

Program in Cultures, Civilizations, and Ideas

Humanities 112: Modernity and Tradition

General Syllabus for all Sections 2019-2020

Course Description

This course is an overview of modern thought. We will read a few decisive texts in the Western tradition – texts that opened up new ways of thought and helped shape the modern world. Along the way we will trace the emergence and transformation of some of the basic terms in which we think. The immediate aim of the course is double: to deepen our understanding of the traditions that we inherited, but also to rethink or refine that heritage. The ultimate aim of the course is to prepare ourselves to confront basic questions (ethical, political, social, economic, religious, scientific, technological) that face us today. For the sake of coherence, we will focus broadly on the themes of *modernity* and *tradition*.

The word ‘modern’ means ‘of the moment’ or ‘right now’ (*modo*); it is commonly opposed to ‘ancient’ or ‘traditional’. European thinkers began to use the word in the 15th and 16th centuries, as it became apparent that their world was different from the ancient world. This sense of difference led to a crisis in the authority of tradition; inherited ways of thinking and acting no longer seemed appropriate or adequate for the new realities. For 500 years, modern thinkers have dealt with this crisis in various ways: some have tried to break with tradition and invent new forms of thought and action; some have tried to clear away the distortions of tradition and to recover the original forms of thought and practice implicit in the tradition’s founding texts; some have sought to transform traditional forms of thought and practice in light of the new realities of the modern world. We will have to attend to the ways in which each text we read tries to break with, recover, or transform the tradition.

The CCI course is meant not only to impart knowledge but also to develop the abilities one needs to be a responsible citizen, a successful professional and a thoughtful person: the ability to read and listen, to speak and write, to think clearly and critically, and to engage in dialogue and debate. Hence the emphasis on careful reading, thoughtful writing, and active participation in class discussions.

Books

The following books are required for this course. **If you are enrolled in this course, you must purchase these books at the university bookstore. Other editions or translations will not be accepted.**

NOTE: not all HUM 112 sections will use the same texts, check with your instructor as to which titles you will need to acquire.

Machiavelli *The Prince* (Norton);

Shakespeare, *Tempest* (Oxford) or *Julius Caesar* (Oxford) or *Hamlet* (Oxford) *Macbeth* (Oxford);

Rousseau, *The Discourses and Other Political Writings* (Cambridge)

Descartes, *Discourse on Method and Meditations on First Philosophy* (Hackett);

Woolf, *To the Lighthouse* (Oxford U.P.) or *A Room of One’s Own* (Mariner Press);

Baudelaire, *The Painter of Modern Life* (Penguin)

Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*. (Vintage);

More, *Utopia* (Penguin);

Kafka, *Metamorphosis* (Penguin);

Marx, *The Portable Marx* (Penguin) or *The Communist Manifesto* (Penguin) or *The Marx-Engels Reader* (Norton);

Shelley, *Frankenstein* (Penguin);

The Basic Writings of Existentialism, G. Marino (ed.), Modern Library

Additional Readings

In addition to the primary texts listed above, you may also from time to time be assigned additional short texts, articles, or excerpts. These texts may have been assembled for you in your instructor’s personal *HUM 112 Course Materials* available in the e-reserve room of the library, which you may be required to print and bring to class.

Requirements

Midterm Course Project 30%, Final 30%, Quizzes and Short Assignments 30%, Participation 10%

Participation

It will be very difficult to do well in this course if you do not participate; that means not only preparing for class and handing in all required assignments on time, but also doing your best to share your knowledge in class, both through writing and speaking. Last but certainly not least, participation also includes regular attendance. Missing classes will adversely affect your grade, and will make it difficult to do well in the other components of the class.

Quizzes and Short Assignments

Throughout the semester you will be responsible for various types of short oral and written pieces (essays, responses, explications, quizzes) assigned at the discretion of the instructor.

Midterm Course Project

One of your major assignments this semester will consist of a course project, the conditions of which will be determined by your course instructor. The nature of this major assessment will be different for each HUM instructor, and may consist of an examination, a research paper, group project, reading blog, journal, etc. Your CCI professor will make the details of this project known to you in class at the appropriate time, and certainly with enough fair warning for you to complete it.

Final Examination

There is a comprehensive final examination in this class: a two-hour, sit-down format essay. The final exam will be comparative and comprehensive, based on all of the texts and lectures from the beginning to the end of the spring semester.

Grading

All sections of Cultures, Civilizations, and Ideas use the following grading scale: A = 93.00-100; A- = 90.00-92.00; B+ = 87.00-89.00; B = 83.00-86.00; B- = 80.00-82.00; C+ = 77.00-79.00; C = 73.00-76.00; C- = 70.00-72.00; D+ = 67.00-69.00; D = 61.00-66.00; F = Below 61.00. The lowest passing grade is a D.

Attendance policy

According to university policy, missing more than 20% of taught hours of any class constitutes automatic failure.

Please Note: Approved Medical Reports for class absences entitle a student to make up any assessment given during the time the student was absent. However, Medical Reports **do not** excuse students from attendance requirements.

Punctuality and deadlines

Students are expected to be in class on time and turn in assignments on the day that they are due. Unpunctuality and missed deadlines are unacceptable.

Academic Honesty

All of the work you do for this class is assumed to be your own. Work that is not your own must be indicated as such. All sources quoted, paraphrased, consulted or used in any way must be cited in keeping with standards of academic honesty. Such sources may include other texts, material posted on the web, or ideas obtained from other students. Bilkent clearly defines what plagiarism is: see “Bilkent University Policy on Academic Honesty” under “Academic Policies and Documents.”

Plagiarism is a serious offense, and is strongly penalized in all sections of Civilization, Cultures, and Ideas. **Any act of plagiarism, no matter how small, automatically means a zero (0%) for the assignment at a minimum. The penalty could be much more severe, however, including failing the course.** In addition, however, every act of plagiarism will be reviewed in accordance with university-wide guidelines, which could mean suspension or dismissal from the university. Students are strongly urged to familiarize themselves now with university policy concerning plagiarism.

Modernity and Tradition

1. Politics I

Possible Example Texts: Machiavelli, More.

This cluster examines More's *Utopia* and Machiavelli's *Prince* and addresses questions of power and its acquisition, legitimacy and state coercion, revising Plato's notion of the 'philosopher king'.

2. Tragedy

Possible Example Texts: Shakespeare.

In this cluster we examine tragedy in early modern England and see how, even if deprived of its sacred and communal function, it nonetheless addresses important philosophical and political questions.

3. Philosophy

Possible Example Texts: Montaigne, Descartes, Pascal

Reading Montaigne and Descartes we look both at the Renaissance appropriation of Antiquity in Montaigne and Descartes' ostensible rejection of all previous forms of philosophy and knowledge in favor of the primacy of reason.

4. Politics II

Texts: Rousseau, Marx

Examining capitalism and revolutions: industrial, scientific and political as well as the rise of ideologies we see how tradition and history become not only the source of nostalgia (Rousseau) but also active principles of change.

5. Ethics

Text: Nietzsche

On the Genealogy of Morals re-addresses notions of individual freedom and society, 'natural law' as opposed to 'social law', the strong versus the weak.

6. Modern Literature

Texts: Baudelaire, Conrad, Woolf, Borges, Kafka, Shelley, Dostoevsky, etc.

This section examines some of the literary genres and concepts that are particular to the modern era.