Fall 2018

CORE-UA 404, Texts and Ideas: Antiquity and the 19th Century

Professor Vincent Renzi
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Office Hours by appointment.

Lecture:
§001: Mondays & Wednesdays .... 11:00 a.m. - 12:15 p.m. .......... 408 Silver Center

Recitation:
§002: Fridays ......................... 8:00 a.m. - 9:15 a.m. .......... 45 West 4th Street, room B01
§003: Fridays ......................... 9:30 a.m. - 10:45 a.m. .......... 7 East 12th Street, room 325
§004: Fridays ......................... 9:30 a.m. - 10:45 a.m. .......... 7 East 12th Street, room 127
§005: Fridays ......................... 11:00 a.m. - 12:15 p.m. .......... Bobst Library, room LL147

Recitation Instructors:
Ms Rebekah Rust (§§002, 003) Mr. Ludwig Schmitz (§§004, 005)
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Thematic Description

That there is a distinctively modern moral psychology is a claim made by a number of influential 19th century European authors. To understand how and why these authors make this claim requires examination first of what they take to be their ancient antecedents. Particular attention is paid to how the modern texts work to establish their claims, and how they are anticipated by those of the ancients.
Overview

As one of the first courses in the Foundations of Contemporary Culture component of the College Core Curriculum, Texts and Ideas serves as an introduction to the study of the liberal arts. The course has a number of complementary goals.

First, it provides N.Y.U. undergraduates with a common academic experience on which to draw both in interactions with one another and in later academic work. Although we may share some readings with other sections of Texts and Ideas, this core experience is defined not by a canon of texts but by a shared concern to introduce you to modes of humanistic inquiry.

Second, because the course is intended for students early in their college careers, heavy emphasis is placed on building your ability to reason soundly and to analyze texts critically. As in Writing the Essay, you will complete frequent writing assignments; however, in this course you will be expected to produce finished work without the constant feedback that that workshop class provides. Likewise, the discussion that occurs in your weekly recitation sections will focus more on the interpretation of the works we are studying than on the process of writing generally. In this sense, your work in this class should move you beyond the expository assignments of Writing the Essay to the sort of argumentative essays that will be expected of you later in your academic and professional careers.

Third, Texts and Ideas seeks to develop your appreciation of the continuing cultural relevance of selected works in the humanities. Our purpose is not to make a survey of “great books,” but rather to understand how works can be interpreted as constituting an intellectual tradition or history of ideas. I have chosen the texts for this course with a view to their relevance to this project and to one another, and because they are challenging materials on which to build academic skills. You should learn to appreciate the artistic and philosophic merits of these texts; but as to whether any are “great books,” I leave it to you to discover if they engage you greatly.

Finally, this class will consider themes, concepts, and ideas of enduring influence and interest. We will be concerned, for example, to examine the different ways the creators of the works we shall study have understood our history, human nature, place in the world, and individuality. Our investigation is thus humanistic in precisely this sense, namely that it leads us to consider fundamental aspects of our human condition; and the modes of inquiry we shall employ should help you appreciate the extent to which our human self-understanding in turn reflects particular views of history and human society. This investigation is therefore liberal in the sense that it seeks to free us from our accidental historical circumstances, allowing us to gain a greater perspective on the possibilities of human existence.

The spirit of liberal education that finds expression in these course goals is itself an excellent example of the continuing influence exerted on our contemporary society by ancient ideas—in this case from Classical Greece. Among the ancient Greeks we find articulated the duplicate concern for a purpose to learning greater than rote mastery of information and for an education that aims to achieve such happiness as derives from understanding our humanity, not merely the fame or profit that comes from technical competence. In this spirit, no direction will here be given for the pursuit of any special study or particular profession; neither will you learn strategies for success in commerce or politics. In this sense, the course is entirely impractical in its design; but there is good reason to think this liberality will nevertheless provide the best preparation for your future endeavors: The skills you learn here are not restricted only to one line of work but are general in their application, and the emphasis is not on mastery of a fixed body of knowledge but rather on preparation for a life of learning. I cannot claim, more than this, that the course will make you happy; but the not inmodest hope shared by many of the authors we shall study is that their works should help you be so. Seen in these ways, the class is preeminently practical, preparing you to flourish in dynamic circumstances in your later studies and professional work, and also, perhaps, for the hard task of deciding what sort of person you will be and what sort of life you will lead. Of course, we cannot presume to measure your humanity. Your overall grade will therefore be based on the essays you will write about the works we shall study and your knowledge of basic facts necessary to their interpretation; but your education, I hope, will continue beyond your satisfaction of the course requirements.
Organization

In this class, you will have two weekly lectures and a weekly recitation section. This is a typical structure for university-level courses. It most likely differs from that of classes you had in primary and secondary school. Those classes usually meet daily in small groups, provide close direction of your studies, and seek to prepare you with skills and knowledge necessary for later work. By contrast, college classes meet less frequently, ask you to synthesize information from a variety of sources, and require you to recognize independently what you need to know to understand the complexity of an idea—and expect you to take the initiative to learn it.

As with any course, you will get the most out of this class if you prepare in advance. This means doing more than skimming the reading. When you read, you should highlight passages of particular importance and make notes about questions you have or points in the text that you feel bear further exploration. Although the lecture is not primarily intended for discussion, I encourage you to ask questions both about the readings and about the lectures themselves. Most importantly, after class you should review your notes and re-read the texts.

Because the lecture brings everyone together, it is the best place for me to give you general information, to demonstrate its relevance to the interpretation of the works we are studying, and to discuss broad themes common among them. By contrast, the small size of the recitation makes it ideal for specific discussion of the texts and for personal attention to your development. The homework assignments and papers are intended to build your interpretative skills and to provide a basis for discussion. You should come to recitation prepared both to discuss the readings and what you have written about them.

The recitation is not intended to save you the trouble of doing the reading or attending the lectures; neither is its purpose simply to answer questions you may have about them. Rather, the recitation provides a time for focused engagement with your course work. It does not replace but complements the lecture, and it should provide the opportunity for you to integrate the information presented in the lecture with your own insights and those of your classmates. This said, the recitation nevertheless is still only a guide. It remains for you to continue to grapple with the material outside of class—in your conversations with friends, in moments of quiet contemplation, and in re-reading the texts—and in writing your papers and preparing for exams.

Requirements

You are expected to read each of the works listed below, to attend all lectures and meetings of your recitation section, to arrive at class meetings promptly, and to participate actively and appropriately in class. In-class writing exercises and brief homework assignments will also be required, as well as some supplemental reading. Finally, you will be required to write three papers and to sit for three examinations—two midterms and a comprehensive final. All work will be graded as submitted, with no opportunity for revision, and credit will be withheld for poor grammar and spelling.

In determining your grade, we will weigh your completion of the course requirements approximately as follows; bear in mind, however, that you are expected to complete every assignment in order to receive a passing grade for the class.

- Class participation (including attendance), homework, & quizzes...... 20%
- Papers (5%, 15%, 20%) .......................................................... 40%
- Midterm Exams (8%, 12%) ...................................................... 20%
- Final Exam ............................................................................. 20%

Note well that a failing grade may be assigned to any student with three absences from lecture and/or recitation. Incompletes will be considered only in cases of documented medical emergency or other, comparably grave circumstances. In the event that you are for good reason unable to attend class, you are expected to contact me in advance (or as soon as is practicable) by telephone or e-mail.
A Note on Classroom Decorum

As a matter of courtesy to the instructors and your fellow students, please arrive at class promptly, and, apart from emergencies, please remain in the classroom for the duration of the lecture or recitation.
Please be sure to shut off your cellular telephone at the beginning of class. Use of laptop computers, tablets, and e-readers is prohibited.

Recording & Transcription

While you are encouraged to take notes in lecture and recitation, you may not make audio or video recordings in class. Neither may you take or exchange class notes in return for remuneration. Violation of this policy will result in a failing grade for the course.

Notes on the Readings

Book of J
In addition to Rosenberg's translation of the Book of J, please be sure also to read the preface and introduction (the latter entitled "The Author J") by Harold Bloom (that is, all the ancillary materials through page 55). Please also read Rosenberg's "Translator's Appendices," pages 325–335.

Freud's Civilization and Its Discontents
On page 17 of Hitchens' introduction, the word quoted from Plato's Republic should be thymoeides.
Bibliography

The following texts are required. Books have been ordered through the N.Y.U.
Bookstore, 726 Broadway. Be certain to purchase exactly those listed below.


Schedule of Classes

Please complete the readings prior to the lecture at which they are first discussed. Be sure to bring the relevant texts to class.

Lecture Assignments

W 9/5: Introduction.................................................................Recitations begin this week.

M 9/10: Isaiah, 1–12.
W 9/12: Book of J.


W 9/26: Aristotle, Poetics. Euripides, Medea.


M 10/8: [Holiday.]
T 10/9: [Quodlibetal day.]
W 10/10: Midterm Examination I.

M 10/15: Plato, Republic, Book I.
W 10/17: Plato, Republic, Books II-IV.

M 10/22: Plato, Republic, Books V-VII.
W 10/24: Plato, Republic, Books VIII-X.

M 10/29: Augustine, Confessions, Books I–X.
W 10/31: Augustine, Confessions, Books I–X. ........................................Paper II

M 11/5: Kierkegaard, Fear & Trembling.
W 11/7: Kierkegaard, Fear & Trembling.

M 11/12: Midterm Examination II.

W 11/21: [Holiday.]

M 11/26: Nietzsche, Genealogy of Morality, Preface, Essay I.
W 11/28: Nietzsche, Genealogy of Morality, Essay II.


M 12/17: Final Examination. Note time: 10:00–11:50 a.m.
Academic Guidelines for Students
The College Core Curriculum, College of Arts and Science

To help foster common academic expectations among students and instructors, the following guidelines for Core courses are offered to students. While these represent minimum expectations across the curriculum, individual faculty members may set additional course requirements. Students should therefore consult the course syllabus for details of policies in each class.

Attendance
Inasmuch as students have voluntarily sought admission to the University, they are expected to attend all class meetings, including all lectures and all meetings of associated recitation, workshop, or laboratory sections. Students may be excused for documented medical or personal emergency and will receive reasonable accommodation for the observance of religious holidays. In these cases, they should contact their instructors in advance or, in cases of emergency, as soon as is practicable. Students are responsible for making up any material or assignments they miss.

Classroom Decorum
The classroom is a space for free and open inquiry and for the critical evaluation of ideas, and it should be free of personal prejudice. Students and instructors alike have an obligation to all members of the class to create an educational atmosphere of mutual trust and respect in which differences of opinion can be subjected to deliberate and reasonable examination without animus.

As a matter of courtesy to their fellow students and instructors, students should arrive at class promptly, prepared and ready to participate. Students are reminded particularly to shut off cellular telephones and, except in cases of emergency, to remain in the classroom for the duration of the lecture or section meeting. If it is necessary to leave or enter a room once class has begun, students should do so quietly and with as little disruption as possible. Under University policy, disruptive classroom behavior may be subject to faculty review and disciplinary sanction.

Note that it is within the discretion of individual faculty members to establish other classroom policies such as prohibiting use of laptop or tablet computers, e-readers, or mobile telephones.

Completion of Assignments
Students are expected to submit course work on time and to retain copies of their work until a final grade has been received for the course. Instructors are not obliged to accept late work and may assign a failing or reduced grade to such assignments.

Students who encounter sudden and incapacitating illness or an other comparably grave circumstance that prevents them from completing the final examination or assignment in a course may request a temporary mark of Incomplete from the course instructor. To receive an Incomplete, students must have completed all other requirements for the course, including satisfactory attendance, and there must be a strong likelihood they will pass the course when all work is completed.

Questions and Concerns
Up-to-date course information is available on the Core Curriculum website: http://cas.nyu.edu/core. Questions, concerns, comments, and feedback may be directed to the following members of the Core Curriculum staff, located in 903 Silver Center, 212-998-8119. Complaints will remain confidential.

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Statement on Academic Integrity
The College Core Curriculum, College of Arts and Science

As a student at New York University, you have been admitted to a community of scholars who value free and open inquiry. Our work depends on honest assessment of ideas and their sources; and we expect you, as a member of our community, likewise to maintain the highest integrity in your academic work. Because of the central importance of these values to our intellectual life together, those who fail to maintain them will be subject to severe sanction, which may include dismissal from the University.

Plagiarism consists in presenting ideas and words without acknowledging their source and is an offense against academic integrity. Any of the following acts constitutes a crime of plagiarism.

- Using a phrase, sentence, or passage from another person’s work without quotation marks and attribution of the source.
- Paraphrasing words or ideas from another’s work without attribution.
- Reporting as your own research or knowledge any data or facts gathered or reported by another person.
- Submitting in your own name papers or reports completed by another.
- Submitting your own original work toward requirements in more than one class without the prior permission of the instructors.

Other offenses against academic integrity include the following.

- Collaborating with other students on assignments without the express permission of the instructor.
- Giving your work to another student to submit as his or her own.
- Copying answers from other students during examinations.
- Using notes or other sources to answer exam questions without the instructor's permission.
- Secreting or destroying library or reference materials.
- Submitting as your own work a paper or results of research that you have purchased from a commercial firm or another person.

Particular emphasis is placed on the use of papers and other materials to be found on the World Wide Web, whether purchased or freely available. In addition to having access to the same search engines as students, faculty also have at their disposal a number of special websites devoted to detecting plagiarism from the web.

Plagiarism and other cases of academic fraud are matters of fact, not intention. It is therefore crucial that you be diligent in assuring the integrity of your work.

- Use quotation marks to set off words that are not your own.
- Learn to use proper forms of attribution for source materials.
- Do your own original work in each class, without collaboration, unless otherwise instructed.
- Don't use published sources, the work of others, or material from the web without attribution.

For further information, consult the College of Arts and Science website on academic integrity at http://cas.nyu.edu/page/academicintegrity.

08/2013
Grading Guidelines
The College Core Curriculum, College of Arts and Science

The College Core Curriculum is designed to provide students with an intellectually rigorous general education in the liberal arts. Because Core courses seek to stretch you beyond your previous schooling and major course of study, they will likely be among the most academically challenging experiences you undertake as an undergraduate. The following guidelines outline our common expectations concerning the evaluation of students' work across the curriculum.

The grade of A marks extraordinary academic performance in all aspects of a course and is reserved for clearly superior work. In large lecture courses such as those in the Core, it would be unusual for more than 20–25% of students to earn grades in this range, or for more than 10% to merit marks of straight A.

As a faculty, we are similarly concerned to reserve the mark of B+ to signify very good work.

It is our hope and desire that the majority of students will want and be able to do good work in their Core courses, work in the B range. Because these courses are intended by design to foster your intellectual development, the difference between merely satisfactory and good work will frequently depend on outstanding effort and class participation. For this reason, class participation is typically a substantial component of the overall grade in Core courses.

The grade of C denotes satisfactory work—regular attendance, ordinary effort, a minimum of demonstrated improvement across the semester. It is expected that every student is capable of and motivated to perform at least at this level.

Grades below C are reserved for less than satisfactory and, in the D range, for poor work and effort, and mark a need for improvement.

The grade of F indicates failure to complete the requirements for a course in a creditable manner. It marks a judgment about the quality and quantity of a student's work and participation—not about the student—and is therefore in order whenever a student fails to complete course requirements, whatever his or her intentions or circumstances may be.

The temporary mark of I (Incomplete) is given only when sudden and incapacitating illness, or other grave emergency, prevents a student from completing the final assignment or examination for a course. It must be requested by the student in advance; all other course requirements, including satisfactory attendance, must have been fulfilled; and there must be a reasonable expectation that the student will receive a passing grade when the delayed work is completed. Students must make arrangements with the faculty member to finish the incomplete work as soon as circumstances permit within the following semester. If not completed, marks of I will lapse to F.
College Core Curriculum is the group of foundational courses that every student must complete in order to earn a degree from the College of Arts and Science. It represents the considered judgment of the faculty about what every College graduate should know as a part of his or her liberal arts education. In other undergraduate divisions at NYU, faculty of those schools have adopted parts of the curriculum to provide a core experience in the liberal arts for their students as well. Because it is shared by students across different schools, majors, and programs, the Core is also sometimes called the general education curriculum.

What's “liberal” about the liberal arts?

“Liberal” comes from the Latin word liber, meaning “free.” In ancient Greece and Rome, liberal education was the pursuit of free men, that is, those with the means and leisure to be able to devote themselves to learning, rather than to labor.

Today when we speak of “liberal education," we mean an education in the "liberal arts," an education for men and women that frees intellectual capacities and the imagination through the study of human endeavor on a broad scale, from music, art, and philosophy, to encounters with nature and with cultures of other times and places.

What are the “liberal arts”?

Sometimes also called the “arts and sciences" or "liberal arts and sciences," in the medieval university curriculum they were seven in number: grammar, logic, rhetoric, arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music.

Today, the liberal arts encompass all the disciplines of the humanities and social sciences, mathematics, and the natural sciences—all those areas of inquiry that are pursued for the sake of expanding human knowledge, rather than as training for a particular profession.

What’s the practical value of liberal education?

Education in the liberal arts builds your critical, analytic, and communications skills, giving you the preparation you need to flourish in the world of work and to become a productive member of society.

More than this, however, education in the liberal arts is preparation for life as a responsible, actively engaged citizen, equipping you with the open-mindedness and soundness of judgment necessary to reason, act, and lead. Indeed, this University—and the whole enterprise of higher education in the United States—was founded on the belief that college graduates have a special opportunity and responsibility to contribute to the common good.

What are the faculty’s specific goals for the College Core Curriculum?

In designing the Core Curriculum, the faculty sought to ensure that students would expand their capacity to communicate effectively, by improving their writing and gaining proficiency in a foreign language. This is why every undergraduate must complete Writing the Essay or its equivalent, and why the University maintains extensive opportunities for language study both in New York and at the global sites, as well as the non-credit Speaking Freely program.
The faculty also wanted to provide every student with opportunities to build his or her quantitative skills and to study the natural sciences. These studies give you the knowledge you need to be an independent-minded citizen in a world increasingly shaped by science and technology, where urgent questions of policy require prudent, well-informed judgments. We aim, too, to foster your appreciation of mathematics and the sciences as liberal pursuits.

We likewise believe that students should gain knowledge of the social sciences, which study how humans communicate, organize their communities, worship, use language, and engage in trade and diplomacy. Because the fine and performing arts connect us in unexpected ways, give pleasure, and reveal new perspectives on the world, the Core Curriculum also includes courses in Expressive Culture.

Finally, students should come to think of themselves as citizens of a larger world by gaining the ability to comprehend how people remote from themselves understand, experience, and imagine their lives. They should also come to know themselves better by engaging critically with the significant ideas that have shaped contemporary culture. For these reasons, all students in the Core Curriculum complete a course in Cultures and Contexts and a course in Texts and Ideas.

Does all this mean that you will take a few courses outside your main interests and comfort zone? That is our intention: Stretching the mind and rethinking old assumptions and beliefs are important preparation for your future. The Core Curriculum represents our commitment as a faculty to assuring you an undergraduate education that will equip you for success in your later careers and prepare you for a life of thinking critically and creatively about who you are, who you want to be, and how to better the world we live in.