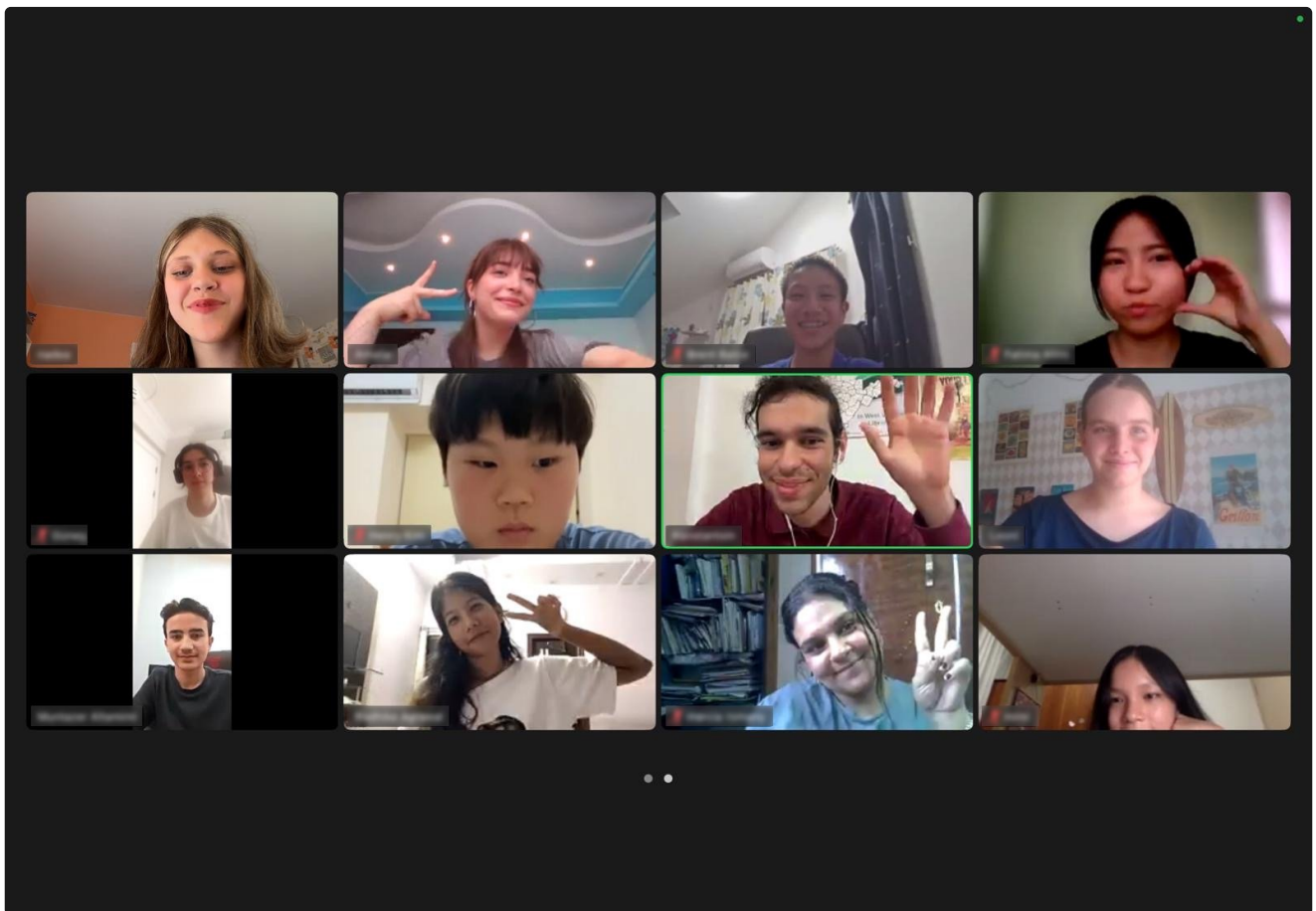


UWC SHORT COURSE · JUNE–AUGUST 2026

Many Ways to Be Human

A first look at our first UWC short course

207 applications. 53 countries. Two cohorts.



One of the June cohort's two groups, during a seminar session together

What this report is, and why we're sending it

This summer, 46 students, from Ukraine to Sudan, Iraq to Mexico, several from countries in active conflict, read the same short texts, talked and argued, without a teacher telling them what to conclude, about what it means to be human.

Our mission is to counter the roots of violence, caused in part by a crisis of attention among the next generation. We do that by running guided, dialogue-based courses in classical literature that help teens learn to listen, think, and speak in ways that create connection. Many Ways to Be Human, our first UWC short course, does this in one very specific way: students from dozens of countries who would otherwise never share a room go through the same seminar, wrestling over the same page, with no lecture and no assigned conclusion. It's the same approach we started two years ago, in a much smaller course for Russian, Ukrainian, and Belarusian students. Through UWC, it now reaches students from anywhere in the world, at a far bigger scale. And it doesn't stop with the students either: through Svet Projects, they have already carried what they built in the seminar into their own communities.

UWC, United World Colleges, is a global network of 18 schools built on the idea that bringing students from different countries and backgrounds together to learn side by side is one of the most direct ways to build peace. Being endorsed as an official UWC partner meant we could open this course to students from that whole network.

The scale, in short

207

TOTAL APPLICATIONS

53

COUNTRIES APPLIED
FROM

46

STUDENTS ENROLLED

22

COUNTRIES
ENROLLED FROM

On our own pre and post course surveys, students moved from 3.83 to 4.25 out of 5 in June, and from 3.83 to 4.04 in August, on questions about speaking up, sitting with hard ideas, and understanding someone unlike themselves. On UWC's own separate evaluation, every student who completed it said they'd recommend the course.

We didn't expect a few weeks together to change that much, and this report is partly us trying to understand it ourselves. It's simply us sharing what happened this summer with our community, there's no ask attached. If you've been following along for a while, this is what that's added up to. If this is your first look at us, welcome, this is just what we did and why it mattered to us.

Where this course came from

Many Ways to Be Human isn't where we started. Two years earlier, in the summer of 2024, we ran our first course ever: a small, online seminar for Russian, Ukrainian, and Belarusian students, reading Solzhenitsyn, Alexievich, and Ostrovsky together while the war between two of those countries was already underway. That course convinced us that students from opposite sides of a live conflict could sit in the same seminar and actually hear each other out.

Many Ways to Be Human grew out of that same conviction, opened up to the rest of the world: what if a course could show students, rather than simply tell them, that any human being, from any corner of the world, deserves to be seen and understood? We wanted a course that was about being human, and built for humans from as many different cultures as possible. That question shaped two things: the reading list, eight texts chosen to show what it means to be human from as many different vantage points as possible, and how we formed each group of students, deliberately kept as diverse as possible.

The format stays the same across every cohort: students read the same short text and think through it together, without a lecturer, without a predetermined conclusion, with the help of our seminar leaders.

June cohort reading list

Michel Montaigne, France — *"On Cannibals," from his Essays*

Vladimir Nabokov, Russia — *"The Doorbell"*

Yasunari Kawabata, Japan — *"The Grasshopper and the Bell Cricket"*

Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Colombia — *"The Handsomest Drowned Man"*

Alice Munro, Canada — *"Red Dress — 1946"*

William Faulkner, United States — *"Barn Burning"*

Rabindranath Tagore, India — *"Cabuliwallah"*

Plato, Ancient Greece — *"Apology"*

And optional films:

Yasujiro Ozu, Japan, 1953 — *Tokyo Story*

Andrei Tarkovsky, USSR, 1957 — *Ivan's Childhood*

Charles Laughton, USA, 1955 — *The Night of the Hunter*

Claude Jutra, Canada, 1971 — *My Uncle Antoine*

Victor Erice, Spain, 1973 — *The Spirit of the Beehive*

August cohort texts & films

Alfred Hitchcock, England — *"Notorious"* (film)

Robert Bresson, France — *"L'Argent"* (film)

Flannery O'Connor, United States — *"Enoch and the Gorilla"*

Leo Tolstoy, Russia — *"Alyosha the Pot"* & *"Three Questions"*

Anton Chekhov, Russia — *"Rothschild's Fiddle"*

Why August looked different

August's cohort wasn't part of our original plan, we added it in response to demand, so we used it as a chance to experiment. The films above started as an optional pairing for June, and about half of June's students watched every one, often staying after seminars to discuss them. Alexandra, from Mexico, said: "I am so addicted to TikTok, watching these slow-moving films made me like focusing on things again."

Between that response and what we'd already seen work in our community seminars, we made films a required part of the course for August, alongside the readings. It worked beautifully. We used the chance to test other new material too, which is why August's lineup isn't as balanced or as culturally wide-ranging as June's, everything about it was more experimental by design.

How each session runs

Each session runs about ninety minutes over Zoom. Students get the reading a few days ahead, read it closely, and come ready with just one requirement, a unique observation and a question. Kanstantsin moderates the discussion, but there's no lecture and no predetermined conclusion, just the group working through the text together.

We brought this idea to the office of United World Colleges and they understood it immediately. Shortly after, Svet Peace Project was endorsed as an official UWC partner for three years. And then we opened applications.

THE RESPONSE

207 applications. 53 countries. Two months.

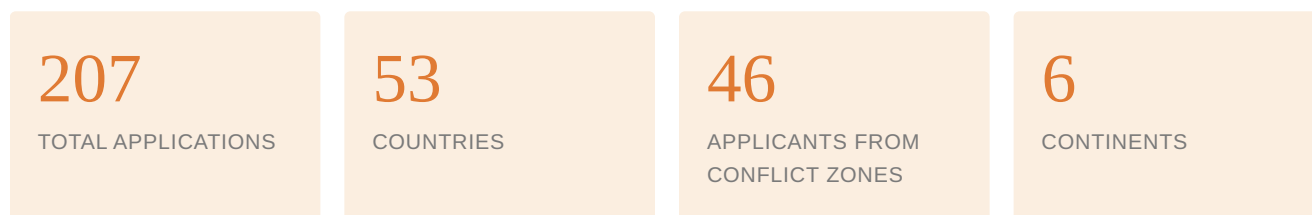
There's no single, simple metric for success in teenage education. So much of what a course changes in someone only shows up years later, looking back at it. But there are ways to get a glimpse of it sooner.

The two that matter most to us are how many people we reach, and the quality of what happens once they're in the room. This section is about reach. What changed for the students who took the course follows a bit further on.

We did not know what to expect, we are a young organization, and this was our first time running a course of this kind. We had no institutional infrastructure and no school network behind us. UWC posted about the

course once on social media. The rest we did ourselves, through connections and networks we had built along the way.

In just over two months, 207 people applied from 53 countries, spanning every inhabited continent. When we spoke with experienced UWC short course organizers, including one who has been running these courses for several years and typically receives 40 to 50 applications each summer, they told us this was a wonderful result. Most short courses benefit from the full backing of existing UWC schools and their established networks. We had just ourselves, and that turned out to be more than enough.



Nearly a quarter of all 207 applications came from six active conflict zones: Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, Sudan, Palestine, Ukraine. Iraq sent more applications than any other conflict zone on that list. Egypt and Iraq were also our two largest sources of applications overall. The need is global.

WHO APPLIED

Six students. Six countries. The same need.

Below are selections from six applications we received. Although coming from wildly different backgrounds, they all converge in the desire for what we offer:

Uliana · Russia

"Right now, because of my country's politics, I feel quite isolated from the world... I just want to live my happy youth, connect with peers from around the world, and build a shared future."

Haya · Syria

"I was born in Syria in 2009, when the Syrian crisis started... I am eager to learn how to spread peace and end conflicts among the young, the old, school mates, families, anyone."

Aayan · India

"Somewhere along the way I understood that equations do not explain grief... The most real thing you can do is try to see through someone else's eyes."

Sandy · Egypt

"Growing up in a rural area limited my exposure to the wider world, but it never limited my curiosity... I am currently learning Russian, because I believe language is a powerful key to understanding people."

Mohamed · Sudan

"The experience of war and moving across three different states changed me deeply... I believe stories and conversations can reduce prejudice and help people connect across differences."

Irakoze · Rwanda

"When I first tried joining the coding club at school, I was not welcomed... I have learned that being human is deeply connected to resilience, empathy, and the ways we support one another."

OUR RESPONSE

We could only take 26.

So we built more.

For our first run of the course, we agreed to host two groups of 13 students each. This keeps the experience intimate and conversation high-quality. Kanstantsin moderates the discussion in both, with Amir as co-facilitator, one group after the other on the same day. That is the practical limit of what two people can do well when they are doing everything themselves.

But 207 people applied. We didn't want 181 of them to get nothing. So we built more. That meant a second cohort in August for more accepted students, and for everyone else, a spot in our free community seminars, spread out across the rest of the summer.

August's dates landed later in the summer than students expected when they first applied, an inconvenient stretch to ask twenty accepted students to commit to five more sessions. Not one of them said no. If anything, they were eager to join.

62

Five free community seminars

For everyone we could not accommodate, standalone Socratic seminars open to anyone, 62 registrations total. Every student who applied to this course was offered something. No one was turned away.

WHAT CHANGED

The numbers behind the change

This is the other half of how we measure success. We ask students the same questions about their character before and after each course. We want to know if anything is actually changing in the people who

take it. Each question asks students to rate themselves from 1 to 5. The numbers below are the group's average score, taken right before the course starts and again right after it ends.

JUNE COURSE		AUGUST COHORT	
26	students accepted	20	students accepted
Sessions	8, every other day	Sessions	5, every other day
Dates	June 21 – July 5	Dates	August 5 – August 12
Full scholarships	25%	Full scholarships	20%
Course fee revenue	\$2,000	Course fee revenue	\$900

August ran a shorter course, five sessions instead of eight. Four of the five questions we track most closely moved in both cohorts. Each line below shows the group's average score before the course and after it, June above August, on the same 1 to 5 scale:

JUNE		AUGUST	
Students surveyed	25	Students surveyed	20
Countries	15	Countries	16
Completed both surveys	22 • 88%	Completed both surveys	19 • 95%
3.83 → 4.25		3.89 → 4.08	
average score • 1–5 scale		average score • 1–5 scale	
Up 11% overall		Up 5% overall	

Comfort speaking up when others might disagree



Arguing convincingly for a viewpoint opposite your own



Sitting with a challenging idea rather than dismissing it



Understanding why someone very different sees the world as they do



Seeing a situation from the point of view of someone very different



The fifth, seeing a situation from the point of view of someone very different, moved in June and held flat in August. Five sessions may just not be enough time to shift that one.

June and August drew from separate applicant pools and started close to each other, 3.83 and 3.89. The pattern holds across both: four measures move, and the fifth needs more time than the short format gives it.

What this tells us: the numbers move on the specific things the course is built to train. Two groups of students, running two different course lengths, months apart, both moved on nearly all of it.

Changes students noticed in themselves

Fatima · Afghanistan

"Before the course I thought that if I think something is right then it is 100% right. But now I understand that people can have different opinions because of the circumstances they were born into and the way they were raised."

"I am not a person anymore who can't change their opinion and thinks they are always right."

"I was very scared at the first session but by the end it really changed because I had more courage and confidence to speak."

Leoní · Spain

"I am not someone who enjoys confrontation, so I always used to just agree with the other person. After this course and after making my project, I always try to be respectful, but I do speak up for myself more."

Mark · Bulgaria

"Even if I disagree with someone's interpretation or thinking, I try to follow their way of thinking and try to understand them better."

Alexandra · Mexico

"I used to be mad at myself when I didn't get a sentence and now I can read a whole chapter again even if I didn't understand a small bit."

"Nowadays it's really complicated for me to pay attention to something fully and lay aside everything else. The course has definitely helped with my attention span. It has also sparked a necessity for me to keep reading."

Aroa · Spain

"Comparing opinions with other people you couldn't relate to in the beginning kind of felt a bit scary at first but then I got much more confident."

"It was wonderful being able to share your thoughts with people from different countries. The course made me more reflective and more curious because of all the things and topics we had talked about, from cannibalism to birds."

Brent · Philippines

"This was my first experience having conversations with people from different countries and backgrounds. I used to think I already understood different perspectives, but the course gave me the chance to experience it in real life. I learned to look at things from another person's perspective and understand that our values and principles are often shaped by where we come from."

Haya · Syria

"Before, I wouldn't go and talk about things that were on my mind. The first couple of seminars I was so afraid to say the things I think about. Then I started to make connections with other participants, and after that I started to speak more and never be afraid of the ideas I had."

"After the course, I became more patient. Patience is mandatory in dealing with everyone, younger or older than you."

WHAT UWC FOUND

Confirmed by someone other than us

UWC runs its own evaluation of every course it certifies, separate from the surveys we run ourselves. Eighteen of our twenty five June students filled it out, sent directly to UWC.

100%

WOULD RECOMMEND THE
COURSE

4.67/5

OVERALL SATISFACTION

4.72/5

ALIGNMENT WITH UWC'S
MISSION

This is the first evaluation UWC has sent us, so we have nothing of our own to measure it against. Still, the fact that every single student who filled the UWC survey would recommend our course stood out to us.

UWC's own learning outcome scores

UWC also scores every course it certifies against six outcomes it tracks across all its programs. Five of six came in above 4.3 out of 5. The one exception, nature and environment, UWC itself flagged as "not core to our program," so we're not surprised it's the lower one.

Motivation 4.61/5

Active citizenship 4.50/5

Diversity 4.39/5

Skills 4.39/5

Global awareness 4.33/5

Nature / Environment 3.33/5

Students also picked words for themselves after the course. Confident and critical leading that list wasn't something we asked for, and it lines up with exactly what our own numbers show about speaking up and sitting with hard ideas.

Confident 11/18

Critical 9/18

Sociable 9/18

Active 6/18

Creative 6/18

Hopeful 5/18

They also picked words for the two of us.

Respectful 15/18

Helpful 14/18

Knowledgeable 12/18

Supportive 12/18

Engaged 12/18

Approachable 10/18

The quotes below are anonymous, UWC shares only the responses with us, not which student wrote which one.

What they'd keep

"I would definitely keep the diversity we had, because hearing different perspectives from people with different backgrounds made the discussions more meaningful and helped me see things from new points of view."

What they plan to do next

"I have already started my own 'Erudition club' in my community, where I use the same session methods I've learned about in the course."

"I plan to use what I learned to create short documentaries and media projects that explore meaningful social and human issues."

Neither answer came from the required project, they came from a plain question about what's next, which tells us the instinct to act isn't something we have to require out of them.

"I consider myself a shy and timid person, but thanks to this course, I have learned to be more comfortable with sharing my opinions with other people."

"It took a topic I had a very strong and one sided view about and turned it into a much more open minded opinion."

SVET PROJECTS

From thought to action

Partway through developing this course, we added something new. Every student now completes a project after the seminars end, built from a specific line, moment, or question in the text that stayed with them, turned into a real action outside the classroom. We call it Svet Projects, and it's now a required part of the course.

This idea came from Victoria Mora, a mentor and a dear friend of ours. She served as president of UWC USA for nine years, and before that spent twenty years at St. John's College, first as a tutor, then as dean, then as vice president. She brought us a rough version of what then became Svet Projects, and we built it out together from there.

The problem we were trying to solve is baked into our slogan for it, from thought to action. A seminar built around great works of literature, philosophy, and art is meaningful on its own. Students spend the session listening to each other, trying to really understand where someone else is coming from, sometimes changing their mind because of something someone said, and building up an idea together as a group, using the text as common ground. They walk away with a felt sense of comradery with an international group they have never met before. Besides, they discover that they can affect the people around them just by how they think and speak.

That sense of agency doesn't stay locked in the room, it tends to leave slowly and mostly only for students who already had the instinct to carry it further on their own. We had already seen students, ourselves included, take what happened in a seminar and carry it into their own lives without anyone asking them to. We wanted to help that happen on purpose instead of leaving it to chance only. So we ask every student to start from something specific in the text, a line, a moment, a question they can't shake, and build their project out from there. It's a requirement, because it's what actually connects a great book to a real action in the world.

We ran it as a pilot at first. It turned out better than we expected, you'll see why in a second. It's now a required part of every online course we run, and we plan to bring it into our in person programs soon too.

We specifically ask students to focus on their own communities, so they can see for themselves that Svet, a Slavic root for "light," is something that starts close to home, in a classroom, a family, a street, before it reaches anywhere larger. Nothing about this project is graded, and there's no penalty for skipping it beyond not receiving a diploma. It moved us to see how seriously almost every student still took it anyway.

We mention Svet Projects in the orientation packet before the course even starts, and bring it up again partway through the seminars. Once the seminars end, we send a short video walking through it in more detail, along with a presentation. Students then have one week to fill out a project outline, and we're

available if they get stuck. Once we've reviewed it, we either approve it or ask them to develop it further. After that, they're on their own to build it, and we check in occasionally along the way.

A few examples of what they built follow, from both the June and the newly-finished August cohort.

Fatima **AFGHANISTAN**



Fatima running "There Is Still a Way," the seminar she designed for girls banned from school in her community. Faces blurred for their safety.

Fatima applied to this course because she, as a woman in Afghanistan, is banned from attending school. In her application, she wrote: "This course is not just an option to me. It is a world where I can raise my voice like a normal human."

After reading Faulkner's "Barn Burning," about a boy who decides not to stay silent in the face of what he knows is unfair, Fatima asked herself a question. She could not change the laws keeping her out of school. But could she do something, in her own situation?

She designed and ran a seminar of her own, called "There Is Still a Way," for seven other girls in her community who were also not attending any school. She brought in an educational counselor as a guest speaker, introduced the girls to online school options they had not known existed, and built a WhatsApp group to stay in touch with them afterward. Several enrolled in online school shortly after.

"Even small actions can make positive changes in people's lives," Fatima wrote. "All they needed was an opportunity."

Sandy **EGYPT**



The opening frame of Sandy's video, interviews with three women in her family filmed alongside the places that mattered to them

Faulkner's "Barn Burning" made Sandy notice how much the story turns on one relationship, a father, and how little choice the son actually had in his own life. She decided to ask three women in her family about their childhoods: her great grandmother, raised in Upper Egypt without finishing school, a family friend who grew up on the Egyptian coast among many siblings, and her grandmother, raised during the 1973 war on Suez. She filmed the interviews alongside footage of the places that mattered to them, a village, the boats her grandmother's friend used to watch as a child.

Watching her family talk about their own parents, Sandy noticed something she hadn't expected. In her family, one generation that couldn't forgive or forget ended up repeating the same mistakes with their children. The generation after them, who chose to let it go, didn't.

Watch the video →

"A girl told me that her passed away grandma would have liked it a lot," Sandy wrote. "Another girl told me the video helped her value her family time more."

Deniz **TURKEY**



Deniz leading the discussion he organized with neighbors about exclusion and first impressions

Deniz's project came from a line in Marquez's "The Handsomest Drowned Man in the World," about a village that doesn't know a stranger washed up on their shore, until they give him a name and start treating him as their own. Deniz wrote a short story about a Ukrainian family living near his neighborhood, then shared it with four neighbors who had met the family before, and led a discussion about exclusion and first impressions.

"The discussion made us notice how easily people can be left out because of assumptions," he wrote. Everyone in the group told him they'd try to be more open to people who are new or seem different.

Deniz also mentioned that he'd been insecure about his English throughout the course, until Kanstantsin, a non-native speaker himself, told him he used to struggle with it too. "That made me feel much more comfortable speaking and making mistakes," he wrote. "I'm really thankful to him for that."

Mark **BULGARIA**



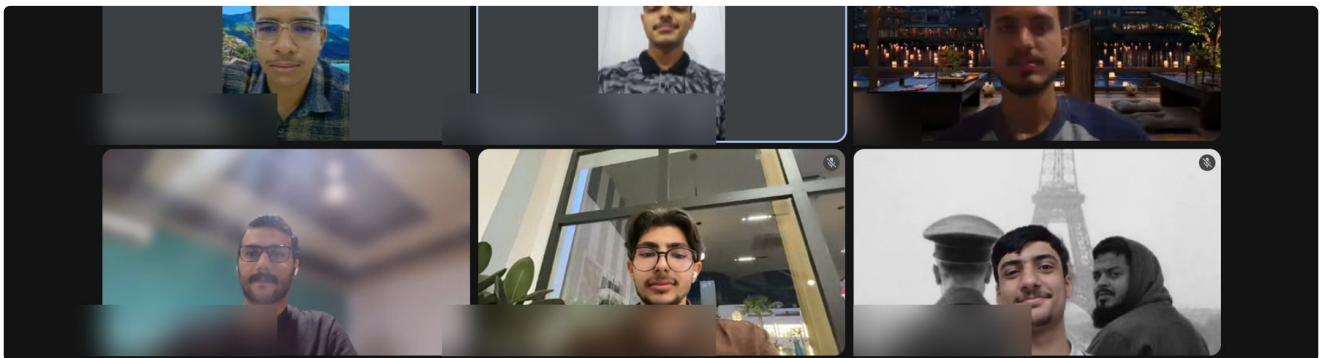
Mark's charity bazaar in central Sofia, paintings, jewelry, and secondhand clothes, proceeds going to CAAI

Mark's project started with a line from Montaigne's essay, "Our eyes are bigger than our bellies," and the gap it points to between seeing a problem and actually being able to act on it. He organized a charity bazaar in central Sofia with about seventeen friends, six hours of handmade jewelry, paintings, and secondhand clothes, with the proceeds going to CAAI, a local NGO working against factory farming.

The bazaar raised 277 euros. What stuck with him more was what he overheard in conversations that day, several friends said afterward they wanted to volunteer with CAAI again, or that they'd try cutting back on meat. He also got to know the NGO's founder personally through the day.

[View the bazaar's Instagram post →](#)

Ali **IRAQ**



Ali running a session of the short course he built for students across Iraq. Faces blurred for privacy.

Ali's project wasn't sparked by one line so much as by the whole shape of the course itself: Socratic seminars where students read the same text and build understanding together, with genuine opinions on the table. He decided to build a short version of it for students back home.

He put together an English-language course modeled on Many Ways to Be Human, picked his own short stories and films, and ran two sessions each for two cohorts of students from across Iraq, handling applications, interviews, and the seminars himself. It was his first time leading a discussion like this. Students asked for more sessions afterward and said it sharpened their English, their critical thinking, and their public speaking.

"Everything I did helped me grow in one way or another and be more confident," Ali wrote.

[Follow the course on Instagram →](#)

Meerab **PAKISTAN**



Meerab's care and connection packets, made for primary school children in her community

O'Connor's "Enoch and the Gorilla" left Meerab thinking about people who are alone and unseen, and how easy it is to overlook them. She wanted eight primary school children from low-income families nearby to know that someone was thinking of them.

She put together care packets of instant noodles and sweets, under the name Care and Connection. Noodles, she said, are dry and unremarkable on their own, and only become comforting once someone takes the time to prepare them. The children were delighted, became friends with each other, and said they wanted to pass the same feeling on to someone else.

"I understood people do care, people do like it when they are invited," Meerab wrote.

Yara **IRAQ**



Yara's journaling and book-swap evening with the Read and Pass group, for women and girls aged 12 to 40

In Tolstoy's "Alyosha the Pot," Yara noticed how little Alyosha said, and only when it mattered, which left her thinking about how important it actually is to speak up. With a local group called Read and Pass, she hosted an hour-long evening for women and girls aged twelve to forty, built around journaling on personality and

self-expression, followed by a book exchange. New friendships formed on the spot, and older women stayed to share advice with the younger girls.

"A person wouldn't have a personality without sharing it and showing it to people that they love and respect," Yara wrote.

[View the event on Instagram →](#)

More projects from both cohorts

Thirty more students turned their reading into something outside the seminar.

June cohort

Nadzeya, Belarus. Made a short film about the different ways women understand their own roles, inspired by Nabokov's "The Doorbell." [Watch the film →](#)

Aroa, Spain. Shared Munro's "Red Dress" with three friends in Madrid and ran a small survey about the character Mary Fortune, sparking real discussion among people who wouldn't usually come across this kind of reading. [View the project →](#)

Leoní, Spain. Plato's "Apology" led her to make a video about courage, interviewing her family, including her grandmother and six year old cousin, along with classmates from the course. She's now starting a debate club at her school. [Watch the video →](#)

Haya, Syria. "Apology" led her to interview a physics professor about talented students in Syria who never found the support their intelligence deserved. [View the project →](#)

Güneş, Turkey. Visited a nursing home in Istanbul and talked with residents about what actually makes a moment meaningful, inspired by "The Grasshopper and the Bell Cricket."

Philipp, Russia. Hosted a movie watch party for friends to work through popular myths about Pre-Columbian life, inspired by Montaigne.

Muntadher, Iraq. Watched "The Odyssey" with his cousins and ran the same kind of discussion the course had taught him, just with his own family.

Kim, South Korea. Talked through "Barn Burning" with friends from church, curious what they'd make of the father's choices in the story.

Kaan, Turkey. Had a long conversation with an elder in his community about the gap between expectations and reality, inspired by "The Doorbell."

Brent, Philippines. Wrote a short story for his family, each character based on someone in his life, as a quiet thank you to his mother, inspired by "Cabuliwallah."

Minh Chau, Vietnam. Talked with neighbors of different ages about cannibalism and morality, inspired by Montaigne, and found her own views shifting along the way.

Marsia, Egypt. Ran her own Socratic-style discussions with people across five Egyptian governorates about what "normal" really means, then published what she found as an article.

Liubov, Russia. Interviewed friends about small, ordinary moments of happiness, and published what she found as essays in Russian and English. [Read the essay →](#)

Alexandra, Mexico. Interviewed four women and a teenager in her life about the roles women are expected to play, publishing her findings on Substack and a video on YouTube. [Read on Substack →](#)

Maryam, Iraq. Made a short film for her community, inspired by Tagore's "Cabuliwallah."

Oliver, USA. Inspired by Montaigne's "On Cannibals," interviewed family members in the United States and Türkiye about how each side sees the other's culture and way of life.

August cohort

Francisca, Argentina. Ran an activity that got friends and family listening to opinions unlike their own, and said it reminded her that "there are other ways of seeing things."

Madiha, India. Asked people in her life to reflect on the relationships that shaped them, for better or worse, and came away learning to listen without rushing to judge.

Anano, Georgia. Paired a famous Georgian film with a Socratic seminar — and plenty of khachapuri — and said the discussion taught her that quality beats quantity.

Mayar, Iraq. Brought three music lovers together to each share a song, and found that the same lyric could mean something different to every person who heard it.

Joana, Spain. Tolstoy's "Alyosha the Pot" left her with one question above all, is obedience a virtue, and she put it to four generations living under one roof.

Anastasiya, Belarus. Two of Tolstoy's tales, "Alyosha the Pot" and "Three Questions," stayed with her. She read them again with a friend and found a sharp new way to see Alyosha.

Omar, Egypt. "Alyosha the Pot," and the way some people are placed above others, felt to Omar like watching reality. He made a video on Egypt's class divide built around it. [Watch the video →](#)

Filip, Romania. Money drove the action in many of the course's stories, especially Bresson's film "L'Argent." Filip interviewed his family about how far they'd go for it, and at what cost.

Mira, Iraq. A line from O'Connor's "Enoch and the Gorilla" stuck with her, that he wanted someday to see a line of people waiting to shake his hand. She asked campers from three countries what they wish people understood.

[Watch the video →](#)

Hà, Vietnam. Bresson's "L'Argent," the course's final film, stayed with her: Yvon's criminal path and the choices along it. She held two conversations with Burmese friends about how cycles of violence begin, and end. [See the project →](#)

Abdunabi, Tajikistan. Ran a workshop where local mentors and leaders came together to plan how to help their own community.

Niyya, Morocco. O'Connor's "Enoch and the Gorilla" inspired her to bring new friends together to read the same story, and discover how differently they saw change.

Sayalee, India. Brought in Zakaria Tamer's "Tigers on the Tenth Day" on her own, and ran her village school's first Socratic seminar around it, with students and teachers alike.

Mustafa, Iraq. Chekhov's "Rothschild's Fiddle" stayed with him, especially the melody Yakov plays before he dies. He wrote a song imagining what Yakov felt as he prepared to leave the world.

LOOKING AHEAD

What's next

The UWC partnership brought us students we couldn't have reached on our own. We're hoping to run it with them again. If that doesn't happen, we'll run it anyway, through the other partners we've built. Many Ways to Be Human is becoming our signature course, and we'll keep refining the reading list from one run to the next. The next big online run is planned for winter 2026–27, with a smaller one in the coming fall.

We're already thinking about what it would take to run this at a larger scale, more cohorts a year, and more groups within each one, so more of the students who want a seat can get one.

What one small course already reaches, in order.

- 1 It reaches us. Getting to build this full time, and watch it come together the way it did, is what makes the work feel worth it.
- 2 It reaches the students. 46 of them sat in our June and August courses, from 22 different countries, plus 32 more sat in our five community seminars, with multiple students attending more than one, listening closely to someone completely unlike themselves, building an idea together across language and background in a way most of them had never done before.

- 3 It reaches their communities. Eighteen of June's twenty-six have already turned what they read and argued about into something outside the seminar: a seminar they ran themselves, a short film, a published essay, a conversation with family and friends who'd never been asked these questions before. None of the people they reached ever took our course at all. The ripple effect of our courses is a beautiful thing to behold.

Picture four courses a year instead of one, and groups running in the tens, maybe the fifties, instead of two. We're building toward that, and we wanted you to see the year that convinced us it's possible.

This report covers our first year running Many Ways to Be Human twice, in June and August of 2026. We wanted our newsletter community to see it. We're always glad to welcome new supporters if this is ever something you'd like to be part of. Thank you for following along, we'll keep sending updates as this grows.

All students enrolled this summer

43 students, 22 countries, two cohorts.

Abdunabi	Tajikistan	Güneş	Turkey	Muntadher	Iraq
Alexandra	Mexico	Haya	Syria	Mustafa	Iraq
Ali	Iraq	Henry	South Korea	Nadzeyya	Belarus
Amalia	Russia	Hà	Vietnam	Niyya	Morocco
Anano	Georgia	Joana	Spain	Oliver	USA
Anastasia	Belarus	Kaan	Turkey	Omar	Egypt
Aroa	Spain	Leoní	Spain	Philipp	Russia
Asude	Turkey	Liubov	Russia	Radhika	India
Belal	Syria	Madiha	India	Sampurna	India
Brent	Philippines	Mark	Bulgaria	Sandy	Egypt
Chau	Vietnam	Marsia	Egypt	Sayalee	India
Deniz	Turkey	Maryam	Iraq	Sebastian	Costa Rica
Fatima	Afghanistan	Mayar	Iraq	Yara	Iraq
Filip	Romania	Meerab	Pakistan		
Francisca	Argentina	Mira	Iraq		

Of the 46 students who were accepted into June and August, three left partway through for reasons of their own. The list above is everyone who stayed and completed the seminar course — not all of them went on to submit a Svet Project.