Core Humanities 201  
Ancient and Medieval Cultures  

Fall 2014  
MW 11:00 am–12:15 pm  
AB 108

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Course Description and Core Objectives

This course surveys the cultures of the Near East, Greece, Rome, and the European Middle Ages. Students explore the roots of philosophy and science; learn about the cultural and historical origins of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam; and examine the interplay between ethics, law and religion. Core themes that are examined include concepts like the heroic code, justice and romantic love. We will be read a wide variety of types of poetic, philosophical, theological and historical texts. As well as mining ideas about the cultures in which they were produced, we will also be studying these texts for their “literary value,” that is for what they can tell us about human nature.

This Core Humanities course satisfies Core Objective 5 of the Silver Core Curriculum:

**CO5. History and Culture:** Students will be able to describe the processes by which past and present societies have been created and perpetuated through their history, ideas, and cultural products. Students will engage both historical and contemporary cultural texts through critical reading, analysis, and interpretation in the context of culture, society, and individual identity.

In addition, CH 201 helps students to develop the skills described in Core Objectives 1 and 3. These objectives are reinforced throughout the curriculum in other courses students take to fulfill core and major requirements:

**CO1. Effective Composition and Communication:** Students will be able to effectively compose written, oral, and multimedia texts for a variety of scholarly, professional, and creative purposes.

**CO3. Critical Analysis and Use of Information:** Students will be critical consumers of information, able to engage in systematic research processes, frame questions, read critically, and apply observational and experimental approaches to obtain information.
Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) and Correlation to Core Objectives (COs):

Students successfully completing CH 201 will be able to:

1. Express ideas clearly and persuasively both orally and in writing, using relevant evidence to support their arguments. (CO1, CO3)
2. Read, interpret, and analyze primary source texts with attention to content, historical and cultural context, genre, and language. (CO3, CO5)
3. Analyze authors’ arguments by identifying perspectives, assumptions, strategies, and omissions. (CO3)
4. Demonstrate a basic familiarity with the cultural values, distinctive practices, and achievements in the arts and sciences, of the cultures of the ancient Near East, of ancient and classical Greece, of Rome, and of medieval Europe. (CO5)
5. Recognize and identify the practices, ideas, and habits of mind that characterize a culture, be able to differentiate one culture from another, and produce a balanced comparison between two texts or cultural practices. (CO5)
6. Recognize and analyze ancient and medieval precedents for contemporary ideas. (CO5)
7. Consider the development of notions of morality and justice in ancient and medieval societies, compare the ethical principles in varying systems of belief, religions, and philosophies, and articulate and defend ethical principles of their own. (CO5)

You may notice that the abbreviation SLO followed by a series of numbers appears on some course materials. This simply means that the lecture, discussion, assignment, or other activity offers opportunities for students to practice skills related to the learning outcomes listed above (e.g., “SLOs 1, 3, 4” means the activity requires you to express ideas orally or in writing (SLO 1), analyze authors’ arguments (SLO 3), and demonstrate familiarity with the cultural values and practices of the societies being studied in the course (SLO 4)).

Required Textbooks

Dante, *The Inferno* (translated by Mark Musa)
Sophocles, *Three Theban Plays: Antigone, Oedipus The King, Oedipus at Colonus*, (translated by Robert Fagles)
Homer, *The Iliad* (translated by Robert Fagles).
Plato, *The Republic* (translated by Allan Bloom)

NOTE: You will also be asked to print out several pdf articles and bring them to class throughout the semester. Links to the articles will be e-mailed in advance, but you must have PRINTED copies of these articles for class.
Assessment

Assessment will be based on how well students complete the following tasks:

- **Attendance and class participation** 10 percent
- **Group work/Informal presentations** 10 percent
- **Essays**
  - Essay 1 (Due September 22) 15 percent
  - Essay 2 (Due October 29) 15 percent
  - Essay 3 (Due December 3) 15 percent
- **Exams**
  - Midterm (October 22) 15 percent
  - Final (December 15) 20 percent

**Participation** is expected and can only help you and your classmates to get the most out of the course. During discussion you’ll have the opportunity to contribute, either by speaking up individually or during group work. For each worthwhile contribution made you will receive credit towards that day’s participation grade. A minimum of two contributions are needed per discussion session in order to receive all of the possible points. This ultimately accounts for 10% of your final course grade; if you find speaking up in class difficult please come and speak to me during office hours so that we can work on strategies to make you feel more comfortable or come up with other ways to handle your participation grade.

**Group Work/ Informal Presentations** You will be asked to complete several group assignments throughout the semester, some of which will require you to present your work to the class.

**Essays** will consist of three 4-5 page papers, each one responding to a specific question and/or assignment. In each paper, students will be expected to refer to specific readings from the course. Guidelines for each paper will be handed out two weeks before the assignment is due.

**Midterm/Final** There will be a midterm and a final exam. These exams will consist of multiple choice, true/false, short answer and matching questions. You will be expected to have memorized certain key terms and concepts for the exams. Also, the exams will be designed to test how closely you’ve read the assigned texts.

**Late Work** will not be accepted.

**Attendance:** There are NO EXCUSED ABSENCES for this class. You may miss three classes without penalty. After that, each absence will result in a 3% deduction from your final grade. If you miss more than eight classes, you will fail the class, no questions asked.
Grading Criteria

Grading criteria for written work are set out below. Plus and minus grades will be used.

A– (90–94%), A (95–100%)
A is for work of exceptional quality. This grade is for essays that present a clear thesis supported by persuasive evidence and analysis, logically organized, and free from typing or grammatical errors. The A essay does more than just competently summarize material from the readings or lectures. It shows the student has thought things through on a deeper level and offers his or her own perspective on the topics under consideration.

B– (80–82%), B (83–86%), B+ (87–89%)
B denotes work that is above average in quality. It demonstrates that the student knows and understands the material covered in class, and that s/he is capable of synthesizing it into a competent essay. It is accurate, detailed, and well organized, with an introduction, a thesis, and a conclusion.

C– (70–72%), C (73–76%), C+ (77–79%)
C is given for work that is average. The student shows familiarity with the material and is mostly accurate, but the paper lacks detail or effective organization. The C essay might make general points but fail to support them with specific evidence, or it might be merely a collection of facts, with no coherent theme or thesis.

D– (60–62%), D (63–66%), D+ (67–69%)
D is given for work that is inadequate. It omits important points, contains more than a few inaccuracies, and is badly organized. It suggests that the student has not been paying much attention to the course or is having problems understanding the material.

F (less than 60%)
F is for work that is not acceptable. It demonstrates that the student has no idea what the course material is about, suggesting a lack of interest or effort and possibly some absences from class.

Academic Dishonesty

Plagiarism (copying all or part of someone else’s work and passing it off as your own) is a serious form of academic misconduct and will not be tolerated in this class. The following definitions and possible courses of action are taken from the Academic Standards section of the university catalog:

Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, the following: Plagiarism: defined as submitting the language, ideas, thoughts or work of another as one’s own; or assisting in the act of plagiarism by allowing one’s work to be used in this fashion. . . .

Sanctions for violations of university academic standards may include the following: (1) filing a final grade of “F”; (2) reducing the student’s final course grade one or two full grade
points; (3) awarding a failing mark on the test or paper in question; (4) requiring the student
to retake the test or resubmit the paper.

The sanction for academic dishonesty in this course is to file a final grade of F. All incidents of
plagiarism or cheating are reported to the Office of Student Conduct and become part of the
student’s academic record.

Disability Services

The University of Nevada, Reno is committed to equal opportunity in education for all students,
including those with documented physical disabilities or documented learning disabilities. If you
have a documented disability and will be requiring assistance, please contact the instructor or the
Disability Resource Center (Thompson Building Suite 101) as soon as possible to arrange for
appropriate accommodations.

Audio and Video Recording

Surreptitious or covert videotaping of class or unauthorized audio recording of class is prohibited
by law and by Board of Regents policy. This class may be videotaped or audio recorded only
with the written permission of the instructor. In order to accommodate students with disabilities,
some students may be given permission to record class lectures and discussions. Therefore,
students should understand that their comments during class may be recorded.

Course Calendar

WEEK 1 (SLOs 1, 2, 4, 7)
AUGUST 25th: THE ORIGINS OF CIVILIZATION

AUGUST 27th: LAW AND CULTURE
Reading: Hammurabi, “The Law Code,” Enduring Legacies, 7-12

WEEK 2 (SLOs 1, 2, 4, 6, 7)
SEPTEMBER 1st: MYTH AND FLOOD
Reading: “The Epic of Gilgamesh,” Enduring Legacies, 3-6

SEPTEMBER 3rd: GREEK CULTURE AND RELIGION
Reading: The Iliad, Books 1-8

WEEK 3 (SLOs 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7)
SEPTEMBER 8th: THE HERO’S JOURNEY
Reading: The Iliad, Books 9-16
Joseph Campbell, “The Hero’s Journey” (pdf)
SEPTEMBER 10th: GREEK VALUES
Reading: *The Iliad*, Books 17-24
Nicholas D. Smith, “Some Thoughts on the Origins of Greek Ethics” (pdf)

WEEK 4 (SLOs 1, 2, 3, 4, 6)
SEPTEMBER 15th: THE POETICS AND THE ORIGINS OF GREEK DRAMA

SEPTEMBER 17th: IS ANTIGONE A FEMINIST?
Reading: *Antigone*, from *Three Theban Plays*
Selection from Judith Butler’s *Antigone* (pdf)

WEEK 5 (SLOs 1, 2, 4, 7)
SEPTEMBER 22nd: OEDIPUS
Reading: *Oedipus the King*, from *Three Theban Plays.*
ESSAY # 1 DUE

SEPTEMBER 24th: HONOR AND THE GOOD CITIZEN
Reading: Plato, *Crito* (pdf)

WEEK 6 (SLOs 1, 2, 4, 6, 7)
SEPTEMBER 29th: WHAT IS JUSTICE?
Reading: Plato, *The Republic*, Books I-III

OCTOBER 1st: UTOPIANISM AND THE JUST CITY
Reading: Plato, *The Republic*, Book IV

WEEK 7 (SLOs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7)
OCTOBER 6th: THE DIVISION OF THE SOUL
Reading: Plato, *The Republic*, Books V-VII
John M. Cooper, “The Psychology of Justice in Plato” (pdf)

OCTOBER 8th: WHAT IS VIRTUE?
Reading: Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics*, Book II (pdf)

WEEK 8 (SLOs 1, 2, 3, 4, 7)
OCTOBER 13th: SELF-LOVE AND HAPPINESS
Reading: Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics*, Books IX and X (pdf)

OCTOBER 15th: ETHICS AND DEATH
Reading: *Excerpts from Epicurus and Lucretius* (pdf)
ET Olson, “The Epicurian View of Death” (pdf)
WEEK 9 (SLOs 1, 2, 4, 5)
OCTOBER 20th: THE WORLD OF ROME
Reading: Cattalus, Poems, *Enduring Legacies* 131-135
Virgil, “The Aeneid” (selection), *Enduring Legacies* 138-153

OCTOBER 22nd: MIDTERM EXAM

WEEK 10 (SLOs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7)
OCTOBER 27th: THE ORIGINS OF MONOTHEISM
Reading: Daniel Trimmer, “Is Monotheism Particularly Prone to Violence? An Historical Critique” (pdf)

OCTOBER 29th: THE ETHICS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT
Reading: *New Oxford Annotated Bible*, Genesis 1-26, Exodus 1-20
ESSAY # 2 DUE

WEEK 11 (SLOs 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7)
NOVEMBER 3rd: THE NEW TESTAMENT
Reading: *New Oxford Annotated Bible*, Mark (all), Luke 1-4

NOVEMBER 5th: THE KORAN
“The Life of Mohammed,” *Enduring Legacies*, 249-253

WEEK 12 (SLOs 1, 2, 4, 6, 7)
NOVEMBER 10th: THE MONESTARY
The Name of the Rose (view on own)

NOVEMBER 12th: THE LIFE AND THOUGHT OF ST. AUGUSTINE
St. Augustine, “City of God,” *Enduring Legacies*, 219-221

WEEK 13 (SLOs 1, 2, 4, 5, 6)
NOVEMBER 17th: THE SPREAD OF CHRISTIANITY
Reading: "The History of My Misfortunes," *Enduring Legacies*, 281-287
"Summa Theologica," *Enduring Legacies*, 373-376

NOVEMBER 19th: BEOWULF
Reading: *Beowulf* (all)
WEEK 14 (SLOs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7)
NOVEMBER 24th: COURTLY LOVE
Reading: Andreas Cappalamas, “The Art of Courtly Love,” Enduring Legacies, 320-325
“The Story of the Grail,” Enduring Legacies, 334-341

NOVEMBER 26th: SIN AND PUNISHMENT
Reading: Dante, The Inferno, Cantos 1, 4, 5, 18
Michel Foucault, Discipline and Punish (pdf)

WEEK 15 (SLOs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7)
DECEMBER 1st: DANTE’S HELL
Reading: Dante, The Inferno, Cantos 26-28, 33, 34

DECEMBER 3rd: CHAUCER
Reading: Chaucer, “Pardoner’s Tale” (pdf)
   Alison Gulley, "We Wol Sleen this False Traytor Deeth": The Search for Immortality in Chaucer's Pardoner's Tale and J. K. Rowling's The Deathly Hallows” (pdf)
ESSAY # 3 DUE

WEEK 16 (SLOs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7)
DECEMBER 8th: REVIEW FOR FINAL EXAM

DECEMBER 15th: FINAL EXAM