

Contemporary Civilization – Spring 2019 – Course Syllabus

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

Location & Time: Hamilton 301: Monday and Wednesday, 8:10am–10:00am

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 at Book Culture (112th St. between Broadway and Amsterdam). If you find different editions of the texts than those provided here, it is your responsibility to find the proper pages/sections for course reading assignments.

- **Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals* (Hackett)**
- Smith, *Wealth of Nations* (Modern Library)
- Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (Cambridge)
- Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (Oxford)
- Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (Oxford)
- **Paine, *Common Sense and Other Writings* (Modern Library)**
- Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (Penguin)
- **Hegel, *Introduction to the Philosophy of History* (Hackett)**
- Mill, *On Liberty and Other Essays* (Oxford)
- *Marx-Engels Reader* (Norton)
- Darwin, *Norton Critical Edition* (Norton)
- Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals / Ecce Homo* (Vintage)
- Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk, Norton Critical Edition* (Norton)
- Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (Grove)
- Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (Harcourt)
- Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political* (Chicago)
- **Woolf, *Three Guineas* (Harcourt)**
- **Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago)**

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, January 23
 - ^ Hume, *Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*, pg. 13-93
- ^ Monday, January 28
 - ^ Smith, *Wealth of Nations*: Introduction and Plan of the Work and Bk. I, Ch. 1-4, 7-8; Book II, Intro, Ch. 3
- ^ Wednesday, January 30
 - ^ Smith: Book III; Book IV, Ch. 1-2; Book V, Ch. 1, Pt. 3, Article 2
- ^ Monday, February 4
 - ^ Kant, *Groundwork*, pg. 1-32
 - ^ **Assign Paper #1**
- ^ Wednesday, February 6
 - ^ Kant, *Groundwork*, pg. 32-55
- ^ Monday, February 11
 - ^ Declaration of Independence; Federalist 10; Douglass, "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?"
 - ^ Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen; Sieyès, "What is the Third Estate?"; Robespierre, "Moral and Political Principles of Domestic Policy" (all on Courseworks)
- ^ Wednesday, February 13
 - ^ Burke, pg. 3-22, 32-38, 47-53, 58-63, 75-79, 87-97, 105-116, 121-128, 135-142, 172-179, 195-204, 248-250
- ^ **Thursday, February 14**
 - ^ **Paper #1 Due**
- ^ Monday, February 18
 - ^ Thomas Paine, *Rights of Man*, p. 135-179; *Age of Reason*, p. 245-295
- ^ Wednesday, February 20
 - ^ Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, Ch. 1-4; Ch. 9
- ^ Monday, February 25
 - ^ Tocqueville, Vol I: Author's Introduction; Part I, Ch. 3-4; Part II, Ch. 3-8; Vol II, Part I, Ch. 1-2, 5-8
- ^ Wednesday, February 27
 - ^ Tocqueville, Vol II, Part II, Ch. 1-8, 10-11, 13, 16-20; Part III, Ch. 7-8, 17-19
- ^ **Monday, March 4**
 - ^ **Midterm Exam**
 - ^ **Assign Paper #2**
- ^ Wednesday, March 6
 - ^ Mill, *On Liberty*
- ^ Monday, March 11
 - ^ Mill/Taylor, "The Subjection of Women," Ch. 1, 3-4; Truth, "Ain't I a Woman?" (On Courseworks)
- ^ Wednesday, March 13
 - ^ Hegel, Intro. to *Phil. of History*, Ch. 1-3
- ^ **Thursday, March 14**
 - ^ **Paper #2 Due**
- ^ Monday, March 18
 - ^ No Class – Spring Break
- ^ Wednesday, March 20
 - ^ No Class – Spring Break
- ^ Monday, March 25
 - ^ Marx, "On the Jewish Question," Pt. I; "German Ideology, Pt. I"; "Wage Labor and Capital"
- ^ Wednesday, March 27
 - ^ Marx, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*; "Theses on Feuerbach"
- ^ Monday, April 1
 - ^ Darwin, "Origin of Species": Introduction, Ch. 3, 4, 14; "Descent of Man": Ch. 2-3, 6, 21
- ^ Wednesday, April 3
 - ^ Nietzsche, *Genealogy*, Essay 1
- ^ Monday, April 8
 - ^ Nietzsche, *Genealogy*, Essays 2-3
- ^ Wednesday, April 10
 - ^ Freud, "Civilization and its Discontents" (trans. Strachey, on Courseworks)

- ^ Monday, April 15
 - ^ Du Bois, *Souls of Black Folk*; “The Souls of White Folk” (On Courseworks)
 - ^ **Assign Paper #3**
- ^ Wednesday, April 17
 - ^ Fanon, Introduction to *Wretched of the Earth*; “On Violence”
- ^ Monday, April 22
 - ^ Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism*, Ch. 10, 11, 13
- ^ Wednesday, April 24
 - ^ Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, p. 18–79
- ^ **Friday, April 26**
 - ^ **Paper #3 Due**
- ^ Monday, April 29
 - ^ Woolf, *Three Guineas*
- ^ Wednesday, May 1
 - ^ Anscombe, “Modern Moral Philosophy” (On Courseworks)
- ^ Monday, May 6
 - ^ Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*
- ^ **Friday, May 10**
 - ^ **Final Exam**