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LS 151L.85: Introduction to the Humanities - Honors

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LS 151.85L **Introduction to the Humanities**

Paul A. Dietrich  
Office: LA 101A  
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Hours: MWF 9-10 & by appointment  
4 credits

Fall, 2004  
MWF 10:10-11:00  
DHC 117  
Th 11:10-12:00  
(ULH 101) or  
7:10-8:00 (SS 352)

An introduction to the Western Humanities through an investigation of selected texts from the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament, classical Greek civilization, the New Testament and early Christian literature. Topics to be considered include: conceptions of self, family, community, cosmos and the gods; ideas of virtue, wisdom, piety, justice, law, and the state; the nature of the good life, good and evil, and the meaning of suffering; the role of myth, symbol and ritual; conceptions of creation, time, and temporality; varieties of visionary experience and the poetics of change, conversion and metamorphosis; the language of love and desire; imagery of journey and pilgrimage; genres of classical and biblical literatures; idealism, realism, humanism and naturalism.

"A classic is a book that has never finished saying what is has to say. A classic is something that tends to relegate the concerns of the moment to the status of background noise, but at the same time this background noise is something we cannot do without. (Conversely) A classic is something that persists as a background noise even when the most incompatible momentary concerns are in control of the situation."  

Italo Calvino

**Course Syllabus**

Aug.31,  
Introduction. Creation and Covenant in the Old Testament/Hebrew Bible: Genesis and Exodus

Sept.1,3  
Law (Torah) and Prophets: Amos, Isaiah et al.

13,15,17  
Wisdom (Writings): Love and Suffering in the Song of Songs, Psalms, Job

20,22,24  
Greek Civilization and Homer’s Epic

27,29,Oct  
Separation, Initiation and Return in the Odyssey

4,6,8  
Songs of War, Love and Honor in Greek Lyric: Archilochus, Sappho, and Pindar

13  
Midterm Exam

11,15,18  
The Birth of Tragedy: Greek Drama and Sophocles’ Oedipus Cycle and Euripides’ Medea and the Bacchae

20,22,25  
Paideia and the School of Athens: Greek Philosophy

27,29  
and Plato’s Dialogues

Nov.1,3,5  
The New Covenant: Jesus in the Gospels (Luke)

8,10,12  
Paul’s Letter to the Romans

15,17,19,22  
Augustine’s Confessions: The Poetics of Conversion
Nov. 24-26  Thankgsgiving Holiday  
Nov. 29  Augustine, Confessions. Time, Memory and Healing  
Dec. 1,3,6  Conclusion and Review  
14  Final Exam - 8:00-10:00  

Required Reading  
The New Oxford Annotated Bible (w/Apocrypha) (Coogan, ed.; Oxford)  
Homer, The Odyssey (Fagles, tr.; Penguin)  
Greek Lyric, (Miller, tr.; Hackett)  
Sophocles, Three Tragedies (Greene tr.; Chicago)  
Euripides, Three Plays (Roche, tr.; Norton)  
Plato, Five Dialogues (Grube tr.; Hackett)  
St. Augustine, The Confessions (Boulding tr.; Vintage)  

Course Requirements  
1. Class meetings will be supplemented by weekly plenary lectures (attendance required). Written responses (1-2 pages) to selected lectures due Friday following lecture. (No late responses)  
2. Essay (4-6 pages) responding to biblical materials due Sept. 24 on "What does it mean to be human in ancient Israel? How are understandings of the self (virtue, wisdom, piety) related to understandings of the family, the community, and the gods (justice, covenant, law)? A revised and enlarged version of your essay (6-8 pages) incorporating materials from classical Greek civilization will be due Oct. 29. The final version of the essay including material from the New Testament and the world of St. Augustine will be due Dec. 10 (8-10 pages). The final essay will thus compare and contrast the various answers to these questions from Genesis to the Confessions.  
3. Prompt completion of assigned reading. Quizzes on readings as needed.  
4. Grades will be based on papers and exams; however, attendance and participation will be considered in the final grade.  
5. Midterm Exam (Wednesday, October 13) and Final Exam (Tuesday, December 14).  

"Classics are certain texts, events, images, rituals, symbols and persons (in which we acknowledge) a disclosure of a reality we cannot but name truth...some disclosure of reality in a moment of 'recognition' which surprises, provokes, challenges, shocks, and eventually transforms us; an experience that upsets conventional opinions and expands the sense of the possible; indeed a realized experience of that which is essential, that which endures - the presence of classics in every culture is undeniable. Their memory haunts us. Their actual effects in our lives endure and await ever new appropriations, constantly new interpretations."  
David Tracy