CONVERSATIONS OF THE WEST:
ANTiquITY AND THE NINeteenth CENTury
V55.0404.019
Tuesday and Thursday, 3:30-4:45
SILVER 714

Teaching Staff:
Professor Paul Fleming (pf21@nyu.edu) / German Department / 19 University Place, Room 321
office hours: Wed 10:00-12:00

Preceptors: Michiel Bot (mtb250@nyu.edu) / Julia Goesser (jcg239@nyu.edu) / Daniel Lukes
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Course Description
This course creates a dialogue between Antiquity and the nineteenth century by
juxtaposing crucial texts from each epoch around such topics as origins, divine
abandonment, the definition the human, morality, and politics. In other words, the
material will not be read chronologically but according to shared themes, problems, and
conflicts. A central concern of this course is the paradigm shift that occurs between
Greek/Biblical Antiquity and the nineteenth century, in particular the move from
metaphysics to history, in which essences give way to contingencies. Readings include:
Genesis, Darwin The Origin of Species, Kierkegaard Fear and Trembling, The Book of
Lie,” Aristotle Nicomachean Ethics, Kant “On the Supposed Right to Lie,” Goethe The
Sufferings of Young Werther, Tocqueville Democracy in America, and Marx The
Communist Manifesto.

Readings and Written Requirements:
All texts must be read by the day they are assigned. Please bring books/reading materials
to class on assigned day. You are responsible for changes in the syllabus and extra
readings that are announced in class.
The written requirements for the course consist in two in-class examinations as well as
two 5-page papers, with topics and guidelines to be distributed in advance.

Required Books (available at NYU Bookstore):
The New Revised Oxford Bible, 3rd College ed.
Plato The Republic (Basic Books, trans. Bloom)
Darwin Darwin (Norton Press)
Nietzsche The Genealogy of Morals (Cambridge Press)
Kierkegaard Fear and Trembling (Princeton Press)
Dostoevsky The Grand Inquisitor (Hackett Press)
Sophocles Sophocles I (University of Chicago Press, trans. Grene)
Tocqueville Democracy in America (Signet Classic)
Goethe The Sufferings of Young Werther (Modern American Library)
Marx The Communist Manifesto (Norton Press)

Required Reader (marked as ® in the syllabus):
Photocopied Reader materials are available at Advanced Copy Center, 522 La Guardia
Place (btw. Bleecker and W. 3rd St.). You must purchase the reader.
Grading:
Grades will be comprised of the following components
* Each 5-page paper (x 2) is worth 20% (=40% total)
* Midterm examination is worth 15%
* Final examination is worth 20%
* Attendance and participation is worth 25%

Attendance:
Attendance at all lectures and recitations is mandatory and will be taken every meeting. You are allowed 3 absences (excused or unexcused) from the lectures and 1 (excused or unexcused) from recitations; subsequent absences will adversely affect your grade. For all meetings, please arrive on time; an attendance roster will be circulated shortly after the beginning of each class. If you do not arrive at class in time to sign the attendance sheet, you will be recorded as absent. Additionally, if you are seen to leave the lecture room after signing the attendance roster but before the lecture is over, your name will be struck from the attendance roster for that day. Please speak with your preceptor before class begins if you need to dismiss yourself before the end of lecture. Each lecture will offer the possibility for questions and discussion.
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Professor Paul Fleming
® = in reader of photocopies

Tuesday, January 16
Introduction

Origins
Thursday, January 18
Schleiermacher “Hermeneutics: Outline of the 1819 Lectures” ®
Genesis 1-11

Tuesday, January 23
Darwin Origin of Species pp. 106-127; 133-147; 158-74

Thursday, January 25
Darwin Descent of Man pp. 213-222; 243-54
National Academy of Sciences “Evolution and the Nature of Science” (in Darwin, pp. 289-300)

Being Called
Tuesday, January 30
Genesis 12-25, and Kierkegaard, Fear and Trembling (pp. 5-67)

Thursday, February 1
Kierkegaard, Fear and Trembling (pp. 68-123)

Divine Abandonment
Tuesday, February 6 [First 5 page paper due]
The Book of Job

Thursday, February 8
Entire Gospel of Mark, and the Passion/Death Scenes of Christ from three other Gospels
(Matthew 26-28; Luke 22-24; John 13-21)

Tuesday, February 13
Jean Paul “Speech of the Dead Christ” ® / Dostoevsky “The Grand Inquisitor” (pp. 1-17)

Thursday, February 15
Dostoevsky “The Grand Inquisitor” (pp. 19-37)

Truth
Tuesday, February 20
Plato “The Allegory of the Cave” (in the Republic, pp. 152-200 = 472b-521b)

Thursday, February 22
Nietzsche “On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense” ®

Tuesday, February 27
In-Class Mid Term Exam
Morals

Thursday, March 1
Teachings from the four Gospels

Tuesday, March 6
Aristotle Nicomachean Ethics, Book II®

Thursday, March 8
Kant “On the Supposed Right to Lie” ®

=== SPRING BREAK ===

Tuesday, March 20
Nietzsche Genealogy of Morals (Preface, parts I and II)

Thursday, March 22
Nietzsche Genealogy of Morals (Part III)

The Human and the Tragic

Tuesday, March 27
Sophocles Oedipus Rex

Thursday, March 29
Goethe The Sufferings of Young Werther (pp. 1-110)

Tuesday, April 3
Goethe The Sufferings of Young Werther (pp. 111-49)

Forms of Politics

Thursday, April 5 [Second 5 page paper due]
Plato Republic (pp. 44-53; 91-125 = 368a-376c; 412a-445e)

Tuesday, April 10
Plato Republic (Books VIII-IX = pp. 221-275 = 543a-592b)

Thursday, April 12
Tocqueville Democracy in America (part I, sect. 11-13 = pp. 100-128; part II, book 1,
sect 16-25 = pp. 143-189)

Tuesday, April 17
Tocqueville Democracy in America (part II, book 2, sect. 26-27, 32, 34, 37-38, 42, 46, 56

Thursday, April 19
Marx “Communist Manifesto”

Tuesday, April 24
Semester Summary / Review

Thursday, April 26
IN-CLASS FINAL EXAM