

**CC1102: Contemporary Civilization**

Spring 2014, Section 27

*Mondays & Wednesdays, 4:10-6:00pm, Hartley 109*

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**Office Hours**  
Mon-Wed by appointment

*It could be that we, who are earth-bound creatures and have begun to act as though we were dwellers of the universe, will forever be unable to understand, that is, to think and to speak about the things which nevertheless we are able to do.*

Welcome to Contemporary Civilization, part two! In this course, we will be reading some of the greatest works of philosophy and theology ever written. All of them are challenging. Some may seem obscure, objectionable, or even wrong. Our task in this course is therefore twofold: first, to attempt to understand these texts on their own terms, that is, to be generous, open and rigorous readers; second, to draw out and clarify the broader problems these works raise in conversation with one another. Through careful reading and active discussion, we will see how questions of cosmology, epistemology, social order, human nature, and ethics have been linked since Plato and remain intertwined today. Though we may disagree with many of their answers, these texts begin by helping us to ask the right questions

This semester provides an overview of the development of moral and political theory from the Enlightenment to the brink of the twenty-first century. In light of the emergence of the ideals of individual self-assertion and political freedom, examined in the first semester of Contemporary Civilization, this semester of the sequence begins by following the evolution of those ideals in the moral theory of the Enlightenment and in the political theory of the age of democratic revolutions. It then turns to the nineteenth-century debates over the institutional (especially economic) form the new democratic commitments should take as well as to the problem of their extension beyond white men. We conclude with studies of challenges to the project of Enlightenment in the contemporary world. Is the present a fully enlightened age or, as Immanuel Kant suggested of his time, only an age of potential enlightenment? On the continuation and future of this project of Enlightenment, with the background established by these texts, each student can then take a stand.

There is no question: there is much reading demanded by this course and it is mostly hard. This semester, like the first one, is as much about learning to read anew as it is about philosophy and social theory. A crucial, if not the crucial, skill you will gain from this class is the ability to take on a complex, densely argued text and to give a meaningful sketch of the author's views. But even more than in the first semester, the course challenges you not simply to learn every author's view but also to **develop your own**.

## STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

Practically speaking, this course will emphasize critical reading, textual analysis, and oral and written argumentation.

**Attendance:** is **mandatory**. In the event that a student must miss a class due to religious observance, illness, or family emergency, there will be the opportunity to make up any missed work. Whenever possible (e.g. in the case of religious holidays), students should provide at least 24 hours advance notification of absence in by email. To have an absence excused for any other reason, you must have a letter of explanation from an appropriate authority figure (a dean, doctor, coach, etc.). More than two unexcused absences, and/or frequent lateness, will result in a lowered final grade.

**Preparation:** the quality of your participation will depend on the level of preparation you give to each session. The texts we will encounter this semester are challenging, and demand careful, attentive reading. At times, the reading assignments will also require you to process a large volume of material within a relatively short span of time. You will be expected to come to class having read the assignments before the class date on which they will be discussed. Work ahead if you need to. Set aside ample time to concentrate on the readings, note and define the authors' main concepts and how they work in the arguments, write down questions about what you find compelling, confusing, strong or weak in the texts. **You are required to bring copies of the assigned texts with you to class.**

**Participation:** as a seminar, the success of this course depends directly on your active participation and involvement, and on your willingness to engage intellectually with the texts *and* with each other. Simply attending class without contributing to discussion will lead to a poor participation grade. Therefore, come prepared to ask and answer questions, to engage in lively discussion with the texts and with each other, but remember that saying a lot is not the same thing as speaking well, and evaluation of your participation will take into account the quality (as well as the quantity) of your contributions.

Cell phones, laptops, tablets, etc. must be **turned off and put away** during class. If you need to use a laptop for any reason, speak to me.

**Weekly Courseworks Posts:** You are required to post on Courseworks once a week. At the beginning of the semester you will be divided into two groups; one group will be responsible for posting before Monday's class, the other before Wednesday's class. You are required to read all of the responses on both days, and you are encouraged to respond to your classmates' posts whether or not it is your day to post. Posts are due by **midnight** the night before class. Your post should be a brief response (150-250 words) to a specific part of the assigned reading followed by 2-3 discussion questions. Posts that do not contain both parts will not receive full credit.

### Written Assignments

*Response Papers:* You are required to write three short response papers (300-500 words) over the course of the semester. There are four deadlines. You may choose the three that work best with your schedule.

*Final Essay:* You will write one essay of 8-10 pages, due April 25<sup>th</sup>. You will be asked to come up with your own paper topic, which you will submit to me approximately two and a half weeks before the essay is due.

### **Academic Integrity**

This is the College's official policy on plagiarism: "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 take on plagiarism: it is the worst thing you can do in this class, and I will not be lenient with those found guilty. It is far better to turn in a mediocre paper than to plagiarize: the former will hurt your grade; if caught, the latter will jeopardize your academic career. You are discouraged from using secondary sources in your written work. If you would like to use *any text* not on our syllabus you must get *written approval* from me beforehand.

If you have any questions about this—that is, if you are not sure whether or not a certain act constitutes plagiarism—ask me about this before turning in your paper.

### **EVALUATION**

- **Participation (30% total):** including attendance, preparation, Courseworks posts, in-class participation, and brief ad-hoc assignments\*
- **Exams (30% total):** In-class midterm examination (10%); **cumulative** final examination (20%)
- **Written Assignments (40% total):** three response papers (300-500 words) (20%); 8-10pp. essay (20%)

\***N.B.** I reserve the right to assign pop quizzes, which will also be considered in this category

### **REQUIRED TEXTS**

The following texts are required for the course, and it is strongly recommended that you purchase them. Please make sure to get the specified editions when doing so. All of the books for the course are also on reserve at Butler Library. Selections from other authors will be available on the CC Web Reader or will be distributed in handout or electronic form in advance of class.

DO NOT buy Wollstonecraft or Burke.

From the Columbia University Bookstore:

- Rousseau, *The Basic Political Writings* (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* (Dover)~~
- Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (Penguin)
- 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* (Dover)
- Freud, *Freud Reader* (Norton)
- Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (Grove)
- Gandhi, *Selected Political Writings* (Hackett)
- Woolf, *Three Guineas*, Annotated Edition (Harcourt)

From Book Culture, located at 536 W 112<sup>th</sup> St: (ordered under my name)

- Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* (Vintage)
- G. W. F. Hegel, *Introduction to the Philosophy of History* (Hackett)

## Course Schedule

22 January

Introduction: **Kant**, “What is Enlightenment?”

### The Ideal of Autonomy

27 January

**Hume**, *An Inquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*, pp. 13-93

**Newton**, “Rules for the Study of Natural Philosophy,” from *The Principia* (CC Reader)

29 January

**Rousseau**, *Discourse on the Origins of Inequality* pp. 45-92

3 February

**Rousseau**, *On the Social Contract* pp. 155-183, 188-201, 210-230, 241-252

5 February

**Kant**, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, pp. 1-32

10 February

**Kant**, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, pp. 32-55

**Radiolab**, Listen to: <http://www.radiolab.org/story/91508-morality/>

*\*Response Deadline\**

### Bourgeois Revolution

12 February

Selections from American Revolutionary Texts and French Revolutionary Texts [both on CC Web]

17 February

CANCELED

19 February

**Smith**, *Wealth of Nations*, pp. xxiii-32; 62-97; 299-301; 360-380; 407-412; 819-846

*\*Response Deadline\**

24 February

**Tocqueville**, *Democracy in America* Vol. 1, Part 1, Ch. 3-4; Part 2, Ch. 1, 4, 6-7

26 February

**Tocqueville**, *Democracy in America* Vol. 2, Part 1, Ch. 1, 2, 5; Part 2, Chaps. 1, 5, 7; Part III, 12; Part IV, Ch. 2-4, 6

3 March

**Mill**, *On Liberty*, entire

Thinking Critically about Modernity

5 March

**Hegel** *Introduction to the Philosophy of History* Chs 1-3

10 March

**Hegel** *Introduction to the Philosophy of History* Chs 4-6

12 March

**Marx** 142-200

*\*Response Deadline\**

SPRING BREAK

24 March

**Marx** 319-361; 376-411; 431-442

26 March

**Darwin**, *On the Origin of Species*, Introduction, Chapters 3, 4, 14

*\*Response Deadline\**

31 March

**Midterm**

2 April

**Nietzsche**, *Genealogy of Morals*, Essays 1-2

7 April

**Nietzsche**, *Genealogy of Morals*, Essay 3

9 April

**Freud**, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, pp. 422-471

**Essay Topics Due in class**

Exclusion and Violence

14 April

**Du Bois**, *The Souls of Black Folk*, pp. FIRST HALF

16 April

**Du Bois**, *The Souls of Black Folk*, pp. SECOND HALF

**Du Bois**, “Souls of White Folk” (CC reader)

21 April

**Woolf**, *Three Guineas*, entire

23 April

**Fanon**, “On Violence,” in *The Wretched of the Earth*, pp. 1-64.

**Gandhi**, “Satyagraha: The Power of Nonviolence,” pp. 27-91.

**FINAL ESSAY DUE April 25<sup>th</sup> at 5pm**

28 April

**Foucault**, *Discipline and Punish* 3-31, 170-194

30 April

**Foucault**, *Discipline and Punish*, 195-228

5 May

TBD