

Contemporary Western Civilization

Columbia University

“The central purpose of Contemporary Civilization is to introduce students to a range of issues concerning the kinds of communities – political, social, moral, and religious – that human beings construct for themselves and the values that inform and define such communities; the course is intended to prepare students to become active and informed citizens.”

Fall Semester: Classical and Biblical Periods to the Early Modern Era

In the Fall Semester, we begin with studies of texts from the two main sources of Western thought, the Abrahamic religion and Classical Greece. We then turn to attempts to synthesize these two traditions from late antiquity through the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. Finally, we explore the intellectual currents of the Early Modern Period, such as the Protestant Reformation, the Discovery of the New World, the Scientific Revolution, and the rise of the modern state. Throughout the semester, we will encounter various attempts to make sense of the order of the social and natural worlds as well as men and women’s places in those orders.

Your final grade is based on a score of 100 points, which will be awarded on the following basis:

Discussion Board Participation:	5%
Class Participation:	10%
First Paper:	20%
Second Paper:	30%
Midterm Exam:	15%
Final Exam:	20%

Reading Assignments

Classical Antiquity

9/3 (W): **What is Justice?** Plato, *Republic*, Books I-II

9/8 (M): **Psyche & Polis**: Plato, *Republic*, Books III-V

- 9/10 (W): **The Good and the True**: Plato, *Republic*, Books VI-VII
- 9/15 (M): **The Fates of Cities and Souls**: Plato, *Republic*, Books VIII-X
- 9/17 (W): **The Political Animal**: Aristotle, *Politics*, Books I (chs. 1-7, 12-13); II (chs. 1-5); III (chs. 1, 4-13, 16); IV (chs. 1, 8, 11-12); V (1-4)
- 9/22 (M): **Wisdom and Happiness**: Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Books I-II, X (chs. 6-10)
- 9/24 (W): **Pleasure and the Good Life**: (a) Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Books VII, X (chs. 1-5); (b) Epicurus, selections (on Courseworks)
- 9/29 (M): **Living and Dying**: *Ecclesiastes* (Bible, pp. 587-594); Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations* Books II, IV, IX.1, IX.42, X, XI.1-20; XII.

Faith and Reason

- 10/1 (W): **Walking with the Lord**: *Genesis* 12-21:22; *Exodus* 1-14, 16-17, 19-20, 23:20-24:18, 31:12-34:35, 40.
- 10/5 (Sun) 12:30 AM: *First paper due (upload on Courseworks)*
- 10/6 (M): **Voices in the Wilderness**: *Isaiah* (a) 1-12; (b) 24-27; (c) 36-39; (d) 40; (e) 43:14 - 44:5; (f) 48; (g) 49; (h) 52:13 - 53:12; (i) 63:7 – 65:25.
- 10/8 (W): **Ecce Homo**: *Matthew*
- 10/13 (M): **Faith, Hope, and Love**: *Romans*; *First Corinthians* (1-3, 10-15); *James*
- 10/15 (W): MIDTERM
- 10/20 (M): **“Voluntary Submission to God” – The Islamic Faith** *Qur’an*: Suras, 1, 112, 96, 81, 56, 16:1-16:22, 2, 9, 4.
- 10/22 (W): **Athens and Jerusalem**: Augustine, *City of God*, Books VIII (chs. 1, 6, 8-10); XI (chs. 2-3, 17-18, 26-27); XII (chs. 1-9, 22-23); XIII (chs. 1-3, 6); XV (chs. 1-2, 4, 6); XIX (chs. 4, 10-17); XXI (chs. 1, 9, 11-12, 17, 21, 25) XXII (chs. 29-30).
- 10/27 (M): **Religion and Wisdom (Medieval Thought I)**: (a) Averroes, *On the Harmony of Religion and Philosophy*, pp. 1-10 (Problems 1-3); (b) Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles* Book 1, and *Summa Theologiae* I, Qu. 2 a. 3; (c) Maimonides, *Guide to the Perplexed*, pp. 632-634; (d) *The Kabbalah* 134-137, 146; (e) Al-

Ghazali, *The Rescuer from Error*; (f) Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love* chs. 1-6, 33, 82-86 (all readings on Courseworks).

10/29 (W): **The Laws of Man and God (Medieval Thought II)**: (a) Averroes, *On the Harmony of Religion and Philosophy*, pp. 14-15 (Problem 4); (b) Maimonides *The Guide of the Perplexed* selections; (c) Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* selections: pp. 44-56, 61-65, 77-80; (d) Aquinas, *On Kingship*, chapters 1-2, 6, 12, 14-15; (e) *Kabbalah*, pp. 148-58, 206-17 (all readings on Courseworks).

The Birth of the Modern World

11/5 (W): **Visions of the New World**: (a) Vespucci, "Letter from the New World"; (b) Lery, *History of a Voyage to the Land of Brazil*, chapters I, V, VIII, XIV, XV, XVI, XVIII; (c) Sepulveda, "Democratizes Alter"; (d) Montaigne, "On Cannibals"; (all readings on Courseworks).

11/8 (Saturday, 1:00-3:00): **The Fox and the Lion**: Machiavelli: (a) *The Prince*, chapters I-III, VI-VIII, XV, XVII-XIX, XXV-XXVI; (b) *Discourses*, Book I, Discourses: 1-5, 11-12, 16-18, 25-26, 55, 57-58; Book II, Discourse: 2; Book III, Discourses: 1, 41.

11/10 (M): **Divinity and Humanity (Renaissance Humanism and The Protestant Reformation)**: (a) Pico della Mirandola, *Oration on the Dignity of Man* (on Courseworks); (b) Luther, *Freedom of a Christian Man (Protestant Reformation Anthology 4-28)*; (c) Calvin, *Institutes (Protestant Reformation Anthology, 178-189, 202-213)*.

11/12 (W): **Cogito Ergo Sum**: Descartes, *Discourse on Method*.

11/17 (M): **Filling in the Blank Slate**: Hobbes, *Leviathan*, chs. I-XII.

11/19 (W): **Divine Right and Social Contract**: (a) James I, "The Trew Law of Free Monarchies" & "Speech to the Lords and Commons of the Parliament at White-Hall" (on Courseworks); (b) Hobbes, *Leviathan*, chapters XIII-XXI.

11/24 (M): **Sovereign Power**: (a) Mornay, *A Defense of Liberty Against Tyrants (Protestant Reformation Anthology, pp. 123-139)*; (b) Hobbes, *Leviathan*, chapters XXVIII (1-2), XXIX-XXXI.

11/26 (W): *Class Rescheduled for 11/8 on account of Thanksgiving*

12/1 (M): **Equality, Liberty, and Property**: (a) Winstanley, "The True Levellers Standard Advanced" (on Courseworks); (b) Locke, *Second Treatise on Government*, chapters II-V, VI (§§52-63), VII, VIII (§§95-100, 113-122).

12/3 (W): **Limited Government:** Locke, *Second Treatise on Government*, chapters IX, XI, XII, XIII, XVIII-XIX.

12/7 (Sun) 12:30 AM: *Second Paper Due (upload on Courseworks)*

12/8 (M): **Church and State:** (a) Hooker, *On Ecclesiastical Polity*; (b) Bayle, *Philosophical Commentary*; (c) Locke, "Letter Concerning Toleration" (all readings on Courseworks).

Spring Semester: Enlightenment to Present Day

In the Spring Semester, we will study texts from Enlightenment to the Twentieth Century. Two themes predominate: first, the idea of human equality and liberation; and second, the idea of the human being as a product of nature and history as opposed to a part of an eternal and providential order. We begin with Enlightenment writers like Rousseau, Hume, and Kant who in different ways address both of these themes. Then we study texts of the American and French Revolutions concerned with the social ramifications of the Enlightenment—including Mary Wollstonecraft who argues that the principle of republican liberty implies a revolution in the relation of the sexes. In our exploration of the nineteenth century, we find a number of thinkers debating the meaning of personal, economic, and national freedom. In Hegel, Marx, Nietzsche, Darwin, and Freud, we encounter attempts to understand the significance of the historic, prehistoric, and developmental origins of human nature, culture, and social institutions. Twentieth-century writers like DuBois, Fanon, and Beauvoir bring to our attention the perspectives of minorities, colonized peoples, and women on the theme of human liberation. We close with Foucault's skeptical questioning of the promise of human liberation on the Enlightenment conception.

Reading Assignments

Readings marked (CW) can be found on the Courseworks website

- 1/21 **Loyseau**, selection from *Treatise on the Orders* (CW)
Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*, (read notes 9 & 15 as well)
- 1/26 **Rousseau**, *On the Social Contract*: I.1, 4-8
II.1, 3-7, 11-12
III.1, 4, 10-15
IV.1-2, 8-9
- 1/28 **Hume**, *Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*,
§§I, II, V, IX; Appendices I, III, IV
- 2/2 **Kant**, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, Preface, §§1 & 2
- 2/4 **Kant**, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, Preface, §§1 & 2
- 2/8 **Rights and Revolutions**

I. Free and Equal Citizens

1. Sieyes, "What is the Third Estate?"
2. Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen, 1789 & 1793 versions
3. United Nations "Universal Declaration of Human Rights" (1948) (Compare to 18th Century Rights Documents)
4. Babeuf, "Plebeians Manifesto"
5. Paine, "Agrarian Justice"

II. Republican Political Order I: French Revolutionary Government

5. Robespierre, "Principles of Political Morality"
6. Saint Just, "Report in the Name of the Committees of Public Safety"
7. Tallien, "On the Terror"

III. Republican Political Order II: American Constitutional Government

8. Brutus III
9. Federalist 10
10. Giles Hickory
11. Federalist 49
12. Federalist 51

2/11 **Burke**, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (selections CW)

2/16 **Wollstonecraft**, *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, Introduction, 2-4, 9

2/18 **The Idea of the Nation State** (CW)

- Herder, "Do we still have a fatherland?"
- Kant, "Perpetual Peace"
- Fichte, Selection from *Addresses to the German Nation*
- Mazzini, "Duty Towards Country"
- Treitschke, Selection from *Lectures on Politics*
- Moeller, Selection from *The Third Reich*

2/23 **Smith**, *Wealth of Nations*

Book I

- Chapter 1
- Chapter 2
- Chapter 3 (pp. 19-20)
- Chapter 6 (pp. 53-57)
- Chapter 7 (pp. 62-71)
- Chapter 8 (pp. 73-80, 90-94)
- Chapter 11, Conclusion (pp. 284-288)

Book II

Introduction (pp. 299-301)
Chapter 3 (pp. 360-365, 367-369, 372-374, 376-380)

2/25

Book IV

Chapter 1 (pp. 456-460, 475-477, 478-479)
Chapter 2 (pp. 481-488, 492-502)
Chapter 3, Part II (pp. 520-523, 526-532)
Chapter 8 (pp. 694-695, 715-717)
Chapter 9 (pp. 745-746)

Book V

Chapter 1, Part III (pp. 839-843)
Chapter 1, Conclusion (pp. 876-878)
Chapter 2, Part II (pp. 887-890)
Chapter 3 (pp. 981-986, 996-998, 1008-1012)

3/2 **Mill, *Utilitarianism*, I, II, IV, V**

3/4 **Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (entire)**

Just kidding.

Read:

- Author's Introduction (on American equality)
- Volume 1, Part 2, chs. 6-7 (on American political life)
- Volume 2, Part 1, chs. 1, 2, 5 (on religion)
- Part 2, chs. 2, 5, 8, 10 (on individualism)
- Part 4, chs. 5-8 (conclusion)

3/9 **Mill, *On Liberty*, chapters I-III**

3/11 **Mill, *On Liberty*, chapters IV-V**

3/23 **Hegel, *Introduction to the Philosophy of History*, chapters 1-4, 5**

3/30 **Marx and Engels, *The Marx-Engels Reader* (ed. Tucker)**

- Manifesto of the Communist Party (pp. 473-491, 499-500)
- Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right (pp. 53-65)
- German Ideology (pp. 148-163, 193-200)
- Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts: Estranged Labour (pp. 70-81)

4/1 **Marx and Engels, *The Marx-Engels Reader* (ed. Tucker)**

- Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844: Private Property and Communism (pp. 81-93)
- Wage Labor and Capital (pp. 203-217)
- Critique of the Gotha Program (pp. 525-534)
- Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State (Engels) (pp. 734-751)

4/6 **Darwin, *Origin of Species***

- Introduction; chapter 3; chapter 4 (pp. 144-153, 157-166, 175-177); chapter 14
- Darwin, *Descent of Man* (in appendix to *Origin of Species*): (pp. 508, 521-543, 549-561)
- Spencer, (in the appendix to *Origin of Species*): (pp. 580-589)
- *I will be discussing the readings from Paley and Lamarck in class; these readings (in the appendix) are optional.* (pp. 565-580)

4/8 **Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, Preface, Essays 1-2**

4/13 **Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, Essay 3**

4/15 **Freud**

- *Origin and Development of Psychoanalysis (The Clark Lectures)*:
Read all five lectures
- *Ego and the Id*:
 1. pp. 630-645
 2. pp. 645-656 (Optional)
 3. pp. 656-658
- *Obsessive Actions and Religious Practices* (Optional)

4/20 **DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folks*, (I, II*, III, IV*, V, VI, IX, XI*, XIII, XIV) * = recommended**

4/22 **Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, "On Violence," "On National Culture,"* "Conclusion" *= recommended**

4/27 **Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, Author's Introduction (xix-xxxv), pp. 3-4, 20-65, 139-155, 195-198.**

4/29 **Beauvoir, *The Second Sex***

- The Lesbian: pp. 404-424

- Conclusion on Marriage: pp. 478-483
- Conclusion on Maternity: pp. 521-527
- Woman and Sexual Liberation: pp. 682-694
- Women and Career: pp. 699-704
- Conclusion of Book: pp. 716-732

Possible supplementary readings on selected topics: Here are some of the passages that almost made the cut. I don't recommend trying to read all of them for class, but you might be interested in reading more on a topic that is of particular interest to you:

- *Marriage: pp. 425-433
- *Housework: pp. 448-457
- *Abortion: pp. 484-492
- *Pregnancy: pp. 495-507

5/4 **Foucault, *Discipline and Punish***

PART I

1. *The body of the condemned*, pp. 3-31
2. *The spectacle of the scaffold*, pp. 47-54

PART III

2. *The means of correct training* (pp. 170-172, 177-194)
 - a. *Panopticism* (pp. 200-209, 213-217, 221-224)

5/6 **Foucault, *Discipline and Punish***

PART IV

1. *Complete and austere institutions*, pp. 251-255
2. *Illegalities and delinquency*, pp. 264-268, 271-282, 285-292
3. *The carceral*, pp. 296-308 (*Foucault has just been discussing a reformatory school for juvenile delinquents which he marks as the "completion of the carceral system"*)