

CC 1101: Contemporary Civilization, Part I

Columbia University
Fall 2016

Meets: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 10:10 am – noon, Hamilton 313.

Instructor: Joshua Simon

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Office: International Affairs Building, 7th floor, Room 734

Office Hours: Mondays, 2-4 pm, or by appointment.

Course Description

The first semester of Contemporary Civilization is an introduction to ancient and early modern moral and political philosophy, primarily in Europe and, much less comprehensively, in the Islamic world. The course begins with a close reading of Plato's *Republic*, which poses the central questions to be pursued throughout: what ethical norms should just individuals observe and what political institutions should just societies adopt?

Our goal is not only to understand how a variety of influential authors have answered these questions in the past, but also to develop skills in critical reading, textual interpretation, theoretical and empirical analysis, discussion, debate, and scholarly writing that will help us rigorously reflect on the meaning of justice in the present, and effectively explain our conclusions in the future.

To these ends, the course requires extensive reading, regular seminar discussions, and two major writing projects, as well as examinations designed to test comprehension.

Books for Purchase

Please acquire copies of the following texts in the indicated editions and bring them to class on the days they are assigned:

Plato, *Republic* (Hackett)
Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* (Oxford)
Aristotle, *Politics* (Hackett)
New Oxford Annotated Bible with Apocrypha (Oxford)
Augustine, *City of God* (Penguin)
The Qur'an, Abdel Haleem ed. (Oxford)
Machiavelli, *The Prince* (Hackett)
Hillerbrand, *The Protestant Reformation* (Harper & Row)
Hobbes, *Leviathan* (Oxford)
Locke, *Political Writings*, Wootton, ed. (Hackett)

Course Requirements and Grading

- **Reading, attendance, and participation (10% of final grade):** Read all assigned selections carefully before each class meeting and come to class prepared to participate politely and effectively in a discussion of the key arguments they contain. Please notify the instructor by email in advance of any planned or last-minute absence from class, explaining the reasons for your absence.
- **Questions for small-group discussion (10%):** For every class meeting from September 8th onward, think of a question about the assigned readings, write it down, and bring it with you to class on a sheet of paper. We will begin each class by forming groups of three or four and devoting 15 minutes to small-group discussion of your prepared questions. The questions will be handed in to the instructor, so make sure your name is on the paper.
- **Midterm (15%) and Final (20%) Examinations:** All students will complete a midterm exam in class on November 10th, and a final exam on Friday, December 16th. Exams are closed-book and closed-note, and will be hand-written in blue books. Students requiring arrangements or support services to accommodate learning disabilities should register with Disability Services and present the instructor with an official request.
- **Short paper (20%):** All students will write and revise a short (3-5 pages, double-spaced, 12-point font) paper that identifies an issue or question upon which Plato and Aristotle disagree, describes the disagreement using citations from both authors, and takes a side in the debate, providing reasons for doing so. The papers will be circulated first to assigned groups of fellow-students, which will meet in person during our regular class time, and provide constructive criticism and feedback. Next, students will revise their papers, and provide the instructor with their original drafts, their revised drafts, and a brief memo noting what revisions were made and how those revisions respond to critiques or suggestions made by fellow-students.
- **Long paper (25%):** All students will write a long paper (5-7 pages, double-spaced, 12-point font) on a topic chosen from a list to be distributed by the instructor, or on a special topic chosen in consultation with the instructor. Exchanging long papers for purposes of criticism and revision is highly recommended but not required.

Class Policies

Laptops, tablets, phones, and “smart” watches should be put in silent mode and remain in your bags or pockets during class meetings. Please bring a hardcopy version of all assigned readings and your preferred note paper, pen, and/or pencil to each class meeting.

The **Columbia University Undergraduate Guide to Academic Integrity** describes the University policies and disciplinary procedures that will be observed in this course concerning academic dishonesty, and provides tutorials on citing sources and study skills. It is available online at: <https://www.college.columbia.edu/academics/academicintegrity>.

Notes on Class Participation

What does it mean to participate politely and effectively in class discussions? We can think of both virtues in terms of the ultimate end that both serve: polite and effective participation stimulates more participation by others, while impolite and ineffective participation stops the conversation.

Participating politely means, first and foremost, contributing without talking over anyone else. You don't have to raise your hands, but you can raise your hands, if while someone is talking, you think of something you want to say, and I will make a note of it and call on you to speak. Participating politely also means thinking about how the tone of your voice and the words you choose will affect your classmates. This course is almost entirely about politics and religion—topics that, notoriously, one is not supposed to raise at Thanksgiving dinner. Strive to address these sensitive issues in ways that make others feel welcome to contribute, and leave no one wishing that they didn't have to come back to class for the next meeting. That means no ad-hominem arguments—if you disagree with what someone else is saying, say so, but confine your disagreement to what the other person is saying, and don't address the person themselves. You are welcome to tell us how your own, personal life experiences, have influenced the way you read a text or responded to it, but don't make assumptions about your classmates' life experiences and how they have influenced the arguments they make in class. All this is emphatically not meant to say don't be passionate, don't be angry, don't be sad, don't be enthusiastic. I hope you will do all those things, but I hope you'll direct those emotions at the texts and the ideas that come up in class, rather than your classmates. We are all in this together.

Participating effectively means making comments or asking questions that are on-topic, responsive to questions or comments that I or, especially, your classmates pose. I hope you will answer my questions and disagree with my interpretations, but I will be particularly impressed when you answer your classmates' questions, or ask your classmates questions about what they are saying, asking them to go deeper, to say more, to consider another possible interpretation or point of view. Effective participation also makes good use of the texts, supporting arguments by pointing us to particular passages. That's why you need to have the books with you every day. Finally, effective participation makes connections across the course, recalling ideas that we've discussed earlier, connecting thinkers, helping us see the points at which they are in explicit or implicit disagreement, asking whose position is more coherent, more compelling, more relevant, and ultimately, more convincing.

Useful Links

The CC Reader contains selected assigned readings in pdf. You can find and download the texts indicated below here: <https://www.college.columbia.edu/core/conciv/ccreader>.

The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy is a comprehensive online reference work, written and continuously edited by experts on the ideas, traditions, and figures it describes. This is a good place to start looking for short biographies and overviews of the authors and texts you are reading: <http://plato.stanford.edu/>.

The Writing Center provides writing support to Columbia students. It offers one-on-one consultations and workshops that will help you improve your essays' arguments, exposition, and organization. You can book appointments at: <http://www.college.columbia.edu/core/uwp/writing-center>.

Schedule of Readings, Due Dates, and Class Meetings

Tuesday, Sept. 6

Introduction to the course – no readings assigned.

Thursday, Sept. 8

Plato, *Republic*, 327a-417b (skim 379d-410b).

Tuesday, Sept. 13

Plato, *Republic*, 419a-471b.

Thursday, Sept. 15

Plato, *Republic*, 471c-541b, 595a-608b.

Tuesday, Sept. 20

Plato, *Republic*, 543c-592b.

Thursday, Sept. 22

Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Books I-II.

Tuesday, Sept. 27

Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Books V-VI, X.

Thursday, Sept. 29

Aristotle, *Politics*, Books I, II (chs. 1-6), III.

Tuesday, Oct. 4

Aristotle, *Politics*, Books IV-V.

Thursday, Oct. 6

Aristotle, *Politics*, Books VII-VIII.

Monday, Oct. 10

Short papers due as email attachment to writing groups at NOON; cc jds2266@columbia.edu.

Tuesday, Oct. 11

Writing group meetings – no readings assigned, no class meeting.

Thursday, Oct. 13

Old Testament, *Exodus* 1-24, *Deuteronomy* 1-6, *1 Samuel* 2, 8-10, 17-20.

Monday, Oct. 17

Revised short paper and revision memo due. Print and place a paper copy in my mailbox on the 7th floor of the International Affairs Building **by 5 pm.**

Tuesday, Oct. 18

New Testament: *Matthew* 3-7, *Romans* (entire), *Galatians* (entire).

Thursday, Oct. 20

Augustine, *City of God*, Book I, chs. 1-12, 16-36; Book VIII, chs. 1-13; Book XIV, chs. 1-4, 8, 10-19, 22-28.

Tuesday, Oct. 25

Qur'an, Suras 1, 114, 112, 111, 107, 98, 96, 68, 63, 56, 39, 26, 17, 12, 2-3 (Read in this order).

Thursday, Oct. 27

Al-Ghazali, “The Rescuer from Error”; Ibn Tufayl, “Hayy ibn Yaqzan”; Ibn Rushd (Averroës), “On the Harmony of Religion and Philosophy”, from the **CC Reader**.

Tuesday, Nov. 1

St. Thomas Aquinas, “Summa Against the Gentiles”, “On Kingship”, and “The Summa of Theology”, from the **CC Reader**.

Thursday, Nov. 3

Francisco de Vitoria, “On the American Indians”; Juan Gines de Sepulveda, “Democrates Alter”; Bartolomé de las Casas, “Apologetic History of the Indies”, from the **CC Reader**.

Tuesday, Nov. 8

Election Day – no class meeting.

Thursday, Nov. 10

Midterm Exam in Class – No Readings Assigned.

Tuesday, Nov. 15

Machiavelli, *The Prince*, entire.

Thursday, Nov. 17

Martin Luther, “The Freedom of a Christian”; “On Government Authority”; “The Twelve Articles of the Peasants” (both the Articles themselves and Luther’s “Friendly Admonition to Peace”), from Hillerbrand, ed., *The Protestant Reformation*.

Tuesday, Nov. 22

René Descartes, “Principles of Philosophy”, “Correspondence with Elisabeth of Bohemia”, “Passions of the Soul”, from the **CC Reader**.

Long Paper Topics Distributed in Class.

Thursday, Nov. 24

Thanksgiving Day – no class meeting.

Tuesday, Nov. 29

Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Book I, Introduction and chapters 1-6, 10, 12-16.

Thursday, Dec. 1

Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Book II, chapters 17-22, 24, 26, 29-31; Book III, chapters 32, 43; Review and Conclusion.

Tuesday, Dec. 6

John Locke, *Second Treatise on Government*, chapters 1-8.

Thursday, Dec. 8

John Locke, *Second Treatise on Government*, chapters 9-19.

Monday, Dec. 12

Long Paper due. Print and place a paper copy in my mailbox on the 7th floor of the International Affairs Building **by 5 pm.**

Friday, Dec. 16: Final Exam 12:30 – 3:30 pm. Place to be announced.