

Great Books II Syllabus
Spring 2017
Dr. Thompson

Course Learning Outcomes:

The goal of this course is to study great books written during the medieval and reformation periods in order to gain a deeper understanding of their principal western worldviews and to engage in extended analysis of such great ideas as fortune, happiness, identity, justice, love, desire, power, suffering, and free will. In order to achieve these goals, each student will, with respect to each of these great ideas:

- Demonstrate the ability to read and analyze text.
- Demonstrate the ability to actively engage in discussion by framing good interpretive questions and challenging peer statements critically and insightfully.
- Demonstrate the ability to write creatively, comparatively, and analytically.
- Demonstrate the ability to critique peer writing.
- Demonstrate the ability to listen to peer statements during discussion and thoughtfully analyze and respond to their content.

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. 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.

Instructor:

Dr. Thompson.

Phone: 310.506.4831

Office: RAC 121

E-mail: thompson@pepperdine.edu - check your e-mail daily for class information.

Web: <http://dt.pepperdine.edu> – your site for the master reading schedule, reading prompts and course information.

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

Office Hours:

By Appointment ONLY.

Reading List:

Confessions, Augustine, translated by Henry Chadwick, Oxford University Press.

The Consolation of Philosophy, Boethius, translated by Victor Watts, Penguin Classics.

The Divine Comedy, Dante, translated by Mark Musa, Penguin Classics.

Richard III, Shakespeare, Washington Square Press.

The Prince, Machiavelli, translated by George Bull, Penguin Classics.

Martin Luther: Selections from His Writings, ed. by John Dillenberger, Anchor Books.

Attendance:

Attendance is mandatory with a measure of grace. You have one free absence (and there is no class on Feb 23), for each subsequent absence your final course grade will be lowered 2%. Absences related to school required events, e.g. athletics, fine arts, debate are excused IF advance notice is provided.

Class Participation (10%):

The process of *shared inquiry* lives on the breath of its participants. Therefore, I expect you to contribute daily to the discussion of the texts at hand. This means coming to class prepared, having read the selections and having recorded questions and thoughts in your reading journal. This class is not a spectator sport, nor is it an audience for a few outspoken voices. I expect you to participate and thereby hone your self-confidence and rhetorical *techne*.

Bi-weekly Writing (30%):

As scheduled, you are to turn in a clear, concise, hard copy essay of 550–600 words on the assigned topic. These papers will be collected at the beginning of class. You must deliver the paper in person. **NO ELECTRONIC SUBMISSIONS.** Each writing assignment must include a “Works Cited” section. You will be writing about the reading assignments we are covering.

There are five reasons for this weekly writing schedule:

- Writers write. To become a better writer, you must write and write often.
- Make a point. In order to focus your thinking on a particular book or books, it is not enough to talk. Talk is cheap. Writing represents your earnest attempt to make a point in a finite and fixed space-frame. It means literally putting your ideas on the line.
- Build toward larger papers. Weekly writing provides a means of developing ideas over an extended timeframe and thereby facilitates your writing of major papers.

- Keep up. Deadlines produce results. Your learning experience will be much deeper if you are pushed by this expectation. I push you so that you will push yourself.
- Writing stimulates class participation. Your class involvement will be strengthened by this process.

The bi-weekly writing assignment will usually be given on the Thursday prior to the due date. NO ELECTRONIC SUBMISSIONS. LATE PAPERS COUNT ZERO.

Extended Writing (3 x 20%):

The midterm papers are to be 7-10 pages, based on your own ideas, discoveries, and insights from the works. See the schedule for due dates. Each paper should be viewed as a fully developed version of one or more of your weekly writing assignments. All papers are due at 5 p.m. in hard copy on the respective due date. NO ELECTRONIC SUBMISSIONS. LATE PAPERS COUNT ZERO.

Writing Content: All writing assignments (unless noted otherwise) are to be interpretive in content. Aim for a distinct thesis, a clear argument, and creative thought. Use great books text judiciously and with discrimination. Use third person voice. Be sure to form a definite position that can be defended via the text. Use ONLY texts from the Great Books courses. Each paper should be a product of analytical thought presented in creative form.

ANONYMOUS WRITING:

This is a very important! Please turn in ALL writing assignments WITHOUT affixing your name. Instead, place your college wide identification number on the last page, after the “Works Cited” section. This allows me to be more objective as I critique and grade your papers. All papers are to follow MLA format cast in 12 point, New Times Roman font.

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 Payson Library.

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.