SYLLABUS

CC-201, Fall, 1990 Humanities III Core Curriculum
Lectures: T, 12:30-2:00
Sargent 101

Core Professors

Katherine O'Connor (Modern Foreign Languages)
Aryeh Motzkin (Philosophy)
Michael Prince (English)

Seminar Times: MWF 9:00-10:00 am, MCS B-31, Professor O'Connor
MWF 10:00-11:00 am, CLA 231, Professor Motzkin
TR 11:00-12:30 pm, COM 210, Professor Prince

Books: The books you should purchase and read are available at the
BU Bookstore. The last page of this syllabus provides a list of these
books, and of the handouts which will be provided.

Grading: Final grades will be determined by the student's seminar
instructor. The grade will be based on a combination of written work,
examinations, and participation, as follows:

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<tr>
<td>Seminar Papers</td>
<td>55%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mid-term Exam</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<td>Final Exam</td>
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Significant positive contributions in the classroom will improve one's
grade; more than three absences will significantly reduce it. Exams
will cover materials in the lectures, seminars, and the readings.
They will include objective, short essay, and long essay questions.
Choices will be offered.

Course Description: The third semester of the Humanities Core
continues our interdisciplinary survey of some of the most significant
literary and philosophical works in Western culture. Our attention
now shifts to the time from the early fourteenth to late seventeenth
century, a period dominated by issues which have come to be discussed
under the inclusive title, "the Renaissance."

As we move from Chaucer to Petrarch and Pico, we will ask why it
is necessary to draw the line on Medievalism and to speak in terms of
a new period in human thought and literary creation. We will consider
how the Italian humanists created a different sense of human
possibility, in no small part by recovering forgotten works of Greek
and Roman antiquity. Our discussion of the Renaissance in Italy and
its developments in France and England will take up the question of a
"rebirth" in learning in several of its most important
aspects—political (the rise of the nation-states, the development of
political analysis in terms of power), intellectual (the emancipation
of human reason from religious authority), technological (the rise of
modern science, the development of the printing press, etc.) and
artistic (the incredible variety and accomplishment of the age of

In the writings of Shakespeare, Montaigne, Cervantes, and
Descartes, we will find a new conception of the self in terms of its
autonomy, its vast potential, and its isolation within a material
world which is beginning to lose its constant allegorical connection
to the divine realm. This was the self which would find its emblems
in Shakespeare's Lear, alone upon a barren and wind-blown heath, in
Montaigne's frollicksome literary persona, taking up cannibals or
drunkenness or the limits of human knowledge as the spirit moved him,
in Cervante's Don who maintains that everyone but him is the dupe of
an evil enchantor, and the meditational Descartes, rejecting all
received knowledge, including the testimony of his senses and the
being of God, before discovering a new basis of certainty, the cogito,
his thinking self.

Along with a new conception of the self went a new conception of
the power of human reason. Sir Francis Bacon derides the "Idols"
which cloud and distort human reason, and proposes a "Great
Instauration" which, like the program of physical research proposed by
Descartes, points toward the great undertaking of modern science.
Baruch Spinoza offered an understanding of human emotions as axiomatic
and logically developed as geometry. In a universe whose every part
obeys absolute laws, he argued, Amor intellectuali Dei, the
intellectual love of God, is man's highest aspiration.

While several of the most important works written during this
period revive classical genres, and in the process redefine them
(Shakespeare's tragedies; Milton's great epic, "Paradise Lost"), the
Renaissance was also marked by the development of new forms of
literary and philosophical creation. Chaucer's short tales,
Petrarch's lyrics, Montaigne's essays, Descartes' philosophical
"autobiography," and, perhaps most importantly, Cervantes' protonovel
are forms whose very innovativeness testifies to the vibrancy of the
time, to new conditions that rendered traditional modes of expression
inadequate.

This period also includes the first great flowering of English
poetry. The course will therefore stress a close study of some of the
greatest poetry in the English language--Chaucer's General Prologue,
Shakespeare's Sonnets, the lyrics of Donne and Marvell, and Milton's Paradise Lost. We will study these works in terms of their contribution to Western culture, but we also want to know how poetry differs from prose, what special problems it poses and what particular rewards it offers to the careful reader—rewards such as those suggested by Wallace Stevens in "An Ordinary Evening in New Haven":

As if
In the end, in the whole psychology, the self,
The town, the weather, in a casual litter,
Together, said words of the world are the life of the world.

John Milton, a polemicist and a political survivor in a time of civil war and ideological struggle, a poet who saw himself in the shadow of Shakespeare and the tradition of Homer and Vergil, a man well-aware of the skeptical and scientific currents of his time, serves as a somewhat baroque example of a Renaissance man. He believed that a good education began with languages, proceeded through mathematics, agriculture, geography, philosophy, architecture, anatomy, medicine, ethics, economics, politics, law, and history, culminating in poetic composition. He sought a language adequate to "justify the ways of God to men," and believed his poem was divinely inspired; it had to be written as it was. What credence do we now give this claim, and how does it influence our understanding of the poem?

Beyond the themes and historical developments charted by the course lies something even more important: the greatness of each of the individual works we will be reading. What this greatness is, why these works instead of others still have the power to engage us in conversation with the creative intellects of the past (a past which therefore includes us!)—these questions will be of primary concern, just as they are central to all of the courses in the Core curriculum.
Geoffrey Chaucer, The Canterbury Tales
(New York: Bantam Books, 1964)

Petrarch, Selections from the Canzoniere tr. Musa
(New York: Oxford University Press, 1986)
Ascent of Mt. Ventoux

Pico della Mirandola, Oration on the Dignity of Man
(handout)

Michel de Montaigne, The Complete Essays of Montaigne, tr. Donald Frame
(Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1958)

Niccolo Machiavelli, The Prince, tr. Mansfield
(Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977)

William Shakespeare, King Lear, ed. Fraser
(New York: Signet Classics, 1963)

William Shakespeare, The Tempest, ed. Langbaum
(New York: Signet Classics, 1964)

William Shakespeare, The Sonnets
(New York: Penguin, 1961)

Miguel de Cervantes, Don Quixote, tr. Cohen
(New York: Penguin, 1951)
Selections

Francis Bacon, A Selection of His Works, ed. Sidney Warhaft

Baruch Spinoza, Ethics, tr. Shirley
(Indianapolis: Hackett, 1982)

Rene Descartes, Discourse on Method and Meditations

John Milton, The Complete Poetry
(New York: Anchor, 1963)
Tuesday, 9/4/90:  

*Geoffrey Chaucer, Canterbury Tales.*

Reading: From Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales:*
"The General Prologue" (pp. 2-41);
"The Miller's Prologue and Tale" (pp. 146-181);
"The Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale" (pp. 182-239).

*Lecture (1): Brian Jorgensen, on Chaucer and Dante*

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Tuesday, 9/11/90:  

*Two Great Humanists: Petrarch and Pico.*

Reading: From Francesco Petrarch, *Selections from the Canzoniere: "The Ascent of Mt. Ventoux"* (pp. 11-19);  

*Lecture (2): Dennis Costa, What is Humanism?*

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Tuesday, 9/18/90:  

*Michel de Montaigne's Essays.*

Reading: Each seminar leader will assign his or her own readings, but all students should read the following from the *Essays* of Montaigne:
"To the Reader," p. 2;  
"That intention is judge of our actions" (I:7, pp. 19-20);  
"That to philosophize is to learn to die" (I:20, pp. 56-68);  
"Of the power of the imagination" (I:21, pp. 68-76);  
"Of moderation" (I:30, pp. 146-149);  
"Of cannibals" (I:31, 150-159);  
"Of the inequality that is between us" (I:42, pp. 189-196);  
"Of Democritus and Heraclitus" (I:50, pp. 219-221);  
"Of the parsimony of the ancients" (I:52, p. 224);  
"Of presumption" (II:17, pp. 478-502).

*Lecture (3): Susan Jackson, on Montaigne*

Reading: Machiavelli, *The Prince*.

*Lecture (4):* *Aryeh Motzkin, Machiavelli and the Beginnings of Modernity*

Tuesday, 10/2/90:  *Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra*. *Don Quixote*.

Reading: From Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, Part I: Chs. 1-9; Ch. 11; Chs. 16-18; Chs. 21-22; Ch. 38; Ch. 45; Chs. 49-50; Ch. 52.

*Lecture (5):* *Rodolfo Cardona, on Cervantes*

Tuesday, 10/9/90:  *Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra*. *Don Quixote*.

Reading: From *Don Quixote*, Part II: Chs. 1-6; Ch. 8; Chs. 22-23; Chs. 25-28; Chs. 30-33; Chs. 41-42; Chs. 61-62; Ch. 64; Chs. 71-74.

*No Lecture: Monday Schedule.*

Tuesday, 10/16/90:  *William Shakespeare*. *King Lear*.

Reading: Shakespeare, *King Lear*.

*Lecture (6):* *William Carroll, on King Lear*


Reading: Shakespeare, *The Tempest*.

*Lecture (7):* *William Carroll, on The Tempest.*
Tuesday, 10/30/90: The Sonnet and William Shakespeare.


Lecture (8): Gerald Fitzgerald, on Shakespeare's Sonnets

Tuesday, 11/6/90: The Poetry of John Donne and Andrew Marvell.

Reading: Selections from Donne and Marvell (handout).

Lecture (9): Laurence Breiner, on Donne and Marvell

Tuesday, 11/13/90: Sir Francis Bacon.

Reading: From Sir Francis Bacon: A Selection of His Works:
"Of Truth" (1 Essays 1625, pp. 47-49);
"Of Death" (2 Essays 1625, pp. 49-50);
"Of Unity in Religion" (3 Essays 1625, pp. 51-55);
"Of Simulation and Dissimulation" (6 Essays 1625, pp. 58-60);
"Of Goodness and Goodness of Nature" (13 Essays 1625, pp. 75-78);
"Of Nobility" (14 Essays 1625, pp. 78-79);
"Of Atheism" (16 Essays 1625, pp. 86-89);
"Of Superstition" (17 Essays 1625, pp. 89-90);
"Of Wisdom for a Man's Self" (23 Essays 1625, pp. 106-108);
"Of Seeming Wise" (26 Essays 1625, pp. 111-112);
"Of Prophecies" (35 Essays 1625, pp. 140-142);
"Of Nature in Men" (38 Essays 1625, pp. 146-147);
"Of Custom and Education" (39 Essays 1625, pp. 148-149);
"Of Fortune" (40 Essays 1625, pp. 149-151);
"Of Vicissitude of Things" (58 Essays 1625, pp. 190-194);
The Wisdom of the Ancients, pp. 274-295;
Aphorisms 1-48 from The New Organon, pp. 331-348.

Lecture (10): Aryeh Motzkin, on Bacon
Tuesday, 11/20/90:  Baruch Spinoza, The Ethics.

Reading: From Spinoza, The Ethics:
Part I:
entire (pp. 31-62);
Part II:
Propositions 1-5 (pp. 63-66),
Proposition 18 (p. 79),
Propositions 34-46 (pp. 86-87),
Propositions 47-49 (pp. 94-96);
Part III:
entire (pp. 103-152);
Part IV:
Proposition 20 (p. 166),
Proposition 28 (p. 169),
Propositions 36-37 (pp. 174-177),
Proposition 45 (pp. 180-181),
Proposition 50 (pp. 182-183),
Propositions 53-54 (pp. 184-185);
Part V:
Preface (pp. 203-205),
Proposition 6 (pp. 207-208),
Proposition 17 (p. 212),
Propositions 21-23 (pp. 215-216),
Propositions 31-37 (pp. 218-222),
Propositions 41-42 (pp. 224-225).

Lecture (11): Aryeh Motzkin, on Spinoza

Tuesday, 11/27/90:  René Descartes, Discourse on Method and Meditations.

Reading: Descartes, Discourse on Method, Parts 1-5 (pp. 1-32);

Lecture (12): James Devlin, on Descartes
Tuesday, 12/4/90:  
*John Milton. Paradise Lost.*

Reading: From *Paradise Lost:*  
"The Verse" and Books I-II (pp. 249-297);  
Book III, Argument and ll. 1-371 (pp. 298-307);  
Book IV, Argument and ll. 1-775 (pp. 317-336);  
Book V, Argument and ll. 1-223 (pp. 342-348).

_Lecture (13):* Christopher Ricks, on Milton

Tuesday, 12/11/90:  
*John Milton. Paradise Lost.*

Reading: From *Paradise Lost:*  
Book VI (pp. 364-387);  
Book VII, Argument and ll. 1-39 (pp. 387-389);  
Book VIII, Argument (p. 404) and ll. 249-653 (pp. 411-420);  
Book IX (pp. 420-450);  
Book X, Argument (pp. 450-451), and ll. 845-1103 (pp. 473-478);  
Book XI, Argument (pp. 478-479);  
Book XII, Argument (p. 501) and ll. 325-649 (pp. 509-517).

_Lecture (14):* Brian Jorgensen, Concluding lecture