**Conversations of the West: Antiquity and the Enlightenment**

Professor Joy Connolly  
Department of Classics  
Lecture Tuesday/Thursday 3.30-4.45  
Preceptors: Catherine Bender, Michiel Bot, Danielle LaLonde  
V55.0403 (sections 002-007)

γνῶθι σαυτόν, “know yourself,” was the phrase inscribed over the entrance to the great temple of Apollo at Delphi. Roman thinkers called the search for the good life *cura sui*, the “cultivation of the self.” Our concerns in this course are how the ancient Hebrews, Greeks, and Romans came to know themselves and those around them—as male and female, naturally isolated or social, civilized or barbarian, virtuous or vicious, rational or passionate, slaves to fate or masters of their destinies—and how Enlightenment thinkers of the 18th century reworked ancient thought about the self. Our texts explore the challenge of self-understanding in individual and communal contexts; what we strive for in life, and why; and where literature, art, and religious belief fit into the project of living the well-lived life.

We will focus on four questions. 1) How do different genres—drama, historical prose, philosophical dialogue, epic poetry, treatise, and memoir—present practical ideas about the truly well-lived life? 2) How is self-knowledge affected by the communities humans create (political regime, nation, religion, family, race, ethnicity, class, gender)? 3) Must we understand the past and its traditions to live well in the present? 4) How do these texts represent the human condition and its capacity to change?

In lecture, assigned texts will be discussed alongside selected works of art and music. Papers will encourage a mix of creative and analytical thinking. Attendance at lecture and precept is required. In-lecture exercises will be held most weeks.

**Advice, contact information, and bonuses**

Three things will help you stay on top of the course. 1) Read the assigned texts before lecture. 2) Stay tuned at the very end of lecture, where I’ll wrap up with advice on what to focus on for our next meeting. 2) Talk, listen, and think in recitation.

*Office hours* for Professor Connolly: Wednesdays 10-12 AM in the Department of Classics, on the fifth floor of Silver. If these hours are inconvenient, e-mail to make an appointment. Teaching assistants will hold independent office hours.

*Contact* for Prof. Connolly: 212 992-9517 (2-9517 from an NYU phone) or joyc@nyu.edu

The course has a Blackboard site where important announcements, images shown in lecture, and handouts will be posted.
Schedule of lectures and readings

Sept 4: Introduction

I. Drama: identity and madness

Sept 6: Euripides, *Bacchae* (read whole play). **No recitations** Fri 9/6 and Mon 9/10
Sept 11: *Bacchae* (revisit selected passages)
Sept 13: Staging Greek tragedy (read selections handed out in Tuesday lecture) **First recitations meet** Fri 9/14 and Mon 9/17

II. Philosophy, love, and eternal life

Sept 18: Plato, *Phaedo* (read whole dialogue): guest lecture
Sept 25: *Symposium*, pp. 45-75
Sept 27: Responding to Plato

III. History: reason and rhetoric in democratic Athens

Oct 2: Thucydides, *History*, pp. 142-154 (Mytilenian debate), 294-301 (Melian debate), 310-321 (Sicilian debate), 404-407 (the end of the Sicilian expedition), 442-446 (temporary downfall of Athenian democracy)
Oct 4: Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, pp. 3-15 (introduction), 32-43 (debate at Sparta), 67-71 (first speech of Perikles), 90-108 (Perikles’ funeral oration, the plague, Perikles’ last speech)

IV. The ethics of epic

Oct 11: *Aeneid* 3-4
Oct 16: *Aeneid* 6-7, 8.822-992, 9.240-end, 10.1-160 and 967-1275, 12

V. Self-knowledge and religious conversion

Oct 18: Augustine, *Confessions* Book 1; *Genesis* and *Exodus* (excerpts) **Paper due**
Oct 25: *Confessions* Books 6-8
VI. Inventing society from the ground up

Oct 30:  * midterm examination *

Nov 1:  Rousseau, *Social Contract* Book 1 (pp. 45-62)

Nov 6:  *Social Contract* Book 2

Nov 8:  *Social Contract* Book 4

VII. The universalist ideal

Nov 13:  Kant, “What is Enlightenment?”

Nov 15:  Kant, “Idea for a Universal History”

Nov 20:  Mozart, *Le nozze di Figaro*

Nov. 22:  THANKSGIVING

VIII. The Enlightenment beyond its own origins

Nov 27:  Equiano, *Interesting Narrative*

Nov 29:  *Interesting Narrative*


Dec 6:  *Vindication*, pp. 245-278, 307-328  

Dec 11:  Wrap-up (final take-home exam handed out; no precepts this week)

*Paper due*

**Final examination:** take-home essays due by e-mail to your TA at 4 PM Thursday Dec 20
Requirements, grading, general policies

Two papers: 7-8 pages or the equivalent (first paper 20%, second paper 25%)

Two exams: midterm (15%, IDs and short essays); and final (20%, IDs, short essays, long essay; this is a take-home exam to be submitted via e-mail)

Participation: recitation attendance and contributions, in-lecture exercises, response: 20%

In-lecture exercises range from 5 minute quiz-type affairs to responses to the reading and will be graded accordingly. Any exercise demanding a bit of extra study (i.e. maps or timelines) will be announced ahead of time. Your lowest grade will be dropped. Missed exercises count as zeroes.

Recitation (also known as “precept”) is an integral element of the course and attendance is required. You are allowed one unexcused absence; any further absences will adversely affect your grade.

No extensions will be granted on or after the day papers are due. Extensions will be granted only in cases of documentable emergency.

You must complete all components of the course: that is, you may not opt out of any papers or exams, or make a practice of skipping recitation; if you do so, you risk failing the course.

Familiarize yourself with University regulations on academic integrity.

If you find yourself struggling with any aspect of the course, consult Professor Connolly and/or your preceptor early and often. We set aside office hours to answer your questions, and you’re encouraged to use them.

Readings (available at the Bookstore): please secure these editions/translations

Thucydides: History of the Peloponnesian War. Trans. Steven Lattimore.
Mary Wollstonecraft: A Vindication of the Rights of Woman.

Important images shown in lecture will be posted later on Blackboard. Readings in the Bible, Kant, and Mozart will be handed out in lecture and posted on Blackboard.