

Contemporary Civilization – Fall 2018 – Course Syllabus

Instructor: Charles McNamara, cjm2173@columbia.edu / charles.mcnamara@columbia.edu

Location & Time: Hamilton 301: Monday and Wednesday, 12:10pm–2:00pm

Office Hours: Hamilton 202: Monday, 3:30pm–4:30pm; Tuesday, 11:00am–12:00pm

Course Description:

Contemporary Civilization is the signature course of Columbia College. It takes as its ambitious focus a broad range of eras, authors, texts, and ideas. As the course title states, it is a study of civilization, understood both on the small scale of the individual and on the larger scale of politics and society.

Texts:

The following texts are required for the course. They are available for purchase both at the Columbia Book Store (Broadway at 115th St.) and Book Culture (112th St. between Broadway and Amsterdam).

- Plato, *Republic* (Hackett)
- Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* (Oxford World Classics)
- Aristotle, *Politics* (Hackett)
- **Epictetus, *Handbook* (Hackett)**
- *New Oxford Annotated Bible with Apocrypha* (Oxford)
- Augustine, *City of God* (Penguin)
- *The Qur'an*, Abdel Hallem, ed. (Oxford)
- Machiavelli, *The Prince* (Hackett)
- Machiavelli, *The Discourses* (Penguin)
- Descartes, *Discourse on Method* and *Meditations on First Philosophy* (Hackett)
- *The Protestant Reformation*, Hillerbrand, ed. (Harper & Row)
- Hobbes, *Leviathan* (Oxford)
- Locke, *Political Writings*, Wootton, ed. (Hackett)
- Rousseau, *The Basic Political Writings* (Hackett)

Office Hours:

I expect students to come to office hours regularly. They are an important opportunity to get help on topics that you are not quite getting straight. Office hours are, of course, not required, but I guarantee that you will enjoy this class more and learn more if you come often. If you cannot make my regular office hours, feel free to schedule an appointment. We can even multi-task if you find yourself scrambling for time: I'm happy to meet over breakfast or on runs.

Grading and Assignments:

The grading in this course will always be **fair, consistent, and transparent**. Your grade will be determined according to the following distribution:

- In-Class Discussion/Quizzes: 10%
 - This course centers around participating in discussions, not listening to lectures. Sitting in silence, even the most attentive silence, will penalize your final grade in the course.
 - Occasionally, I will give 5-minute quizzes at the beginning of class on the assigned reading. You cannot take these quizzes late, so make sure you come to class on time.
- Homework/Response Papers: 10%
 - At least two days before each class, I will post a selection of study questions about the upcoming material on our CourseWorks website. **Before midnight on the night before class**, you must write 3-5 sentences in response to one or more of these questions. You must complete this brief response for **every regular meeting of class**.

- In addition to study questions, I will post a question for written response. You must complete **five** response papers (250-350 words) over the term about these questions. This response paper is due in hard copy at the beginning of class. Late response papers will not be accepted.
- Essays: 40%
 - Writing is arguably the best technology we have for explaining our thoughts to each other. One central aim of this course is to cultivate your ability to write thoughtful, original prose.
 - The writing assignments for this class demand careful argumentation, verbal precision, and clear language. **Opaque language is not impressive.** Keep in mind this advice from Julius Caesar: “Just as you should avoid a craggy cliff, so you should avoid an unheard and unaccustomed word.”
- Midterm Exam: 15%
- Final Exam: 25%

Office of Disability Services:

Columbia University instructors are required by law to provide accommodations as prescribed by the Office of Disability Services. I cannot, however, make these accommodations unless I know that you are entitled to them. If you are entitled to accommodations through ODS, see me **as soon as possible**.

Core Policy on Student Attendance:

Students are expected to attend every session of their Core classes. Students who miss class without instructor permission should expect to have their grade lowered. Repeated unexcused absences will result in a failing grade or a withdrawal from the class. In the event that a student must miss a class due to religious observance, illness, or family emergency, instructors may strongly encourage (though not require) that students complete additional assignments to help make up for lost class participation. Whenever possible (in the case of religious holidays, for example), students should provide advance notification of absence.

My Addendum to the Core Policy Student Attendance:

Do Not Miss Class. If you have more than **four** unexcused absences over the course of the term, you will fail the course. If you are absent from class, even for legitimate reasons (sporting event, etc.), you will be expected to complete **an extra response paper** about the material you missed. Note that this response paper **does not count** toward your five required response papers.

Core Policy on Academic Integrity:

Columbia College is dedicated to the highest ideals of integrity in academia. Therefore, in Literature Humanities and Contemporary Civilization, any instance of academic dishonesty, attempted or actual, will be reported to the faculty chair of the course and to the dean of the Core Curriculum, who will review the case with the expectation that a student guilty of academic dishonesty will receive the grade of ‘F’ in the course and be referred to dean's discipline for further institutional action.

My Addendum to the University Policy on Academic Integrity:

Committing plagiarism is a capital offense in the academic world in which we live and work. If you are found to have committed plagiarism on any assignment, you will receive an F on that assignment and may face further sanctions (e.g., expulsion) from the Office of Judicial Affairs. It is important to understand, moreover, that plagiarism includes more than just lifting language word-for-word from Wikipedia. It includes submitting work, even unpublished work, written by others. It includes failing to cite or acknowledge the sources of one's ideas, even when those ideas are thoroughly paraphrased.

If you find yourself tempted to do any of these things or if you are uncertain whether your work constitutes an instance of plagiarism, please e-mail me immediately.

Course Outline (subject to minor adjustment):

- Wednesday, September 5
 - Plato, *Republic*, Book I
- Monday, September 10
 - Plato, *Republic*, Books I-IV
- Wednesday, September 12
 - Plato, *Republic*, Books V-VII
 - **Assign Paper #1**
- Monday, September 17
 - Plato, *Republic*, Books VIII-X
- **Tuesday, September 18**
 - **Paper #1 Due**
- Wednesday, September 19
 - Aristotle, *Nic. Ethics*, Books I-II; Book III, Ch. 1-5
- Monday, September 24
 - Aristotle, *Nic. Ethics*, Book V; Book VI, Ch. 5-8, 12-13; Book VII, Ch. 1-8; Book VIII; Book X
 - **Assign Paper #2**
- Wednesday, September 26
 - Aristotle, *Politics*, Book I; Book III, Ch. 1-13; Book IV, Ch. 1-2; Book VII, Ch. 1-3, 13-17; Book VIII, Ch. 1-3
- Monday, October 1
 - Hebrew Bible: *Exodus* 1-24; *Deuteronomy* 1-6; *1 Samuel* 2, 8-10, 17-20; *Ecclesiastes*
- Wednesday, October 3
 - Epictetus, *Handbook*
 - Epicurus, *Letter to Herodotus*, *Letter to Menoecus*, *Principal Doctrines*, *Vatican Sayings* (on CC website)
- **Thursday, October 4**
 - **Paper #2 Due**
- Monday, October 8
 - New Testament: *Matthew* 3-7; *Galatians*; *Romans*
- Wednesday, October 10
 - Augustine, *City of God*, Book I, Preface and Ch. 1-9, 15-36; Book II, Ch. 2, 14; Book III, Ch. 31; Book IV, Ch. 1-4; Book V, Preface and Ch. 1, 8-19; Book VI, Preface; Book VIII, Ch. 1-12
- Monday, October 15
 - Augustine, *City of God*, Book XI, Ch. 1; Book XII, Ch. 6-8, 23; Book XIII, Ch. 1-8, 13-15, 19; Book XIV, Ch. 1-4, 8, 10-19, 22-28; Book XVIII, Ch. 1; Book XIX, Ch. 13-17; 24-28
- Wednesday, October 17
 - *Qur'an*, Suras 96, 1, 114, 112, 111, 107, 98, 68, 63, 56, 39, 26, 17, 12, 4, 3, 2
- Monday, October 22
 - Al-Ghazali, *The Rescuer from Error*; Ibn Tufayl, *Hayy Ibn Yaqzān*; Averroes, *On the Harmony of Religion and Philosophy* (on CC website)
- Wednesday, October 24
 - Aquinas, *The Summa against the Gentiles*, *On Kingship*, *The Summa of Theology* (on CC website)
- **Monday, October 29**
 - **Midterm Exam**
 - **Assign Paper #3**
- Wednesday, October 31
 - Luther, “Preface to Latin Writings”; “Freedom of a Christian Man”; “On Governmental Authority”; “Commentary on St. Paul to Romans”; “Twelve Articles of the Peasants” (in Hillerbrand / on CC website)
- Monday, November 5
 - No Class – Election Day Holiday
- Wednesday, November 7
 - Machiavelli, *The Prince*
- **Thursday, November 8**
 - **Paper #3 Due**
- Monday, November 12
 - Machiavelli, *Discourses*, Book I, Preface and Ch. 1-13, 16-18, 27, 29, 32, 34, 42, 53-55, 58; Book II, Preface and Ch. 1-3, 29
- Wednesday, November 14
 - Vitoria, *On The American Indians*; Poma de Ayala, *Appeal Concerning the Priests*; Council of Castile; Florentine Codex (on CC website)
- Monday, November 19
 - Descartes, *Discourse on Method*
 - Galileo, “Letter to the Grand Duchess” (on CC website)

- Wednesday, November 21
 - NO CLASS – Thanksgiving Holiday
 - Monday, November 26
 - Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Introduction and Part I
 - **Assign Paper #4**
 - Wednesday, November 28
 - Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Part II; Part IV, 46-47; Review and Conclusion
 - Recommended: Part III, Ch. 32, 38
 - Monday, December 3
 - Locke, *Second Treatise on Government*
 - Recommended: A *Letter Concerning*
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- Toleration*
 - Wednesday, December 5
 - Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality*, pg. 45–92
 - **Friday, December 7**
 - **Paper #4 Due**
 - Monday, December 10
 - *Social Contract*, pg. 156–183, 188–201, 210–230, 243–252
 - **Friday, December 14, 12:30pm–3:30pm**
 - **Final Exam**