

Conversations of the West: Topics in Antiquity and Modernity - Conflict and Resistance

SPRING 2007 V55.0400

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Lectures

Tuesday and Thursday 11:00am - 12:15pm Silver 206

Recitations

Friday	09:30am - 10:45am	48 Cooper Square Room 114
Friday	11:00am - 12:15pm	194 Mercer Street Room 201
Monday	08:00am - 09:15am	48 Cooper Square Room
Monday	09:30am - 10:45am	Silver Room 710

This class will examine the themes of conflict and resistance in Western literature, focusing primarily on two important texts, Joseph Heller's *Catch-22* and Homer's *Iliad*. Heller cast Yossarian as a modern day Achilles (he is even named as such at one point in the novel), not a coward, nor even anti-war, just reluctant to waste his life in a cause he no longer believes in—a hero or anti-hero trapped by circumstance. The 1970 release of Mike Nichols' film version and America's involvement in Vietnam brought a new notoriety to the text. Today seems a good time to re-examine the importance of *Catch-22*, in many ways an American *Iliad*. Homer's *Iliad* forms the base of Western epic, lyric poetry, and drama. By viewing this seminal text through the prism of a modern popular work like *Catch-22*, we better see the power, savage beauty, vitality, and tragedy of this story of the consequences of rage run amok. Achilles faces his own *Catch-22* as he broods alone in his tent after being publicly slighted by Agamemnon. He has nowhere to go, he cannot desert, he will not fight, and his protest has disastrous results. Linking these two great works, we look at other important texts dealing with the themes of conflict and resistance. Readings: Homer's *Iliad*; Exodus, Luke; Hesiod's *Theogony*; Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound*; Sophocles' *Philoctetes*; Aristophanes' *Birds*; selections from Plato, Thucydides, Plutarch's *Lives*, Augustine's *City of God*; Chaucer's "The Knight's Tale"; Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*; Byron's "Prometheus"; Tennyson's "Charge of the Light Brigade"; Kipling's *The Man Who Would be King*; selections 20th century "War Poets"; Heller's *Catch-22*.

Requirements

You are required to read all the texts listed below, to attend all lectures and recitation sessions, be on time for all sessions and to be an active and supportive participant. All

homework assignments must be turned in on time. Papers will not be accepted late for any reason whatsoever.

There will be a required class trip to see *Prometheus Bound* at Classic Stage Company. This will cost approx \$15 and be on Wednesday 21st March.

Grading:

- Two Papers: 2500 word each (20%, 20%)
- Midterm Exam: 20 paragraph answers (20%)
- Final Exam: 20 paragraph answers (30%)
- Participation in precept and attendance (10%)

Class Etiquette

1. Please refrain from talking when your professor or a classmate is addressing the class or when the class is listening to audio/video course materials.
2. Please do not eat in class. Drinks are fine.
3. Please clean up any mess you make during class.
4. Please treat your professor and classmates with respect
5. Please sleep in your own bed at home and not in class.
6. Please bring an open and inquiring mind to class and be prepared to discuss views that may differ from yours, intelligently and with respect.
7. Please do not leave class or start packing up your belongings until your professor has informed you that class has finished.
8. Please treat any visitors to class as you would your professor.
9. Please do not be late for class.
10. Please turn off cell phones and pagers and close laptops.
11. Please do not use the internet, instant messages, skype, MP3 players or any other electronic device that will impair your full participation on class.

Mitigating Circumstances

If you are aware of any conditions or circumstances that will affect your course work in any way (such as learning disabilities, medical problems etc.) it is your responsibility to make your professor fully aware of them at the earliest opportunity either in person after class, by scheduling an appointment, via telephone, e-mail or in writing. If a student fails to make due notification the professor will be unable to take any such circumstances into consideration when setting work or calculating grades.

Please get to know University regulations on academic integrity; read in particular <http://www.nyu.edu/cas/map/guidelines/academicintegrity.html>.

Bibliography

These books are required and are available at the NYU bookstore.

Homer – *The Iliad*, Translated by Stanley Lombardo. Hackett Publishing
Augustine – *City of God*.

- New Oxford Annotated Bible
 - ✓ Shakespeare *Coriolanus*, Cambridge University Press
 - ✓ Joseph Heller *Catch-22*
 - ✓ Aristophanes Vol. 1. Translated by Peter Meineck. Hackett Publishing.
- Plato, *The Trial and Death of Socrates*, Hackett Publishing.
- Sophocles' *The Theban Plays*, Translated by Peter Meineck and Paul Woodruff, Hackett Publishing
 - ✓ *Prometheus Bound*, translated by James Kerr (On Order)

Other Required Books (order from any bookstore or online)

Chris Hedges, *War is A Force That Gives Us Meaning*.

Web or book resources.

Hesiod *Theogony* Stanley Lombardo translation (Hackett) or
<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/cgi-bin/ptext?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0130>
<http://www.sacred-texts.com/cla/hesiod/theogony.htm>

Thucydides *The Peloponnesian War* or
<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/cgi-bin/ptext?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0200&query=book%3D%231>

Plutarch *Life of Coriolanus*
<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/cgi-bin/ptext?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.03.0078&query=head%3D%231>

Chaucer, 'The Knight's Tale' in *The Canterbury Tales*
<http://classiclit.about.com/library/bl-etexts/gchaucer/bl-gchau-can-kni.htm>
<http://www.luminarium.org/medlit/knight.htm>

Lord Byron, *Prometheus*
<http://readytogoebbooks.com/LB-Pro47.htm>

Alfred Lord Tennyson, *The Charge of the Light Brigade*
<http://poetry.eserver.org/light-brigade.html>

Wilfred Owen, *Dulce et Decorum est*.
<http://www.english.emory.edu/LostPoets/Dulce.html>

Rudyard Kipling, *The Man Who Would Be King*
<http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/8147>