

HUMANITIES 210
THE HUMANITIES IN THE WESTERN TRADITION FROM ANCIENT TIMES TO THE
RENAISSANCE
Fall semester 2009

Time and location: MW 9:55-10:45, Leigh Hall 107

Lecturer: Dr. Michael Graham
206C Arts and Sciences
972-7826 (office) or 836-2589 (home)
mfg@uakron.edu
<http://www3.uakron.edu/history/graham/>

Office Hours: MW 11:00-noon or by appointment

Description:

This course will examine the evolution of Western Culture (the culture we all share, for better or worse) from the beginnings of recorded history until about 1500. We will examine historical events, literature, intellectual trends, art and music in the effort to understand our own place in the context of human history. What are the sources of our ideas and assumptions? How have they changed over time? Are the questions we face today unprecedented, or have they been considered before? What does it mean to be “civilized”? These are the sorts of issues we will consider. Two hours of lecture a week (with some lectures including multimedia elements) will be augmented by two additional hours spend in discussion, giving students the opportunity to ask about, and reflect upon, the material.

Course objectives:

- to enhance our cultural awareness and self-understanding
- to develop and hone skills in critical thought and analysis
- to develop and hone skills in written and oral communication

Required Texts:

- Graham, Levin, Bouchard, Harp and Baranowski, eds., *The Humanities in the Western Tradition: A Reader* .
- Wiesner, Ruff, Wheeler, *Discovering the Western Past: A Look at the Evidence* Custom edition for the University of Akron (DWP)
- N.K. Sandars, ed., *The Epic of Gilgamesh*
- Sophocles, *Antigone* (Richard Braun, ed. and trans.)
- Machiavelli, *The Prince* (David Wootton, ed. and trans.)
- Student guide for this course, file #74, available from the Docu-Zip Center in the Student Center. This may also be downloaded through Springboard - see instructions at the end of this syllabus.

Course Requirements:

- regular attendance in lectures, and attendance and participation in discussion section (Discussion counts as 30% of your final grade, some of which will be assessed based on written

work, and some on attendance and participation. Your discussion instructor will provide details on this)

- two essay exams given during semester (each 20% of final grade)
- essay-based final examination (30% of final grade)

What follows is a schedule of lectures, readings and examinations for this course. Note that readings should be completed *before class meets* on the day indicated.

Week 1 -

- August 24: Introduction to Course and Subject
(Reading: HWT, pp. 1-4, "Introduction")
- August 26: The Ancient Near East and Egypt
(Reading: Gilgamesh pp. 61-119)

Week 2 -

- August 31: Homer and the Greek Ideal; The Polis
(Reading: HWT, pp. 5-47, "The Iliad")
- September 2: How Did Athens Really Work?
(Reading: DWP, pp. 20-42, "The Ideal and the Reality of Classical Athens")

Week 3 -

- September 7: NO CLASS (Labor Day)
- September 9: Greek Art
(Start reading Sophocles, *Antigone*)

Week 4 -

- September 14: Greek Culture: Drama and Early Philosophy
(Finish Sophocles, *Antigone*)
- September 16: Plato
(Reading: HWT, pp. 49-71, "The Phaedo")

Week 5 -

- September 21: Aristotle
- September 23: Alexander and the Hellenistic Age
THE FIRST ESSAY EXAM WILL BE GIVEN IN DISCUSSION TODAY,
COVERING MATERIAL THROUGH TODAY

Week 6 -

- September 28: Roman Republic, Roman Values
(Reading: HWT, pp. 73-109, Ovid's "Art of Love")
- September 30: Roman Politics and the Shift to Empire
(Reading: DWP, pp. 43-65, "The Achievements of Augustus")

Week 7 -

October 5: The Pax Romana and Roman Law
(Reading: DWP, pp. 120-146, "Slave Law in Roman and Germanic Society")

October 7: Hellenistic and Roman Art
(Reading: start on next week's assignments, as they are longer than others)

Week 8 -

October 12: Judaism to 70 A.D.
(Reading: HWT, pp. 111-167, Selections from the Old Testament)

October 14: Roman Palestine and the Life of Jesus
(Reading: HWT, pp. 169-232, Selections from the New Testament)

Week 9 -

October 19: The Evolution of Early Christianity
(Reading: DWP, pp. 98-118, "The Development of Orthodoxy in Early Christianity")

October 21: Augustine
(Reading: HWT, pp. 233-254, Augustine's *Confessions*)

Week 10 -

October 26: Islam
(Reading: HWT, pp. 255-292, Selections from the *Koran*)

October 28: Early Christian, Byzantine and Islamic Art

Week 11 -

November 2: Transitions From Antiquity to the Middle Ages
THE SECOND ESSAY EXAM WILL BE GIVEN IN DISCUSSION TODAY,
COVERING MATERIAL THROUGH WEEK 10

November 4: Medieval Secular Culture
(Reading: HWT, pp. 305-350, "The Conquest of Orange")

Week 12 -

November 9: The Evolution of the Medieval Church
(Reading: HWT, pp. 293-304, Benedictine Rule and Thomas Aquinas)

November 11: Medieval Philosophy and Theology
(Reading: DWP, pp. 172-197, "Life at a Medieval University")

Week 13 -

November 16: Romanesque and Gothic Art
(Reading: HWT, pp. 349-377, Selections from Dante)

November 18: Dante, Petrarch and the Early Renaissance
(Reading: HWT, pp. 379-388, Petrarch and Pico della Mirandola)

Week 14 -

November 23: Italian Renaissance Thought and Culture
(Reading: DWP, pp. 247-269, "The Renaissance Man and Woman")

November 25: Italian Renaissance Art
(Reading: Begin Machiavelli, *The Prince*)

Week 15 -

November 30: Conclusion: Paris, circa 1500

(Reading: Finish Machiavelli, *The Prince*)

December 3: NO CLASS/MAKEUP DAY

FINAL EXAM: TBA

SELECTED THEMES OF THE HUMANITIES IN THE WESTERN TRADITION WHICH WILL BE HIGHLIGHTED IN THIS COURSE

1. HUMAN NATURE: Are people, left to themselves, naturally good or evil? Does “civilization” improve or degrade humanity? Do we have free will? Do we have souls? Are we in any way immortal?
2. HUMAN SOCIETY: How is society organized? How should it be organized? What is the role of law in our society and where does it come from? Is there an ideal form of government? How have our current ideas about government and society developed?
3. THE ROLE OF RELIGION: How important and necessary is religion to culture? What function(s) does religion serve in society? What effect does religious belief have on politics, philosophy, literature or art? What is the relationship, if any, between humanity and the divine?
4. THE IDEA OF THE CITY: To what degree is “civilization” dependent on urban life? How have cities evolved? What do cities represent in our culture, and how have their roles changed over time?
5. GENDER AND LOVE IN HISTORY: How have men and women related to each other through the ages? Are “traditional” gender roles determined primarily by human biology or are they cultural constructs? How have the avenues open to men and women differed? How has the idea of romantic love evolved?

SOME GENERAL NOTES ABOUT THIS COURSE:

The Humanities in the Western Tradition is exclusively designed for the General Education Program at the University of Akron. It is a single, unified course of instruction, consisting of lectures followed by small group discussions. Lecture and discussion are not two separate courses. The idea of the lecture is to provide a general narrative and theoretical background for the assigned readings, which are intended to provide the primary material for discussion. Discussion class should not be another lecture presentation

Attendance is required in both lecture and discussion classes. Students may be dropped from the course for flagrant nonattendance. Students are responsible for all material covered in lecture and discussion, whether or not they attended. Makeup exams will be given only for good reasons and at the discretion of the discussion instructor. Student performance will be assessed under the parameters listed above. No extra credit will be given in any discussion class for any reason,

although discussion instructors may, as a policy in their classes, give a certain amount of discussion credit for participating in a “cultural experience”, such as visiting an art museum or attending a play. This will not be a requirement, but may be offered by discussion leaders as an option.

Please ensure that your cell phone ringer is turned off in lecture and discussion. While cell phones are useful modern contraptions, it is extremely rude to have them ringing or to be talking on them in class. The same goes for texting, playing electronic games, etc.

Dishonest or disruptive conduct will not be tolerated either in lecture or in discussion class. Any instances of academic dishonesty or disruption will be vigorously prosecuted according to *The University of Akron Student Code of Conduct*. This includes plagiarism or cheating on examinations.

The withdrawal policy is the official university policy: a student may withdraw without an advisor’s or instructor’s signature through the 14th day of the semester. After that, and up to the midpoint of the semester, a student may withdraw with their advisor’s signature. After the midpoint, withdrawal requires the signature both of the advisor and the course instructor. The paperwork for any withdrawal **MUST BE DATED AND PROCESSED THROUGH THE OFFICES OF THE REGISTRAR AND CASHIER NO LATER THAN THE LAST DAY OF THE 12TH WEEK OF CLASSES.**

Some elements of this course will be available on Springboard. While you could still succeed in the course without using Springboard, it offers a convenient way to get materials such as the student guide, etc. Therefore, students are urged to log in with Springboard early to make sure they can negotiate the system.