIS, Ryan Library 209 Office Hours: by appointment	Email: rlang@pointloma.edu Phone: Ext. 2350
Start Date: Thursday, October 29, 2026 Final Exam: Thursday, December 17, 2026, 7:30pm	

“Realistically, being part of a loving community does not mean we will not face conflicts, betrayals, negative outcomes from positive actions, or bad things happening to good people. Love allows us to confront these negative realities in a manner that is life-affirming and life-enhancing.”

-from “Community: Loving Communion” in *All About Love* by bell hooks (2001)

“There are no unsacred places; there are only sacred places and desecrated places.”
-from “How to Be a Poet” by Wendell Berry (2001)

PLNU Mission

Point Loma Nazarene University exists to provide higher education in a vital Christian community where minds are engaged and challenged, character is modeled and formed, and service is an expression of faith. Being of Wesleyan heritage, we strive to be a learning community where grace is foundational, truth is pursued, and holiness is a way of life.

Honors Program Mission

"The Honors Program exists to promote greater understanding of diverse human traditions of self-awareness and creativity. Examining these traditions in light of the Christian faith and liberal methods of learning, students excel in their abilities to interpret and discuss written, visual, and sonic texts within theological and interdisciplinary frameworks. Students take their education beyond the classroom in extracurricular activities, as well as in works of service and mercy as informed by the Wesleyan tradition."

Course Description

This course examines major questions of human existence – including meaning and purpose, work and vocation, culture and creativity – through cross-disciplinary perspectives.

Honors Program Learning Outcomes

- Analyze and discuss diverse human traditions of creativity and self-reflection while examining them in light of Christian faith.
- Interpret written and visual media in light of their contexts, complexity, and aesthetics.
- Articulate life questions within multidisciplinary and theological frameworks.
- Demonstrate an ability to design and participate in discourses in an informed and hospitable manner.
- Participate in acts of devotion and works of mercy through service opportunities, as informed by the Wesleyan tradition

Course Learning Outcomes

At the Conclusion of the course, students will be able to:

- analyze major questions of human existence, such as meaning, purpose, and vocation, using insights from literature, philosophy, art, and social thought.
- evaluate the role of culture and creativity in shaping individual and collective understandings of human purpose across historical and contemporary contexts.
- engage cross-disciplinary perspectives to reflect on personal and societal practices, making reasoned judgments about what constitutes a meaningful and productive life.

Required Texts

McBride, James. *Deacon King Kong* (2020)

*Professor Lang will provide free copies of the book for each student.

Course Assignments

Note-taking: No computers or phones are allowed in class. Taking notes by hand is superior to computers for thinking, learning, and remembering. A Moleskine notebook will be provided to you on the first day of class to write your Reading Reflections and take notes in. Students who have an accommodation that allows them to use a laptop to type assignments or notes should let Prof. Lang know by the 2nd week of class, so arrangements can be worked out. Here are two articles on the utility of hand-writing notes:

<https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/why-writing-by-hand-is-better-for-memory-and-learning/>

<https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2024/05/11/1250529661/handwriting-cursive-typing-schools-learning-brain>

Reading: The dates on the syllabus indicate what we will be discussing in class. Please have the assignment read prior to the discussion. And please refrain from reading too far ahead, if possible. Taking notes in the margins of your book and underlining are encouraged. Print copies of the supplemental readings will be provided the week prior to their due date. We will end each class session with a "[silent reading party](#)," while Prof. Lang grades each week's Reading Reflections (see below).

Reading Reflections: Five times during the semester each student will hand write a 2-4+ page reading reflection. Each reflection is worth 10 points. (Students who have an accommodation that allows them to use a laptop to type assignments or notes should let Prof. Lang know by the 2nd week of class, so arrangements can be worked out.) Unless specific directions are given, the response can involve an analytical reflection, a personal reflection, or can connect the book to course themes. It may also be a combination of any of these elements. Each reflection must include direct quotations from that week's daily reading with page numbers; reference to past chapters and past supplemental readings are okay, but not required. You should reference your book and notes while you write. Due dates for the reflections are indicated on the course schedule below and on Canvas. Reflections will be graded at the end of each class session.

Final Exam: In your Moleskine notebook, write a three to four page essay about Christian Community that addresses the major themes of the class. Prof. Lang will keep your notebooks overnight for grading, and the notebooks may be picked up from her office after noon the next day or on a later date. More details will be included in the assignments tab associated with this assignment.

Participation: Every student is expected to actively participate in HON3000. This means showing up on time and staying until the very end of class (please don't ask to leave early), having completed the daily reading and preparing to discuss it, listen, and learn from fellow students. Participation informs 25% of our final grade. Because HON3000 meets once a week, every class is valuable, and so students are allowed to miss one class without penalty (no explanation will be needed). But after that, each absence will deduct 2% from your final grade. Excessive absences/tardies will warrant a written warning from Prof. Lang. More information on the PLNU attendance policy can be found at the bottom of this syllabus.

Honors events: Honors events are included in the class schedule to enhance classroom learning. Attendance is optional, but highly encouraged.

Late Assignments: Only in rare circumstances will Prof. Lang accept late work.

Assessment and Grading

Your final grade will be determined as follows:

Reflections	50%
Final Exam	25%
Participation	25%

Sample Standard Grade Scale Based on Percentages

A	B	C	D	F
A 93-100	B+ 87-89	C+ 77-79	D+ 67-69	F Less than 59
A- 90-92	B 83-86	C 73-76	D 63-66	
	B- 80-82	C- 70-72	D- 60-62	

Final Examination Policy

Successful completion of this class requires taking the final examination on its scheduled day. The final examination schedule is posted on the [Traditional Undergraduate Records: Final Exam Schedules](#) site. If you find yourself scheduled for three (3) or more final examinations on the same day, you are authorized to contact each professor to arrange a different time for one of those exams. However, unless you have three (3) or more exams on the same day, no requests for alternative final examinations will be granted.

Spiritual Care

Please be aware PLNU strives to be a place where you grow as whole persons. To this end, we provide resources for our students to encounter God and grow in their Christian faith. If you have questions, a desire to meet with the chaplain or have prayer requests you can contact your professor or the [Office of Spiritual Life and Formation](#).

PLNU Copyright Policy

Point Loma Nazarene University, as a non-profit educational institution, is entitled by law to use materials protected by the US Copyright Act for classroom education. Any use of those materials outside the class may violate the law.

PLNU Recording Notification

In order to enhance the learning experience, please be advised that this course may be recorded by the professor for educational purposes, and access to these recordings will be limited to enrolled students and authorized personnel.

Note that all recordings are subject to copyright protection. Any unauthorized distribution or publication of these recordings without written approval from the University (refer to the Dean) is strictly prohibited.

PLNU Academic Honesty Policy

Students should demonstrate academic honesty by doing original work and by giving appropriate credit to the ideas of others. Academic dishonesty is the act of presenting information, ideas, and/or concepts as one's own when in reality they are the results of another person's creativity and effort. A faculty member who believes a situation involving academic dishonesty has been detected may assign a failing grade for that assignment or examination, or, depending on the seriousness of the offense, for the course. For all student appeals, faculty and students should follow the procedures outlined in the University Catalog. See [Academic Policies](#) for definitions of kinds of academic dishonesty and for further policy information.

PLNU Academic Accommodations Policy

PLNU is committed to providing equal opportunity for participation in all its programs, services, and activities in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Students with disabilities may request course-related accommodations by contacting the Educational Access Center (EAC), located in the Bond Academic Center (EAC@pointloma.edu or 619-849-2486). Once a student's eligibility for an accommodation has been determined, the EAC will work with the student to create an Accommodation Plan (AP) that outlines allowed accommodations. The EAC makes accommodations available to professors at the student's request.

PLNU highly recommends that students speak with their professors during the first two weeks of each semester/term about the implementation of their AP in that particular course. Accommodations are not retroactive so clarifying with the professor at the outset is one of the best ways to promote positive academic outcomes.

Students who need accommodations for a disability should contact the EAC as early as possible (i.e., ideally before the beginning of the semester) to assure appropriate accommodations can be provided. It is the student's responsibility to make the first contact with the EAC. Students cannot assume that because they had accommodations in the past, their eligibility at PLNU is automatic. All determinations at PLNU must go through the EAC process. This is to protect the privacy of students with disabilities who may not want to disclose this information and are not asking for any special accommodations.

Language and Belonging

Point Loma Nazarene University faculty are committed to helping create a safe and hospitable learning environment for all students. As Christian scholars we are keenly aware of the power of language and believe in treating others with dignity. As such, it is important that our language be equitable, inclusive, and prejudice free.

Inclusive/Bias-free language is the standard outlined by all major academic style guides, including MLA, APA, and Chicago, and it is the expected norm in university-level work. Good writing and speaking do not use unsubstantiated or irrelevant generalizations about personal qualities such as age, disability, economic class, ethnicity, marital status, parentage, political or religious beliefs, race, gender, sex, or sexual orientation. Inclusive language also avoids using stereotypes or terminology that demeans persons or groups based on age, disability, class, ethnicity, gender, race, language, or national origin. Respectful use of language is particularly important when referring to those outside of the religious and lifestyle commitments of those in the PLNU community. By working toward precision and clarity of language, we mark ourselves as serious and respectful scholars, and we model the Christ-like quality of hospitality. If you (or someone you know) have experienced a bias incident regarding language, you can find more information on reporting and resources at www.pointloma.edu/bias.

Sexual Misconduct and Discrimination

In support of a safe learning environment, if you (or someone you know) have experienced any form of sexual discrimination or misconduct, including sexual assault, dating or domestic violence, or stalking, know that accommodations and resources are available through the Title IX Office at pointloma.edu/Title-IX. Please be aware that under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, faculty and staff are required to disclose information about such misconduct to the Title IX Office.

If you wish to speak to a confidential employee who does not have this reporting responsibility, you can contact Counseling Services at counselingservices@pointloma.edu or find a list of campus pastors at pointloma.edu/title-ix. If you (or someone you know) have experienced other forms of discrimination or bias, you can find more information on reporting and resources at www.pointloma.edu/bias

Content Warning*

I acknowledge that each of you comes to PLNU with your own unique life experiences. This contributes to the way you perceive various types of information. In HON 3000, all of the class content, including that which may be intellectually or emotionally challenging, has been intentionally curated to achieve the learning goals for this course. The decision to include such material is not taken lightly. These topics include abuse, rape, violence, racism, and suicide. If you encounter a topic that is intellectually challenging for you, it can manifest in feelings of discomfort and upset. In response, I encourage you to come talk to me or your friends or family about it. Class topics are discussed for the sole purpose of expanding your intellectual engagement in the area of literature and culture, and I will support you throughout your learning in this course.

Trigger Warning*

I acknowledge that each of you comes to PLNU with your own unique life experiences. This contributes to the way you perceive several types of information. In HON 3000, we will cover a variety of topics, some of which you may find triggering. These topics include abuse, rape, violence, racism, and suicide. Each time this topic appears in a reading or unit, it is marked on the syllabus. The experience of being triggered versus intellectually challenged are different. The main difference is that an individual must have experienced trauma to experience being triggered, whereas an intellectual challenge has nothing to do with trauma. If you are a trauma survivor and encounter a topic in this class that is triggering for you, you may feel overwhelmed or panicked and find it difficult to concentrate. In response, I encourage you to take the necessary steps for your emotional safety. This may include leaving class while the topic is discussed or talking to a therapist at the Counseling Center. Should you choose to sit out on discussion of a certain topic, know that you are still responsible for the material; but we can discuss if there are other methods for accessing that material, and for assessing your learning on that material. Class topics are discussed for the sole purpose of expanding your intellectual engagement in the area of literature and culture, and I will support you throughout your learning in this course.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Policy

The use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools (e.g., ChatGPT, iA Writer, Marmot, Botowski, GrammarlyGo, Perplexity, etc.) is prohibited in this course for any aspect of your work, including idea generation, drafting, editing, or final submissions. This course is designed to develop and assess your independent critical thinking, writing, and research skills without the assistance of AI technologies. Violations of this policy will be treated as breaches of academic integrity.

PLNU Attendance and Participation Policy

Regular and punctual attendance at all class sessions is considered essential to optimum academic achievement. If the student is absent for more than 10 percent of class sessions, the faculty member will issue a written warning of de-enrollment. If the absences exceed 20 percent, the student may be de-enrolled without notice until the university withdrawal date or, after that date, receive an “F” grade.

Loma Writing Center

The Loma Writing Center exists to help all members of the PLNU community cultivate transferable writing skills to engage their academic, professional, personal, and spiritual communities. We work toward this goal by conducting one-on-one consultation sessions, supporting writing education across the PLNU community, and participating in ongoing writing center research.

Getting feedback from the Loma Writing Center while you're in the process of working on an assignment is a great way to improve the quality of your writing and develop as a

writer. You are encouraged to talk with a trained writing consultant about getting started on an assignment, organizing your ideas, finding and citing sources, revising, editing for grammar and polishing final drafts, and more. For information about how to make in-person or online appointments, see [Loma Writing Center webpage](#) or visit the Loma Writer Center on the first floor of the Ryan Library, room 221.

- Appointment Calendar: <https://plnu.mywconline.com/>
- Website: <https://www.pointloma.edu/centers-institutes/loma-writing-center>
- Email: writingcenter@pointloma.edu

COURSE SCHEDULE

***No class on October 22, 2026, due to Fall Break. Read Chapters 1-4 of *Deacon King Kong* and the two supplemental readings before the 1st class meeting on Oct. 29th.**

Week 1: Oct. 29, 2026 – The Messiness of Community

Reading:

- *Deacon King Kong*, Chapters 1–4 (4 chapters)
- "How to Be a Poet" by Wendell Berry
- "[This Is the Solution to America's Literacy Crisis, and It's a Lot of Fun](#)" from the *New York Times* (Aug. 16, 2026) (If you don't yet have a *NYT* subscription, [set up a free account](#) through the library to access this article)
- Optional: Watch the [James McBride Interview](#) for One Book One San Diego 2025 (apx. 50 min.)

Week 2: Nov. 5, 2026 – Community: Shaped by One Another

Reading:

- *Deacon King Kong*, Chapters 5–7 (3 chapters)
- Ch. 8 of *All about Love* by bell hooks, "[Community: Loving Communion](#)" (in the linked PDF, scroll down to page 86 and the chapter title given above)
- Read and click through the "[Brooklyn](#)" page of the Mapping Inequality website; explore the map by zooming in; read through these tabs: Context, Categories & Space, Population, and Area Descriptions
- "[Housing Discrimination](#)" from the *Encyclopedia of Diversity and Social Justice*
- "[Redlining](#)" in *Wiley Blackwell Encyclopedias in Social Sciences: The Wiley-Blackwell Encyclopedia of Urban and Regional Studies*

Due: Reflection #1: In your notebook, write a 2-4+ page reflection on this week's readings. Include at least one direct quote, including page numbers, from each source. Include one to three questions about the reading you'd like to ask the group to discuss.

Week 3: Nov. 12, 2026 – Community: Shaped by Place

Reading:

- *Deacon King Kong*, Chapters 8–10 (3 chapters)

- [“You May Never Look at the Sports Arena the Same Again”](#) from the *Voice of San Diego*
- [“Imagine a Renters’ Utopia. It Might Look Like Vienna”](#) from the *New York Times* (If you don’t yet have a *NYT* subscription, [set up a free account](#) through the library to access this article)

Due: Reflection #2: In your notebook, write a 2-4+ page reflection on this week’s readings. Include at least one direct quote, including page numbers, from each source. Include one to three questions about the reading you’d like to ask the group to discuss.

Week 4: Nov. 19, 2026 – Neighborhoods and Native Habitats

Reading

- *Deacon King Kong*, Chapters 11–14 (4 chapters)
- [“How a San Diego Community Partnered with Law Enforcement to Defeat a Street Gang”](#) from *KPBS*
- [“Saving Sunset Cliffs”](#) from the *San Diego Union Tribune*

Due: Reflection #3: In your notebook, write a 2-4+ page reflection on this week’s readings. Include at least one direct quote, including page numbers, from each source. Include one to three questions about the reading you’d like to ask the group to discuss.

Extra Credit Opportunities to be done before Dec. 3rd class meeting:

- Option #1 (2-3 points): Take a walk in Sunset Cliffs Natural Park below campus or a walk through the Point Loma Native Garden at 2275 Mendocino Blvd. Take a selfie. Email the selfie to Prof. Lang at rlang@pointloma.edu. Write a short reflective entry in your journal about the experience. What did you see, hear, smell, feel, etc.
 - Extra 1 bonus point for identifying a **native to San Diego** plant that is edible and has medicinal qualities. Bring a *small* piece (i.e. twig size or a couple of leaves) of the plant to class on Dec. 3rd and share what you learned about it.
- Option #2 (2 points): Over Thanksgiving Break, interview a family member or multiple family members about how your family ended up where they live now or where they/you are from and write a reflective journal entry about what you learned, including any noteworthy opportunities and challenges that went into the decision to move.
 - Or if you aren’t seeing family over the break, write a reflective journal entry about how you ended up coming to PLNU. Include any noteworthy opportunities and challenges that you faced when making the decision.

***No class on November 26, 2026 due to Thanksgiving Break** (extra reading assigned)

Week 5: Dec. 3, 2026 – Who Is the Church?

Read:

- *Deacon King Kong*, Chapters 15–21 (7 chapters)

Due:

- **Reflection #4:** In your notebook, write a 2-4+ page reflection on this week's reading. Include at least one direct quote, including page numbers, from each source. Include one to three questions about the reading you'd like to ask the group to discuss.
- **Extra Credit** (see above)

Week 6: Dec. 10, 2026 – Regrets and Redemption

Read

- *Deacon King Kong*, Chapters 22–26 (5 chapters)

Due: **Reflection #5:** In your notebook, write a 2-4+ page reflection on this week's reading. Include at least one direct quote, including page numbers, from each source. Include one to three questions about the reading you'd like to ask the group to discuss.

Week 7: Dec. 17, 2026, 7:30pm – In-Person Final Exam