HSH1000 The Human Condition

NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF SINGAPORE · LEVEL 1 · SEMESTER 1, AY2026/27 · OPEN-BOOK EXAM SHEET · SIDE 1/2

Full guide + ask Sia about HSH1000

SIDE 1/2 EXAM MAP → identify · distinguish · apply · justify **OPEN BOOK · ~30 MCQS** frameworks · models · definitions · decision rules

0 · Exam Map COURSE.JSON · SYLLABUS

5 | 15 | 20 | project 30 | exam 30

COMPONENT	WT	SIGNAL
Surveys, peer reviews & practice exam	5%	non differentiating
Tutorial engagement tasks	15%	non differentiating
Group discussion summaries	20%	less differentiating
Final project	30%	differentiating
Final exam	30%	differentiating

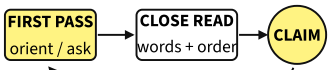
PERMITTED MATERIALS · VERBATIM

"The final exam will consist of approximately 30 MCQs (likely of the 4 option per question kind), open book (students may bring in material), but no internet or AI access." *(HSH1000 syllabus, Semester 1 AY2026/27)*

What it rewards: lecture comprehension, careful reading of the essential texts, and accurate **identification + application** of critical reading and thinking concepts, possibly in new contexts.

EXAM MOVE → ***Read the stem for the demanded operation: classify, distinguish, reconstruct, map, weigh or compare. Eliminate options that answer a neighbouring question.***

1 · Two-Pass Reading C1 · MAP + FAQ



cannot anchor? return as a question

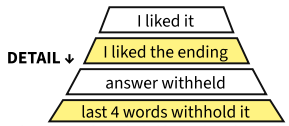
Two passes produce different outputs; an unanchored claim loops back to inquiry.

PASS	NOTICE	OUTPUT
Orienting	genre, register, purpose, surprise, gap	3 observations + ≥1 open question; never a verdict
Close	repetition, unexpected wording, order, naming/absence	a claim another reader can check in the same lines

RELIABILITY TEST

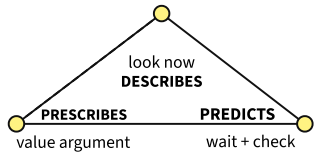
If the claim would survive completely different wording, it is summary, not close reading.

1.1 · Discussion Record C1 · STRATEGY



Push a reaction down the ladder until another reader knows where to look.

2 · What a Sentence Does C2 · MAP + FAQ



Classify first because each kind is settled by different evidence.

KIND	CLAIM	WHAT SETTLES IT?
Description	world is this way	observation, count, document
Prediction	world will be this way	later outcome
Prescription	something ought to be done/valued	argument about worth
Definition	word will be used this way	useful/misleading, not true/false

Mixed sentence? Split at the connective; test each half. A true count does not by itself support a recommendation: the missing bridge is a premise about *what is worth doing*.

3 · Definitions + Genre C2 · WORKED



A dictionary reports usage; it cannot decide where your argument ought to draw a line.

Genre is a claim: it supplies expectations and changes what counts as achievement or fault. "Report" makes sparse characterisation apt; "story" can make the same absence thin. If a text straddles genres, state which reading serves which claim; do not switch labels when one becomes inconvenient.

CALL IT A…	THEN TEST…
report	accuracy, evidence, completeness
story	selection, character, ordering, effect
thought experiment	isolated variable and hidden assumption

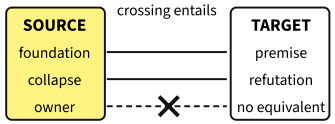
The Oxford English Dictionary is **descriptive**: it records dated usage. It can settle a dispute about established use, not decide where an essay ought to draw a boundary.

DEFINITION DECISION

Established usage disputed? → lexical. Blurred boundary? → precising. Technical/local sense needed? → stipulate, announce it, then remain consistent.

TRAP → ***A thought experiment's implausibility may be its method. Challenge the variable isolated or an assumption smuggled in, not the fact that the setup is extreme.***

4 · Metaphor Mapping C4 · TOPIC MAP



A complete mapping shows what crosses and the blocked feature that reveals what is hidden.

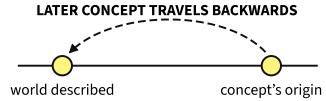
1. Name the **target**: what is actually discussed.
2. Name the **source**: where the borrowed vocabulary is literal.
3. Give 2–3 crossings and the inference each licenses.
4. Find one prominent **blocked feature**; explain what the metaphor cannot express.

WORKED LINE · CITY WALL

Target = settled society/wild. Source = masonry. Crossings: boundedness → inside/outside is maintained; cumulative work → boundary is a project; "holding back" → wild becomes an opposing force. Block: exchange crosses real boundaries. Hidden claim: the relation is adversarial by construction.

Dead metaphor = absorbed into ordinary vocabulary; its entailments work unnoticed. Revive "foundations of belief" and ask whether beliefs really rest on a few basics and collapse without them.

5 · Anachronism C6 · WORKED



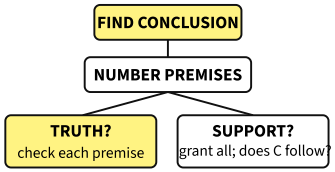
The borrowed category arrives as if it had always been available.

Conceptual anachronism imports a later category, value or distinction into a world that lacked it, inventing agreement and blocking surprise.

TEST	ASK
Availability	Could the person see this option/distinction/value?
Evidence	Is the presupposition visible in the text?
Repair	Replace the later label with what the text shows.

Allowed: later analytical vocabulary naming a visible structure, e.g. *liminal*. **Risky:** vocabulary attributing a stance, e.g. *individualist*, without textual support.

6 · Argument Reconstruction C7 · MAP + FAQ



Truth and support are independent investigations and require different replies.

1. Ask what the passage wants accepted; write the **conclusion** first.
2. Strip examples, restatements and rhetorical questions; number one premise per line.
3. Add the assumption needed to close the gap and mark it **[supplied]**.
4. Apply charity: would the author accept this strongest reconstruction?
5. Test premise truth, then support, separately.

FAILURE	PROPER REPLY
False premise; support otherwise holds	counterexample/evidence against that premise
True premises; conclusion not established	alternative explanation/case where P holds and C fails

WORKED RECONSTRUCTION

C: stop treating decency as natural; ask what produces it. P1: without rules, people take more than their share. P2: loud fairness advocates may take most. **[Supplied]** behaviour without constraint reveals nature better. Attack the supplied bridge, not merely add examples.

Mark supplied premises because *you* added them. An unmarked bridge can turn a charitable reconstruction into a position the author would reject.

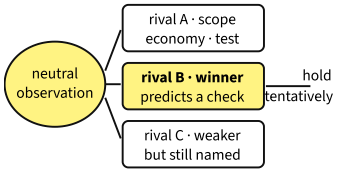
7 · Words Inside Arguments C7 · BODY

If both sides cite the same evidence but sort it into different categories, diagnose ***semantic drift***. Fix a precising definition for this discussion, then restate the remaining disagreement. A community's convention may be arbitrary in origin yet binding in use; silently changing a shared term can mislead.

Finding an implicit conclusion: test candidate sentences by removal—without this sentence, does the rest still have a point? Indicator words help but are not required. Treat examples as evidence for a general premise, not as extra premises; delete restatements before numbering.

8 · Three Inference Types C8 · CLINIC

TYPE	MOVE	PROMISE / FAILURE
Deductive	premises contain conclusion	cannot fail if premises hold / false premise or invalid form
Inductive	observed → unobserved cases	likelihood / small, biased or unrepresentative sample
Abductive	observation → explanatory account	best available, tentative / rivals omitted



"Best" is comparative: name rivals before scoring scope, economy and testability.

ABDUCTION BUILD

1 neutral observation → 2 ≥2 rivals, including the boring one → 3 criteria stated before winner → 4 prediction/check → 5 what result would overturn the ranking.

Scope covers more of what is observed without special pleading. **Economy** adds less machinery. **Testability** is most useful: it names an observation on which rivals differ. Criteria invented after picking the winner are post-hoc justification.

9 · Xunzi as Abduction C8–9 · FAQ

Shared observation: people can be good, and goodness takes work. **Mengzi:** an innate capacity is cultivated. **Xunzi:** appetites come first; goodness is produced by ***deliberate effort***, learning and inherited forms. Xunzi's account explains why teachers, correction and practice are extensive and why removing them predicts conflict.

DO NOT FLATTEN THE CLAIM

Not "people are evil". *Nature* names what comes before cultivation; goodness is relocated to achievement, not denied. Mengzi can reply that the apparatus removes obstruction rather than producing what was absent.

ACCOUNT	EFFORT MEANS	PREDICTION
Mengzi	cultivate/release an innate capacity	forms protect growth from obstruction
Xunzi	produce a shaped disposition	without forms, appetites generate conflict

The comparison is abductive, not a refutation: a rival returns if it explains the necessity and success of the shaping apparatus equally well.

10 · Fast Distinction Matrix C1–12 · GLOSSARY

DO NOT MERGE	DECIDING QUESTION
orienting pass / close reading	questions & reactions, or word-anchored claim?
description / prescription	could observation settle it?
lexical / precising / stipulative	record, sharpen or propose?
source / target domain	where is the vocabulary literal?
later term / anachronism	does it merely describe, or impute an unavailable stance?
premise truth / support	is P true, or does P reach C?
induction / abduction	further case, or hidden cause/mechanism?
primary / reliable	close to this question, or accurate?
past / history	everything that happened, or a shaped account?
contingency / randomness	could differ, or lacks explanation?
formation / etiquette	reshaping desire, or surface manners?
comparison / two summaries	is one axis of disagreement named?

11 · Universal Apply Routine EXAM STRATEGY



Definition without cue = recall only.

Cue without consequence = spotting only.

Best option completes all four moves.

Use this micro-structure for an unfamiliar passage, concept or source.

FAST ELIMINATION

Wrong category → wrong evidence → overclaim beyond passage → treats a relation as a permanent label → ignores the stated terms → criticises an inference for promising more than its kind promises.

ONE THING → ***Write the decisive distinction before reading all four options. The distractors are usually true statements about the wrong neighbour.***

12 · Four Essential Texts COURSE OVERVIEW

TEXT	FAST RETRIEVAL HOOK
Omelas	aggregation; concentrated cost; separateness; staying/walking
Gilgamesh	mortality; liminality; boundary crossings; composite text
Xunzi	nature; deliberate effort; ritual/music; best explanation
A Vietcong Memoir	selection; emplotment; contingency; competing identities; sources

HSH1000 The Human Condition · Application Drills

NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF SINGAPORE · ANSWER FRAMES · WORKED APPLICATIONS · TRAPS · SIDE 2/2

Full guide + ask Sia about HSH1000

SIDE 2/2 DRILLS → answer frames · four text applications · source/narrative audit · synthesis grid USE ON FRESH PASSAGES trap = correct concept, wrong operation or overclaim

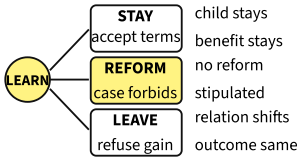
13 · Answer Frames C1–12 · WORKED

QUESTION TYPE	COMPACT FRAME
Identify a concept	**Name** it → quote/cue the decisive feature → explain the effect → state what the passage does not settle.
Close read	Claim first → exact word choices/orderings → how they jointly create the effect → plausible alternative reading.
Map metaphor	target → source → crossings + licensed inferences → blocked feature → hidden claim.
Reconstruct argument	C → numbered P → [supplied P] → truth test → support test → strongest point of attack.
Best explanation	neutral observation → rivals → scope/economy/testability → winner → check that could reverse ranking.

UNFAMILIAR PASSAGE STEM

"This is **[concept]** because **[quoted cue]**. The cue matters because it **[licensed inference/effect]**. It does not by itself establish **[limit]**."

14 · Omelas Application C3 · WORKED



child stays
benefit stays
no reform
stipulated
relation shifts
outcome same

Three responses alter different things; reform is deliberately removed from the case.

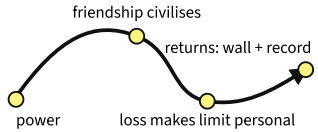
Doctrine: right action maximises total welfare; welfare ultimately matters; totals are compared; everyone counts once. **Pressure:** benefit diffuse, cost concentrated, child cannot consent/deserve, and suffering is the means.

FRESH CASE · UNIVERSITY PROGRAMME

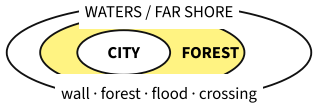
Many students receive a small tuition cut; a tiny cohort loses its only programme. Aggregation may favour closure after multiplication. Objection: no benefit passes to those bearing the total loss, and their loss produces the saving. Repair: include institutional distrust as a welfare cost. Price: verdict now turns on an empirical prediction about reputation.

Separateness of persons: a trade within one life differs from adding one person's loss to others' gains. Walking away may reject complicity, but leaves both child and arrangement unchanged.

15 · Gilgamesh Application C5 · WORKED + FAQ



The journey fails to defeat death; the story relocates permanence to built, shared things.



Major episodes are crossings between built world, guarded wild and farther waters.

TRANSMISSION FACT	THEREFORE
multiple versions, long reworking	read as composite attitudes, not one authorial doctrine
clay fragments + reconstruction	do not treat a gap as meaningful silence
translation; Canvas version fixed	do not rest a claim on one word without checking whose choice it is

Liminal means at a threshold and preserves movement; "hybrid" sounds fixed and "outsider" wholly beyond.

GUARDIAN EPISODE · FINISHED APPLICATION

Guardian stands between cultivated world and wild; appointment makes the forest protected. Expedition becomes **transgression**, not resource gathering. The cedar returns as a door: the wild is converted into the built world. This explains why consequences follow; "monster fight" does not.

EPISODE DRILL

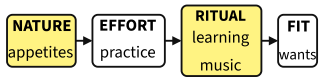
zones crossed → who crosses → cost → link to ending.

LIMINAL FIGURE	THRESHOLD	WHAT IT ENABLES
the king	divine / human	mortality becomes a problem, not a given
the wild man	animal / city	civilisation appears as learned bodily practice
forest guardian	cultivated / wild	crossing becomes protected transgression

16 · Anachronism Repairs C6 · WORKED

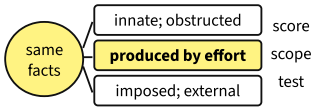
RISKY CLAIM	REPAIR USING THE TEXT
"crisis of identity"	loses the restraining relationship; abandons the role his city needs
"environmental crime"	forest is guarded; felling is a transgression with consequences
"citizens vote"	they learn of the arrangement and stay

17 · Xunzi: Nature → Forms C8–9 · WORKED



forms shape desire, not just curb it

If goodness is produced, its instruments are load-bearing rather than optional etiquette.



Rivals are scored on stated grounds; supporters are not counted.

TERM	JOB
Nature	appetites/preferences before cultivation; left alone they set people in competition
Deliberate effort	sustained cultivated activity reshaping what appetites attach to
Ritual	inherited technology giving desires forms that can coexist
Learning	borrows accumulated correction from teacher and tradition
Music	acts on feeling directly and synchronises feeling in performance

ARGUMENT FROM MUSIC

C: ordered sound in common is necessary to moral formation. P1 habitual feeling shapes wants. P2 argument reaches feeling slowly. P3 music acts directly and synchronises. **[Supplied]** formation that cannot reach feeling will not change wants.

Strong objection: a method below argument bypasses consent. **Reply:** nobody chooses their first formation; this makes which forms are transmitted urgent. **Cost conceded:** the instrument serves a bad end as efficiently as a good one.

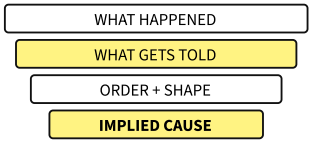
Not deference to tradition: forms are justified by what they produce; conflict-producing forms are criticisable on the account's own terms.

18 · IBE Worked Drill C8 · WORKED

Observation: in a group of five, the two with full attendance wrote the weakest reflections. Rivals: attendance displaced private thinking; weaker writers; reflections test a skill meetings do not develop. The third predicts success on discussion work; if they fail there too, the second recovers.

TRAP → *Keep the observation cause-free. "Attendance substituted for thought" is already an explanation and skips the comparison.*

19 · Historical Narrative C10 · MAP + WORKED



Selection and ordering are already claims; disputes at the top are often decided at the bottom.

Past = everything that happened. ***History*** = an account of some of it, shaped for a reader. Narrative need not mean dishonesty.

SHAPE	RESPONSIBILITY	MUST EXPLAIN
Betrayal	those breaking a prior commitment	why reliance was reasonable
Tragedy	structural forces	why decisions still mattered
Irony	mechanism turning effort opposite	how reversal arose
Vindication	opponents of the achieved end	the outcome's costs

Contingency: it could have gone otherwise; prevents reading the known ending into the start. ***Path dependence***: earlier choices narrow later options, explaining constraint without inevitability.

AUDIT PROCEDURE

Strip connective words → list bare events → note exclusions → name the shape → propose a rival using the same events → identify the evidence that distinguishes them.

Words such as *finally*, *only*, *still* and *announced as* often carry the shape while looking like neutral connective tissue.

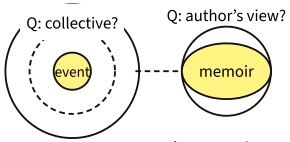
WORKED ACCOUNT

Warnings; closure; reassignment; financial reason. Missing: figures and student outcomes. "Finally / first / announced as" builds betrayal. Rival irony: advocacy made the programme visible as a cost and hastened closure. Deciding evidence: whether budget review preceded advocacy.

20 · Identity as Formation C10 · FAQ

The memoir begins with family, class and colonial education before revolution. Several legitimate claims precede commitment, so identity becomes formation under pressure rather than a fixed conviction unfolding. "Betrayal" needs a prior commitment, a party breaking it and an expectation reasonable at the time.

21 · Weighing Sources C11 · WORKED



same source; question sets role

"Primary" belongs to a source–question relationship, not permanently to the document.

QUESTION	CHECKS	BAD MOVE
Who/when?	position, access, time gap	name author and stop
For whom/why?	audience + purpose shape inclusion	assume stated purpose is operative
Could know?	access to this particular claim	presence at war = access to all of it
Who else?	genuinely independent corroboration	three books using one account = three sources

Primary ≠ reliable. Distance and reliability are separate axes. A participant may be mistaken/self-serving; a later scholar with many accounts may be closer to the truth. Positioned does not mean disqualified: name the access the position grants and the blind spot it creates.

Corroboration adds weight only when sources are independent. Unusually exact agreement can be evidence of copying rather than accuracy.

FOUR-SOURCE WORKED ANSWER

Participant memoir: primary for that person's expectation, weak for the movement collectively. Opposing memoir: adds a second position only if independent. Scholarly history: secondary, but can survey the range and surviving documents. Encyclopaedia: tertiary; orient and find sources, never support a contested claim.

Position used well: a participant who later felt betrayed has unmatched access to what was promised and expected, plus a systematic reason to reconstruct earlier ambiguity as a clearer commitment. State both access and blind spot.

22 · Common Source Traps C11 · FAQ

- Classifying before writing the exact claim.
- Counting derivative agreement as corroboration.
- Assuming exact agreement proves accuracy; it can signal copying.
- Calling a source "biased" and discarding it instead of using its position analytically.
- Letting one person stand for a distribution.

23 · Four Synthesis Lenses C12 · TOPIC MAP

IDENTITY	MORALITY
How does this self come to exist?	What gives the standard force?
SOCIETY	**KNOWLEDGE**
Who belongs, and what does it cost?	What would count as knowing?

Use each lens as a demand for process, source, price or test—not as a topic label.

LENS	OMELAS	GILGAMESH	XUNZI	MEMOIR
Identity	what benefit one accepts/refuses	contact, loss, limit	effort shapes beginnings	competing claims
Morality	aggregation under pressure	mortality + transgression	standards produced	promise + betrayal
Society	benefit rests on exclusion	city/wild boundary	forms coordinate desire	family, empire, cause
Knowledge	stipulated terms isolate issue	fragment + translation limit	best explanation, tentative	position + shaped account

CROSS-TEXT FRAME

Choose lens first → state one comparative claim → give each account in its own vocabulary → name the **axis** → say what becomes visible only through comparison.

Finished comparison: Gilgamesh and Xunzi agree that a person does not arrive finished. They differ on agency: the wild man is formed by what happens to him—food, clothing, friendship, loss—whereas Xunzi locates work in repeated deliberate effort using ritual, learning and music.

24 · Final Trap Board ALL CHAPTERS

TRAP	REPAIR
retell plot	name concept + causal/interpretive work
spot metaphor only	map crossings + block
"bad argument"	name truth or support failure
one explanation called best	add rivals + check
anachronistic label	describe visible structure
two summaries	state the axis

SOURCE ANSWER

question → classification for this claim → provenance/access → independent corroboration → limit.

CROSS-TEXT ANSWER

one claim → Text A in its own vocabulary → Text B in its own vocabulary → one axis → what comparison establishes.

Option audit: right object? permitted evidence? terms respected? warranted stopping point? Distractors often evaluate before reconstructing, treat "primary" as "true", or demand certainty from abduction.