

**Great Books I
Syllabus
Fall 2011
Dr. Thompson**

Learning Outcomes:

This is a seminar course devoted to close reading and discussion of classical works of Western civilization. This course also gives students extensive practice in critical and thoughtful writing. “The goal of the Great Books program is to instill in the student the habits of mind that characterize a self-reliant thinker, reader, and learner.”¹ This singular goal or *learning outcome* will be achieved by close reading of each text, thoughtful discussion – both in listening and speaking, and by disciplined effort in writing interpretive analyses of the great ideas presented in each work. This course constitutes a “First-Year Seminar Program” option, whose learning outcomes are in concert with the study of the literature and philosophy of western civilization². But, all of this is only possible if you are willing to work hard and learn to think, read, and write in the landscape of the great ideas. Learning is a discipline, whose first step is mastery of your volition.

University Mission:

By reading the great books, you will grow intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually, thus helping to fulfill the university’s mission of gaining preparation for a life of purpose, service, and leadership.

Reading List:

Euripides. Ten Plays. Trans. Paul Roche. Signet Classic.
Plato. The Republic. Trans. Richard Sterling and William Scott. Norton.
Aristotle. Ethics. Trans. J.A.K. Thomson. Penguin.
Virgil. The Aeneid. Trans. Robert Fitzgerald. Vintage.
Homer. The Iliad. Trans. Robert Fagles. Penguin.

Recommended:

The website: <http://www.wisc.edu/writing/Handbook/DocMLA.html> contains critical information on the citation of textual quotations. This is the MLA (Modern Language Association) standard.

¹ An Introduction to Shared Inquiry. Third Edition. The Great Books Foundation. 1992. p. ix.

² Communicate clearly in well-organized and persuasive oral presentations; Communicate effectively in well-organized and clear written discourse; Demonstrate the ability to interpret research findings appropriate to the subject matter covered in the seminar; Demonstrate the ability to document sources using a format appropriate to the subject matter covered in the seminar; Demonstrate critical-thinking and problem-solving skills appropriate to the subject matter covered in the seminar; Articulate an understanding of vocation in a Christian context; Articulate an understanding of the Christian mission of the University

Office:

My office location is RAC 127. I can be reached by telephone at 310.506.4831 and by e-mail at thompson@pepperdine.edu. My office hours are M 10-11, T 11-12, F 12-1 and I am also happy to schedule appointments as needed. Please set these up in person, by phone or e-mail.

Website:

My website is located at <http://dt.pepperdine.edu> Look there for the syllabus, reading prompts, and other materials for the class.

Journaling:

Keep a personal journal using a lined or blank book. Use this to record at least three ideas or insights or interesting questions per week. These should come directly from your reading of the great books themselves. For example, as you read Plato's Republic, your observation/question might be: "If the soul is really tripartite, what would happen if emotions ruled all decisions instead of reason? In particular, what would happen if only anger was at work? Would there be anybody left standing?" I will occasionally collect these and look at them to see what your mind is cooking up.

Essentials:

1. Three original papers. Each paper topic will be laid out in advance. The first paper will be six pages long and deal with the notion of tragic heroism as described in the Trojan War. The second paper will be eight pages in length and deal with Platonic vs. Aristotelian justice and ethics. The third paper will be eight pages long, focusing on the hero's journey as described in Virgil's Aeneid and The Bacchae. All papers are to be double spaced in a 12 point Times New Roman font, using 1" margins.
2. Attendance, preparedness, and participation.
3. On several occasions, short writing assignments will be given in class, on my website or via e-mail.

Grading Criteria for writing:

An "A" paper should have the following qualities:

1. Clear, sophisticated thesis in answer to the assignment.
2. Well-organized paper with coherent, orderly paragraphs.
3. Assertions well-supported with logical reasoning and specifically described examples.
4. Precise and interesting language.
5. No major grammatical errors.
6. Careful proofreading.

All writing assignments are to be interpretive in content. Aim for a distinct thesis, a clear argument, and creative thought. Use text judiciously and with discrimination. Avoid using first person. Be sure to form a definite position that can be defended via the text.

All of your writing should refer only to works that we have read in this course. Each paper should be a product of analytical thought and careful analysis presented in a creative form.

Each paper is graded via the following criteria:

- P (The point of your paper, 20 points),
- A (How well you argued your position, 20 points),
- T (Your use of text, 20 points),
- R (Risk-taking/creativity, 20 points),
- L (Effective Use of language, 10 points), and
- M (Mechanics, 10 points).

Standards for written work:

All papers must be prepared using word processing software (Microsoft Word is recommended.) Indent paragraphs, give page numbers at top right, and have a title.

Proofread for errors. Read your paper aloud and most errors will jump out!

Use MLA style to cite all quotations.

(See <http://www.wisc.edu/writing/Handbook/DocMLA.html>)

Submit your writing on time. All work must be turned in electronically by 11:59 p.m. on the given due date. No late papers will be accepted.

Grading:

All work is to be submitted anonymously, by affixing your college wide identification number, NOT your social security, to the back of the last page. Do not enter your name on any of the papers.

Your course grade will be determined as follows:

Papers	25, 25, & 30%
Class Participation	15%
Short Writing Assignments	5%

Attendance and punctuality are also an important part of your participation in this course. Each absence beyond your second one will reduce this grade by 2%. If you are more than 5 minutes late, it counts as an absence.

Plagiarism:

May result in an automatic failure in the class. It is plagiarism if you (1) borrow a paper from another student, (2) turn in a paper written by any other person, (3) take material (pages, paragraphs, sentences, or ideas) from any printed source without giving credit.

See <http://seaver.pepperdine.edu/academicintegrity>.

Disability Services:

Any student with a documented disability (physical, learning, or psychological) needing academic accommodations should contact the Disability Services Office (Main Campus,

Tyler Campus Center 264, x6500) as early in the semester as possible. All discussions will remain confidential. Please visit <http://www.pepperdine.edu/disabilityservices/> for additional information.

Help on writing:

Take advantage of my availability for help on writing your papers. You may submit rough drafts in advance of the due date for any paper. Do this by anonymous e-mail attachment by setting up a generic account with a commercial e-mail provider (gmail, yahoo, ...). We also have an excellent writing center located in CAC 123, x4097. See <http://seaver.pepperdine.edu/writingcenter/>

Final Exam

12.12.11 -- 10:30-1:00

Reading/Discussion Schedule

Iphigenia at Aulis – 3; Iliad – 6; Republic - 6; Ethics - 4; Aeneid – 6; Bacchae – 3

Paper Due Dates

Paper #1 – October 1; Paper #2 – November 5; Paper #3 – December 12