NEW YORK UNIVERSITY
CONVERSATIONS OF THE WEST
ANTIQUITY AND THE ENLIGHTENMENT

Fall 2004

V.55.-0403-008
Tuesday, Thursday 4:55 – 6:10
Room: Silver 206

Professor Bernard Manin
Preceptors: Azi Levo, Peter Northup

I. Reading list. The following books should be purchased. They are available at NYU Book Center.


II. Course description and goals:

We will study selections from the major texts that have shaped the Western tradition of thought, focusing primarily on social and political thought. Our first goal will be to understand the meaning and significance of these texts. We will also critically discuss a number of claims made in these works.

We will pursue two lines of investigation. First, we will explore the place of religion and that of reason in the Western tradition, going back to the Ancient roots of the religious perspective –the Judeo-Christian legacy--, and to the origins of the rationalist outlook –the Greek heritage. Second, we will explore how the key principles of Modern social and political thought both
arose from, and broke with the two legacies from the Antiquity. We will highlight the pivotal importance of the Wars of Religion in the formation of the Modern outlook. When necessary, we will pay particular attention to the historical context in which our materials were written.

**III. Course requirements:**

Classes will be devoted to lectures and discussions of the readings. Readings will consist of selections from the works listed above. For each lecture students should bring to class the book that is assigned for reading that day. Mandatory recitation sessions are also offered, and are an integral part of the course. Attendance to both lectures and recitation sessions is mandatory. Final grades will be based on: 1/ a mid-term in-class examination (25%), 2/ a final in class examination (30%), 3/ short writing assignments (2 to 3 pages long, double spaced), roughly one every other week over the course of the semester (25%, with special consideration of effort and improvement), 4/ attendance and participation (20%).

Students are reminded that plagiarism is strictly prohibited.

**IV. Schedule of lectures and reading assignments**

7 Sept.: **General introduction**

**Part 1: The Judeo-Christian source:**

Supremacy of the divine

9 Sept.: *The Hebrew Bible*, Genesis, chs. 1-17

14 Sept.: *The Hebrew Bible*, Exodus, chs. 1-5, 13-14, 20-24, 40


**Part 2: The Greek source:**

Reason, human agency, politics and democracy

23 Sept.: The Greek inventions in historical context

28 Sept.: Sophocles, *Antigone* (the play in its entirety)

30 Sept.: Plato, *Republic*

Reading: Plato, *Republic*, Bks. I, II, down to 368b
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<th>Date</th>
<th>Author, Title</th>
<th>Reading</th>
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<tr>
<td>19 Oct.</td>
<td>In class exam</td>
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Part III. Principles of Modern Political and Social Thought: individual rights, social contract, the place of the people in government

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<td>28 Oct.</td>
<td>The rise of a new conception of society and government in historical context: the wars of religion</td>
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25 Nov.: No classes

30 Nov.: Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*
Reading: Locke, *Second Treatise*, chs. 14, 19

2 Dec.: Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*
Reading: Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality* (in its entirety)

7 Dec.: Rousseau, *On the Social Contract*

9 Dec.: Rousseau, *On the Social Contract*
Reading: Rousseau, *Social Contract*, Bk.II, chs.1-3; Bk. III, ch. 15; Bk. IV, chs.1, 2

14 Dec.: Overview