Western Civilization: A Critical Inquiry
The Roxbury Latin School
First Marking Period Assignments - 2021-22

Class Meeting - (C1-C25)**; Assignment Due -** (A2-A25)**; Graded Assignment Due**

UNIT 1: Ancient Scriptures: Hebrew, Christian, and Islamic

As we will discuss at greater length in our first class meeting, this course **Western Civilization: A Critical Inquiry** is primarily a history-focused inquiry that includes consideration of religious, historical, and philosophical texts in the first marking period.

To begin our inquiry, we will be studying the Ancient Hebrew scriptures because this particular text (and its interpretation and reception by people across time) has had an impact (and continues to have an impact) on the development of the "West" and interactions between cultures, governments, and religions across the world, even today.

Thus, we will be interested in how, for example, some of the stories that have been captured in these early religious texts lay out value systems with concepts such as a "covenant" to guide and regulate human relationships, and provides models of leadership (positive and negative) that are often recalled and reinterpreted across time, even into the present.

In this unit, we will also critically examine the concept of a "Judeo-Christian tradition," as this is a concept generally associated with the notion of "Western Civilization" in our time, and has the potential to be erroneously inclusive and exclusive.

Unit 1 Overview:

To those ends, some areas of focus for Unit 1: "Ancient Scriptures: Hebrew, Christian, and Islamic" will be:

1) seeing how descriptions of people and events that are common to different religious traditions can be interpreted differently within those religious traditions.

2) hearing from a contemporary scholar of the Ancient Hebrew Bible (Professor Bernat) who will introduce us to a scholarly framework for interpreting a story from the Ancient Hebrew Bible referred to as the "Akedah" (the "Binding"). This scholarly framework employs three levels of analysis--rhetorical, literary, and historical--which will be thoroughly described in Professor Bernat's lecture. After seeing how these levels of

analysis work together to theorize about an Ancient Hebrew author's intent in telling this story, you will write a graded paragraph using one level of analysis from this same scholarly framework (rhetorical, literary, OR historical) to compare the telling of the "Binding" in the Ancient Hebrew Bible with the telling of the "Binding" in the Quran.

3) reading and responding to two news articles that critically examine the concept of a "Judeo-Christian tradition."

Guiding Questions:

- Why should we hold the concept of "Western Civilization" as a very fluid one?
- What can we learn about different tellings and different interpretations of people and events that are common to more than one religious tradition?
- What are some examples of influences on Ancient Hebrew culture that come from other civilizations? No culture develops in a vacuum.
- What can we learn about a concept often associated with the study of Western Civilization, referred to as the "Judeo-Christian Tradition," that can help us to think critically about this concept as the course unfolds?

Learning Objectives:

- Learn how to highlight and annotate reading assignments, using guiding prompts and questions.
- Learn how to take notes in a lecture context.
- Write an analytical paragraph with a thesis statement, supporting evidence, and sound reasoning.
- Introduce proper use of parenthetical citations.
- Understand how some scholars analyze historical evidence and literary techniques to theorize about the rhetorical intent of an ancient author in telling a scriptural story.
- Practice looking for the main argument (thesis) of an author and the evidence and reasoning that supports the argument in both scholarly work and the contemporary press.
- Develop a sense for your own biases when reading a scholarly work or an article from the contemporary press.

AUGUST

30 MonC1 *Class*: Intro. to course & URL page; Intro to 1st reading & highlighting/annotating
31 TuesC2 A2Reader, pp. 1-6 (Jarvis introduction) and discuss note taking for lecture

SEPTEMBER

1 WedC3 A3Reader, pp. 8-12 (Chap. 1 Abraham & Story of Abraham, abridged)
Class: Rhetorical, Literary & Historical Analysis Lecture, Prof. Bernat

2 ThursC4 A4Reader, pp. 13-24 (Moses & Exodus)
Class: **Open-notes Quiz on Lecture**
Reader pp. 25-26 - Apply Bernat's RLH analysis framework to a comparison of Sargon of Akkad and Moses' birth stories
Reader pp. 27-29 - Briefly compare Jarvis' Christian interpretation of the Akedah w/Bernat's interpretation; what might account for the rhetorical differences?

3 Friday LABOR DAY HOLIDAY

6 Monday LABOR DAY HOLIDAY

7 TuesC5 A5Reader, pp. 30-40 - Mount Sinai & The Promised Land
Class: Apply Bernat's RLH analysis framework to the 10 Commandments and ancient inscriptions & monuments in Bernat's slides - (n.b. Rosh Hashanah)

8 WedC6 A6Reader, pp. 42-49 (Freedman - The Primary History)
Class: Discuss Freedman (n.b. Rosh Hashanah)

9 Thurs No Classes - Field Trips & Activities

13 MonC7 A7Reader, pp. 50-56 (Freedman - The Decalogue)

14 TuesC8 A8Reader, pp. 58-63 (Quran, Surah 37 in full; verses 100-110 is the Akedah)
Class: Introduce Paragraph Assignment

15 WedC9 A9Choose R, L, or H for comparing Hebrew Bible & Quran versions of Akedah
Class: Begin drafting your paragraph

16 ThurC10 A10Continue drafting your paragraph
Class: Continue drafting (n.b. Yom Kippur)

20 MonC11 A11**Paragraph Due (beginning of class)**
Class: Read & discuss articles on "Judeo-Christian tradition" (Reader, pp. 64-73)

UNIT 2: Ancient Greece: Thucydides' History of the Peloponnesian War

Unit 2 Overview:

In Unit 2, we will focus on:

1) The story of how the democratic city-state of Athens developed a thirst for empire and perished in its quest through war with the other great superpower of its time--Sparta.

2). The enduring work of Thucydides' history of the Peloponnesian War, which is regarded by many to be the work of the first "modern" historian with lessons for some of the recurring problems of humanity.

3) The interaction and interrelationship between three concepts animating history in all places and in all times--justice, power, and human nature--which are central to Thucydides' telling of the history of the Peloponnesian War.

Guiding Questions:

- What was the historical context in which the Peloponnesian War arose?
- How was Thucydides' historical method different from that of historians who preceded him?
- What types of considerations should a society consider in making a decision of whether to go to war?
- How might we usefully compare the ways in which leaders in times of crisis respond to the crisis through oratory?
- What can we learn about justice from an early debate over whether the death penalty should be invoked?
- How can we compare elements of an ancient pandemic to the pandemic of our day, COVID-19?
- What can we learn from an ancient example of societal breakdown in a civil war that may serve as a cautionary tale for all times?

Learning Objectives:

- Continue to practice note-taking in a lecture context.
- Continue to highlight and annotate readings with guiding prompts/questions.
- Continue to practice historical writing and analysis in a paragraph format.
- Learn how to create a Works Cited page.
- Understand the importance of defining key terms--justice, power, and human nature--toward applying those terms to historical analysis of speeches.
- Conduct research to find a primary source document.
- Practice developing categories for comparison of two primary sources documents.
- Conduct research to find an article from the contemporary press for use in comparing a current event to an ancient one.

- Herodotus' Histories & Thucydides' Speech of Archidamus

Class: *Thucydides & Peloponnesian War Lecture*, Prof. Rothwell

22 WedC13 A13Thucydides, p. 17-28 (Speeches from Debate at Sparta)

Class: **Open-notes Quiz on Lecture**

23 ThursC14 A14Thucydides, p. 39 - mid 46 (Pericles' Funeral Oration)

Class: Discuss Oration & Introduce Paragraph Assignment

(and Bibliographic Citations)

27 MonC15 A15Come with speech of a leader responding to a national crisis (it can be any nation of the world now, or in the past) and a bibliographic citation for that speech, **AND**… Read: Thucydides, p. 46-50 (The Plague)

Class: Plague/Covid-19 Comparison Activity

28 TuesC16 A16Thucydides, p. 66 - mid 71 - Mytilenian Debate (Speech of Cleon)

29 WedC17 A17Thucydides, p. mid 71-mid 76 Mytilenian Debate (Speech of Diodotus)

30 ThursC18 A18**Paragraph Due beginning of class**

Class: Read & Discuss Thucydides, p. 89-95 - Civil War in Corcyra

OCTOBER

4 MonC19 A19End of Peloponnesian War & Its Aftermath Lecture: Prof. Rothwell (recorded)

Class: **Open-notes Quiz on Lecture**

Introduce Unit 3

Watch *Ciceronian Rhetoric Lecture: Ethos, Pathos, Logos*, Mr. Matthews

UNIT 3: Ancient Greece: The Last Days of Socrates

Unit 3 Overview:

In Unit 3, we will focus on the following:

1). The Trial (and post-trial) of Socrates with some emphasis on Socrates' views on wisdom, the examined life, and the "social contract".

2). Ancient Greek rhetorical techniques for arrangement of arguments, using ethos, pathos, and logos.

3). Ancient Greek orders of architecture, architectural innovations, and desire for their art to imitate nature.

3). Consideration of the core meaning of Plato's "Allegory of the Cave".

Guiding Questions:

- What is Socrates' definition of *wisdom*?
- What does it mean to live an *examined life* in Socrates' view?
- How can we apply the concept of a *social contract* to Socrates' decision to not escape "justice" after being convicted and sentenced to death? Can there be situations in which the status quo should be challenged because the social contract is broken? What is *civil disobedience*?
- What seems to be the core message of Plato's "Allegory of the Cave" and what application might it have for our own "examined lives"?
- How are Ancient Greek art and architecture reflections of their culture?

Learning Objectives:

- Practice engaging with philosophical ideas from enduring works of Plato.
- Learn how to identify arguments using ethos, pathos, and logos
- Learn how to identify, understand, and appreciate Ancient Greek artistic and architectural forms and innovations.

5 Tues	C20	A20Reader, p. 92-106 - The Last Days of Socrates, “Apology” - 1st half (EPL) *Class*: **Open-notes Quiz on Lecture** Begin discussion of the Apology
6 Wed	C21	A21Reader, p. 107-117 - Apology - 2nd half (EPL) *Class*: Finish discussion of the Apology
7 Thur	C22	A22Reader, p. 118-125 - A History of the World in 100 Objects: Parthenon Sculp. Complete Dr. McCrory’s pre-lecture assignment (which she will send via email) *Class*: Art & Architecture Lecture, Dr. McCrory
11 Monday		**COLUMBUS DAY HOLIDAY**
12 Tues	C23	A23Reader, p. 126-137 (Crito) *Class*: **Open-notes Quiz on Lecture**
13 Wed	C24	A24Reader, p. 138-141 (The Cave)
14 Thur	C25	A25**TEST in class today on EPL, The Apology, Crito, & The Cave**