Students writing in campus newspapers argue that the humanities help us engage meaningfully with human nature and society.

An analysis of a 250-topic model of Collection 1—consisting of 82,324 newspaper articles containing the word “humanities”—shows that academics in the humanities tend to advocate for their fields in relation to broader social problems. This is especially evident in articles written by students in campus newspapers—for example, those typical of topics 61 and 2 in the model. (For a discussion of values attributed to humanities in mainstream newspapers in Collection 1, see KF-4-6)

Articles such as a and b highlight such values as critical thinking and human understanding as signatures of the humanities. The broad claim is that the study of literature and the analysis of text, together with the critical thinking/reading skills fostered by fields such as philosophy, can help build a working knowledge of human nature. This knowledge can then be utilized in understanding the social interaction of individuals and groups. Furthermore, student authors hold that humanities students are better at critically observing the surrounding world (see example), and thus are also better able to identify social problems and propose innovative, ethical solutions.

Students writing in campus newspapers often identify and advocate for humanistic values that are intrinsic rather than material. (See KF-4-1 for intrinsic versus extrinsic values of the humanities.)

Document collection studied: Collection 1
Topic model of this collection: 250 topics
Interesting sample topics in the model: #2, #61
Representative articles: a, b
Evidentiary documentation for this key finding: Team 4- Interpretation Report

5 Dec. 2019; rev. 8 July 2020 (Francesca Battista & Surojit Kayal)