

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 Job*, Dostoevsky "The Grand Inquisitor," Plato *The Republic*, Nietzsche "On Truth and 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. Blecker 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

Mark 3:31-4:34 / Matthew 12:46-13:23 / Luke 8: 4-21

Mark 10:13-52/ Matthew 19:13-30, 20:17-34 / Luke 18:15-43, 22:24-27

Matthew 5:38-48 / Luke 6:27-36

Matthew 22:1-14 / Luke 14: 16-24

Matthew 25: 14-30 / Luke 19: 12-27

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 = pp. 189-94, 209-13, 216-21, 226-33, 246-48, 255-60, 301-14)

Thursday, April 19

Marx "Communist Manifesto"

Tuesday, April 24

Semester Summary / Review

Thursday, April 26

IN-CLASS FINAL EXAM