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*

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](http://www.devotions.net/bible/00bible.htm) and [http://bible.oremus.org/](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.


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](http://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/](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. 6: NO CLASS: SIMCHAT TORAH.

Oct. 8: *Antigone*.

Oct. 13: NO CLASS: LEGISLATIVE DAY.

Oct. 15: *Matthew*.

**First paper due**

Oct. 20: *I Corinthians*.


Nov. 3: *Aeneid*, pp. 293-323, 355-86.
Nov. 5: **MIDTERM EXAM**.


Nov. 12: Wagner, *The Ring of the Nibelung*.

Nov. 17: *The Ring of the Nibelung* (focus on Rheingold and Walküre).

Nov. 19: *The Ring of the Nibelung* (focus on Siegfried and Götterdämmerung).

Nov. 24: Tennyson.

Nov. 26: NO CLASS: THANKSGIVING.

Dec. 1: Tennyson. **Second paper due**

Dec. 3: Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*.

Dec. 8: Arnold, poetry.


**Final examination:** take-home essays to be submitted to NYU Classes by 5.00 p.m. on Tuesday, December 22.

**General information**

**Office Hours:**

Professor Levene: Tuesdays 11.00-12.15 in Room 503H, 5th floor of the Silver Center, 100 Washington Square East. Or if you prefer you can call me (212-998-8598 – 88598 if calling from an NYU telephone) or e-mail me (D.S.Levene@nyu.edu) to make an appointment – or in fact you are welcome just to turn up without an appointment and knock at my door at any time. I’m always happy to see students if I am otherwise unoccupied; the worst that will happen is that I will be otherwise occupied, in which case I’ll arrange to see you at a mutually convenient time.

Dr Kwak: Thursdays 12.30-1.30, Room B06, 19 University Place, or by appointment (youna.kwak@nyu.edu).

Mr Zatlin: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 11.30-1.30, Silver Room 503S, or by appointment (ari.zatlin@gmail.com).