Undergraduates and non-undergraduates both value the humanities as useful but not prestigious.
(Survey results complementing WE1S big-data research)

Surveyed by WE1S at the University of Miami, both undergraduate and non-undergraduates chose the sentiments positive, useful, and fun as their top three reactions to the question: “How would you describe your overall impression of the humanities?” And a sentiment of negative was the last choice of both groups (see graph).

However, in response to the same question, the two groups differ in how challenging they perceived the humanities to be. While easy was the fourth top description chosen by undergrads, it was seventh down the list for non-undergrads. In parallel, the humanities are difficult for 10% of undergrads and 21% of non-undergrads. The difference is likely due to the fact that non-undergraduate respondents often engage with the humanities in a postgraduate or professional capacity (where they face more advanced or complicated problems), while most undergrads experience the humanities in their bachelor-degree level schooling, often as required course work. Indeed, when asked “In what context(s) do you hear the word ‘humanities’ used?,” 73% of undergrads answered at school. (Other answers included: 48% in books or media; 13% at home; and only 9% at work.) By contrast, 24% of non-undergrads heard the word at work.

Perhaps for reasons related to the perceived easiness of the humanities at the undergrad level, fewer undergrads (14%) than non-undergrads (22%) think of the humanities as prestigious. However, both groups see the humanities as more useful than prestigious. This is the exact inverse of both groups’ view about the sciences by comparison with the humanities (see KF-9-5).

---

1 Non-undergraduates included graduate students, faculty, and staff.