**Great Texts 2301**

**INTELLECTUAL TRADITION OF THE ANCIENT WORLD**



Spring 2014

Tuesdays 2-3:15

BR Flat 135 F

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Draper 209

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**REQUIRED TEXTS**

These specific editions:

Homer Iliad, trans. Fagles (Penguin: ISBN-13: 978-0140275360)

Sophocles, Antigone, trans., Paul Woodruff (Hackett, ISBN-13: 978-0872205727)

West, Four Texts on Socrates (Cornell: 978-0801485749)

Plato Republic, trans., Allan Bloom (Basic Books: ISBN-13: 978-0465069347)

Aristotle Ethics, trans., Ostwald (Pearson: ISBN-13: 978-0023895302)

Strunk & White, *Elements of Style* (Buccaneer Books)

Robert McMahon, “Real World Writing” (available from professor)

**COURSE OVERVIEW**

GTX 2301 is designed to introduce students to the intellectual tradition of the ancient West. Our goal is to examine carefully just a few of the culture’s most important texts and to begin to acquire an intellectual knack for interpreting them.

**COURSE STRUCTURE**

For the most part, our class time will consist of wonderfully engaging, guided discussions. Contrary to common opinion and practice, good class discussions are an extremely demanding art form. We shall thus have to cultivate the virtues they demand while avoiding the vices that ruin them (see the quotation at the bottom of the syllabus). Grades will be based on students’ performance in a number of areas: attendance & participation, quizzes, writing exercises, two essays, and a final exam. All assignments for the class are designed to help students acquire a basic understanding of the texts and to encourage students to begin the wild adventures of philosophical reflection.

***Participation & Attendance*:** Attendance is required. Please come to class well prepared to discuss the assigned texts. I do not distinguish between “excused” and “unexcused” absences, so there is no need to tell me why you were absent or to worry about a doctor’s note. Any student who misses *more than seven* scheduled class meetings will automatically fail the course, regardless of performance. Students who accumulate more than three absences should expect to see their grade substantially affected. *Leaving early or arriving late* will count as one-half absence.

***Quizzes*:**Quizzes on the assigned reading material will be administered regularly. These will typically take the form of multiple-choice questions, but other types of quizzes may also be administered. Quizzes will present no difficulty to the student who has read the assignment for the day with care; they are designed to encourage disciplined preparation. Your three lowest quiz scores will be dropped at the end of the semester.

***Writing Exercises:*** These are designed to prepare you for the two papers by giving you practice on the basic elements—introduction, body paragraphs, evidence.

***Essays*:** You will write two essays for the course, 5 pages each. These will be graded on style as well as content. Essay topics will be assigned in class. Work handed in late will be subject to a point deduction of 10% per day.

***Exam*:** The final exam will be administered on **Monday, May 12, 9:00 - 11:00 a.m**. It will be designed to test two different things. First, it will test your *factual* knowledge of the texts for the course and will thus contain a number of multiple choice questions. Many of these questions will be drawn from the quizzes taken during the semester. Second, it will test your interpretive and philosophical skills by including an essay component.

**GRADE SCALE**

Your grade will be calculated according to the following scale:

100 - 90% = A 79 - 77% = C+ 59 - 0% = F

89 - 87% = B+ 76 - 70% = C

86 - 80% = B 69 - 60% = D

Participation: 10%

Quizzes 15%

Writing Exercises 15%

Paper 1 20%

Paper 2 20%

Final Exam: 20%

**DISCUSSION SCHEDULE**

***January***

T 1/14 Class Introduction: “Liberal Education: Its Conditions and Ends”

Th 1/16 *Iliad* 1-3

T 1/21 *Iliad* 4-7

Th 1/23 *Iliad* 8-10

Writing Exercise 1 due Friday Jan. 24 by 5:00 pm.

T 1/28 *Iliad* 11-14

Th 1/30 *Iliad* 15-17

***February***

T 2/4 *Iliad* 18-21

Th 2/6 *Iliad* 22-24

Writing Exercise 2 due Friday Feb. 7 by 5:00 pm.

T 2/11 *Antigone*

Th 2/13Plato *Apology*

T 2/18 Plaot *Crito*

Th 2/20 Plato *Republic* 1

Writing Exercise 3 due Friday Feb. 21 by 5:00 pm.

T 2/25 *Republic* 2

Th 2/27 *Republic* 3

***March***

T 3/4 *Republic* 4

Th 3/6 *Republic* 5

T 3/18 *Republic* 6

Th 3/20 *Republic* 7

T 3/25 *Republic* 8

Th 3/27 *Republic* 9

Paper 1 due Friday March 28 by 5:00 pm.

***April***

T 4/1 *Republic* 10

Th 4/3Aristotle *Ethics* 1

T 4/8 *Ethics* 2

T 4/15 *Ethics* 3

Th 4/17 *Ethics* 4

T 4/22 *Ethics* 6-10 (selections)

Th 4/24 *Ethics* 7

T 4/29 *Ethics* 8

***May***

Th 5/1 *Ethics* 9

Paper 2 due Friday May 2 by 5:00 pm.

Some quotations for pondering:

* Conversation . . . springs from the movement of present minds disposed to intellectual adventure. Its enemies are the tedious, pertinacious talkers, resisting the flow without being able to give it a fresh direction; those who, like a worn gramophone record, distract the company by the endless repetition of what may have begun by being an observation but, on the third time round, becomes the indecent revelation of an empty mind; the noisy, the quarrelsome, the disputatious, the thrusters, the monopolists and the informers who carry books in their pockets and half-remembered quotations in their heads. Conversation cannot easily survive those who talk to win, who won’t be silent until they are refuted, those who won’t forget or who cannot remember, those who are too lazy to catch what comes their way or who (like men of putty) are too unresponsive to do anything but let it stick.

--Michael Oakeshott, “The Voice of Conversation in the Education of Mankind”

* At [a great] school you are not engaged so much in acquiring knowledge as in making mental efforts under criticism. . . . A certain amount of knowledge you can indeed with average faculties acquire so as to retain; nor need you regret the hours you spend on much that is forgotten, for the shadow of lost knowledge at least protects you from many illusions. But you go to a great school not so much for knowledge as for arts and habits; for the habit of attention, for the art of expression, for the art of assuming at a moment’s notice a new intellectual position, for the art of entering quickly into another person’s thoughts, for the habit of submitting to censure and refutation, for the art of indicating assent or dissent in graduated terms, for the habit of regarding minute points of accuracy, for the art of working out what is possible in a given time, for taste, discrimination, for mental courage and mental soberness. And above all you go to a great school for self-knowledge.

--William Cory, Reflections of an Eton Master

* [An introductory course such as this] will do best to confine itself to major texts which are in the hands of the students. Their interpretation will amount to philosophical training. The spirit of meditation, the capacity for penetrating self-analysis, the way of unbiased thinking, an openness for all substantial possibilities—all of this cannot be directly taught, but it can be awakened and trained in the comprehension of great philosophizing. How it will come about is incalculable.

--Karl Jaspers, “On Studying Philosophy”

* Our first exposure to the simple basic thoughts of philosophy can have an effect as if cataracts were removed from our eyes.

--Karl Jaspers, “On Studying Philosophy”

* Every age has its own outlook. It is specially good at seeing certain truths and specially liable to make certain mistakes. We all, therefore, need books that will correct the characteristic mistakes of our own period. And that means the old books.

—C.S. Lewis