

General Studies 146: Modernity
Professor Melissa M. Wilcox
M 10:00-10:50 / WF 11:00-11:50, Olin 305
Whitman College
Spring 2006

Office: Olin 183
Office phone: 527-5247
E-mail: wilcoxmm@whitman.edu

Office hours: W 2:30-4, F 1-2:30, or by
appointment
Fall coffee hour: M 3-4

Official course description:

A two-semester exploration of the formation and transformation of some western world views (ways of understanding nature, society, the self, and the transcendent). The course will focus on the World of Antiquity and the Modern World. Attention will be given not only to the continuity in the transition of dominant world views, but also to competing and alternative visions. The course will examine some of the important individuals and events which have significantly shaped, reshaped, and challenged these world views. In this process, revolutions in thought and society, encounters between peoples and cultures, and perspectives on "us" and "them" will constitute major objects of study. The study of primary sources, discussion, and writing will be emphasized. The two semesters will be taught as a single year-long course, with the first semester a prerequisite for the second. The P-D-F grade option may not be elected for this course.

Themes for this section:

Underlying the individual texts of Antiquity and Modernity lies the opportunity to explore the construction, contestation, and common themes of the "West" as a concept (and a powerful reality) through analysis of some of the central texts of the so-called "Western intellectual canon." As with the fall semester of Core, our focus will be on close readings of the assigned texts, with the goal of developing your abilities to "read with the grain," "read against the grain," discuss texts thoughtfully and respectfully with your peers, and write in a clear, organized, and analytical manner.

As we move into the "modern" period of Western history, several themes come to the foreground; all revolve around the central theme of "self" and "other." These include the philosophical and social definitions of the autonomous individual, the role of nature, the relationship between mind and body, and the significance of those "others" who are "good to think with" but are rarely considered to be autonomous individuals themselves. Such "other" voices are increasingly attended to as we move through the latter part of the semester; they were always present, but more often ignored earlier by the more powerful among the Western intelligentsia. If you enjoy these perspectives from the West's "outsiders within," you should consider continuing on to the optional third semester of Core, Critical and Alternative Voices.

Required texts:

- Descartes, *Discourse on Method*. Trans. D.A. Cress, Hackett, 0-87220-422-7
- Shakespeare, *Othello*. Ed. Gerald Bentley, Penguin, 0-14-071463-4
- Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*. Ed. C.B. Macpherson, Hackett, 0-915144-86-7
- Voltaire, *Candide*. Trans. D.M. Frame, Signet, 0-451-52809-3
- Mozart, *Don Giovanni*. Dover, 0486249441
- Kant, *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*. Trans. J. Ellington, Hackett, 0-87220-166-x
- *English Romantic Poetry: An Anthology*. Ed. S. Applebaum, Dover, 048692827
- Marx and Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*. International, 0-7178-0241-8
- Marx, *Wage-Labour and Capital*. International, 0-7178-0470-4
- Darwin, *The Origin of Species*. Ed. P. Appleman, Norton, 0-393-97867-2
- Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*. Trans. W. Kaufmann, Vintage, 067-9724621
- Ibsen, *Four Major Plays: Vol. 1*. Trans. R. Fjelde, Signet, 0-451-52406-3
- Goldman, *The Traffic in Women*. Times Change Press, 0-87810-001-6
- Morrison, *Beloved*. Random House, 1-400-03341-1

All course materials will also be on reserve in Penrose Library. Please note that library editions may have slightly different page numbers or slightly different wording from the editions available in the bookstore, but we are making an effort to ensure that they will be as closely matched as possible when they aren't exactly the same. They are still okay to use for my section. Note, however, that you must have the first (1859) edition of Darwin's *The Origin of Species*.

Course requirements:

Preparation for class: Please come to class having thoroughly read and thought about the day's assignment. If you plan to keep your books, you should engage with the text as you read by highlighting or underlining important passages, words, and phrases, and making notes in the margins. If you don't plan to keep your books, or you're using the library copies, buy a notebook especially for Core and engage with the text by making notes as you read, being sure to write down the page numbers and/or line numbers of the passages on which you're commenting. Come to class with your book and your notes (or a photocopy and notes, if you're using the library reserve copies), plenty of spare writing paper, and writing utensils. *Be prepared, be alert, and be on time!*

Keeping track of assignments: Only rarely will I remind you about assignments that are due. This syllabus is your reminder: keep it in a prominent place, and check it regularly to make sure you know when each assignment is due. If you keep a calendar of any sort, it's a very good idea to put all of your major assignments on your calendar in order to plan ahead adequately for them.

Grading: Final grades in this course will be determined as follows:

Leading discussion.....	15 %
Essays (3 @ 15% each).....	45%
Annotated bibliography for research paper.....	5 %
Pre-writing / peer editing for research paper.....	5 %
Research paper.....	20 %
Class participation	10 %

Remember to keep all papers I return to you so that you can track your own grade in the course.

Leading discussion: Once during the semester it will be your responsibility to summarize the day's reading, suggest topics for discussion, and lead the class in discussing the reading. Please keep your summary to five concise and insightful minutes (you will be timed!), and suggest at least three questions for discussion. We'll sign up for these sessions in class on Friday, January 20.

Essays: Topics for these 4-5 page essays will be handed out in class one week before each essay is due. You may rewrite *one* (and only one) of these essays if you wish; your final grade on the essay will then be the average of your first grade and the rewrite grade. Rewrites are due two weeks after I return the paper. As with last semester, all papers must use Chicago style as presented in the Hacker style manual, and you may not use outside sources.

Research paper: This paper will serve as the capstone to both the writing aspects and the Western intellectual history aspects of Core. Your task will be to research the debate over a required common first-year course in Western intellectual history, and to take a position in that debate. (Note that there are a number of intermediate and "compromise" positions, so your own stance doesn't have to be simply "for" or "against.") We'll have a special class session with reference librarian Barbaraella Frazier, who can show you the tools to use in researching this question, and your first assignment for this project will be to turn in an annotated bibliography for your paper. (An annotated bibliography includes a sentence or two describing each work, in addition to the citation itself). You will also need to bring your pre-writing and a rough draft to class for peer editing, to be done as homework this time rather than as an in-class workshop. Your final paper should be 7-8 pages in length, excluding the bibliography (the 8th or 9th page). Our final exam session (Tuesday, May 16, from 2:00-4:00) will serve as a forum in which to present your positions in this debate, and papers are due in class on that day.

Class participation: Since this course relies heavily on discussion, it is extremely important that you be in class, on time and prepared, each day. **Students who miss more than four class sessions without informing me in advance will lose 50% of this portion of their grade.**

General policies for Core:

1. Writing assignments are to be set by each instructor, but there will be a minimum of four written assignments and fifteen pages of writing each semester, as well as a final evaluative exercise at the end of each semester.
2. Students who wish to change Core section may do so only at the semester break, prior to the beginning of second semester, by making a request to the Registrar. Students are not allowed to choose which section they would like to enter. Those students who seek to change sections will be assigned to other sections by the Registrar.
3. All assignments must be completed for a student to receive a passing grade. If a student fails to turn in a paper or to take an examination, that student must receive an F or an Incomplete for the semester.
4. The penalties for academic dishonesty are described in the Statement on Academic Honesty and Plagiarism that all students accept as proper rules for academic behavior when they arrive on campus. Any substantially plagiarized written assignment will not be considered a completion of the assignment, and will result in failing the course.
5. The grading criteria in the various sections are determined by each instructor. Some sections may place a greater emphasis upon some aspect of the students' work (papers, oral reports, participation in discussion, examinations, etc.) in the determination of a course grade. This course has a common set of readings, but the process of evaluation is unique to each section.
6. Attendance, itself, is necessary but not sufficient. Students must participate in the conversation.

Policies for this section:

Students with disabilities: If you have a disability and need my help in making this course fully accessible to you, please feel free to contact me, either in person or through the Academic Resource Center (527-5213). I'll be happy to help in whatever way I can.

Inclusive language: Inclusive language is the use of accurate and unbiased gender terminology (see Hacker pp. 20-21), and it is required in this course. It's important for a number of reasons. For one thing, language shapes how people think. When religious studies was considered to be the study of the beliefs of *man*, for instance, people (usually male scholars) tended to study male writers, male believers, male religious leaders, and so on simply because it didn't occur to them to study women as well. As a result, they had a less accurate understanding of religion than we have today. "Humanity" and "humans" are gender-inclusive terms; "man" and "men" are not.

Non-inclusive language also can be misleading, inaccurate, or vague. Traditional formal English, for example, requires that you use the singular pronoun "he" as a generic pronoun. Thus, you might say that "when a new member is initiated into the secret society, he must undergo several hours of ordeals." People who read that sentence are left wondering whether "he" includes women or whether this secret society is for men only. The solution? When you use singular generic terms (like "one," "anyone," "a person," etc.), use the combined pronoun

“she or he.” Or, for a less awkward sentence, simply use a plural noun (“people,” “initiates,” “members,” etc.), because English has a non-gendered plural pronoun (“they”).

“Late fees”: Without advance notice, there will be no make-ups for discussion leading sessions. Late rewrites and rough drafts/pre-writing will not be accepted; the essays, bibliography, peer editing, and research paper will lose 5 percentage points for each day they are late (including weekends).

Academic dishonesty: Honesty is an integral part of academic learning; any form of cheating expresses gross disrespect for the efforts of your teacher, the hard work of your classmates, and your own privilege in having access to a quality education. I will not hesitate to report and pursue incidents of suspected academic dishonesty, including plagiarism and copying others’ assignments. **The maximum penalty for academic dishonesty is permanent expulsion from Whitman.**

This class is an educational safe zone. It welcomes and respects the viewpoints of students of all sexual orientations and genders as well as all races, ethnicities, religions, and abilities. All members of this learning community are expected to treat each other with respect and dignity, and to listen especially carefully to the voices (in text and in person) of cultural and social minorities.

Course Schedule

→ Watch for the arrows! They tell you when an assignment is due.

Week 1: The modern self

Wednesday, 1/18: Kant, "What is Enlightenment?"

Friday, 1/20: Read syllabus; Descartes, *Discourse on Method*, Parts 1-3

→ Sign up to lead a class discussion

Week 2: The self as subject and object of study

Monday, 1/23: Descartes, *Discourse on Method*, Part 4

Wednesday, 1/25: Descartes, *Discourse on Method*, Parts 5 and 6

Friday, 1/27: Shakespeare, *Othello*, Act 1

Week 3: Self and tragedy

Monday, 1/30: Shakespeare, *Othello*, Acts 2-3

Wednesday, 2/1: Shakespeare, *Othello*, Act 4

Friday, 2/3: Shakespeare, *Othello*, Act 5

Week 4: Self and governance

Monday, 2/6: Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, Chs. 1-4

Wednesday, 2/8: Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, Chs. 5-6

Friday, 2/10: Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, Chs. 7-9

Topics for Essay #1 available in class

Week 5: A colonial Odyssey?

Monday, 2/13: Voltaire, *Candide*, Chs. 1-13

Wednesday, 2/15: Voltaire, *Candide*, Chs. 14-21

Friday, 2/17: Voltaire, *Candide*, Chs. 22-30

→ Essay #1 due in class

Week 6: Self, body, gender, art

Monday, 2/20: Presidents' Day – No class! Please read *Don Giovanni* before you attend a screening of the film. Note that both vocal and orchestral scores for the opera are on reserve in the music library, if you prefer to read scores rather than the libretto.

*****Monday evening and Tuesday evening, 7:30 – 10:30 p.m.: Required film screening of *Don Giovanni* in Maxey Auditorium. See me if you cannot come to either screening.*****

Wednesday, 2/22: Guest lecture by Prof. Robert Bode in Maxey Auditorium (during regular class time)

Friday, 2/24: Discussion of *Don Giovanni*

Week 7: Self and morality

Monday, 2/27: Kant, *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*, Preface and Section 1

Wednesday, 3/1: Kant, *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*, Section 2 (to 428)

Friday, 3/3: Kant, *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*, remainder of Section 2

Week 8: Self and nature

Monday, 3/6: Keats – "Bright Star"; Wordsworth – "I Wandered Lonely As a Cloud",
"My Heart Leaps Up When I Behold" (in *English Romantic Poetry*)

Wednesday, 3/8: Wordsworth – "Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey"

Topics for Essay #2 available in class

Friday, 3/10: Keats – "Ode to a Nightingale", "Ode on a Grecian Urn", "Ode on
Melancholy"

~ **SPRING BREAK: MARCH 11 THROUGH MARCH 26** ~

Week 9: The alienated self

Monday, 3/27: Marx, *Wage-Labor and Capital*

Wednesday, 3/29: Marx, *Communist Manifesto*

→ Essay #2 due in class

Friday, 3/31: **I will be out of town, accompanying seniors to a conference. Meet in the Center for Teaching and Learning (Penrose 317) at our usual time for a class on research tools with reference librarian Barbaraella Frazier. Attendance will be taken!**

Week 10: Autonomy called into question

Monday, 4/3: Darwin, *The Origin of Species*, 27-30, 41-75

Wednesday, 4/5: Darwin, *The Origin of Species*, 75-94, 115-121

Friday, 4/7: Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, Preface and 1st Essay

Week 11: Comprehending Nietzsche

Monday, 4/10: Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, 2nd Essay (sections 1-12)

Our section will not meet – I will be out of town. You may earn extra credit by attending another Core section.

Wednesday, 4/12: Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, 2nd Essay (sections 13-25)

Friday, 4/14: Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, 3rd Essay (sects 1, 8-15, 22-24, 27-28)

→ Annotated bibliography due in class

Week 12: Life, art, creation

Monday, 4/17: Ibsen, *Hedda Gabler*, Act 1

Wednesday, 4/19: Ibsen, *Hedda Gabler*, Acts 2-3

Friday, 4/21: Ibsen, *Hedda Gabler*, Act 4

Topics for Essay #3 available in class

Week 13: Who is the "self"?

Monday, 4/24: Goldman, *The Traffic in Women* (19-32) and *Marriage and Love* (37-46)

Wednesday, 4/26: Morrison, *Beloved* 1-52 (3-49, earlier version)

Friday, 4/28: Morrison, *Beloved* 53-111 (50-105, earlier version)

→ Essay #3 due in class

Week 14: Selves, freedoms, ambiguities

Monday, 5/1: Morrison, *Beloved* 112-174 (106-165, earlier version)

Wednesday, 5/3: Morrison, *Beloved* 177-247 (169-235, earlier version)

Friday, 5/5: Morrison, *Beloved* 251-end (239-end, earlier version)

→ **Research paper rough drafts due in class for peer editing**

Week 15: Conclusions

Monday, 5/8: Review the texts we've studied this semester; be prepared to discuss central themes and divergences between the texts.

→ **Peer editing due (Return the original draft and pre-write to the author, along with your peer editing sheet; turn in a photocopy of the marked-up papers and the editing sheet to me)**

Final forum: Tuesday, May 16, 2:00-4:00, in our regular room. Research papers due in this class session.

Hooray! You're done! Have a great summer!