

Great Books III Syllabus
Fall 2021
Dr. Thompson

Course Learning Outcomes:

The goal of this course is to study great books written during the period ranging from the enlightenment to transcendentalism in order to gain a deeper understanding of their principal western worldviews and to engage in extended analysis of such great ideas as epistemology, truth, reality, the body politic, nature, human rights, deity, morality, and life meaning. 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 *learning outcome* (goal) 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.

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

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.
Courses: [https:// courses.pepperdine.edu](https://courses.pepperdine.edu)

Office Hours:

M 12:00, T 14:00, R 12:00 F 14:00

Reading List (with ISBN):

Descartes. Discourse on Method and the Meditations. Hackett. 0872204200
Milton. Paradise Lost. Norton. 0393924289
Rousseau. Basic Political Writings. Hackett. 0872200477
Voltaire. Candide. Penguin. 0140440046
Kant. Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals. Library of Liberal Arts. 0023078251
Shelley. Frankenstein. Signet. 0451527712
Austen. Persuasion. Penguin Classics. 9780143106289 Dickinson.
Complete Poems. CreateSpace. 1540408019

Reading, Discussion, & Writing Schedule

Descartes (4) Aug 31, Sep 3, 7, 10

Milton (5) Sep 14, 17, 21, 24, 28

Rousseau (4) Oct 5, 8, 12, 15

Voltaire (2) Oct 19, 22

Kant (4) Oct 26, 29, Nov 2, 5

Shelley (3) Nov 9, 12, 16

Austen (3) Nov 19, 23, 30

Dickinson (3) Dec 3, 7, 10

Attendance:

It is your job is to read each text carefully, prepare for each class discussion, attend class, & write with a strong voice and with mature attention to the texts at hand. Excessive absences will result in a lowered grade.

Class Participation (15%):

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 *techné*.

Extended Writing (3 x 25%)

You are to submit three finished works of writing, each of which is 6+, 7+, and 8+ pages long*, elaborating on an idea of your weekly writing or another topic or question. The first paper should focus on either Milton or Descartes. The second paper, of length 7+ pp.* must draw from Kant, Rousseau or Voltaire, and one other author from this course. The last paper must draw from two of the following: {Shelley, Austen, & Dickinson} and one other author from this course and must be 8+ pp. long*. These papers are due on Sep 30, **Nov 13**, and Dec 16 – all papers are to be submitted electronically by 23:59. Late papers are penalized 30% per day. (*Excluding the Works Cited page.) Rough drafts are due 48 hours prior to paper deadline.

Please submit all written work without your name affixed. Simply write your college wide ID on the last page. This ensures that my grading of your work will be objective and honest.

Short Writing (10%):

As assigned, you are to turn in a clear, concise, hard copy essay of 550–600 words on the assigned topic. 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 recurring 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 weekly writing assignment will usually be given on the Friday prior to the 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 <https://seaver.pepperdine.edu/academics/academic-support/integrity/>

Disability Services:

Any student with a documented disability (physical, learning, or psychological) needing academic accommodations should contact the Office of Student Accessibility. Please visit <https://www.pepperdine.edu/student-accessibility/> 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, ...).

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.