

## CORE-UA 402

## TEXTS AND IDEAS: ANTIQUITY AND RENAISSANCE

TUESDAY, THURSDAY 9.30-10.45

Silver 206

Professor Thomas Ertman

In the first half of this course, we explore the ancient foundations of traditional western culture by examining the political and social institutions, religious beliefs and value systems of the Romans and early Christians through close reading and analysis of the works of Livy, Cicero, Plutarch, Virgil, Apuleius, Augustine and the New Testament. We then turn to the world of the Italian Renaissance, defined for our purposes as the period between the composition of Dante's *Inferno* around 1300 and the death of Michelangelo in 1564. Renaissance means rebirth, and during this period Italian intellectuals, writers, painters and sculptures saw themselves as contributing to a rebirth of western culture by turning for inspiration to the philosophical, literary and artistic legacy of the ancient world that we studied in the course's first seven weeks. Authors like Dante and Boccaccio, political theorists like Machiavelli and art critics and biographers like Vasari helped redefine the way we understand our world and respond creatively to it in ways that brought forth many masterpieces which continue to be read, discussed, and viewed right down to the present.

Course requirements: The requirements of this course are: 1) Weekly attendance and participation in recitation sections (15% of grade). 2) **Ten** weekly two-page response papers (double-spaced, standard font and margins), to be handed in to your preceptor **in class** each Thursday. The papers should **not** be summaries of the week's reading, but rather should identify an idea or argument in the reading that has **surprised, perplexed, or inspired you**. **Two** of these papers, those for **weeks XI and XIV**, should be based **both** on the Vasari or Cellini reading and a viewing of appropriate works of Renaissance art found at the Metropolitan Museum or another New York artistic institution. The papers will be graded check, check plus or check minus (25% of grade). 3) An in-class midterm on **March 22** (25% of grade). 4) A one hour fifty minute final exam on **Thursday, May 12 from 8 to 9:50** (35% of grade).

Professor Ertman's office is in the Core office, 9<sup>th</sup> floor of Silver. His telephone number is 998-8119 and his e-mail [tel1@nyu.edu](mailto:tel1@nyu.edu). His office hours are Thursdays 3.30-4.30 and by appointment. All books for the course have been ordered at the NYU Bookstore.

**PLEASE NOTE: THE USE OF COMPUTERS, IPHONES, IPADS, IPODS OR OTHER ELECTRONIC DEVICES DURING LECTURE IS STRICTLY PROHIBITED**

## SCHEDULE OF LECTURES AND READINGS

### I. THE ANCIENT ROMANS I

#### Lecture Topics

1. (Jan. 26) Course Introduction
2. (Jan. 28) Livy's *History of Rome*

#### Required Reading

Livy, The Early History of Rome, Books I-V (Penguin Classics, 2002), pp. 29-157, 391-435.

### II. THE ANCIENT ROMANS II

#### Lecture Topics

1. (Feb. 2) Rome's Emergence as a World Power
2. (Feb. 4) Plutarch's *Lives*

#### Required Reading

Plutarch, The Rise of Rome (Penguin Classics, 2013), pp. 256-292, 450-475, 489-530.

### III. THE ANCIENT ROMANS III

#### Lecture Topics

1. (Feb. 9) The Crisis of the Roman Republic
2. (Feb. 11) Cicero and his *Republic*

#### Required Reading

Cicero, Political Speeches (Oxford World's Classics, 2009), pp. 157-192, 229-270; The Republic and the Laws (Oxford World's Classics, 2008), pp. 3-10, 17-58, 71-74, 76-79, 81-94;

#### **IV. THE ANCIENT ROMANS IV**

##### Lecture Topics

1. (Feb. 16) Augustus and Imperial Rome
2. (Feb. 18) Virgil's "Aeneid"

##### Required Reading

Virgil, The Aeneid, trans. Robert Fitzgerald (Vintage), Books I, II, IV, VI-VIII, X, XI to line 653, XII.

#### **V. THE ROMANS AND THE COMING OF CHRISTIANITY I**

##### Lecture Topics

1. (Feb. 23) Who Wrote the Christian Bible, When and Why?
2. (Feb. 25) The Emergence of Christianity

##### Required Reading

"Luke," "The Acts of the Apostles," "Romans," in: The New Oxford Annotated Bible, 4<sup>th</sup> ed.

#### **VI. THE ROMAN NOVEL AS A WINDOW ON EVERYDAY LIFE**

##### Lecture Topics

1. (March 1) Love, Sex and Belief in Late Imperial Rome
2. (March 3) The Only Complete Roman Novel: Apuleius's "The Golden Ass"

##### Required Reading

Apuleius, The Golden Ass (Penguin Classics, 1999), entire.

#### **VII. THE ROMANS AND THE COMING OF CHRISTIANITY II**

##### Lecture Topics

1. (Mar. 8) The Spread and Consolidation of Christianity
2. (Mar. 10) Augustine's "Confessions"

##### Required Reading

Saint Augustine, Confessions, trans. Henry Chadwick (Oxford World Classics), Books 1-6, 8-9.

**\*\*IN-CLASS MIDTERM TUESDAY, MARCH 22\*\***

## VIII. THE COLLAPSE OF ROME AND THE EMERGENCE OF THE ITALIAN CITY-STATES

### Lecture Topics

1. (Mar. 22) **In-class Midterm**
2. (Mar. 24) The Emergence of the Commune of Florence

### Required Reading

Dante, The Divine Comedy I: Inferno (Penguin Classics, 2002), Cantos I-VII.

## IX. EARLY RENAISSANCE FLORENCE AND DANTE'S *DIVINE COMEDY*

### Lecture Topics

1. (March 29) Dante's *Inferno* I
2. (March 31) Dante's *Inferno* II

### Required Reading

Dante, Inferno, Cantos XIII-XX, XXIV-XXVII, XXX-XXXIV.

## X. THE REEMERGENCE OF NARRATIVE FICTION: BOCCACCIO

### Lecture Topics

1. (April 5) Courtship, Love and Sexuality in Ancient Rome and Renaissance Florence
2. (April 7) Giovanni Boccaccio's Decameron

### Required Reading

Giovanni Boccaccio, The Decameron (Oxford World's Classics, 2008), pp. 3-50, 87-99, 168-176, 283-286, 373-385, 386-431, 482-489, 635-686.

## XI. THE REEMERGENCE OF PAINTING AND SCULPTURE

### Lecture Topics

1. (April 12) Vasari's *The Lives of the Artists*
2. (April 14) Why Did the Visual Arts Revive in 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> Century Italy?

### Required Reading

Vasari, The Lives of the Artists (Oxford World's Classics, 2008), pp. 3-36, 47-58, 84-169, 191-209, 224-231.

## **XII. THE POLITICS OF THE ITALIAN CITY-REPUBLICS I**

### Lecture Topics

1. (April 19) The Politics of the Italian City-Republics
2. (April 21) Machiavelli's *Discourses on Livy*

### Required Reading

Machiavelli, The Discourses (Penguin Classics, 1984), pp. 93-152, 165-176, 190-196, 223-248, 270-288, 367-376, 385-397.

## **XIII. THE POLITICS OF THE ITALIAN CITY-REPUBLICS II**

### Lecture Topics

1. (April 26) The Decline of the City Republics
2. (April 28) Machiavelli's *The Prince*

### Required Reading

Machiavelli, The Discourses, pp. 425-437, 444-445, 461-496, 513-528; The Prince (Penguin Classics, 2009), pp. 3-106.

## **XIV. THE END OF THE RENAISSANCE**

### Lecture Topics

1. (May 3) Theory and Practice in the Visual Arts of the High Renaissance
2. (May 5) The End of the Renaissance: Cellini's *My Life*

### Required Reading

Benvenuto Cellini, My Life (Oxford World's Classics, 2009), pp. 5-75, 172-217, 261-274, 296-335.

**FINAL EXAM THURSDAY, MAY 12 FROM 8 TO 9:50 IN OUR CLASSROOM  
(SILVER 206)**