Conversations of the West
V55.0404.015
TR 2-3:15, Silver 703

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Course Description
This course is organized around the notion of a continuous dialogue between antiquity and
the nineteenth century about fundamental questions: knowledge, nature, morals, and politics.
We are tracing the prehistory of issues which are still with us today. The way we look back
to the nineteenth century bears a resemblance to the way they looked to antiquity, as a
source of questions to reformulate. Therefore, the course juxtaposes texts from each era
according to the questions we’ll be pursuing through them. One issue that will connect the
four units is the changing conceptions of historical change and their narration.

Required Books
Augustine, Confessions, Oxford World’s Classics, trans. Chadwick
The New Oxford Annotated Bible
Karl Marx, The Communist Manifesto, Norton, ed. F. L. Bender
Friedrich Nietzsche, On the Genealogy of Morals, Vintage, ed. W. Kaufmann
Sophocles, Antigone, Oedipus the King, Electra, Oxford World’s Classics, trans. Kitto, ed.
E. Hall
Vergil, Aeneid, Penguin Classics, trans. West
Course packet to be purchased at Unique Copy, Green St. (corner of Green and Mercer)

Requirements
Final examination (20%); 2-page paper (10%); 2 5-page papers (20% each); section grade
(35% off the total grade: presentation 5%; 2 response papers 10% each; attendance and
participation 10%)

Course Policies
Extensions granted on papers only for substantive reasons (medical or family emergencies,
requiring documentation). Late papers will be marked down. Attendance will be taken
during class. More than three unexcused absences will put you in jeopardy of failure.

SCHEDULE
I. KNOWLEDGE
January 21 Introduction
January 23  Sophocles, Oedipus the King
January 28  Plato, Republic, course packet, book 7 selection
January 30  Plato, Republic, course packet, book 10
February 4  Freud, Infantile Sexual Theories, course packet
February 6  Freud, Wolfman

II. NATURE
February 11  Genesis 1-5; Lucretius, book 1
February 13  Lucretius, book 5
February 18  President’s Day: no class
February 20  Darwin, The Origin of the Species, Introduction, Chapters 1 and 14
2-page paper due
February 25  Darwin, The Descent of Man, Introduction, Chapters 1 and 21
February 27  John Dewey, The Influence of Darwin on Philosophy (pp. 481-483)

III. MORALS
March 4  The Gospel according to Matthew, 1-14
March 6  The Gospel according to Matthew, 15-28
March 11  Augustine, books 1, 2, 3, 4.2, 6.18-26
March 13  Augustine, books 8, 12, 13
5-page paper due
March 25  Nietzsche, Nietzsche, On Truth and Lie (reader); Genealogy of Morals, Section I, Nrs. 2,5,7,8, 12, 13, 16
March 27  Nietzsche, Genealogy of Morals, Section II, 1,2,3, 4, 12, 16, 17, 18, 23
April 1  Nietzsche, Genealogy of Morals, Section III, 1, 11, 12, 13, 15, 18, 20, 22, 24, 27

IV. POLITICS
April 3  Genesis 6-end
April 8  Exodus
April 10  Vergil Aeneid books 1-4
5-page paper due
April 15  Vergil books 6-8
April 17  Vergil books 10-12
April 22  Hegel, Lordship and Bondage, course packet
April 24  Hegel, Lordship and Bondage, course packet
April 29  Marx, On the Jewish Question
May 1  Marx, Communist Manifesto

Final Examination