Conversations of the West: Antiquity and Renaissance

V55.0402
Spring 2007
Time MW 2:00-3:15
Location SIL 408

Dr. Karl Appuhn
Office – KJCC 509
Office Hours – W 3:30-4:30
Email – appuhn@nyu.edu

Teaching Assistants: Jennifer Egloff and Michael Pexioto

Course Description: This course aims to familiarize students with a few key texts and ideas in western culture. The first half of the course will be devoted to an examination of ancient texts from the "Judeo-Christian" and Hellenic traditions (the two presumed pillars of the "western tradition"). In the second half of the course we will see how western Europeans rediscovered, reconsidered, and occasionally rejected these texts and ideas during the period we now refer to as the Renaissance (roughly the mid fourteenth to the mid seventeenth century). Because we will not have time to examine every aspect of these two cultures, we will spend most of the semester looking at a set of problems arising out of conflicting ideas about human nature and the related problem of how to create a just and orderly society in spite of humanity's flaws.

Course Requirements:

Reading: All required readings must be done in their entirety before your discussion section meets.

Writing: Midterm exam, final exam, and four short papers (4-5 pages or 1200-1500 words) N.B. The short papers are due in class and under no circumstances will extensions be granted or emailed papers accepted. Paper topics will be posted on the course Blackboard site at least a week in advance of the due date.

Participation: Attendance and participation in all recitation section assignments are required. N.B. Your performance in section counts more than any single assignment; therefore it is in your interests to prepare and participate.

Statistics: Grades break down as follows:
Exams 25% (12.5% each), Short Papers 50% (12.5% each), Section 25%

Electronic Devices Policy: Students may not use electronic devices (cellular telephones, electronic organizers, cameras, laptop computers, tape recorders etc.) of any kind in class. Hearing impaired students who wish to use a recording device must present a note from disability services. There will be no other exceptions.
Readings: (All books are available at the University Bookstore and on reserve at Bobst Library)
The Bible Revised Standard Version (Oxford)
Aeschylus, The Oresteia (Chicago)
Aristotle, The Politics (Hackett)
Augustine, City of God (Penguin)
Bondanella (ed.), The Portable Machiavelli (Viking)
Castiglione. The Book of the Courtier (Penguin)
Erasmus, Discourse on Free Will (Ungar)
Hillerbrand (ed.), The Protestant Reformation (Harper)
Homer, The Iliad (Chicago)
More, Utopia (Penguin)
Plato, Republic (Hackett)
Shakespeare, The Tempest (Folger)

Lecture and Reading Schedule:

Week One (Jan 15-19)
M – Martin Luther King Day Holiday
W – Introduction: Is there such a thing as western culture?

Week Two (Jan 22-26)
M – How Creation Stories Shape Our Worldview
   The Bible, Genesis (entire).
W – Divine Laws and Human Laws
   The Bible, Read in order:
   Exodus 1-35.
   Leviticus 14:1-15:33; II Kings 7:3-7:20.
   Judges; I Samuel 1-16; I Kings, 1-19.

Week Three (Jan 29-Feb 2)
M – Human Nature and War
   The Iliad, Books 1-12
W – Human Nature and Revenge
   The Iliad, Books 13-24

Week Four (Feb 5-9)
M – The Limits of Revenge
   Aeschylus, Agamemnon and The Eumenides
W – Reshaping Human Nature to Make a Perfect Society
   Republic, books 1-5.
Week Five (Feb 12-16) **(First Short Paper Due In Class on Monday)**
M – The Limits of Human Intellect
   *Republic*, books 6-10.
W – The Implications of Human Nature for Political Organization
   *The Politics*, Bk 1, Bk 2 chs. 1-5, Bk 7 ch.1, Bk 8 ch. 1.

Week Six (February 19-23)
M – **President's Day Holiday**
W – The Implications of Human Nature for Political Organization (cont.)

Week Seven (Feb 26-Mar 2)
M – From Mosaic Law to Christian Law
   *The Bible*, Luke, John, Romans, and Galatians
W – Why Human Societies Can Never Be Just
   *City of God*, Bk IV chs. 1-4, Bk VIII chs. 1-12, Bks XIV and XIX.

Week Eight (Mar 5-9) **(Second Short Paper Due In Class on Monday)**
M – Human Time and Divine Time
   *City of God*, Bk I chs. 18, 29-36, Bk V, Bk XII chs. 1-28, Bk XV,
   Bk XXII chs. 6, 24, 29-30.

W – **Midterm Examination**

**Spring Break**

Week Nine (Mar 19-23)
M – Introduction to the Renaissance
W – Wealth and the Moral Society
   “Panegyric to the City of Florence” (Blackboard)
   “On the Government of the City of Florence” (Blackboard)

Week Ten (Mar 26-30)
M – Self Interest and the Just Ruler.
   *The Prince* (entire) in *The Portable Machiavelli*
W – The Lessons of History for the Present
   *The Discourses* (all excerpts in *The Portable Machiavelli*)

Week Eleven (Apr 2-6) **(Third Short Paper Due In Class on Wednesday)**
M – Good Manners Make Good Societies
   *The Book of the Courtier*, Books 1 and 2
W – Freedom to Sin and Freedom from Sin
   “Commentary on St Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians.” (in Hillerbrand)
Week Twelve (Apr 9-13)
M – Faith and Human Law
   "On Governmental Authority." (in Hillerbrand ed.)
   "The Institutes of the Christian Religion." (in Hillerbrand ed.).
W – Free Will and Salvation
   Discourse on Free Will (entire).

Week Thirteen (Apr 16-20)
M – Revisiting Plato's Republic
   Utopia (entire)
W – Human Nature and Natural Humans
   The Tempest (entire)

Week Fourteen (Apr 23-27)
M – Human Nature and the State of Nature
   Leviathan, chs. 1-16
W – Human Nature and the Need for a Powerful State
   Leviathan, chs. 17-21, 29, 30, 32, 33, 46, 47.

Week Fifteen (Apr 30) (Fourth Short Paper Due In Class on Monday)
M – Conclusion and Review: Whose western tradition is it anyway?