Conversations of the West / Expository Writing
Enlightenment Track: Spring, 2004

Introduction

This is a very ambitious course. It includes a great deal of reading on many critical issues and problems of Western culture. These issues spanned the centuries and concerned diverse communities. They help us understand why our society looks like it does today, where many of our values come from, and why certain tensions characterize our culture. But our primary focus is not our society today, but the great authors, philosophers and religious leaders of the past who influenced the different cultures that preceede and inform ours. Our first task is to understand the authors in their historical situations. Although we study the perennial problems of Western culture, every moment in history is comprised of unique events, circumstances and peculiarities.

The first half of our course explores the “Judeo-Christian” and Hellenistic traditions. The former tradition emerged from the civilization of Ancient Israel, the second from the civilizations of Greece and Rome. Already in antiquity the traditions collided, and both the Christian Scriptures and Augustine are products of that encounter. The second half of our course jumps to the Enlightenment in the 17th and 18th centuries. Enlightenment thinkers grappled with the fusion of these traditions which they had inherited, subjected both to serious criticism, and tried to revise them based on recent scientific advances. In a way we will see the Judeo-Christian and Hellenistic traditions merging together in the first half of our course and splitting apart in the second half, as a new tradition—science and technology—rises to prominence.

Required Texts

1. *Oxford Study Bible.*
5. Augustine, *Confessions* (Oxford)
Requirements

(1) Reading and Participation: This is most important. You will not learn unless you read the texts, think about them and struggle with the ideas. Lectures will help you to understand the texts, but you will gain the greatest rewards by analyzing, thinking critically, grappling with the writings yourself and participating in discussions. Reading and Participation includes several elements:

(a) Attending discussion sections. Too many absences will adversely affect your grade. Do not come to discussion sections or lectures without your text for that day.

Attendance will not be taken at lectures. However, since discussion section will often take up issues raised in lectures, failure to attend lectures will impact the quality of participation in discussion.

(b) Keeping up with the reading and participating in the discussion sections.

(c) Response papers. Each student will write a response paper for each text (i.e. one paper for Genesis, one for Exodus, one for The Symposium etc.). The responses should be about one-typed page in length, and must be turned in on the day the text is first discussed. You should select a passage, idea or claim which intrigues you and write a brief response. These can be passages with which you agree (and explain why) or with which you disagree (and explain why). Or you might select a passage which you don't completely understand but wish to attempt to puzzle out. Your papers should focus on particular passages rather than summarizing the text as a whole. Occasionally I may ask you to write on a specific passage or to take up a specific question.

Some of the texts will strike you as strange or offensive. You are welcome to write about what seems strange or offensive to you. But your approach should be to try to understand why the author proposes an idea that you find alien. For example, you might find that the depiction of God in Genesis clashes with how you conceive of God, or that Plato's celebration of homosexual love strikes you as unethical. Avoid this type of reaction: "The picture of God in Exodus is primitive and silly. How can God get so mad at the Egyptians and kill them all? How stupid to portray God as if he is on a power trip...." "Plato must have been a lecherous and disgusting pervert to celebrate the love of boys...." Rather, you should frame your response as follows: "The portrayal of God in Exodus as punitive and warlike differs radically from my conception of God. I have always been taught that God is merciful to all his creatures. What could have motivated the author of Exodus to conceive of God in this fashion? Perhaps the Israelites were constantly fighting battles with the surrounding nations and it inspired the soldiers to think that their God fought on their side in war...." I am asking you not simply to react, but to try in each case to understand the author within his or her world.

(2) A midterm exam.

(3) A final exam.
**Grading**

You will actually receive two separate grades, one for the "Conversations of the West" component of the class, and one for the "Expository Writing" component. The "Expository Writing" grade will be based on the papers and other writing exercises assigned in recitation sections. The "Conversations of the West" component is based as follows:

- Participation (in recitation sections) and response papers: 30%
- Midterm: 30%
- Final: 40%

**Schedule**

| Jan 21: | Introduction |
| Jan 26: | Genesis 1-25 |
| Jan 28: | Genesis 26-50 |
| Feb 2:  | Exodus 1-34, Deut 29-30, Jonah |
| Feb 4:  | Exodus 1-34, Deut 29-30, Jonah |
| Feb 9:  | Sophocles, *Oedipus the King* |
| Feb 11: | Sophocles, *Oedipus the King* |
| Feb 16: | --- no class --- (Presidents' Day) |
| Feb 18 | Sophocles, *Antigone*. |
| Feb 23: | Plato, *Symposium* |
| Feb 25: | Plato, *Symposium* |
| March 1: | Plato, *Apology, Crito* |
| March 3: | Matthew |
| March 8: | Galatians; John 1:1-18, Acts 1-11 |
| March 10: | Midterm |
| March 22: | Augustine, *Confessions* |
| March 24: | Augustine, *Confessions* |
| March 29: | Enlightenment: Introduction. |
| March 31 | Deism and Optimism: Pope, *Essay on Man* |
| April 1 | Encounters with Foreign Cultures: Montesquieu, *Persian Letters* |
| April 5 | Montesquieu, *Persian Letters* |
| April 7 | Isaac Newton and his influence (lecture) |
| April 12 | Film and Discussion: Mindwalk |
| April 14 | Rousseau, *Second Discourse* |
| April 19 | Rousseau, *Second Discourse* |
| April 26 | Voltaire, *Candide* |
| April 28: | Voltaire, *Candide* |
| May 3 | The Philosophes: Diderot, *Encyclopedia* (handout) |
For each text I have prepared study questions. These will help guide your reading and focus you on important passages. When I lecture I will assume that you have paid close attention to the questions and the passages to which they refer. The questions may also serve as the basis of discussions in the discussion sections.

**Examples of Response Papers**

(1) "Wait the great teacher, Death; and God adore...Man never Is, but always To be blest." (Pope, *Essay on Man*, Epistle I, Section III.) These lines are very interesting to me. The author claims that death is a teacher. This is true because the fear of death drives humans to act in noble ways. They learn from their mistakes in order not to make them again and risk the chance of dying a miserable death, of just the chance of dying at all. Pope combines the need to see death as our teacher with the instruction to adore God. This seems to imply that although death appears to be an all-powerful force that dictates the way in which we live our day to day lives, there is a higher power that is often overlooked. This power is that of God. If we continue to adore God and put our trust in Him, we can rid ourselves of the fear that seems to be innate in our being. God does not let us know the future; rather He gives us hope. This hope derives from the comfort and confidence that we receive through our faith.

Pope continues by saying that man is never actually blessed but that he will be blessed. I think he means that no matter how fortunate we are in this world, we can never be truly happy. But only in heaven, when we do not have to face our fear of death, we will be blessed. When we are no longer human beings within bodies, but pure souls in heaven, then we will be blessed. On earth to be blessed is impossible because a blessing implies happiness and peace. But this can never be the case when the fear of death hangs over us. The only place where there is ultimate happiness and eternal peace is in Heaven with God where we are all repentant souls.

(2) In *Antigone* Sophocles includes a mysterious character, Ismene. Ismene is a cross between a person that Socrates does not admire and a playwright's device to set the scene for the coming action. Ismene represents an opposite to Antigone and Creon. They are both passionate, even stubborn characters. Antigone is not content with seeing that her brother is given the proper burial rights; she must "shout it out" (99). The chorus notes that "She does not know / how to yield to trouble." Antigone is determined to do what she sees is right. Creon is similarly determined to do what he sees as right; he says, "But he that is loyal to the state / in death, in life alike, shall have my honor" (228-229). In fact, Creon and Antigone share almost identical philosophies. Antigone would replace the word 'state' with 'family'.

Ismene on the other hand has not made up her mind. When Antigone invites her to join in the deed, Ismene answers "To act in defiance of the citizenry / my nature does not give me means for that (91-92). However, when Creon charges Antigone with the crime, Ismene tries to take the blame for what Antigone did, saying, "But in your troubles I am not ashamed to sail with you on the sea of suffering" (594-5). Ismene is concerned with her appearance in the eyes of others. When she thinks Antigone will be seen as a treasonous criminal, she declines to join her. But when she sees that Antigone is in fact acting in a noble and tragic way, Ismene wants that too for herself. By portraying her in this fickle way, Sophocles shows that he dishonors those people who exemplify the traits of Ismene. While Creon and Antigone are seen as noble
and tragic characters, deserving of respect, Ismene is dishonored by being ignored the majority of the play. Ismene can also be seen as a device used by Sophocles to describe what action would follow. The dialogue between Antigone and Ismene hardly contributes to a greater understanding of the main conflict of the play (which takes place between Antigone and Creon). The dialogue mainly explains why Antigone acts as she does, and describes the conflict she faces with Creon. Ismene is not a fully developed character, but is important in her juxtaposition with Antigone.

(3) Augustine, in his *Confessions*, said to the Lord, “For to love this world is to break troth with you.” I find this to be very interesting; Augustine is saying that one cannot love the world and love G-d and the same time, that one is breaking some kind of godly bond by loving the world. Yet, doesn’t Augustine assert that G-d is the Creator of the Universe and hence also of this world? Augustine recites from the Bible, “all things find in You their origin...the center of their being,” (22), therefore it is shown that people should love G-d’s worldly creations since a part of G-d resides in each creation. Therefore, it seems to be a little rash that Augustine must categorize everything: one side is this world, which is flawed and should be discarded, and on the other is G-d and Heaven, which is perfect and should be prized. If a perfect entity, such as the Lord makes something, I believe then that at least a part of that creation should contain a small amount of perfection, and should be loved. Therefore, it is essential that one loves this world, G-d’s creation, as a means to help oneself to love and appreciate his Creator. However, in the context of the writing, I believe that through this statement Augustine is trying to caution readers against replacing worldly objects and intellectual pursuits with godly worship and knowledge. Augustine, through his own experience, is saying that it is difficult to balance appreciation of worldly things with the worship of G-d, that if one isn’t wholly contributed to the Lord, then he will be sucked into materialism. This may be true, however, it remains that Augustine makes a somewhat contradictory statement by forcing a separation between love for G-d and love for His world.
Dr. Jeffrey Rubenstein

Conversations with the West: Enlightenment Track:

Questions on Genesis


(1) Creation: Gen 1:1-2:4. (a) What is the biblical view of creation? What is God’s relationship to nature and to the world he creates? (b) Try reading this passage out loud. What feeling do you get? What words recur in the story? What point is conveyed?

(2) Compare the creation of human beings in Gen 1 and Gen 2. What is the order of creation? What is the reason for the two genders in each chapter?

(3) What is the biblical view of mankind? Are human beings good or bad, divine or bestial, noble or base? What does “the image” of God mean?

(4) Why are Adam and Eve exiled from the garden? What are the consequences of this? (This will be discussed in the discussion sections.)

(5) A number of failures, evils, and sins are recounted in Gen 1-11. What are these? (See especially 6:5-8) Why do they occur? How does God respond? Note Gen 8:21-9:11. Does this mean God is changing his policy?

(6) God makes covenants with Noah (Gen 9) and Abraham (Gen 17; see too Gen 15) and later, in Exodus, with the entire people (Exod 19-24). (And you could see Gen 1:27-29 as a covenant with Adam.) What is a covenant? (Look it up in a dictionary or encyclopedia.) What does this imply about the relationship between God and humans?

(7) Compare Gen 18 and Gen 22. How can one understand these two chapters? Why does Abraham act so differently, protesting in one case and obeying in the other? Why does God command the sacrifice of Isaac?

(8) In Gen 18:25 Abraham says to God, “Should not the judge of all the earth do what is just?” How can he talk to God like this? What does this show about the divine-human relationship?

(9) Jacob steals the blessing and extorts the birthright from Esau. But he suffers a great deal in the rest of his life. What happens to Jacob that can be seen as punishment for what he did? See especially Gen 29:25-26 and 32:14-22 and 37:29-35. See too 27:13, 31:32-33 and 35:16-17. (In general are the patriarchs perfect or morally flawed; are they semi-divine or human?)
(10) Follow the character development of Joseph and his relationship with his brothers. Note repeated themes in the story: dreams, clothes, ascents and descents (the pit, prisons) etc. What does Joseph learn in life? What is the role of God in the story?

The crucial question is the ordeal that Joseph puts his brothers through. Why does he do this? Is it pure revenge? Do the brothers (and father) deserve the ordeal? We will discuss this in class.

(11) How is God portrayed in Genesis? How does he relate to human beings? What does he want from them? What does he offer?

(12) EXERCISE on the FLOOD: To appreciate the uniqueness of the Bible it is necessary to understand it in its context. Much of biblical thought is a reaction to, and rejection of, values in the surrounding cultures. I have provided you a translation of the Babylonian story of the Flood. Compare this to the biblical account (Gen 6:5-9:17.) Make a list of all the similarities and all the differences, and think about the significance of the differences. For example, think about the reasons for the flood in both stories, who is saved, why, how etc. We will go over these in class.

(Note: in the Babylonian story, Utnapishtim, the survivor of the flood [=Noah] is relating his story to Gilgamesh, the hero of the epic.)

(13) EXERCISE on biblical style: The literary style of the Bible is brief, communicating only the essential details, lacking long and complex descriptions. Whatever information is provided should therefore be considered essential. This makes the job of the reader both easier (since there is less to read) and harder (since the reader must ask what the purpose of each detail is, and must also fill in the gaps in the text.) Carefully read Genesis 22:1-19 and pay close attention to what is narrated and what is not. For example, 22:4 suddenly begins “On the third day....” Why are we not told what happened up to that point? What would you like to know about this time? Then why does the narrator not tell us? Note all repetitions and consider why those phrases are repeated. We will read this section closely in class or in discussion sections.

Note: In your response papers on the Hebrew Scriptures (and later, on the Greek Scriptures), please try to avoid simplistic oppositions such as “The God of Wrath vs. the God of Love.” This idea actually has no basis in the texts. It is a product of the Christian-Jewish debate in later times over which is the true or better religion.
The Story of Gilgamesh

"The Story of Gilgamesh" celebrates the mighty deeds of Gilgamesh, Enkidu, Utnapishtim and others. Some characters in the story are human, some divine, some are both. For example, Gilgamesh, the king of Uruk, is one-third human and two-thirds divine. After his best friend—Enkidu—dies, the king sets out on a quest for immortality. The story tells of all the mighty deeds which Gilgamesh performs on his journey to Dilmun, where the once mortal Utnapishtim and his wife now live as immortals.

In 1872 archaeologists found a copy of "The Story of Gilgamesh" at Nineveh in Iraq. It was written in cuneiform on twelve baked clay tablets. On the eleventh tablet, Utnapishtim tells Gilgamesh how he and his wife became immortal by surviving a great flood in a giant cube-shaped barge. When The Divine Assembly discovered some mortals had survived the flood, they voted to change Utnapishtim and his wife from mortals into immortals in order not to violate their own decree that no mortals survive the flood!

In the Babylonian telling of the story, Atrahasis is the protagonist; in the Sumerian version, Ziusudra is the hero. Ancient Israel retells the Utnapishtim episode of "The Story of Gilgamesh" in "The Story of Noah and the Ark!" (Gen 6—8). The similarities and differences in these stories emphasize the similarities and differences between Israel and her ancient Near Eastern neighbors.

Tell me, Utnapishtim, how did you and your wife become immortal and join The Divine Assembly?

Well, Gilgameshi, let me tell you the story of a divine conspiracy, a secret plot which The Gods devised to exterminate humanity.
The Gods decided to flood the Earth. But Ea, God of Fresh Water, whispered to the reed walls of my house the plans of Enlil, Leader of The Divine Assembly.

Listen to me, Wall!

You Reed Mat, pay attention to me.

Pull down your house,

Build a barge.

Abandon all your possessions,

Save only your life!

Take specimens of every living thing on board. Make the ark as wide as it is long (Gen 6:11-21), with a roof like the dome of the heavens.

I told Ea that I would obey his orders, but then asked: "What shall I tell the people and the elders of the city?" He said: "Tell them: I have learned that Enlil has sentenced me to death, so I cannot stay here in Shuruppak, his city, but must move to the coast where Ea is lord."

First, I built the hulls of the ark one-hundred seventy-five feet high, and the decks one-hundred seventy-five feet wide. I constructed a top deck and six lower decks, separated into compartments by nine bulkheads. Then I caulked the ark with bitumen and asphalt thinned with oil (Gen 6:14-16). I led my workers as if it were festival time and the ark was completed in seven days. We had a difficult time launching the ark, but we finally managed to get it into the water using log rollers.

Then I loaded all my gold and silver, my entire family, domestic animals, wild beasts, and all kinds of craftspeople into the ark (Gen 7:2-4 + 7-9). Finally, at the precise moment set by Shamash, God of the Sun, I boarded the ark, battened down the hatch and turned command of the ark and its manifest over to Puzur-Amurri, the navigator (Gen 7:13-16).

At dawn…

The Horizons turned black with clouds,

Adad, God of Thunder, roared.

Shullat and Hanish—The Divine Messengers—

Flew over hill and plain.

Nergal, God of the Underworld, unlocked The Cosmic Dam.

Ninurta, Son of Enil, opened The Dikes.

The Gods strafed The Earth with lightning,

Adad turned The Day into Night.

Throughout the day…

The Winds attacked like soldiers,

The Waters drowned the mountains and the people (Gen 7:11-12 + 17-23).

Fig. 17. The second figure from the right is probably the god Anu holding the waters of life, which he passes in a vase to a naked Gilgamesh. The small animals and objects represent the constellations of stars.
One person could not see the other.
The Heavens could not see the Earth.
The Waters ran The Anunnaki into the Heavens,
Frightened The Gods like stray dogs against city walls.
Ishtar, Goddess of Love and War, shrieked,
Cried out like a woman in labor (Mic 4:9):
"How could I kill my own people,
Conspire with The Gods against those
to whom I gave birth?
Their bodies float on the sea,
Swell like schools of dead fish."
The Anunnaki sat humbled,
The Gods wept.

For six days and six nights the winds blew. On the seventh day, the raging storm subsided and the sea grew quiet. I felt the stillness and then realized that everyone else had drowned in the flood. I opened the hatch, and sunlight fell on my face. I bowed my face to the deck and wept with tears running down my cheeks (Gen 7:24—8:3).

The ark ran aground on Mount Nisir (Gen 8:4). It remained grounded for six days and then, on the seventh day I released a dove. It flew back and forth, but came back without finding a place to rest. Then I released a swallow, but it also returned without finding a place to rest. Finally, I released a raven. Because the flood waters had begun to subside, the raven fed, circled, cawed and flew away. Immediately, I released the rest of the creatures from the ark and they scattered to the four winds (Gen 8:5—17).

I prepared a sacrifice,
I poured a libation on the mountaintop.
I set out my sacred vessels.
I kindled a sacred fire of reed, cedar and myrtle.
The Gods smelled the aroma,
They swarmed like flies around the sacrifice (Gen 8:20).

When Ishtar arrived, she removed her necklace of lapis-lazuli and took this oath:

"By my necklace, I swear,
I shall never forget these days.

Let every god enjoy this meal,
But let Enlil eat no sacrifice mortals prepare.
Enlil thoughtlessly created a flood,
He drowned the mortals who feed The Gods!"
(Gen 8:21—22 + 9:12—17).

But, when Enlil did arrive and saw the ark, he was furious:

"Have some mortals escaped?
Every last one was to be destroyed!"

Consequently, Ninurta convened The Divine Assembly and indicted Ea for obstructing Enlil’s plan to flood the earth. Ea opened his defense by reiterating that he only wanted to control the human population with wild animals, famine, or plague, not destroy every last mortal with a flood. In closing, Ea testified:

"I did not tell Uttapishtim of Enlil’s plan,
I did not warn him of the impending doom.
Subpoena Uttapishtim,
Let the mortal speak.
He dreamed a dream alone,
He interpreted the divine conspiracy for himself."
Eventually, based on the decision of The Divine Assembly, Enil boarded the ark and told me and my wife to kneel on either side of him. He laid his hands on our heads and decreed:

"Utnapishtim and his wife have been mortal,
Henceforth they shall be immortal.
They shall live in a far away land,
They shall dwell at The Mouth of the Rivers!"
(Gen 9:1-17).
So, The Gods resettled us in this far away land,
They brought us to The Mouth of the Rivers.

So, this concludes the story of how we became immortal. Now, Gilgamesh, you have to tell my wife and me the story how you are going to become immortal and join The Divine Assembly.

*Fig. 19. A statue of Gilgamesh holding a lion cub (Louvre).*  
*Fig. 20. A nude statue of the goddess Ishtar from the early Babylonian period.*
Dr. Jeffrey Rubenstein

Conversations with the West: Enlightenment Track:

Questions on Exodus, Deuteronomy and Jonah

Note: Exodus contains three major themes: (1) Chapters 1-15: Slavery and Redemption from Egypt. (2) Ch. 16-24, 32-34: covenant at Mt. Sinai, revelation, sin of molten calf. (3) Ch. 25-31 (35-40): Building of the Tabernacle and consecration of the priests.


(2) What is the effect of all the miracles and plagues? Why are they necessary?

(3) Why do both Moses and the Israelites have to be “introduced” to God? (see e.g. Exod 3-4, 6:2-9.) Why are they all so reluctant? Note especially 6:3. What does this mean?

(4) What is the function and meaning of the Passover (Exod 12-13)?

(5) Follow Moses’s birth, education and development. What kind of a leader is he? What is his character?

(6) God appears in a burning bush to Moses, and then as a pillar of fire and cloud in the camp of the Israelites? Why these forms? (Cf. Exod 20:4)

(7) How does God reveal himself to the people at Mt Sinai? What is the people’s reaction? Why is God so worried they will “break through” (Exod 19:18-25)?

(8) In Ch. 19 the Israelites enter into a covenant with God (also 24:3-8). Chs. 20-24 record the content of the covenant. Why so many laws? What subjects are treated? What do the people have to do? What does God have to do?

(9) What is the attitude to the “stranger” or non-Israelite? What are the repercussions of not being part of the covenant? (see Exod 22:21-24, 23:9)

(10) Chs. 32-34 narrate the sin of the molten calf. What is the sin? What is God’s reaction? How does Moses speak to God (32:10-14, 32:30-34)? Why does God change his mind? (10a) God says he will destroy the people (32:9-10) but then Moses asks for forgiveness (32:11-14, 32:30-35, 34:9) and God forgives them (after some punishment—32:35) and re-affirms the covenant (34:10 ff.) What does this tell you about the covenantal relationship?

(11) What is the purpose of the Tabernacle? Why have a Tabernacle?
(12) EXERCISE on LAW: It is also important to understand biblical law in its context. I have provided some laws from other Ancient Near East cultures. Compare these laws to their biblical parallels. What is similar, what is different, and what is the meaning of those differences? We will go over these in class. The following verses should be compared with the laws:

- #195 — Exod 21:15
- #196-201 — Exod 21:23-27 (and see Leviticus 24:17-20)
- #209-214 — Exod 21:22-25
- Hittite law #1-2 — Exod 21:12
- #53 — Exod 21:35
- #54-55 — Exod 21:28-32
- #250-251 — Exod 21:28-32

Note: a “seignior” seems to be someone from the middle class.

Deuteronomy 29-30 (p.211)

(13) What happens if the Israelites keep the covenant? Violate the covenant?

(14) How do the Israelites “turn back” (Deut 30:2)? Can they always do this?

Jonah (p. 960)

(15) Note the use of irony in the Book of Jonah, e.g., who is more religious, Jonah or the sailors? Find other examples.

(16) Why does Jonah not want to go to Nineveh? What is your initial assumption, after reading chapter one, of why he does not want to go? What is your understanding at the end?

(17) What does the book teach about the role of the prophet? What is Jonah’s view of the prophet? Does everything a prophet say come true?

(18) IMPORTANT: Why does God care about the Ninevites? (Keep in mind that they are not Israelites.) Why does God forgive the Ninevites? Is this fair?

(19) Why is Jonah upset that God saved the Ninevites? What lesson does Jonah learn? What is the moral of the story?

(20) How is God depicted in the Book of Jonah? How does this compare to Genesis-Exodus?
they shall prove it against her and they shall cut off her breast because she made a contract for another son without the knowledge of his father and mother.

195: If a son has struck his father, they shall cut off his hand.

196: If a seignior has destroyed the eye of a member of the aristocracy, they shall destroy his eye.

197: If he has broken another seignior’s bone, they shall break his bone.

198: If he has destroyed the eye of a commoner or broken the bone of a commoner, he shall pay one mina of silver.

199: If he has destroyed the eye of a seignior’s slave or broken the bone of a seignior’s slave, he shall pay one-half his value.

200: If a seignior has knocked out a tooth of a seignior of his own rank, they shall knock out his tooth.

201: If he has knocked out a commoner’s tooth, he shall pay one-third mina of silver.

202: If a seignior struck another seignior’s daughter and has caused her to have a miscarriage, he shall pay ten shekels of silver for her fetus.

203: If that woman has died, they shall put his daughter to death.

204: If by a blow he has caused a commoner’s daughter to have a miscarriage, he shall pay five shekels of silver.

205: If that woman has died, he shall pay one-half mina of silver.

206: If he struck a seignior’s female slave and has caused her to have a miscarriage, he shall pay two shekels of silver.

207: If that female slave has died, he shall pay one-third mina of silver [44].

"Talion"
(From the Code of Hammurabi)

194: When a seignior gave his son to a nurse and that son has died in the care of the nurse, if the nurse has then made a contract for another son without the knowledge of his father and mother,
four persons, man or woman, and pledge his estate as security.

2: If anyone kills a male or a female slave in a quarrel, he has to make amends for him/her. He shall give two persons, man or woman, and pledge his estate as security [45].

"The Ox That Gores"
(From the Laws of Eshnunna)

53: If an ox gores another ox and causes its death, both ox owners shall divide (among themselves) the price of the live ox and also the equivalent of the dead ox.

54: If an ox is known to gore habitually and the authorities have brought the fact to the knowledge of its owner, but he does not have his ox dehorned, and it gores a man and causes his death, then the owner of the ox shall pay two-thirds of a mina of silver.

55: If it gores a slave and causes his death, he shall pay 15 shekels of silver [46].

(From the Code of Hammurabi)

250: If an ox, when it was walking along the street, gored a seignior to death, that case is not subject to claim.

251: If a seignior’s ox was a gorer and his city council made it known to him that it was a gorer, but he did not plaid its horns (or) tie up his ox, and that ox gored to death a member of the aristocracy, he shall give one-half mina of silver.

252: If it was a seignior’s slave, he shall give one-third mina of silver [47].

Egypt and America
Pharaoh’s country was cursed with plagues, and his hosts were lost in the Red Sea, for striving to retain a captive people who had already served them more than 400 years. May like disasters never befall us. ABRAHAM LINCOLN [48]
Dr. Jeffrey Rubenstein

Conversations with the West: Enlightenment Track

Questions on Sophocles, *Oedipus the King*

Note: “strophe” and “antistrophe” are not characters. They are two parts for the chorus. The words Phocias, Loxias and Pythia refer either to the God Apollo or to Delphi, the location of the oracle and a temple for Apollo.

Also, you are responsible for reading the entire play for the Feb 9th, even though we will spend two classes on the play.

**BESIDES THE RESPONSE PAPER, PLEASE HAND IN, ON A SEPARATE PAGE,** an answer, in about 25 words: What is Sophocles’s main point, i.e., the moral of the play?

(1) How would you describe Oedipus? Great? Heroic? Proud? Does he have faults? What are these?

(2) What are Oedipus’s feelings for the city? How does he see his role as leader? Is this appropriate?

(3) Who does Oedipus get angry at in the course of the play and why?

(4) Note the encounter between Oedipus and Teiresias. What does each symbolize? Who is really blind?

(5) What are the clues that lead to Oedipus’s discovery of who he is? How is each brought to light?

(6) How does the end make you feel? Emotionally how do you react to Oedipus’s end?

(7) Why Oedipus? Does he deserve his fate? If not, why does this happen? Could it happen to anyone? How do you know it won’t happen to you?

(8) Why does Oedipus blind himself? (See what he says.)

(9) Many people in the play are “rescuers” or “helpers.” In what way is Oedipus, Teiresias, Jocasta, the Corinthian messenger and the herdsman a rescuer or helper?

(10) What is the role of gods in the play?

(11) What is Jocasta’s attitude to oracles and prophecy? (See 707-724, 849-857, 945-47) Why does she say these things? The chorus reacts to this in ll. 863-910. What makes the chorus so upset? What is the real issue here?
Dr. Jeffrey Rubenstein

Conversations with the West: Enlightenment Track:

Questions on Sophocles, *Antigone*

(1) Why does Antigone want to bury the corpse, and why is Creon against it? Do either Antigone or Creon feel conflicted about this matter? If not, why not?

(2) What is Creon’s character? How would you describe him?

(3) What are Creon’s values? What makes men good / just and bad / unjust in his eyes? (see especially his first speech, 179ff, 198-215, 524-25)

(4) What is Creon’s attitude toward the city? What is his conception of his role and responsibility as leader? Note the ode of the chorus, 368-411. What is the chorus saying about human beings and about the city? (Note that the word “wonder” in line 368 has the sense of “awesome,” “terrible,” “dreadful.”)

(5) Does Antigone have any flaws? Or is she perfectly just, good and loving? (note the judgment of the chorus, 924-927).

(6) In 310-320 Creon makes some assertions about the gods. Is he right? In 495ff Antigone makes some assertions about the gods. Is she right?

(7) What eventually persuades Creon to yield? What does he mean in 1191-92: “It may be best, in the end of life, to have kept the old, accepted laws.” What did he mean by “established laws” in 525?

(8) What is the unwritten law mentioned in 499 and the “law” mentioned in 717?

(9) Note the use of “honor” / “glory” and “shame.” With what are these associated in the play, and by whom? See e.g. the different opinions in 545-552; 749; 766, 804 and elsewhere.

(10) Read the Chorus’s ode in 1002-1041. What is the chorus saying about human experience?

(11) Pay attention to images of ships and sailing. What do these images suggest?
Please jot down answers to these preliminary questions before you read the symposium, also to be handed in before class, separate from the response paper:

(a) Do you think you will be remembered 3 generations from now? 10 generations from now? 50 generations? Do you care about this or not?

(b) How can you ensure that you will be remembered? (hint: think of some people we do remember from long ago.)

(c) Does being remembered—leaving your mark on history—grant you some sort of immortality? importance?

NOTE: Through the vehicle of homosexual love (including love of younger men or boys), the Symposium investigates love as such and its relations to Plato’s vision of the Good.

(1) What is a Symposium?

(2) Take careful note of the first speech: Appolodorus tells his friend of a previous conversation he had with Glacon, in which he told Glacon of a conversation with Aristodemus, who reported the speeches at the symposium. Why does Plato introduce the events this way? What do we make of this distance, this indirectness?

(3) What is Phaedrus’s conception of love? What noble acts does love inspire?

(4) Pausanius distinguishes two kinds of love. What are they? Why is one higher than the other?

(5) What is Eryximachus’s view of love? Does this move you? (Remember, he is a doctor!) What seems to be missing from his view?

(6) What is Aristophanes’s “myth” of the creation of human beings and the origins of love? Is this meant to be taken seriously?

(7) For Agathon, how does love relate to the virtues?

(8) Socrates (through Diotima) offers a conception of love that differs from all the others. What is his fundamental criticism of the other views?
(9) For Socrates, what are the various things one may love? Why are they arranged in this hierarchy? Which is best? Why? (see next page)

(10) How does love ultimately relate to knowledge for Socrates? To what extent is love "physical" for him? What is the ultimate goal of love?

(11) As opposed to the other speeches, Alcibiades does not praise love but... what? Why?

(12) How does Alcibiades describe Socrates? Why does he fail in his "seduction" of Socrates?

(13) How does the "love" between Alcibiades and Socrates compare to the concept of love in Socrates's speech?

(14) Note the descriptions of Socrates's resistance to physical sufferings, p. 72 (ll. 220A-B). Why do these things not affect Socrates?

(15) Think about the last paragraph. What does it show?
The structure of Socrates's / Diotima's hierarchy (209 ff.)

(209)
Beautiful bodies-- children
Beautiful souls-- immortal children
   1. fame, glory, good name, e.g. Achilles
   2. poetry and crafts, e.g. Homer, inventors
   3. statecraft and law; e.g. Solon, Athens
“final and highest mystery...” (pay attention!!)

(210)
A) Beauty of bodies
   1. individual body (give birth to beautiful ideas)
   2. beauty of bodies in general

B) Beautiful souls (210C)
   individual soul (-- give birth to ideas as will make young men better)
   (activities and laws: e.g. Joe's poems, Solon's laws, courageous acts; 210C)

C) Beautiful knowledges (glory itself, poetry itself, law itself, courage itself) (210D)
   (give birth to many gloriously beautiful ideas...philosophy 210E)

D) Beauty itself (give birth to true virtue and almost become immortal 212B)
Dr. Jeffrey Rubenstein

Conversations with the West: Enlightenment Track:

Questions on Plato, Apology

(1) What do you think really made the Athenians dislike Socrates? Were they justified? What did Socrates think he was doing? (28a-29)

(2) Note that there are two sets of charges, earlier charges (19b-c, p. 23) and later charges (24b-c, p. 27). What do each consist of?
   (2a) The accusers charge that Socrates “does not believe in the gods in whom the city believes, but rather other spiritual things.” What does this show about the concept of the state, and about the relationship between state and religion? Why must everyone who lives in the city-state believe in its gods?

(3) Is this charge (not recognizing the gods) against Socrates correct? What “divinities” does Socrates believe in?

(4) What does Socrates see as his duty to the state? Why? Why did he never take public office?

(5) Socrates claims he never was a teacher and never taught anybody anything (33a-b). But we usually think of him as a teacher. What can he mean by this? Is it irony?

(6) Why is philosophy such a good thing according to Socrates?

(7) Why will Socrates not plead and beg for mercy?

(8) What counter-penalty does Socrates propose? Is he serious or is this irony? Is it obnoxious?

(9) Does Socrates defend himself in his speeches? Or is he trying to accomplish something else? What?

(10) Socrates says “the unexamined life is not worth living” (38a). What does he mean?

(11) Socrates believes he has a mission from god. What is this mission? How does it compare to Abraham’s “mission”?

(12) Was the state justified in punishing Socrates for what he did? Why or why not? Note that Socrates does not challenge the legitimacy of the impiety law.

(13) We generally feel sympathy for Socrates and outrage at his trial and punishment. But can we read the dialogue the opposite way? How might you argue that Socrates deserved what he got?
Questions on *Crito*

(1) Socrates argues that we must never do evil or injure others, even when they injure or harm us, as this makes us evil. Is this tenable? How would you respond?

(2) How would you argue against Socrates’s claim that by escaping punishment and thereby disobeying the laws, the state and its laws would be harmed. How would the state be harmed?

(3) Note that Socrates compares the state to a father and master. Is this a good analogy? What analogies would you use?

(4) Socrates then argues that he must obey the laws because he made an agreement with the laws to obey their commandments. To avoid punishment would break that agreement. When did he enter into this agreement? Is this a convincing argument? Would we apply it today?

(5) Socrates suggests that he should not think of his life and children first and of justice afterwards, but of justice first. What kind of hierarchy of values is this? To what kinds of people do you think it makes sense? Do you agree with these priorities?

(5a) Note that Socrates is arguing that one cannot weigh non-moral goods (his life, children) against moral claims (to act justly). Do you agree with this analysis or is it flawed?

(6) Does Socrates’s argument imply a rejection of civil disobedience? Would Socrates ever permit disobedience to the law? When?
Conversations with the West: Enlightenment Track:
Questions on Matthew

Outline:
1:1-4:16. Birth and Person of Jesus
4:17-16:20. Proclamation and Teaching of Jesus

(1) In general you should look for two trends throughout Matthew:
(a) Jesus as the fulfillment of scriptures and prophecies of the Hebrew Bible. One way Matthew argues that Jesus is the Messiah is by claiming that Jesus fulfils older prophecies. See, for example, 1:15, 1:18, 1:22-23, 21:1-5. Find other examples throughout the Gospel. (Be sure to refer to the helpful notes on the bottom of the page.)

(b) Symbolic connections to the Hebrew Bible. Matthew connects Jesus to the events, ideas and characters of the Hebrew Bible. For example, the first verse states that Jesus was the son of David and Abraham. Why mention these two figures? What does this tell you about Jesus? Another example: in 2:13ff. Jesus is taken to Egypt because King Herod wants to kill him. What figure in Exodus was born in Egypt and had to hide from a king who wanted to kill him? Contrast Matthew 2:19-20 and Exodus 3:19-20. See too the “transfiguration,” 17:1-13 (Why do Moses and Elijah appear?). Find other examples throughout the Gospel. (And see 12:38-42 on Jonah).

(2) Chs 1-2 give an account of Jesus’s birth. What miracles happen? (Recall the births of Isaac and Moses.)
(2a) What is the purpose of the genealogy in 1:1-18?

(3) Who is Jesus and what is he called? See 1:16, 1:21, 3:17, 4:5, 9:27, 11:27 and especially 17:5. Note the confusion in 16:13-20. Are these consistent?

(4) In 3:13-17 Jesus is baptized and receives the “Holy Spirit.” What is the importance of this?

(5) In chapter 4 Jesus is baptized and receives the “Holy Spirit.” What is the importance of this?

(5) In chapter 4 Jesus is tempted by the devil. Why these three temptations? What is the point of this scene? Why forty days (see above, question 1b)?

(6) What is the content of Jesus’s (or Matthew’s) teaching? What is his basic message? See e.g. 3:2, 4:17. Why repent? What is the kingdom of heaven? See 4:23. What is the “good news”? (The word “gospel” means “good news.”)
(6a). In Chapter 5-7 Jesus delivers the “sermon on the mount”? Who else went up a mountain and delivered teaching there? What are some themes in this sermon?

(7) What is God’s role in Matthew? What does he do?

(8) How does Jesus convince other people to follow him or that he is the Messiah? What miracles does he do? Why do they believe him? See e.g. 11:1-11; 4:23-25; 8:14-17.

(10) Jesus associates with marginal groups and classes, especially the poor and sick, but also lepers, sinners, women, tax-collecters / centurions, Samaritans and gentiles. Why? Who criticizes him for this contact and why?

(11) Jesus comes into conflicts with various Jewish groups and authorities (Pharisees, Sadducees, scribes, chief priests etc.) Who are these groups and what is the source of the conflict? What is Jesus’s criticism of these opponents, both in terms of their relationship to God and their attitude to other Jews? See e.g. 9:1-12; 12:1-14; 15:1-20, 19:1-9.

(12) In 11:25 and 13:10-15, 49-50 Jesus mentions that God has hidden things from some people or that some people are excluded. Who are these people and why? Why does Jesus tell the disciples not to tell others that he is the Messiah in 16:20?

(13) In 24 Jesus mentions “the first birth-pangs of the new age.” What is this age? He also predicts terrible things. To whom will these happen? Why? See too 10:34-39.

(14) In 26:3-4 we learn that the chief priests and other leaders want to destroy Jesus. Why? See 26:57-66.

(15) Death and Resurrection. In 16:21, 17:22-23, 20:17-19, 26:1-2 and elsewhere Jesus says that he must suffer, be rejected and be killed.” Why?

(16) What does Jesus mean by calling bread his “body” and wine his “blood” in 26:26-29?

(17) What is the meaning and importance of the resurrected Jesus in Ch. 28? How does his death save?

(18) Compare the life, trial and death of Socrates and Jesus. What is similar and what is different?

(19) FOR CLASS AND DISCUSSION SECTIONS:

(a) Jesus does much of his teaching in the form of parables. What is a parable? Why does he teach this way? Note what Jesus says in 13:10-15. Does the parable make clear the message or obscure the message or both? In 13:1-58 Jesus explains the parables, but elsewhere he does not. Why bother with a parable if he will give an explanation? Think especially about the parables in 20:1-16, 21:33-43, 22:1-14 and 24:42-51 (we will discuss these in class or sections). What is Jesus teaching in each parable? How do the teaching styles and goals of Jesus and Socrates compare?
Conversations with the West: Enlightenment Track

Questions on *Acts, Galatians*

1. Acts 1:1-11 tells of Jesus’s ascension. 1:11 says “This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way you saw him go into heaven.” When does the author think this will happen?

2. What happens in Acts 2:1-3:26? What gives the disciples these powers?

3. What other powers do disciples have throughout the book? Which of their acts parallels those of Jesus? (see e.g. 5:1-16, 21-23; 9:36-43 etc.)

4. Acts 6:1-6 mentions a conflict between Hebrews (“who spoke the language of the Jews”) and Hellenists (those who spoke Greek”) of the Christian community. What are these two factions?

5. What provokes the persecution against the Church in 8:1-3? What are the consequences?

6. Where do the disciples go to preach the message of Jesus in 8:4ff? (See map 14 in the back of the Bible.)

7. Acts 9:1ff tells of the conversion of Paul (Saul), one of the most important events in the history of Christianity. Why does he accept Jesus? What does Jesus tell him to do (see 9:15)? What is new about this?


10. Acts 11:26 reads “It was in Antioch that the disciples first got the name of Christians.” What were they before? What does this change imply?


Questions on Galatians (p. 1475)

Note: Paul is responding to a controversy in the Galatian Christian community. The issue is whether gentiles who wish to become Christians must first become Jews: must they be circumcised, and by extension, must they observe the Mosaic covenant, that is, Jewish law? The larger issue is: who is included in the new religion of Christianity? Is it open to gentiles? If so,
how? The “Letter to the Galatians” is addressed to the members of that community. (On the location of Galatia see Map 14 at the back.)

(1) Note the different style, content and conception of Jesus in Paul as opposed to Matthew. Why does Paul not speak so much about Jesus’s life?

(2) In Gal 1:3-5, what is the meaning of Jesus for Paul?

(3) In Gal 1:1, 1:16-17, 2:7-9, how does Paul define his role? How does this compare to Acts? Where does he get his authority? (Remember, Paul was not one of the twelve original apostles.)

(4) Paul gets upset at the idea that gentiles should be circumcised. See Gal 2:3ff, 5:2ff. Why is he upset at this?

(5) Paul refers to “Jewish Christians” as opposed to “gentile Christians” in 2:11ff. What does this mean? What distinguishes these groups in the eyes of James, Cephas etc.? Note that 2:11-14 tells that Cephas was eating with “gentile Christians” until messengers came from James and, apparently, warned him to stop. He withdrew “because he was afraid of the advocates of circumcision.” What was their reason to stop Cephas from eating with gentiles? What does Paul think about this? What is the “Gospel for Gentiles” as opposed to the “Gospel for Jews” (2:7)?

(6) What is the status of the law? See Gal 2:15-3:14. THIS IS A CRUCIAL SECTION OF THE LETTER. If not law, then what is the covenant based on? How does this compare with Jesus as presented by Matthew?

(6a) What is so bad about the law for Paul (And it is bad!!)? Why was it there in the first place? (see especially 3:19ff.)

(6b) What does Paul mean in 2:19, “I died to law,” and 5:18, “If you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law.”

(7) Paul presents many examples of “dualistic thinking.” For example, Law vs. Gospel; and Law vs. Spirit. What are some other dualisms?

(7a) On the other hand, Paul tries to break down boundaries. See 3:28: “There is no such thing as Jew and Greek, slave and free, male and female; for you are all one person in Christ Jesus.” What does this mean? See too 6:15: “Circumcision is nothing; uncircumcision is nothing; the only thing that counts is new creation!”

(8) What is the importance of Abraham in 3:6? How does Paul not think of Abraham?

(9) In Gal 4:21ff Paul presents an allegorical reading of a biblical passage. What is an allegory (look it up)? Why is this type of interpretation necessary? Why does Paul not just tell us what he thinks?

(10) If Christians don’t have to observe “the law” can they do whatever they please? See Gal 5:19-25. Why do they have to obey those commandments? Are these not part of “the Law” that Paul rejects?

(11) Note the passage in John 1:1-18. Read it out loud. How does it sound? Does the concept of the “word” remind you of Plato’s forms / ideas?
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Conversations with the West: Enlightenment Track:

Questions on Augustine, *Confessions*

Note: This is our longest text. Please read: 1-4, 6, 7:6-27, 8:5-12; 10:31-43. (Ideally you should try to read all of Book 1-9.)


(2) Who is Augustine addressing in the Confessions? For whom did he write the book?

(3) Augustine focuses a great deal on language in Books 1-4. How did Augustine use language (speech, rhetoric) in his youth? How does he think it should be used?

(4) Why did Augustine steal the pears, and why is this incident so important to him? (see 2:4ff.) Have you ever done something similar? Why?

(5) Augustine’s friendships are very important to him. But they also cause him great pain. What role do they play in his life, and what does he learn from them? (see especially 2:2, 4:7-9 etc.)

(6) Augustine’s relationship with his mother is a constant theme throughout the book. What is she like? What is her role? How does he remember her?

(7) Throughout his life Augustine was obsessed with the question of evil: where does evil come from? What are the answers he adopts during his life, and what is his final answer? (Note: Manichaeism was a religion that believed in two gods, a good god and an evil god, who were at war in the universe.)

(8) Augustine almost becomes a believer in 7:17-19, but suffers a setback. What kept him back? (Note what Augustine says about the “unchangeable” in 7:17. Who does this remind you of?) What then allowed him to believe? (see 8:12; note where he is when this happens.)

(9) What is Augustine’s general answer to why he found God and Christianity? (See 8:12). What implications does this have?

(10) What does Augustine believe about free will? (And keep in mind what kinds of things Augustine attributes to God.)

(11) What is the nature of the human being Augustine describes in Book 10? Socrates said “Know thyself.” Is this possible for Augustine? (See 10:37).

(12) What is Augustine’s attitude toward the body and sex? (see 2:2-3 etc.)