

Ideas That Have Shaped the World

Version 2, updated 9/18/15, changes are in red.

First-Year Seminar, Fall 2015

MONDAY/FRIDAY 11:30

Room: Tome 232

Prof. John MacCormick

Office Hours: please see the instructor's website

Writing Associate: Taylor Hunkins

Library Liaison: Josefine Smith

Learning Goals:

- Explore and critically analyze influential ideas in the humanities from various perspectives
- Improve as a writer through writing, getting feedback, and revising
- Improve ability to debate and defend ideas, including your own views, with clarity and reason
- Improve ability to gather and assess the quality and reliability of various sources of information in research

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Why do ideas matter? What is the relationship between the individual and the community? How can we define human nature? What is justice? Are there universal moral principles? Or are our actions considered moral according to the moment and place in which we find ourselves? Explore these and other fundamental issues of humanistic inquiry through a series of compelling and influential texts. Faculty members from several different disciplines will join with students to read and discuss the work of authors as diverse as Homer, Plato, Augustine, Shakespeare, Jefferson, Marx, Du Bois, Duras, Darwin, Turing, and Achebe. The reading list is focused around the question, "How do the ideas of these authors – all from different cultures and eras – resonate across time and help us to understand our present experience within a global community?" Furthermore, studying carefully the work of outstanding thinkers, readers, and writers is one of the best ways to learn to read, think, and write well yourself. Because all sections of the course will read the texts simultaneously, conversations will extend beyond the classroom. The seminar also features six plenary lectures by visiting speakers and Dickinson faculty on themes and issues central to the readings. Students and faculty in all course sections will attend these plenary sessions together.

COURSE STRUCTURE

Class Meetings

The seminar meets Mon/Fri 11:30-12:45 in Tome 232. Plenary sessions (attended by all students and faculty in all four course sections), meet during class time as scheduled on the syllabus. **Please note the location of each plenary session as it is different from your regular class location.**

Plenary Sessions

- 1) From Myth to History (Homer, Thucydides) Monday, Sept.7
- 2) Pagans and Christians (Plato, Augustine) Monday, Sept.21
- 3) The Divine in the World (Dante) Monday, October 5
- 4) The Modern Self (Shakespeare, Descartes) Monday, October 26
- 5) Rebellion and Revolution (Marx, Jefferson, DuBois) Monday, Nov.9
- 6) New Histories (Achebe, Duras) Monday, November 23

Seminar Format and Etiquette:

This is not a lecture course. The basis of a seminar is discussion and participation by each student in written and oral assignments. All readings and assignments must be completed before each class on the syllabus so that we have a basis for discussion. Plan ahead – you will not be able to skim before class and be adequately prepared. 20% of your grade is based in preparation of readings ahead of time and participation. The way to succeed in this is to take notes from your reading, be prepared, and not be afraid to speak up. At the same time, always allow others to respond and contribute as well. It's important to the success of the class to keep the dialogue good humored and respectful, while at the same time being incisive and challenging when it comes to the ideas.

Required Reading

The following books are required for the course. They are all available at the College Bookstore and are in paperback.

1. Achebe, Chinua. *Things Fall Apart*. 50th Anniversary Ed. New York: Anchor Books, 1994. ISBN#: 978-0385474542.
2. Alighieri, Dante. *The Inferno of Dante*. Translated by Robert Pinsky. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1997. ISBN#: 978037452531-6.
3. Appiah, Kwame Anthony. *Cosmopolitanism*. New York: W.W. Norton Co., 2007. ISBN#: 978-0393329339.
4. Descartes, René. *Discourse on Method & Meditations on First Philosophy*. 4th ed. Translated by Donald Cress. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Books, 1999. ISBN#: 978-0872204201.

5. Du Bois, W.E.B. *The Souls of Black Folk*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2005. ISBN#: 978-1416500414.
6. Duras, Marguerite. *The Lover*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1998. ISBN#: 978-0375700521.
7. Homer. *Iliad*. Translated by Stanley Lombardo. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Books, ISBN: 978-0872203535
8. Plato. *Republic*. Trans. G.M.A. Grube. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing, 1992. ISBN#: 978-0872201361
9. Shakespeare, William. *The Tempest*. 2nd ed. Edited by James Phelan & Gerald Graff. Boston: Bedford/St. Martins, 2008. ISBN#: 978-0312457525.
10. Thucydides. *On Justice, Power, and Human Nature*. Edited by Paul Woodruff. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Books, 1993. ISBN#: 978-0872201682.
11. David Rosenwasser and Jill Stephen, *Writing Analytically*, 6th edition. ISBN#: 978-1285436500

Readings will be assigned from these texts and others throughout the semester. All additional readings are located on the Moodle site for this class. You will need to bring it to class with you, or have it available on your own laptop or tablet.

Written Assignments

Emphasis will be placed on four formal, written assignments during the semester. Two of these will include draft and revised forms, and one will be connected to a library component. The due dates of each assignment are indicated on the "Projected Class" schedule below. There will be enough time in between drafts and final versions of written assignments to discuss them with me and/or with our **Class Writing Associate** or a **Writing Center Tutor**.

Late Work Policy

Each student is permitted a total of four no-penalty days of lateness over the entire semester; every subsequent day of lateness incurs up to a 25% penalty for the late assignment. Late days can be used only in whole day units. Keep track of your own usage of late days. To use one or more late days on a given assignment, state clearly at the start of your submission how many days you are using, and the total used so far in the semester.

Writing Component in Detail

There will be four main writing assignments:

- A1: a close reading, based on a specific selection from one of the texts we read (3-4 pp., approx. 1000 words)
- A2: the library project, which is a critical review of sources that support a thesis

- A3: a compare and contrast paper, looking at one idea from two perspectives (4-5 pp., approx. 1300 words)
- A4: a thematic essay, on one of the themes of the course (5-6 pp., approx. 1750 words)

Writing Associate: Early feedback is key to good writing. A Writing Associate is a Dickinson upper class student who has been specially trained by the Writing Center to help other students with writing. We are fortunate to have Taylor Hunkins as our "W.A." in this seminar. His tasks include:

- orient students to the Writing Center
- give mini-lessons on writing-related topics
- assist groups of students in out-of-class peer review

You are required to have at least two group meetings with the WA during the semester. You should also visit the Writing Center early and often. Your writing and papers will benefit.

About Deadlines: Meet them. They are not suggestions. The key to meeting deadlines is preparation. Start early and leave yourself ample time to draft, revise, visit the Writing Center, revise again, and proof read.

Library Liaison: librarians are trained experts at helping you find important information that may not come up on a simple key word internet search. We are fortunate to have as our library liaison for this seminar Josefine Smith. She will

- give our class an introduction to library resources
- be available to help you with your writing projects for this class

Academic Integrity

This is an important topic, but here are the basics:

- do your own work; clear any collaborations ahead of time and give full credit
- cite your sources fully and explicitly
- for quotations, use quotation marks and cite fully; for summary or paraphrase, cite fully and explicitly at the end of the relevant paragraph or sentence.

For further details, please consult the "Community Standards" page on the Dickinson web site. **Penalties for violating the code of academic conduct described there are severe, including suspension from the College.**

Required Academic Integrity Tutorial: DUE DATE: ~~Friday 10/16/15~~ **Monday, September 21.** All incoming Dickinson students are required to complete Academic Integrity instruction. To fulfill this requirement, logon to Moodle (through the college Gateway) and look for the "course" entitled "Academic Integrity Tutorial." After you

have entered the Academic Integrity Tutorial course, click on the link to the tutorial, "I Thought I Could Get Away with It ...," in order to begin. Follow the instructions carefully, as you will only receive credit if you complete the entire tutorial and answer all questions. Students who do not complete this instruction will not be allowed to request classes during the spring course request period.

Grading

Your final grade will be based on five separate grades: one for each writing assignment and one for class participation, which encompasses everything from discussion to attendance.

20% class participation

20% A1 (close reading paper) - 10% each for the draft and the revision

20% A2 (library project)

20% A3 (comparative essay) - 10% each for the draft and the revision

20% A4 (thematic paper)

Accommodations for Disabilities

Dickinson College makes reasonable academic accommodations for students with disabilities. Every professor is available to discuss the implementation of academic accommodations for students with documented disabilities. Students requesting accommodations must first register with Disability Services to verify their eligibility. After documentation review, Marni Jones, Director of Learning Skills and Disability Services, will provide eligible students with accommodation letters for their professors. Students must obtain a new letter every semester and meet with each relevant professor prior to any accommodations being implemented. These meetings should occur during the first two weeks of the semester (except for unusual circumstances). The Office of Disability Services is located in Biddle House. For appointments call 717-245-1080. For more information, see the Disability Services website.

PROJECTED CLASS SCHEDULE**(May be revised during the semester as necessary)**

- Th 8/27 **Initial Class Meeting. 10:15-11:30 a.m. PLENARY MEETING
RUBENDALL RECITAL HALL, WEISS CENTER FOR THE ARTS
Summer Assignment Due**
- F 8/28 Individual Advising sessions as needed – schedule with the instructor.
- Sat. 8/29 **Second seminar class 10:15-11:30 p.m.
Reading: Homer, *Iliad*, Bks.1, 6, 9.**
- M 8/31 **Third regular seminar class 11:30-12:45
Reading: Homer, *Iliad*, Bks.16, 18, 22, 24. **CLOSE READING PAPER
ASSIGNED****
- F 9/4 **Reading: Thucydides/Woodruff, *On Justice, Power*, pp ix-xxv, 1, 12-37.**
- M 9/7 **PLENARY SESSION 11:30 STERN GREAT ROOM. “From Myth to
History,” Prof. Loren Jay Samons, Boston University.
Reading: Thucydides/Woodruff, *On Justice, Power*, 39-58, 66-76, 89-95**
- F 9/11 **Reading: Plato, *Republic*, Introduction, pp.viii-xviii; Bks.2 and 4 (pp.32-59,
94-121)**
- M 9/14 **Reading: Plato, *Republic*, Bks.8 and 10 (pp.213-240, 264-292)
CLOSE READING PAPER DUE**
- F 9/18 **Reading: Augustine, *City of God*, Bks. 14, 19. **(Moodle)****
- M 9/21 **PLENARY SESSION – 11:30 RUBENDALL RECITAL HALL “Pagans
and Christians” Prof. Marc Mastrangelo (Classical Studies)**
- F 9/25 **CLOSE READING PAPER REVISION DUE
Reading: Dante, *Divine Comedy (Inferno)*, Foreword/Translator’s Note:
pp.xi-xxiv; Canti 1-13**
- M 9/28 **LIBRARY SESSION – Library paper assigned 3-4 pgs.**
- F 10/2 **Reading: Dante, *Divine Comedy*, Canti 14-24**
- M 10/5 **PLENARY SESSION – 11:30 STERN GREAT ROOM “The Divine in the
World,” Prof. Dennis Looney, Univ. of Pittsburgh Reading: Dante,
Divine Comedy, Canto 25-end**

- F 10/9 **Reading:** Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, Acts 1,2. Montaigne, from *Of the Cannibals*, pp.119-120; William Strachey, from *True Repertory of the Wrack*, pp.121-23. **(In your edition of the Tempest)**
LIBRARY ASSIGNMENT DUE
- M 10/12 **Reading:** Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, pp. Acts 3,4,5.
(SECOND PAPER ASSIGNED - "Comparative Essay" 4-5 pgs.)
- F 10/16 **Open Class**
- M 10/19 **Fall Pause**
- F 10/23 **Reading:** Descartes, *Discourse on Method*,
Parts 1-2 (pp. 1-13), 4 (pp. 18-22), and 5 (pp. 23-26 and 31-33 only)
- M 10/26 **PLENARY SESSION STERN GREAT ROOM 11:30 a.m.-12:45 p.m.**
**"The Modern Self" Profs. Chauncey Maher (Philosophy),
Carol Ann Johnston (English)**
- F 10/30 **Reading:** Jefferson, *Declaration of Independence*; 1789 letter to James Madison; Samuel Adams, *Speech*; Madison, *Federalist #51 (Moodle)*
SECOND PAPER DRAFT DUE
- M 11/2 **Reading:** Adam Smith, *Wealth of Nations* (excerpt); Marx, Introduction (Tucker: "Marx/Engels Reader"), pp.xix-xxvii; xxxii-xxxvii. *Estranged Labour*. pp.70-81; *Manifesto on the Communist Party*, pp.473-500. **(Moodle)**
- F 11/6 **Reading:** Darwin, excerpt from *Origin of Species* (details on Moodle). Turing, *Computing Machinery and Intelligence*, *Mind*, Vol. 59, No. 236 (Oct., 1950), pp. 433-460, sections 1, 2, and 6 only. **(Moodle)**
- M 11/9 **PLENARY SESSION STERN GREAT ROOM 11:30 a.m.-12:45 p.m.**
"Rebellion and Revolution," Profs. Doug Edlin (Political Science), Chris Bilodeau (History)
SECOND PAPER REVISION DUE
- F 11/13 **Reading:** Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, chs. 1-6
THIRD PAPER ASSIGNED
- M 11/16 **Reading:** Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, chs. 8,10,14

- F 11/20 Reading: Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* (first half)
- M 11/23 **PLENARY SESSION - 11:30 STERN GREAT ROOM "New Histories" Prof. Cotten Seiler, American Studies.**
Reading: Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* (second half)
- F 11/27 **Thanksgiving Break**
- M 11/30 Reading: Duras, *The Lover* (entire text)
- F 12/4 **CONCLUDING PLENARY - 11:30 STERN GREAT ROOM**
THIRD PAPER DUE. Reading: Appiah Ch3-4.

Acknowledgment: This syllabus was developed by the Humanities Collective of Dickinson College, led by Professors Melinda Schlitt and Marc Mastrangelo. The above version of the syllabus has been edited by John MacCormick.