

TEXTS AND IDEAS: ANTIQUITY AND THE 19TH CENTURY

Professor David Levene
Department of Classics

Lectures: Tuesdays and Thursdays 2.00-3.15, Cantor Film Center Room 101

Recitations: Fridays Section 002: 8:00-9:15, 12 Waverly Place, L113

Section 003: 9:30-10:45, 25 West 4th, C-5

Section 004: 9:30-10:45, Silver 412

Section 005: 11:00-12:15, Silver 506

Section 006: 12:30-1:45, Silver 504

Preceptors: Youna Kwak, Ari Zatlin.

Every society places demands on individuals: it could not do otherwise and still remain a society. But what happens when those demands are inconsistent? Can – or should – an individual determine the right course of action by reason alone? Or should one simply obey – but then, whom should one obey? What happens when people’s moral judgements differ from the expectations of those around them? How can one maintain a society in the face of such conflicts? From the first moments of Western literature those questions are explored; they became all the more insistent in the unprecedented political, social, intellectual, and economic upheavals of the 19th century. This will form the centre of our study.

We will be examining these questions through a variety of texts from both of our periods, focusing on three themes in particular. First, what are the primary conflicts that our texts identify – conflicts within a single individual torn in two directions, or between different individuals, or between a single person and society more broadly? Second, what resolutions to those conflicts are proposed or assumed within the works – and are those resolutions unproblematic, or might they lead to further conflicts of their own? Third, how do these texts conceive of the role of society: are there shared values that might allow it to cohere and survive, and if so, how can those values be adopted or maintained?

Study Advice

The first rule of this, as of every other course, is to READ the prescribed texts, and to do so in time for the lectures in which they will be discussed. You will get little out of the lectures, and even less out of the recitations, if you come to them unprepared. The second rule is that you should be prepared to talk, listen, and think, especially in the recitations, but also in the lectures – there will be plenty of opportunities both to ask and answer questions.

Readings

Books originally in foreign languages should be read in the prescribed translations. In the case of texts translated from Hebrew, Greek, Latin, or German, translations can vary substantially, and you will often find it bewildering if you try to use a translation different from the rest of the class. The prescribed translations are as follows:

The New Oxford Annotated Bible

Homer, *The Iliad*, tr. Robert Fagles (New York, 1990)

Sophocles, *Antigone* and Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*. Both in *Greek Tragedies 1*, ed. D. Grene and R.

Lattimore (3rd edition, ed. M. Griffith and G.W. Most, Chicago, 2013)

Virgil, *Aeneid*, tr. Robert Fagles (New York, 2008)
Richard Wagner, *The Art-Work of the Future and Other Works*, tr. W. Ashton Ellis (Omaha, 1994)
Richard Wagner, *The Ring of the Nibelung*, tr. Stewart Spencer (in S. Spencer & B. Millington, *Wagner's Ring of the Nibelung: A Companion* (London, 2000))
Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality*, ed. K. Ansell-Pearson (Cambridge, 1994)

However, the *New Oxford Annotated Bible* is a translation (the 'New Revised Standard Version', or NRSV) which is also available in other editions. It is also on the Internet at <http://www.devotions.net/bible/00bible.htm> and <http://bible.oremus.org/>, though both sites only allow a limited portion to be downloaded at a time, which makes for inconvenient reading.

Texts originally written in English are another matter. Everything we will be reading is available on the Internet – indeed, in some cases it is for practical purposes only available on the Internet, as there are either no texts in print or else they exist only in editions that are expensive and/or hard to find. Personally I prefer reading books – especially in the case of long texts like *Culture and Anarchy* or *Idylls of the King* – rather than screens or printouts, so I have recommended cheap editions where they exist, but the choice is entirely yours.

Matthew Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy and Other Writings*, ed. S. Collini (Cambridge, 1993).
Poems: *Bacchanalia*, *The Buried Life*, *Dover Beach*, *Philomela*, *Rachel*, *Stanzas from the Grand Chartreuse*, *A Summer Night*, *Thyrsis*. All at <http://www.readbookonline.net/books/Arnold/434/>
Alfred, Lord Tennyson, *Idylls of the King and a Selection of Poems*, ed. G. Everett (New York, 2003).
Poems to be read: *The Coming of Arthur*, *Lancelot and Elaine*, *The Holy Grail*, *Pelleas and Ettarre*, *Guinevere*, *The Passing of Arthur*, *The Palace of Art**, *The Lotos-Eaters*, *The Epic**, *Ulysses*, *Crossing the Bar*. All also at <http://onlinebooks.library.upenn.edu/webbin/gutbook/lookup?num=8601>, <http://onlinebooks.library.upenn.edu/webbin/gutbook/lookup?num=610>, and <http://www.poetryfoundation.org/bio/alfred-tennyson#about>. Note that the two poems asterisked in the list above do not appear in the recommended volume, and so must be read online.

Other poems will be supplied on handouts in the lectures.

Requirements, grading, general policy

Two short papers: 5-6 pages, 7-8 pages (20%, 25%)

Midterm exam: IDs, short essays (15%)

Final (take-home): short and long essays (25%)

Participation in recitation, including attendance in recitations and lectures (15%)

If you are forced to miss a lecture or a recitation due to illness or emergency, inform your preceptor in advance. Except in special cases, the course is too large to arrange make-up examinations. After one missed recitation and/or two missed lectures, your grade will suffer incremental decreases.

Familiarise yourself with College regulations on academic integrity; read in particular the relevant section of cas.nyu.edu/page/academicintegrity. You should also be aware of the dangers of plagiarism: an astonishing number of students haven't the faintest idea what does and does not count – and getting it wrong means the likelihood of failing the course. For a succinct general guide to what you can and can't do see <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/589/01/>.

No extensions will be granted on or after the day papers are due. If you must turn in late work because of illness or other emergency, contact your preceptor immediately. Papers turned in late without prior notice and good reason will have grades reduced appropriately.

Schedule of Lectures and Readings

- Sept. 3: Introduction.
- Sept. 8: *Genesis* 1-22; *Exodus* 11-16, 19-24, 32.
- Sept. 10: *Genesis* 23-50; *Exodus* 1-10, 17-18.
- Sept. 15: NO CLASS: ROSH HASHANAH.

NOTE: The following pages of the *Iliad* should be read for the next three lectures: 77-115 (to 'looming over armies'), 145-7 (to 'Argives in their triumph'), 195-213, 231-75, 296-324, 334-6 ('But not even now' ... 'win it for ourselves!'), 369-441, 467-502, 520-4 (to 'out of action'), 541-58, 588-614.

- Sept. 17: Homer, *Iliad*.
- Sept. 22: *Iliad*.
- Sept. 24: *Iliad*.
- Sept. 29: NO CLASS: TABERNACLES.
- Oct. 1: Sophocles, *Antigone*.
- Oct. 6: NO CLASS: SIMCHAT TORAH.
- Oct. 8: *Antigone*.
- Oct. 13: NO CLASS: LEGISLATIVE DAY.
- Oct. 15: *Matthew*.
- Oct. 20: *I Corinthians*.
- Oct. 22: Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*.
- Oct. 27: Virgil, *Aeneid*, pp. 47-102, 127-52.
- Oct. 29: *Aeneid*, pp. 178 ("But now Venus")-265.
- Nov. 3: *Aeneid*, pp. 293-323, 355-86.

**** First paper due ****

