

THE ODYSSEY

P R O J E C T



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Who we are

The Odyssey Project offers free University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign courses in the humanities to income-eligible adults in our East Central Illinois community. Odyssey students can earn up to eight transferable college credits in an environment designed to support non-traditional students.

The program provides integrated support, including course materials, dinner and transportation. As important, Odyssey students and alumni have access to both academic and career advising.

Odyssey students take courses in four areas of the humanities, taught by experienced University of Illinois instructors: literature, US history, art history and philosophy. Education in the humanities helps students expand their skills in critical thinking, problem solving, knowledge-based decision-making and empathy. In this way, the Odyssey Project creates supportive conditions for students to develop the skills that will serve them in their pursuit of higher education, workforce opportunities and a lifetime of learning-based citizenship.

Managed by the Humanities Research Institute (HRI), the Odyssey Project was established in Champaign-Urbana in 2006, in partnership with Illinois Humanities, as a Bard Clemente Course in the Humanities. The program retained its Bard affiliation until fall 2019, when it began a new chapter as a University of Illinois credit-bearing program, with courses offered by the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (LAS) and enhancements provided by a grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. Odyssey students in Champaign-Urbana are now University of Illinois students with access to the educational resources of a world-class research institution.



Who can take Odyssey Project classes?

Classes are open to Champaign-Urbana (and surrounding area) residents who

- Are 18 or older
- Can read a newspaper in English
- Have not yet earned a bachelor's degree
- Have a household income at or below 150% of the federal poverty line

You can take Odyssey classes even if

- You do not have a high school diploma or GED.
- English is not your native language.

How can I apply?

- The Odyssey Project application period opens in the spring and runs for approximately two months.
- Applications can be made online at **go.illinois.edu/odyssey** or via paper forms available at various community locations.
- Students must attend a summer information session as part of the application process.
- Admission notices are sent out in early August.

Class Schedule

- Fall Semester: Humanities 110—Introduction to the Humanities I: Philosophy & Art History
- Spring Semester: Humanities 111—Introduction to the Humanities II: Literature & U.S. History

Classes meet twice a week in the evenings and include subject-area instruction (90 min), dinner (30 min) and writing instruction (60 min).

Bolstering Student Success

At Odyssey, we recognize that students' success requires support at multiple levels. Non-traditional students, in particular, face a variety of challenges to being back in school and completing the coursework. That's why we provide students with resources including free textbooks and course materials, computers for class use, meals and transportation. Our holistic approach to the Odyssey experience offers wrap-around educational services, including:

- Academic and career advising
- Tutoring sessions outside of class with instructional staff
- Help accessing community resources
- A safe community for learning and discussion

Odyssey alumni also have access to:

- Academic and career advising
- Reading groups, field trips and networking activities

Odyssey Project instructors work to provide a safe, supportive and dynamic learning environment rooted in humanities values and practices. Because education happens both in and outside the formal classroom, the courses also offer cultural experiences in the community. Students attend field trips, such as for cooking classes at Common Ground Food Co-op and performances at Krannert Center for the Performing Arts. Each semester, Odyssey also welcomes a Mellon artist- or writer-in-residence, who engages students in the creative process, positioning them not only as students of, but also contributors to, the culture of their community.





Learning Outcomes

Odyssey Project students develop critical-thinking skills they can apply to the pursuit of higher education, the workplace, day-to-day decisions and relationships, including:

- Communication
- Complex reasoning
- Knowledge-based decision-making
- Problem-solving

Students learn research skills by creating research projects for the university's Undergraduate Research Week. In so doing, students practice gauging an audience, conducting research, analyzing results and presenting their work, while also recognizing their greater contribution to human knowledge.



Contact us:

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go.illinois.edu/odyssey



In students' own words:

[I will take with me] this feeling of accomplishment and knowing if I stay focused I can complete anything I put my mind to. [I want others to know] how Odyssey gets you prepared to further your education.

[Discussions] got me thinking about how art and philosophy are connected and how others might be connected in ways I hadn't thought of before.

Seeing the improvement in my writing in just a few months [has been rewarding].

I can honestly say that each and every part of this class was rewarding. I love having the opportunity to learn and expand my understanding.

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