



NEW YORK UNIVERSITY

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The College Core Curriculum
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Spring 2016

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. Cantor Film Center, room 102

Recitation:

§002: Thursdays..... 8:00 a.m. – 9:15 a.m. 12 Waverly Place, room L113
§003: Thursdays..... 9:30 a.m. – 10:45 a.m. 45 West 4th Street, room B07
§004: Thursdays..... 8:00 a.m. – 9:15 a.m. Silver Center, room 504
§005: Thursdays..... 9:30 a.m. – 10:45 a.m. 40 West 4th Street, room LC13
§006: Thursdays..... 12:30 p.m. – 1:45 p.m. Waverly Building, room 566B
§007: Thursdays..... 2:00 p.m. – 3:15 p.m. Silver Center, room 510
§008: Thursdays..... 2:00 p.m. – 3:15 p.m. 45 West 4th Street, room B07
§009: Thursdays..... 3:30 p.m. – 4:45 p.m. Silver Center, room 504

Recitation Instructors:

Mr. Juan Carlos Aguirre (§§002, 003)
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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 ideals—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 immodest 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. Late work and electronic submissions will not be accepted. 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 is also 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.

Nietzsche

In addition to *On the Genealogy of Morality*, please also read the following materials published in the supplement of the Cambridge University Press translation of the *Genealogy* (page numbers refer to the Revised Student Edition).

- "Twofold prehistory of good and evil." *Human, All Too Human*, Volume I, §45, pp. 123–124.
- "Custom and what is in accordance with it." *Human, All Too Human*, Volume I, §96, p. 125.
- "Concept of morality of custom." *Daybreak*, Book I, §9, pp. 133–135.
- *Beyond Good and Evil*, §260, pp. 154–157.
- "To what extent even we are still pious." *Joyful Science*, §344, pp. 158–160.

Note also the following corrections and clarification to the Revised Student Edition of the *Genealogy*.

GM, I, 5, p. 14, at note 12: For ἐσθλος read ἔσθλός.

GM, I, 5, p. 14, at note 12: For χαχός read κακός.

GM, I, 10, p. 21: For οἴζυρος read οἴζυρός.

GM, I, 10, p. 21: For ἐνπράττειν read εἶδ' πρᾶττειν.

GM, I, 11, p. 23: For ῥαθυμία read ῥαθυμία.

GM, III, 26, p. 117: For χάσμι' ὀδόντων read χάσμι' ὀδόντων.

Editor's Introduction, p. xviii: In the second paragraph, Ansell-Pearson begins a discussion of *GM*, II, 12. He then goes on to quote from *GM*, II, 13. Note that in the subsequent sentence (beginning "His fundamental claim..."), and following, he returns to quoting *GM*, II, 12.

Augustine's Confessions

At VIII.vii (16), a line has dropped out of the Oxford translation: "And I looked and was appalled, but there was no way of escaping from myself. If I <tried to turn my eyes away, they fell on Ponticianus, still telling his tale,> and you once again placed me in front of myself; you thrust me before my own eyes so that I should discover my iniquity and hate it."

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.

Aristophanes. *Clouds*, translated, with introduction and notes, by Jeffrey Henderson. Newburyport, MA: Focus Classical Library, 1992. I.S.B.N.: 978-0-941051-24-8.

Augustine. *Confessions*, translated, with introduction and notes, by Henry Chadwick. Oxford World's Classics. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008. I.S.B.N: 978-0-19-953782-2.

The Book of J, translated from the Hebrew by David Rosenberg, interpreted by Harold Bloom. New York: Grove Press, 1990. I.S.B.N.: 978-0-8021-4191-0.

Euripides. *Medea*. Oliver Taplin, trans. Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 2001. I.S.B.N.: 978-0-226-20345-4.

The New Testament. Good News Translation. Illustrated Saint Joseph Edition. New York: Catholic Book Publishing, 1987. I.S.B.N.: 978-0-89-942630-3.

Plato. *Republic*, translated, with notes, an interpretive essay, and a new introduction by Allan Bloom. Second edition. [New York:] Basic Books, 1991. I.S.B.N.: 978-0-465-06934-7.

Tanakh: a new translation of the Holy Scriptures according to the traditional Hebrew text. [Student edition.] Philadelphia & Jerusalem: Jewish Publication Society, 1985. I.S.B.N.: 978-0-8276-0366-0.

Freud, Sigmund. *Civilization and Its Discontents*. [1930.] James Strachey, trans. & ed.; introduction by Christopher Hitchens; biographical afterword by Peter Gay. [Standard Edition.] New York & London: W. W. Norton, 2010. I.S.B.N.: 978-0-393-30451-0.

Kierkegaard, Søren. *Fear & Trembling*. [1843.] C. Stephen Evans & Sylvia Walsh, edd. Sylvia Walsh, trans. Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006. I.S.B.N.: 978-0-521-61269-2.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. *On the Genealogy of Morality*. [1887.] Keith Ansell-Pearson, ed.; Carol Diethe, trans. Revised Student Edition. Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008. I.S.B.N: 978-0-521-69163-5.

Schedule of Classes

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

LectureAssignments

M	1/25:	Introduction.....	Recitations begin this week.
W	1/27:	Isaiah, 1–12.	
M	2/1:	Nietzsche, <i>Genealogy of Morality</i> , Preface, Essay I.	
W	2/3:	<i>Book of J.</i>	
M	2/8:	<i>Book of J.</i> Genesis. Exodus.	
W	2/10:	<i>Book of J.</i> Genesis. Exodus. Matthew. Paul, Galatians. <i>Gospel of Mary.</i>	
M	2/15:	[Holiday.]	
W	2/17:	Matthew. Paul, Galatians. <i>Gospel of Mary.</i>	Paper I
M	2/22:	Aristotle, <i>Poetics</i> . Euripides, <i>Medea</i> .	
W	2/24:	Aristotle, <i>Poetics</i> . Euripides, <i>Medea</i> . Aristophanes, <i>Clouds</i> .	
M	2/29:	Midterm Examination I.	
W	3/2:	Aristophanes, <i>Clouds</i> .	
M	3/7:	Plato, <i>Apology of Socrates</i> . Xenophon, <i>Apology of Socrates</i> .	
W	3/9:	Plato, <i>Republic</i> , Book I.	
M	3/14:	[Spring Break.]	
W	3/16:	[Spring Break.]	
M	3/21:	Plato, <i>Republic</i> , Books II-IV.	
W	3/23:	Plato, <i>Republic</i> , Books V-VII.	
M	3/28:	Plato, <i>Republic</i> , Books VIII-X.	
W	3/30:	Augustine, <i>Confessions</i> , Books I–X.	
M	4/4:	Augustine, <i>Confessions</i> , Books I–X.	Paper II
W	4/6:	Kierkegaard, <i>Fear & Trembling</i> .	
M	4/11:	Kierkegaard, <i>Fear & Trembling</i> .	
W	4/13:	Midterm Examination II.	
M	4/18:	Marx, “Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844”; <i>A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy</i> , Preface.	
W	4/20:	Marx and Engels, <i>Communist Manifesto</i> .	
M	4/25:	Nietzsche, <i>Genealogy of Morality</i> , Essay II.	
W	4/27:	Nietzsche, <i>Genealogy of Morality</i> , Essay III.	
M	5/2:	Freud, “Miss Lucy R.,” <i>Civilization & Its Discontents</i> .	
W	5/4:	Freud, <i>Civilization & Its Discontents</i>	Last recitations meet 5/6.
M	5/9:	Conclusion.	Paper III
M	5/16:	Final Examination. Note time: 10:00–11:50 a.m.	