

V55.0404008

CONVERSATIONS OF THE WEST: ANTIQUITY AND 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

TUESDAY, THURSDAY 12:30-1:45

SILVER 713

Professor Thomas Ertman

In the first half of this course, we explore the ancient foundations of traditional western culture by examining the political and social institutions, religious beliefs and value systems of the Israelites, Greeks, Romans and early Christians. We then turn to the radical challenges to this traditional culture, embodied above all in western Christianity, in the areas of the economy, politics, religion and morality that arose over the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, challenges that continue to reverberate to this day. At the heart of the course, then, will be "conversations" both among the Ancients (Israelites, Greeks and Romans) and between the Ancients and their 19<sup>th</sup> century defenders and challengers. At the same time, we will also engage in another kind of conversation, between ourselves in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and all of these figures from the western past, trying to determine which of their insights are still of relevance to us today.

Course requirements: The requirements of this course are: 1) Weekly attendance and participation in recitation sections (15% of grade). 2) Weekly one-page response papers (double-spaced, standard font and margins), to be handed in to your preceptor by 5pm each Thursday. The papers should **not** be summaries of the week's reading, but rather should identify an idea or argument in the reading that has **surprised, perplexed, or inspired you**. The papers will be graded check, check plus or check minus (25% of grade). 3) An in-class midterm on **March 20** (25% of grade). 4) A one hour fifty minute final exam on **May 3** from 12 to 1:50 (35% of grade).

Professor Ertman's office is in the Puck Building, 295 Lafayette St., 4<sup>th</sup> Floor. His telephone number is 998-8359 and his e-mail [Thomas.Ertman@nyu.edu](mailto:Thomas.Ertman@nyu.edu). His office hours are Wednesdays 2-3 and by appointment.

All books for the course have been ordered at the NYU Bookstore.

## SCHEDULE OF LECTURES AND READINGS

### I. ANCIENT ISRAEL I

#### Lecture Topics

1. (Jan. 16) Course Introduction
2. (Jan. 18) Who wrote the Hebrew Bible, when and why?

#### Required Reading

"Genesis," in: The New Oxford Annotated Bible, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., pp. 11-81.

### II. ANCIENT ISRAEL II

#### Lecture Topics

1. (Jan. 23) Monotheism, Law and Society among the Ancient Israelites
2. (Jan. 25) Monotheism, Law and Society among the Ancient Israelites

#### Required Reading

"Exodus," "Deuteronomy," in: The New Oxford Annotated Bible, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., pp. 84-141, 243-308.

### III. THE ANCIENT GREEKS I

#### Lecture Topics

1. (Jan. 30) Homer and Archaic Greece
2. (Feb. 1) Homer's "Iliad"

#### Required Reading

Homer, The Iliad, trans. Richmond Lattimore, Books 1, 9, 16, 18-20, 22-24 (= pp. 59-75, 198-217, 330-353, 375-417, 435-496).

### IV. THE ANCIENT GREEKS II

#### Lecture Topics

1. (Feb. 6) Society and Democracy in Periclean Athens
2. (Feb. 8) Thucydides' "The Peloponnesian War"

#### Required Reading

Thucydides, The Peloponnesian War, trans. Rex Warner/Penguin, pp. 35-168.

## V. THE ANCIENT GREEKS III

### Lecture Topics

1. (Feb. 13) Philosophy in Ancient Greece: Socrates and Plato
2. (Feb. 15) Plato's "Symposium"

### Required Reading

Plato, The Trial and Death of Socrates, complete; Symposium, trans. Waterfield, complete.

## VI. THE ROMANS AND THE COMING OF CHRISTIANITY I

### Lecture Topics

1. (Feb. 20) Republican and Imperial Rome
2. (Feb. 22) Virgil's "Aeneid"

### Required Reading

Virgil, The Aeneid, trans. Fitzgerald, Books 1-2, 7, 9-12 (=pp. 3-61, 195-225, 259-402).

## VII. THE ROMANS AND THE COMING OF CHRISTIANITY II

### Lecture Topics

1. (Feb. 27) Who wrote the Christian Bible, when and why?
2. (Mar. 1) The Emergence of Christianity

### Required Reading

"Luke," "The Acts of the Apostles," "Romans," in: The New Oxford Annotated Bible, pp. 95-145, 195-239, 243-266.

## VIII. THE ROMANS AND THE COMING OF CHRISTIANITY III

### Lecture Topics

1. (Mar. 6) The Spread and Consolidation of Christianity
2. (Mar. 8) Augustine's "Confessions"

### Required Reading

Saint Augustine, Confessions, trans. Chadwick, Books 1-6, 8-9 (=pp. 3-110, 133-178).

## IX. THE 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY: CHALLENGES TO THE ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL ORDER I

### Lecture Topics

1. (Mar. 20) **In-class Midterm**
2. (Mar. 22) The Theory of Economic Liberalism: Adam Smith's "Wealth of Nations"

### Required Reading

Adam Smith, The Wealth of Nations (Oxford edition), pp. 11-30, 227-301, 393, 401-407, 414-441.

## X. THE 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY: CHALLENGES TO THE ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL ORDER II

### Lecture Topics

1. (March 27) Liberal Capitalism and the Industrial Revolution
2. (March 29) Marx's Theory of Society and History

### Required Reading

Marx and Engels, Manifesto of the Communist Party and other documents (Bedford edition), pp. 63-110, 127-151.

## XI. THE 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY: CHALLENGES TO THE ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL ORDER III

### Lecture Topics

1. (April 3) Political Liberalization and Democratization
2. (April 5) J.S. Mill's "On Liberty"

### Required Reading

John Stuart Mill, On Liberty (Penguin edition), complete (=pp. 59-187).

## XII. THE 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY: CHALLENGES TO THE RELIGIOUS AND MORAL ORDER I

### Lecture Topics

1. (April 10) Science and Religion in the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century
2. (April 12) The Darwinian Challenge

### Required Reading

Charles Darwin, The Origin of Species (Oxford edition), pp. 3-139.

### XIII. THE 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY: CHALLENGES TO THE RELIGIOUS AND MORAL ORDER II

#### Lecture Topics

1. (April 17) Friedrich Nietzsche and the Ancient Greeks
2. (April 19) Nietzsche's Challenge to Christian Morality

#### Required Reading

Friedrich Nietzsche, On the Genealogy of Morals (Oxford edition), complete (=pp. 3-136).

### XIV. THE 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY: CHALLENGES TO THE RELIGIOUS AND MORAL ORDER III

#### Lecture Topics

1. (April 24) Freud's Theory of Mind
2. (April 26) Freud's Social Theory/Concluding Thoughts

#### Required Reading

Sigmund Freud, Civilizations and its Discontents (Norton edition), complete (=pp. 10-112)