

General Studies 145C: Antiquity

Whitman College – Fall 2008

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or by appointment

Course Description

Antiquity & Modernity is a year-long exploration of the formation and transformation of some Western worldviews – conceptions of what is most fundamental and important in human life, both as it is and as it ought to be. We will explore ways of understanding nature, society, the self, and the transcendent. Attention will be given not only to the continuity within the dominant worldviews, but also to competing and alternate visions. The course will examine some of the important individuals, texts, and events that have significantly shaped, reshaped, and challenged these worldviews.

This semester, we will focus on Antiquity. We will explore representative texts from several of the principal roots of Western culture: classical Greece, ancient Mesopotamia, the Hebrew Bible, the Roman empire, and the initial development of Christianity. We will conclude with Augustine's attempt to synthesize aspects of these sources into a single vision.

Course Goals

- To develop your skills of close reading and critical analysis of texts that are very difficult and often conceptually distant.
- To retool your high school writing skills by having you work on your writing process, focusing on how to have an idea that you are genuinely intellectually invested in, and how to develop and support that idea through formal writing and analysis.
- To create a fun and supportive conversational space in which you are encouraged by both your peers and by me to be intellectually vulnerable.
- To create an intellectually stimulating environment that encourages you to discover “the life of the mind” from out of the power of your own insights into formative texts from the Western tradition.

Class Format

One of the main purposes of Antiquity & Modernity is to help students *personally engage* difficult texts like the ones we read. While I will sometimes present background information, alternative interpretations, or so on, those occasions will be rare and brief. The bulk of our class time will be spent actively working with the readings and the larger issues that they suggest, through whole-class and small-group discussions and other activities. More details about expectations for individual participation are provided on a separate handout.

For this class to work, everyone in the room must be *fully mentally present*. Turn off your cell phone, put away your other work, and really focus on the conversation. If you find that you're too drowsy or too

distracted by something else to concentrate, you should simply (and unobtrusively) leave. Otherwise, I may interrupt class to ask you to leave.

High Tech

- I will often distribute important announcements, reminders, and clarifications through e-mail. It is your responsibility to *check your account every day*.
- There is also an e-mail list-server set up for the class, which you should feel free to use. Messages sent to gens145c_08fa@lists.whitman.edu will be forwarded to everyone in our section.
- The main General Studies website (http://www.whitman.edu/general_studies) has a variety of useful information and links.

Required Texts

Hacker, Diana. A Pocket Style Manual. 4th ed. New York: Bedford / St. Martin's, 2004.

A good dictionary (You can't understand the readings if you don't know what the words mean!)

Augustine. Confessions. Trans. R.S. Pine-Coffin. New York: Penguin Books, 1961.

Cicero. On Duties. Ed. and Trans. M.T. Griffin and E.M. Atkins. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991.

The Epic of Gilgamesh. Ed. and Trans. Benjamin R. Foster. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2001.

Euripides. Medea. Trans. Rex Warner. Euripides I. Ed. David Greene and Richmond Lattimore. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955.

---. The Bacchae. Trans. William Arrowsmith. Euripides V. Ed. David Grene and Richmond Lattimore. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959.

Homer. The Odyssey. Trans. Robert Fagles. New York: Penguin Books, 1996.

The New Oxford Annotated Bible. 3rd ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 2001.

Plato. Apology. Trans. G.M.A. Grube. Rev. John Cooper. The Trial and Death of Socrates. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 2000.

---. Symposium. Trans. Alexander Nehamas and Paul Woodruff. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1989.

Tanakh: The Holy Scriptures. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1985.

Summary of Requirements and Grading

Class participation	20%
Weekly Paragraphs	15%
1000-Word Essays	15% combined
Final Portfolio	50%

(Detailed explanations of each of these components are provided on a separate handout.)

**** NOTE: You cannot pass the class if:**

1. You miss 9 or more class meetings *for any reason*.
2. You miss 3 or more of the weekly paragraphs *for any reason*.
3. You fail the final portfolio assignment.

Academic Honesty

All of the work that you submit in this course must be entirely your own. Of course, you can seek help in a variety of ways as you prepare your weekly paragraphs and 1000-word essays. But it is not permitted for you to use someone else's words or ideas in your written work without giving proper acknowledgment. Guidelines for citation can be found in Hacker's Pocket Style Manual.

Plagiarism will *not* be tolerated in any form. You have signed a statement indicating that you understand and will abide by the College policy on plagiarism. **Any student caught plagiarizing will automatically fail the course, and may be expelled from the College.** For more details, see the Student Handbook.

Schedule of Readings & Assignments

**** NOTE:** *The questions posed here are intended to provide one possible starting point for each reading, so you can focus your preparation for our class discussions. However, I hope that you won't feel constrain yourself to them, and that you'll still identify and pursue your own interests and insights.*

Wed. Sep. 3 Homer, The Odyssey, books 1-4
Q: *Why does Telemachus have to leave home?*

Fri. Sep. 5 Homer, The Odyssey, books 5-8
Q: *Why does Odysseus pass up opportunities for immortality with Calypso and a great life with Nausicaa to try to return to Ithaca?*

⇒ *for the first part of the semester, group #1 = Monday, group #2 = Wednesday, and group #3 = Friday*

Mon. Sep. 8 Homer, The Odyssey, books 9-12
Q: *Using the standards of the text, evaluate the encounter with Polyphemus. Who behaves badly, and how? Who behaves well, and how?*
* syllabus quiz

Wed. Sep. 10 Homer, The Odyssey, books 13-16
Q: *How do the stories Odysseus tells on Ithaca compare to the stories he told to the Phaeacians? What is revealed through that comparison?*

Fri. Sep. 12 Homer, The Odyssey, books 17-20
Q: *How is Odysseus both testing others and being tested himself as he works to regain his kingship? How do those tests work, and what is their significance?*

Mon. Sep. 15 Homer, The Odyssey, books 21-24
Q: *Taking for granted that The Odyssey is a work of genius, what could be the reason for the abrupt ending?*

- Wed. Sep. 17 Sappho, selections on e-reserve (password = antiquity)
Q: In the fragment that Carson numbers 130, Eros is described as “sweetbitter” (translated by Balmer as “bittersweet” and by Powell as “sweet, bitter”). What exactly does that mean? How do we see it in any one of the other fragments?
- Fri. Sep. 19 Sappho, re-read selections on e-reserve
Q: What is Sappho’s view of and relationship with Aphrodite (a.k.a. Kypris)?
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- Mon Sep. 22 Euripides, The Medea, all
Q: In what ways are Medea’s grief and rage made to seem sympathetic and justified?
*** first paper due**
- Wed. Sep. 24 Euripides, The Medea, re-read all
Q: Is Medea triumphant at the end of the play?
- Fri. Sep. 26 Euripides, The Bacchae, all
Q: Why does Pentheus act the way he does? (And is he really being so unreasonable?)
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- Mon. Sep. 29 Euripides, The Bacchae, re-read all
Q: What (if anything!) do you think is the real tragedy of this play?
- Wed. Oct. 1 Euripides, The Medea and The Bacchae, all
Q: In The Medea, the primary conflict is within a single character, while in The Bacchae it seems to be between two characters. How does that difference affect the nature of the tragedy and/or the audience’s experience of it?
- Fri. Oct. 3 Plato, Apology, all
Q: For Socrates, what does it mean to “examine” your life? Why is it so important?
** participation self-evaluation due*
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- ⇒ *for the second part of the semester, group #2 = Monday, group #3 = Wednesday, and group #1 = Friday*
- Mon. Oct. 6 Plato, Symposium 172a-199c
Q: Determine which speech so far you think is the most correct. If it were true, in what ways would life be good for a lover? In what ways might life be bad?
- Wed. Oct. 8 Plato, Symposium 199c-212c
Q: How could Socrates’ view avoid the problems that could arise for a lover if the view you chose for Monday’s question were true?
- Fri. Oct. 10 Plato, Symposium 212c-223d
Q: Is it better to be Socrates or Alcibiades? Who would you rather be?
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- Mon. Oct. 13 **NO CLASS – FALL BREAK**

- Wed. Oct. 15 Gilgamesh, tablets I-III
Q: *What does it mean for Gilgamesh and Enkidu to be “equals”? What does Enkidu actually do for Gilgamesh? How?*
- Fri. Oct. 17 Gilgamesh, tablets IV-VIII
Q: *How are the gods portrayed in the epic so far?*
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- Mon. Oct. 20 Gilgamesh, tablets IX-XI
Q: *The closing lines of the epic return to the walls described at the beginning of Tablet I. Why? What is their significance in this context?*
* **second paper due**
- Wed. Oct. 22 Tanakh, Genesis 1-11
Q: *How does the flood story in Gilgamesh compare to the flood story in Genesis?*
- Fri. Oct. 24 Tanakh, Genesis 12-22
Q: *Create a visual representation of the near-sacrifice of Isaac (Gen. 22)*
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- Mon. Oct. 27 Tanakh, Exodus 1-15
Q: *Why is Moses chosen to lead the Israelites?*
- Wed. Oct. 29 Tanakh, Exodus 16-24 and 32-34
Q: *How does the covenant through Moses compare with one of the earlier covenants, either through Noah or Abram/Abraham?*
- Fri. Oct. 31 Tanakh, Job 1-21
Q: *What is the essence of Job’s complaint? What is the essence of his friends’ response?*
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- ⇒ *for the third part of the semester, group #3 = Monday, group #1 = Wednesday, and group #2 = Friday*
- Mon. Nov. 3 Tanakh, Job 28-31 and 38-42
Q: *How does God’s response address Job’s complaints?*
- Wed. Nov. 5 Cicero, On Duties I.1-92
Q: *What is the ultimate foundation supposed to be for Cicero’s ethical claims? How so?*
* *participation self-evaluation due*
- Fri. Nov. 7 Cicero, On Duties I.93-161
Q: *For Cicero, what is the proper role of human reason? Why?*
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- Mon. Nov. 10 Cicero, On Duties II
Q: *How does Cicero understand the relation between glory and honorableness?*
* **third paper due**
- * **Tue. Nov. 11** lecture by Prof. Anthony Long (UC-Berkeley): “Cicero’s Communitarian Politics”
4:00 p.m. – Maxey Auditorium

- Wed. Nov. 12 Oxford Bible, Luke 1.1-9.50
 Q: For Luke, how do Jesus' teachings and/or actions relate to Tanakh?
- Fri. Nov. 14 Oxford Bible, Luke 9.51-19.27
 Q: Choose the parable that you find to be most interestingly difficult. What can you make of its message? And what's left to figure out?
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- Mon. Nov. 17 Oxford Bible, Luke 19.28-24.53
 Q: For Luke, what is important about Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection?
- Wed. Nov. 19 Oxford Bible, Romans 1-8
 Q: For Paul, what is important about Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection?
- Fri. Nov. 21 Oxford Bible, Romans, all
 Q: If salvation is open to everyone and guaranteed for no one, then how can it be true that the Jews are God's chosen people?

THANKSGIVING BREAK

- Mon. Dec. 1 Augustine, Confessions, books 1-3
 Q: What is Augustine's view of the nature of sin?
- Wed. Dec. 3 Augustine, Confessions, books 4-6
 Q: For Augustine, is friendship more of a positive or a negative influence overall?
- Fri. Dec. 5 Augustine, Confessions, book 7
 Q: According to Augustine, how could an all-good and all-powerful God have created a world in which there seems to be so much evil?
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- Mon. Dec. 8 Augustine, Confessions, books 8-9
 Q: Who is ultimately responsible for Augustine's conversion?
- Wed. Dec. 10 Augustine, Confessions, book 10
 Q: Summarize Augustine's overall view: what does it take to achieve salvation?
 * *participation self-evaluation due*
- Fri. Dec. 12 SEMESTER WRAP-UP
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- * **Tue. Dec. 16 FINAL PORTFOLIO DUE by 4:00 p.m.**