

The humanities are the art of ordinary life.

In public media--especially by comparison with the sciences--the humanities appear in topics related to the ordinary and material happenings of life--dying, marrying, getting an award, reading a book, going to an event, seeing street art, and so on. While the media thinks the public is interested in specific science research fields (see our key finding [KF-5-7](#)), it embeds the humanities in the everyday, event-oriented, and local.

We see this phenomenon in all WE1S collections, but with special clarity because of the contrast with science in our [Collection 21](#) (28,957 articles mentioning the “humanities” or “science[s]”). The following top topics featuring “humanities” as a keyword in a [topic model](#) of the collection highlights topics about everyday individual or social events related to the humanities.

Topic #	Label for topic
74	College coursework in science and humanities
53	Humanities grants and funding
100	Academic events and announcements
46	Books and ideas
50	Politics in the academy
109	Street art in Washington, D.C.
3	Philosophy of science
99	Classical artifacts and monuments
141	American history
138	Cultural and humanities events
121	Libraries and archives
88	Obituaries of poets

Topics in which the word “humanities” is prominent (in descending order of the topic’s weight in the collection)

Five of the top topics characterize articles of these sorts: obituaries (including paid ones), event announcements, and notices of grants or awards received. These are less thematic articles, such as those debating the value of the humanities, than records of ordinary life and work happening in, through, and all around the humanities.

Document
NA. “Corrections.” <i>The New York Times</i> . April 10, 2003.
NA. “BULLETIN BOARD.” <i>The New York Times</i> . November 14, 2001.
NA. “Paid Notice: Deaths KERN, EDITH.” <i>The New York Times</i> . October 09, 2005.
NA. “Corrections.” <i>The New York Times</i> . November 04, 2013.
ArensonKaren W. “BULLETIN BOARD.” <i>The New York Times</i> . December 18, 2002.
NA. “Paid Notice: Deaths RABEN, JOSEPH, PH.D.” <i>The New York Times</i> . January 28, 2015.
(949)Amy Spurgeon, 574-4228. “OUR TIMES / ORANGE COUNTY COMMUNITIES; COSTA MESA.” <i>Los Angeles Times (6+ months)</i> . January 01, 1900.
NA. “Haverford Provost To Be Chief of Bates.” <i>The New York Times</i> . January 27, 2002.

Examples of top articles (for [topic #100](#))

In a broad view of public media discourse, the humanities become part of the background of everyday life. By contrast with science’s exoplanets and other objects (see [KF-5-4](#)), they are the cosmic background radiation of life. (But see key finding [KF-5-2](#) on how the humanities are also contradictorily just academic!)

Document collection studied: Collection 21 : U.S. Top Newspapers, 2000-2018 (articles mentioning humanities or science)
Topic model of this collection: C-21.150 (150 topics)
Interesting sample topics in the model: #74 , #100
Representative articles: events , obituaries
Evidentiary documentation for this key finding: WE1S report
Related readings: Michael Levenson, The Humanities and Everyday Life (2017)