

An academic field devoted to meanings of life and humanisation

Main challenges for the University of Humanistic
Studies in an academic climate of rates and rankings

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University of Humanistic Studies

- Located at the heart of the medieval city centre of Utrecht
- Inspired by humanist traditions
- Around 600 students are enrolled at the University in a Bachelor, Master, pre-Master or PhD-programme of Humanistic Studies
- Graduates work as a coach or humanist counsellor in care institutions, the army or the penitentiary sector, or as teachers of worldviews and morality. Many also work as a consultant, policy worker or researcher in civic, academic and commercial organisations or in policy-making institutions.



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⇒ Developing and interconnecting knowledge and values



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- It is especially since the Enlightenment that humanism is explicitly viewed as a philosophy of life in which the human perspective is a defining factor in understanding and giving meaning to life and the world



Meanings of Life

Humanistic Studies explores how people respond to existential issues:

- What makes life worth living?
- What is the meaning of happiness and prosperity?
- Which moral and ethical choices are open to us?
- How do we cope with suffering and sorrow?
- What is the role of religion and worldview in responding to existential issues?



Humanisation

Humanistic Studies explores important contemporary social, political and ethical issues:

- What does a pluralist society entail?
- How can we define quality of care and education?
- How can we pursue sustainable development?
- How can human rights be guaranteed?

⇒ Interconnections between meanings of life and humanisation



Main areas of research

- Pluralism and dialogue: meaning-making in a globalizing world
- Ethics of care
- Humanist tradition, meaning in life and ageing well
- Citizenship and humanisation of the public sector
- Identity development in a humanist perspective



(Inter)national partners

- ‘Simagine: social imaginaries in a globalising world’: Pieter Gillis Center of Antwerp University, Center for Migration and Intercultural Studies (CeMIS) Antwerp University, Amsterdam Centre for the Study of Cultural and Religious Diversity (ACCORD) Free University Amsterdam, Centre of the Humanities Utrecht University
- Institute for Reconciliation and Social Justice of the University of the Free State, Bloemfontein, South Africa
- International Network of Care Ethicists
- Institute on Aging, University of Wisconsin, Madison
- Department of Psychology, Health and Technology, University of Twente
- Network Education for Democratic Intercultural Education (EDIC)



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- Philosophy of science: academic research and normativity



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- Governmental research policy: focus on economics and technological innovation



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- Rates and rankings: visibility
- Administrative control

Thank you for your attention

