CONVERSATIONS OF THE WEST:
ANTIQUITY AND THE ENLIGHTENMENT

Fall Semester 2007
Cantor Film Center 101

Professor Don Garrett
Email: Don.Garrett@nyu.edu
Phone: 212-998-3562

Preceptor: John Morrison
Email: jrm377@nyu.edu
Phone: 347-881-6672

Preceptor: Jed Lewinsohn
Email: jedlew@gmail.com
Phone: 201-207-9409

Preceptor: Jonathan Cottrell
Email: jdc372@nyu.edu
Phone: 347-267-2154

Lecture Section 010: T and Th 9:30-10:45
Office Hours: T 11:00-12:00, Th 1:30-3:30
Office: 5 Washington Place, Room 604

Recitation Sections 011-012: F 9:30, 11:00 AM
Office Hours: T 11:00-12:00, F 12:30-1:30
Office: 5 Washington Place, Room 413

Recitation Sections 013-014: M 8:00, 9:30 AM
Office Hours: M 11:00-12:00, T 11:00-12:00:
Office: 5 Washington Place, Room TBA

Recitation Sections 015-016: M 3:30, 4:55 PM
Office Hours: Th 11:00-12:00, Th 2:00-3:00
Office: 5 Washington Place, Room 613

Preceptor: John Morrison
Email: jrm377@nyu.edu
Phone: 347-881-6672

Preceptor: Jed Lewinsohn
Email: jedlew@gmail.com
Phone: 201-207-9409

Preceptor: Jonathan Cottrell
Email: jdc372@nyu.edu
Phone: 347-267-2154

Course Topic
How should human beings live, individually and collectively? Where should they look for
guidance in deciding how to live: to tradition, to religion, to the state, to reason, to sentiment?
These are among the most basic questions that every person must answer. Many of the
deepest, most systematic, and most influential attempts to address these and related questions
were made by Mediterranean peoples (including the Hebrews, Greeks, and early Christians)
of Antiquity (approximately 3000 BCE to 500 CE), and by Europeans of the Enlightenment
(approximately 1600-1800 CE). This course will investigate some of their answers as they are
expressed in a set of closely interrelated works of scripture, drama, dialogue, fiction,
confessional writing, and philosophical argumentation from Antiquity and the Enlightenment.

Course Goals
The course is designed to offer students an opportunity to examine, compare, appreciate, and
interrogate some of the most important and influential ideas about how human beings should
live—ideas from two distinct but critical historical periods that together account for a
significant portion of the shared intellectual heritage of the West. The course should thus
enable students to assess and improve their own beliefs about how to live while at the same
time expanding and deepening their understanding of the historical development and
contemporary application of leading ideas in ethics, religion, psychology, and political theory.
Throughout the course, students should hone the critical skills that will make them more
careful readers, clearer writers, and more thoughtful interlocutors.

Course Website
The course Blackboard site is available via the Academics tab of NYU Home at
<http://home.nyu.edu>. It contains the syllabus, contact information, announcements, lecture
outlines, links to online readings, paper assignments, examination study questions, the Digital
Dropbox for submitting papers, an individual Gradebook listing, and other useful information.
Course Requirements

Students will have multiple opportunities to exercise their skills, demonstrate their understanding, and receive timely feedback that will enable them to improve the quality of their work. The course requirements consist of recitation exercises, class discussion, two analytical papers, a midterm examination, and a final examination.

Recitation Exercises: Typically, a recitation will begin with a fifteen-minute written exercise of some kind, such as a short quiz on the week’s reading and/or a short essay on a single discussion question posed by the preceptor.

Class Discussion: Students are expected to contribute to class discussion in their own recitation section and, as opportunities arise, in the main lecture section as well.

Analytical Papers: Two analytical papers will be assigned during the course of the semester, each on a topic to be selected from a list that will be provided at least two weeks in advance. The first paper, approximately 1500 words (4-5 double-spaced pages) in length, will be due on Monday, October 1. The second paper, approximately 2000 words (6-7 double-spaced pages) in length, will be due on Monday, November 26. Papers must be submitted via the Digital Dropbox in Blackboard by noon of the due date.

Midterm Examination: A midterm examination, consisting of three essay questions, will be held in class on Tuesday, October 23. A list of study questions will be distributed one week in advance, on Tuesday, October 16.

Final Examination: A final examination, consisting of five essay questions, will be held from 8:00 AM to 9:50 AM on Thursday, December 20. A list of study questions will be distributed at the last regular class meeting, on Tuesday, December 11.

Grading

A grade of ‘A’ indicates original thought and comprehensive understanding. A grade of ‘B’ indicates careful thought and sound understanding. A grade of ‘C’ indicates some thought and adequate understanding. A grade of ‘D’ indicates minimal thought and partially deficient understanding. A grade of ‘F’ is failing.

Conscientious attendance, reading, discussion, review, and writing are essential. Those who do all of these things should expect to be successful in the course; those who do not should expect to do poorly. Course grades will be calculated as follows:

- Recitation exercises (ten best only; others will be dropped) 15%
- Class discussion 10%
- First analytical paper 15%
- Midterm examination 15%
- Second analytical paper 20%
- Final examination 25%

Students experiencing difficulties in the course should consult with the course instructor or their recitation preceptor as soon as the difficulties become apparent.

Academic Integrity

Plagiarism is the use without attribution of either the words or the ideas of another person and violates the principles of academic integrity. For details, see the MAP statement on academic integrity at [http://www.nyu.edu/cas/map/about/academicintegrity](http://www.nyu.edu/cas/map/about/academicintegrity). Any instance of plagiarism will result in a failing grade for the course and a written report to the College Dean.
Required Texts


Sophocles, *Oedipus Tyrannus*, edited and translated by P. Meineck and P. Woodruff (Hackett)

Sophocles, *Antigone*, edited and translated by P. Woodruff (Hackett)

Plato, *The Republic*, edited and translated by C.D.C. Reeve (Hackett)

Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, edited and translated by T. Irwin (Hackett)

Augustine, *Confessions*, edited and translated by E.J. Sheed (Hackett)

Benedict (Baruch) de Spinoza, *Theological-Political Treatise*, edited and translated by S. Shirley (Hackett)


David Hume, *An Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals*, edited by J.B. Schneewind (Hackett)

David Hume, *Dialogues concerning Natural Religion*, edited by R. H. Popkin (Hackett)


Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, edited by M. Brody (Penguin)


Schedule of Topics and Required Primary Reading [with page numbers]

Week 1: Introduction and Hebrew Scriptures
- September 4 (T): Introduction to Conversations of the West
- September 6 (H): *Book of Genesis* [11-61]

Week 2: Hebrew Scriptures
- September 11 (T): *Book of Exodus* [62-104] and *Amos* [948-957]
- September 13 (H): *Book of Job* [510-550] and *Book of Ecclesiastes* [684-692]

Week 3: Sophocles
- September 18 (T): *Oedipus Tyrannus* [1-63]
- September 20 (H): *Antigone* [1-58]

Week 4: Plato
- September 25 (T): *The Republic* Books I-II [1-65]
- September 27 (H): *The Republic* Books IV [103-135] and IX [270-296]

Week 5: Aristotle
- October 1 (M): FIRST PAPER DUE
- October 2 (T): *Nicomachean Ethics* Books I-III [1-49]

Week 6: Christian Scriptures
- October 9 (T): *Gospel of Luke* [1327-1364]
- October 11 (H): *Acts of the Apostles* and *The Letter of Paul to the Romans* [1394-1447]
Week 7: Augustine


Week 8: Spinoza
October 23 (T): MIDTERM EXAMINATION

October 25 (H): *Theological-Political Treatise* Chapters 1 [1-20], 4-5 [48-70], 7 [86-104], 11 [138-144], 13-15 [153-172], and 18 [205-211]

Week 9: Locke

Week 10: Rousseau
November 6 (T): *Emile*, Preface, beginning of Book I [1-11], and Book IV: “The Creed of a Savoyard Priest” only [274-332]

November 8 (H): *Emile*, Book V: “Sophy, or Woman” only [385-426]; and *Discourse on Inequality* Part II [online via Blackboard]

Week 11: Hume

November 15 (H): *An Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals*, Sections VI-IX, Appendices I-IV, and “A Dialogue” [51-119]

Week 12: Hume
November 20 (T): *Dialogues concerning Natural Religion* [1-89]

November 22 (H): THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY

NO RECITATIONS ON NOVEMBER 23 (F) OR NOVEMBER 26 (M)

Week 13: Kant
November 26 (M): SECOND PAPER DUE

November 27 (T): *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*, Preface and Sections I-II [1-48]

November 29 (H): *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*, Section III, Supplement [49-67]

Week 14: Wollstonecraft

December 6 (H): *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, Chapter 5 section 1 [99-117], Chapter 9 [175-186], and Chapter 13 [223-242]

Week 15: Goethe
December 11 (T): *Faust*, Part I and Act V of Part II [64-503]

NO RECITATIONS ON DECEMBER 14 (F) OR 17 (M)

Examination Week
December 20 (H): FINAL EXAMINATION, 8:00-9:50 AM