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HONR 121L.82: Ways of Knowing

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FALL, 2014, HC 121: WAYS OF KNOWING

TU TH: 2:10-3:30 P.M., SECTION 82 DHC 117

Professor: Ron Perrin

Office DHC 106

Office hours. DHC 106 Tu Th 3:30-4:30 P.M. Also by appointment.

Email: ronperrin@mtwi.net

Course Description and Objectives

What can we know and how do we think we know? This course will draw from Scripture, Philosophy, Science and Literature to explore these fundamental questions.

The primary emphasis is not on *what* we know but *how* we know what we believe we know. Thinkers in every age of civilization have grappled with how we know- -the divine, the natural world, the self and society. In considering their conclusions we will examine together the possibility of integrating their diverse responses and engaging each response with the others.

Through a combination of lectures, discussions, and written essays students will be encouraged to trace and develop their own responses to the various ways of knowing.

Required Texts

The Book of Job, Stephen Mitchell translation.

Tae Te Ching, Stephen Mitchell translation, Harper Perennial

The Discourse on Method, Rene Descartes

The Tempest, William Shakespeare, Pelican ed.

Silent Spring, Rachel Carson

Course pack (available at the University Bookstore)

Key

CP=Course pack

*= Joint session (both sections meet in DHC 119)

RP=Ron Perrin

ES=Erin Saldin

CLASS PLAN

T 8/26 Introductions, Overview, Structure of the course.

Writing Assignment (ungraded)

Th 8/28 D.W. Meinig, "The Beholding Eye: Ten Versions of the Same Scene" (CP)

I: Knowing the Divine

T 9/2 Tao te Ching

TH 9/4 Genesis 1-5.5: Two accounts of the creation. (CP)

Thursday 9/4: Honors Convocation 7:00 P.M. University Theatre

T 9/9 Genesis 11:26-13.11, 15-22:24 (CP) The Abraham Story (CP)

W 9/10 Plenary Lecture #1: Gary Hawk, "Oh My, God" (7:00-8:00 P.M. GBB 106)

Th 9/11 Gospels of Matthew and John (CP)

Writing Assignment Due

***T 9/16** ES, *The Book of Job*, First half

Th 9/18 *The Book of Job*, Second half

II. Knowing Nature

T 9/23 Plato's Allegory of the Cave

W 9/24 Plenary Lecture #2: Ron Perrin: "The Passage From Mythology to Philosophy in Ancient Greece" (7:00-8:00 P.M. GGB 122)

***TH 9/25** RP: Aristotle; Selections from *Physics*, *Metaphysics*, *Nicomachean Ethics* (CP)

Assignment of First Essay

T 9/30 Descartes' *Dicourse on Method*. Sections 1,4,6

***TH 10/2** ES Euclid and Galileo (CP)

T 10/7 Darwin, *The Origin of Species*, *The Descent of Man*. Selections (CP)

***Th 10/9** Film "The Queen of Trees"

T 10/14 Huxley, Selections from *Evolution and Ethics and Other Essays* (CP)

TH 10/16 Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring*. Selections

First Essay Due

T 10/21 Wordsworth poems: “Tintern Abbey,” “Elegiac Stanzas,” “Nutting.” (CP)

W 10/22 Plenary Lecture #3: Pat Burke, “Pika, Persons, and the Practical Imperative: Ethics in the Age of Global Warming.”

TH 10/23 Frost poems including “The Wood Pile,” “Out Out,” “Two Look at Two,” (CP)

III: Knowing Self and Society

T 10/28 Emily Dickinson poems, Billy Collin’s “Taking off Emily Dickinson’s Clothes” (CP)

Note: Class on the 28th will dismiss early so that students can attend Tim O’Brien’s “Conversation with First-Year Students” (3:10-4:00 p.m.) in the UC Theatre.

O’Brien (the author of *The Things They Carried*) will also give a public lecture at 8:00 p.m. in the Dennison Theatre

***TH 10/30** ES, Debra Earling Stories (CP)

Assignment of Second Essay

T 11/4 Election Day, No class

***TH 11/6** RP Arendt, “Truth and Politics” First Half (CP)

T 11/11 Veterans Day, No Class

***TH 11/13** Arendt, “Truth and Politics” Second Half (CP)

T 11/18 Carver, “A Small Good Thing.” (CP)

TH 11/20 Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, Acts 1-3

Second Essay Due

T 11/25 *The Tempest*, film excerpts

TH 11/27 Thanksgiving, no class

T 12/4 *The Tempest* Acts 1-5

TH 12/6 Rilke, “Letter Four to a Young Poet.” (www.carrothers.com/rilke4.htm)

Assignment of Take Home Final

Week Dec 8-12 Class meeting to be announced

Grading Criteria

Attendance and **active** participation: 10%

* First and second essays: 25% each

* Take-home final 40%

In assigning the final grade particular attention will be given to the following considerations from the University Catalog's description of the Davidson Honors College. "Honors courses . . . are conducted in a seminar format, **emphasizing critical thinking, the development of written and oral communications skills**, direct contact with the faculty, and the use of original texts."

Essays are due in class on or before the date listed in the syllabus. Unless the student has made a prior arrangement with the professor one grade level (A becomes an A-) will be deducted for each day the assignment is late. Essays with an undue number of punctuation, spelling, and grammatical errors will be returned ungraded for correction. Essays are graded by the following guidelines.

F: Failure to meet minimum requirements

D. Unsatisfactory, but some effort made to meet minimum requirements

C. Satisfactory, meets minimum requirements.

B. Good to very good. Thoughtful reflection, effective analysis, clear writing.

A. Excellent depth of critical analysis, thoughtfulness of reflection.

Writing style demonstrates creativity and mature analytical skills going beyond the primary requirements of the assignment.

Description of Written Assignments

1. A 3-4 page typed ungraded essay in response to the question, "what ways do I think I know the divine, the {natural} world, society and the self? What counts for you as authoritative sources of such knowledge, and why? **Due in class,**

Thursday, September 11.

2. A 5 page typed essay. The essay will be assigned Tuesday, September 25. **Due in class, Thursday, October 16**

3. A 5 page typed essay. Instructions will be assigned Thursday, October 30, **Due in class Thursday, November 20.**

4. A take final examination An 8-10 page typed essay. The essay will be designed to help students integrate the material from the entire semester. The essay topic will be distributed on the final regular class day. **Due during the final exam period.**

Plenary Lecture Responses: The first class day after each plenary lecture students will be required to turn in a one page statement of what they found most significant in the lecture. This assignment will count towards fulfilling the course requirement for student participation.

NOTE This course requires an electronic submission of an assignment stripped of your personal information to be used for educational research and assessment of the writing program. Your papers will be stored in a data base. A random selection of papers will be assessed by a group of faculty using a rubric that scores a) development of ideas, b) organization of ideas, c) language choices, d) appropriate conventions, and e) integration of resources. This assessment in no way affects either your grade or your progression at the university.

Devices: The use of electronic devices is not permitted in class. This includes but is not limited to cell-phones, tablets, and computers. I strongly urge you to bring a paper notebook and to take handwritten notes during class.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is a serious violation of academic integrity . Please review the University's plagiarism definition on p. 22 of the catalog. *Students who plagiarize may fail the course and be remanded to the Academic Court for possible suspension or expulsion.* If you have any doubt about plagiarism and attribution of others' work please contact your professor.

P/NP grade option: A minimum grade average of C- is required for a P grade in this option.

Incomplete grade option: See the criteria that must be met for this option in the University catalog