

## **CULTURAL TRADITIONS**

Humanities 101, Summer 2014

Online Course

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Community  
College  
of Philadelphia

This syllabus serves as an introduction and a guide to the course.  
As needed, some non-essential sections may be modified during the term.  
Contact the instructor if you are unclear about any part of it.

### **Course Description**

The College Catalog describes the course in the following way: "Interdisciplinary study of the humanities, from the ancient world to the European renaissance, including literature, philosophy, art and history. Themes of continuing significance, including concepts of the hero, justice and the self are examined in both Western and non-Western contexts. The course emphasizes oral and written analysis of primary texts. Recommended for students desiring to transfer."

The course fulfills elective and general education requirements for Humanities, American/Global Diversity, and Interpretive Studies. In addition, it serves to promote the College Core Competencies of Critical Thinking, Effective Communication, Information Literacy, Responsible Citizenship, and Technological Competence.

Student Learning Outcomes state that successful completion of the course enables you to:

- Analyze primary texts to demonstrate how they reflect the social, political and/or cultural context that produced them from Antiquity to the Age of Exploration
- Explain similarities and differences between aesthetic, political and/or social values as they developed in Western culture and that of a selected non-Western society
- Discuss the role of the humanities in shaping society

This course involves a close examination of primary works of literature, philosophy, art, and religion, with a focus on some central themes of continuing importance across a variety of cultures and spanning a time period of more than 4000 years, starting in ancient Sumer (which is today Iraq) and ending in 16<sup>th</sup> Century France. Civilizations of the West will be covered alongside those of the Near East. The course is not a comprehensive historical account of events. It is better understood as an analysis of core concepts as they appear in cultural traditions, with special attention to how they reflect the essential beliefs and values of a society. Some of the themes explored across various cultures include the role of women, the importance of duty and piety, and the meaning of courage, friendship, and love.

Upon successful completion of the course you will be more familiar with some classical and historically significant works of literature, art, philosophy, and religion. You will also be able to better identify and analyze complex ideas within a broad range of contexts. This will contribute to your improved ability to read, write, and think systematically and rigorously about such matters. And, you might even enjoy yourself along the way.

### **Required Reading**

The following books are required reading for the course. In most cases, only limited selections will be assigned from each book. Various versions and translations of all these texts are widely available, but you are required to use the editions and translations listed here. Different translations often produce very different results in a reader. In addition, introductory material that is usually only found in these specific editions will sometimes be assigned along with the primary text itself.

We will be reading the books in the order listed on the syllabus. You will need the first book by the second week of the term. During the term you will be presented with other material for study online within our course site. If you have any questions or concerns, please ask.

*Gilgamesh*, Stephen Mitchell (translator), Atria Books, 2006, ISBN: 9780743261692.

*The Iliad*, Homer, Stephen Mitchell (translator), Atria Books, 2012, ISBN: 9781439163382.

*The Book of Job*, Stephen Mitchell (translator), Harper Collins Publishers, 1992, ISBN: 9780060969592.

*Selected Letters*, Seneca, Elaine Fantham (translator), Oxford University Press, 2010, ISBN: 9780199533213.

*Confessions*, Augustine, Henry Chadwick (translator), Oxford University Press, 2009, ISBN: 9780199537822.

*The Qur'an*, M.A.S. Abdel Haleem (translator), Oxford University Press, 2005, ISBN: 9780199535958.

*Essays*, Michel de Montaigne, John Cohen (translator), Penguin Books, 1993, ISBN: 9780140178975.



## Online Elements

This course is being offered entirely online. Computer literacy is assumed. You are not required to appear in person for any meetings or exams, and you are not required to be online at particular times. However, you will need several hours of access every week to a computer or mobile device with some minimal system requirements, including internet access and an approved internet browser or Canvas app. It is your responsibility to ensure that you are able to connect fully and properly to our course site.

If you are new to online courses at CCP, become familiar with how the Canvas system works and where to go if you need help. Visit the College's Online Learning website for details: [www.ccp.edu/academic-offerings/online-learning](http://www.ccp.edu/academic-offerings/online-learning). For technical assistance, contact the Office of Online Learning at [onlinelearning@ccp.edu](mailto:onlinelearning@ccp.edu), or contact the College's IT Support team: (215) 496-6000 or [4itsupport@ccp.edu](mailto:4itsupport@ccp.edu).

## Activities and Assignments

This is a challenging course. It takes considerable time and effort each week to succeed. Plan ahead and be prepared to commit. If you go more than one week without any activity in the course, you may automatically fail the course for lack of participation.

The course is designed so that a relatively small group of students can come together and participate in a cooperative learning community that is guided by the instructor and a selection of texts or other primary source material. You are an essential part of the class. As you might expect, the value you gain from the course depends directly on the time and effort you put in. What might surprise you is that the success of others is also affected by your work. We share and discuss our ideas, questions, and formal writing with each other. Each student benefits greatly from the participation of classmates. It is essential that you log in regularly to read all relevant updates, comments, and questions from the instructor as well as your classmates. Success in the course requires that you be an active and engaged part of the ongoing class dialogue and inquiry.

You are expected to carefully read and think about the material assigned. The goal is to take our discussions deeper than a casual conversation, so quickly flipping or scrolling through a few pages will not be sufficient.

A set of study questions is posted each week. The questions serve to focus and direct your reading as well as the overall class conversation surrounding the reading. Questions are of a wide variety, but they always encourage you to develop a clear understanding of the central ideas and concepts expressed by an assigned text or work of art. Proper engagement with the questions may require you to identify and analyze the reasoning expressed by an author, or to draw connections among several perspectives and cultures. Rigorous abstract thinking and reflection are often needed to successfully respond to the questions. A study question will never ask you to merely summarize what you have read.

Quizzes on the weekly study questions account for 60% of your course grade. Each week a quiz is due on the study questions. Three questions are randomly selected from the week's set of questions and posted in the quiz. You must respond to at least two of the quiz questions to earn full credit. If you answer all the questions well, you can earn extra credit.

Over the length of the semester, extra credit can be a significant help in raising your course grade. It is also the way to make up for missed assignments.

Each response within the quiz should be approximately 250 words in length – no less than 200 words and no more than 300 words. Longer responses are not necessarily better than shorter ones, but be sure that you use the space and time given to provide necessary details and explanations. Choose your words wisely and stay focused on answering the questions well. Always be clear and concise. Also, remember that we are working within an academic setting, so your writing should be appropriately professional in its tone and presentation. Proofread your work and be respectful in the way you address the ideas or practices of others. You will have two hours to complete the quiz itself. You are strongly encouraged to prepare responses ahead of time and paste them into Canvas when you take a quiz. Be careful and verify that you are in a secure location with a stable internet connection before sitting down to take a quiz. They cannot be restarted if they are stopped or interrupted.

Outside research is not permitted when responding to the study questions. Keep your responses directly connected with the context of the class and the specific questions being asked. Reviewing the assigned reading may be helpful, but going on the internet to look something up will not. Use your own words in your writing and produce responses that demonstrate your own ability to think things through. Quotes, if used at all, should be used very sparingly -- a few words at most from the assigned text. Make sure to properly cite any quote you do use.

Keep in mind that excerpts from your responses may be shared with the rest of the class. The ultimate goal here is for you to contribute something to our comprehension of the subject. Think about how your responses could best contribute to the collective understanding of the assigned material.

Also, be prepared to respond to additional questions, comments, or requests for clarification that you may get as part of the weekly discussion on the assigned topic. Overall participation in each week's discussion accounts for 30% of your course grade. This is important and it should be done well. To earn full credit you must be actively involved in the discussion during the week, and your contribution must be valuable. There is no precise number of posts that will guarantee you a top grade, but less than four in a week will almost surely be too few. However, do not forget that quality still matters more than quantity. This is an academic discussion. The discussion is not an invitation to express how you personally like or dislike the topic we are discussing or the texts you have been assigned to read. Simply stating that you are confused or merely repeating what has already been said is not a powerful way to join the discussion either. Strive to make your comments and questions relevant and helpful to you and the class as well. It is fine to ask questions when you don't understand. Others may be in a similar situation. But, make your questions as precise and as well explained as you can. Keep up with the contributions of others in the class and try your best to find a good point where you can come into the conversation. Always read carefully the posts made each week by the instructor. They can help you improve your comprehension of the topic and often provide good opportunities for you to contribute to the week's discussion.

Participation in the discussions is evaluated at the end of each week, but your quiz on the material is usually earlier in the week. This is essential for ensuring that our discussions are fruitful. Keep careful track of due dates and times for all assignments. Late submissions are accepted up to 24 hours after they are due, but they will be reduced by one letter grade for tardiness. For example, a quiz that would normally earn an A would earn a B grade if it is late. No submissions are accepted more than 24 hours after they are due.

The remaining 10% of your course grade is determined by a Short Essay, due during the last week of class. This writing assignment gives you the opportunity to expand upon and further explore one of the topics or themes we have discussed during the term. This brief essay should be approximately 500 words in length - no less than 400 words and no more than 600 words. You may select the focus of your essay, but (like your work with the study questions) outside research is not permitted. The goal is not to go beyond the scope of our course. Instead, you should challenge yourself to take your own analysis and thoughtful reflection deeper into the texts and areas of study we have been looking at all semester. You are strongly encouraged to work with the instructor as you prepare and refine your ideas for this essay.

There is no MidTerm Exam or Final Exam for this course. No additional assignments, make-up work, or extra credit will be given.

If you have a documented disability or other need requiring special accommodations for any course assignment or activity you should contact the Center on Disability at (215) 751-8050 and inform the instructor as soon as reasonably possible. This information is kept strictly confidential.

## Grading

Individual assignments and overall class performance are evaluated according to the following guidelines:

A is indicative of excellent work. It requires a demonstrated mastery of the material and significant contribution to our class learning environment. You must understand and apply the relevant concepts, theories, and analytical skills with a high level of precision and impact.

B indicates a strong competency and overall a job well done. However, there are some subtle elements that are missed or not fully developed in your work. Often the depth of your work is significant, but there are some clear ways for it to be more effective or comprehensive.

C corresponds with a satisfactory, but basic level of demonstrated understanding and analytic ability. There is evidence of some valuable thinking strategies and at least a general understanding of the relevant concepts. Still, there is not enough insight or depth to your work. Your contribution to the class is acceptable, but not good or great.

D indicates a level of work that is quite minimal. The quality is lacking in all respects. There is only a bare understanding of the issues and usually not more than a superficial attempt at rigorous intellectual activity.

F is reserved for situations where no work at all is done or the work is significantly below even a minimal measure of quality. Comprehension and skill application are entirely, or almost entirely, absent. Your presence does not help, and may even hinder, the learning experience of others in the class.

The Canvas system tracks your course grade in terms of percentages. The following percentage scale is used to determine your overall course grade at the end of the term:

0 – 12 = F

13 – 32 = D

33 – 67 = C

68 – 87 = B

88 – 100 = A

## Academic Integrity

The Community College of Philadelphia is dedicated to the intellectual and personal development of its students, and to promoting an environment that exemplifies the College's core values, including Integrity, Academic Excellence, and a Commitment to Teaching and Learning. Academic integrity requires respect for and acknowledgement of the work and efforts of others. It is essential to a high level of teaching and learning. Academic integrity emphasizes fairness, honesty, and responsibility in all academic endeavors and communications, on the part of both faculty and students.

Violations of academic integrity may involve a variety of acts, including, but not limited to, plagiarism and cheating. Anyone who assists another person in an activity that constitutes a violation of academic integrity is also responsible and accountable for such a violation.

Plagiarism is the act of appropriating all or part of the work of another person or persons and passing it off as one's own. It occurs when the original ideas, language, or design elements that are not common knowledge are used without permission or proper credit. Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to, copying from a text without using quotation marks or other appropriate citation.

Cheating can take many forms. It may occur as a blatant disregard for instructor guidelines and rules for assignment completion, an intentional effort at deceiving the instructor, or an attempt to gain an unfair advantage over classmates.

Even one violation of academic integrity results in your automatic failure of the course. There are no exceptions. Take this policy very seriously. Ignorance and carelessness are not acceptable excuses. If you are unsure about what is or is not appropriate, please contact the instructor without delay.

## Contact

The instructor is available to address questions and concerns, but before asking a question it is wise to read the syllabus carefully and completely. Many common questions are answered here. Also, keep up to date by reading the instructor's posts in the discussion area of the course site. Questions are often covered there too. If you are still unsure, please ask. Most student questions or concerns are handled within the General Discussion area. This will be like raising your hand and asking a question in class. This allows students with similar questions to benefit from the instructor's answers.

You should contact the instructor through Canvas email if the matter you wish to discuss is private, personal, or confidential.

Public posts or private mail messages for the instructor will normally receive responses within 48 hours or less.

All communication with the instructor should be through Canvas. However, if you cannot log into Canvas and need to contact the instructor you may use College email or phone: oacostamorales@ccp.edu and (215) 751-8655. These methods of communication usually result in slower responses and should only be used if you are unable to access Canvas.

\*May your study of Humanities be memorable and valuable\*