History 100: Western Thought to 1600
University of Massachusetts Amherst
Prof. Brian W. Ogilvie
Teaching Assistant: Christoph Strobel
Spring Semester 1998, Section 2B
Lecture: MW 12:20-1:10, Bartlett 301
Discussion: 4B, F 11:15-12:05, Bartlett 206
5B, F 12:20-1:10, School of Management 9
6B, F 1:25-2:15, School of Management 9

Prof. Ogilvie
Office: Herter 617
Tel.: (413) 545-1599
Voice mail: (413) 545-1599 (after 4 rings)
E-mail: ogilvie@history.umass.edu
Hours: TuTh 10:00-11:30 AM, and by appointment.

Mr. Strobel
Office: Herter 711
Tel.: (413) 253-6322
Voice mail: (413) 253-6322 (machine)
E-mail: christoph16@juno.com
Hours: MW 11:00 AM-12:00 noon, and by appointment.

This syllabus is also available on the World Wide Web at the following URL:
<http://www-unix.oit.umass.edu/~ogilvie/courses/100/index.html>.
Updates to the syllabus, handouts, and assignments will be posted to this web page.

Brief course description
This course has two related purposes:

First, we will be reading classics of ancient Greek, ancient Roman, medieval, and Renaissance philosophy and literature, as a means of introduction to the Western intellectual tradition. This will necessarily be a selective introduction. My goal is not to “cover” all of Western thought in the last two and a half millennia—that would be impossible to do in a lifetime, let alone a semester. Instead, we hope to introduce you to the range of literature in this tradition and look at the ways in which different writers have dealt with some similar problems.

Second, we will consider the ways in which the Western tradition has been repeatedly reconstructed, as succeeding generations of thinkers turned to the past with new interests and aims. Classics, the “great books,” are made, not born: from the variety of conflicting views expressed by past thinkers, societies select those which seem to offer guidance when confronting contemporary problems. This means that the interpretation of classic works can change dramatically as social and intellectual conditions change.

Course goals
The course description, along with the course schedule below, gives you an idea of the subject matter addressed by this course. At the end of the course, you should be familiar with the texts we are reading, the ideas that they raise, and the historical contexts that produced them. As an educated woman or man living in a western society, you will find this knowledge to be helpful in understanding our common culture and the differences which separate us from the past.
The course has another goal: to help you learn to think historically. What does it mean to “think historically”? Historians might disagree on a precise definition, but they would all agree that historical thinking involves these three attitudes or skills:

- Understanding human actions and thoughts in the context which produced them. The historian’s cardinal sin is *anachronism*, which means a confusion of time. Every human society, past and present, has its own values and ways of thinking, and they are often very different from our own. For example, the ancient Greeks used the word “democracy” to describe one kind of government, but their notion of “democracy” is, in many respects, very different from our own. Avoiding anachronism means understanding the past on its own terms.

- Exercising critical judgment about what you read and hear. “Critical judgment” does not mean always being negative. Rather, it means that you should always weigh and consider the validity of what you have been told, in light of the source’s possible biases and the strength of its argument. Historical sources are like legal testimony and argument: they aren’t always true or convincing. The historian, like a judge, has to weigh and consider his or her sources and decide whether they are reliable.

- Knowing how to use historical sources—texts and objects—as evidence to make an argument about what happened in the past. History is imagination disciplined by evidence. Historians want to know not only what happened in the past, but why it happened and what its consequences were. Historical sources are the building blocks of historical explanation, but they must be interpreted.

To reach these goals, you will have to engage in “active learning.” If your high-school history classes involved nothing more than reading the textbook, listening to the teacher, memorizing names and dates, and regurgitating these facts in papers and tests, you are in for a surprise. History is much more interesting than that. But you will have to work: to think about the lectures and readings, and participate actively in discussions.

**Your goals for the course**

You have just read my goals for the course. You should now take the time to reflect on those goals and think about any others you might have. Everyone takes a college course for a reason: it might be simply to fulfill a distribution or a major requirement, but you probably have other reasons: otherwise you could have taken another course that meets those requirements. In the space below, you can write the reasons you are in this course and any goals on which you wish to concentrate during it.

- 
- 
- 
- 

**Course structure**

Lectures, by Prof. Ogilvie, take place on Mondays and Wednesdays. Discussion sections will be held on Fridays and will be led by Mr. Strobel. Both lectures and discussions are crucial parts of the course, and attendance at both is required. Reading necessary to
understand the lectures will be assigned in conjunction with that lecture, but all the readings for a week will be discussed on Fridays. If you fall behind in the readings during the week, you should catch up by Friday in order to be prepared for discussion.

Education specialists sometimes denigrate lectures as a form of “passive learning.” In their view, a lecturer imparts information to students, who merely take it in. But effective attendance at a lecture requires more than passive absorption. You should think about what the lecture is about, distinguish important points from illustrative examples, and take careful notes. You should also ask yourself—and, if it seems important, the lecturer—any questions you might have. You should take the same approach to your reading. If you do this, you will have no problem finding something to say in the discussions; on the contrary, you will find that an hour goes by very quickly!

Course requirements

This course is an introductory survey. It has no prerequisites and requires no background in history or Western thought. Some of the readings are difficult, but they will be explained so that everyone can understand them, and discussions will help you deepen your understanding. But the course is not easy. You will need to consistently do the readings and attend class regularly in order to pass. To succeed in this class, you should plan to spend six to ten hours every week reading and studying. Some weeks won’t require that much; other weeks may require more.

There are five basic requirements for the course:

1. Attendance at lectures and discussion sections.
   If you must miss a class, you should inform Prof. Ogilvie or Mr. Strobel in advance of the reason, or provide documentation (such as a note from the doctor) afterwards. You may send e-mail or leave messages on Prof. Ogilvie’s voice mail or with the History Department (545-1330). Athletes should present a complete schedule of the days they will miss by February 11. If a religious holiday will prevent you from attending class, please inform Prof. Ogilvie or Mr. Strobel by February 11.

2. Reading all assignments.
   There will be frequent quizzes on the readings in lectures and discussion sections. If you have done the readings, the questions will be straightforward. The quizzes will also be used to monitor attendance at lectures.

3. Two papers
   Two short (5-7 page) papers will be required. Paper topics will be announced February 25 and April 22. They will be due one week later: i.e., March 4 and April 29. Papers will be graded on content (what you say), organization (how effectively you say it), and style (how clearly you say it). If you are dissatisfied with your grade on a paper, you will have the opportunity to rewrite it.

4. Midterm
   A midterm examination will be given on March 30. You will receive a study guide in advance.

5. Final exam
   The final will be given during exam week. The exact date will be announced after the exam schedule has been published. You will receive a study guide in advance.

The course grade will be determined according to the following criteria:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attendance and participation in discussion</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two papers @ 15% each</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midterm examination</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final examination</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Policy on academic honesty**

Plagiarism is grounds for failure in the course. Plagiarism consists of either (a) copying the exact words of another work without both enclosing them in quotation marks and providing a reference, or (b) using information or ideas from another work without providing credit, in notes, to the source of the information or ideas. Submission of a paper copied from another work, or which contains fictitious or falsified notes, will result in automatic failure of the course. Please refer to the *Undergraduate Rights and Responsibilities* booklet for the University’s full policy on academic honesty.

**Books for course**

The following paperback books are available for purchase at Food for Thought Books (106 N. Pleasant, Amherst). They are also on reserve in the DuBois Library. The Montague Book Mill, Raven Books in Northampton, and many other local used bookstores have copies of some of these books. You are advised to purchase all the books early in the semester, because bookstores begin to return unused copies before the end of the semester. I have tried to select the least expensive editions.


In addition, there is a course packet at Campus Design & Copy (Student Union 401-403, M-F 9:30 AM-5 PM). This packet contains the rest of the readings for this course, and you should plan to buy it. There will be a few copies of the packet on reserve.

**A note on readings**

You should plan to read each selection twice: once to get an overview, and a second time to take notes on the main points. Before the discussion, you can then go over your notes and skim the text a final time to make sure you have not missed anything.

It is important to take careful notes. You will find it much easier to write papers and study for the exams if your notes are well organized and easy to read. This is true of lecture notes as well as reading notes. If you are not sure how to take notes efficiently, Learning Support Services (DuBois Library, 10th floor) offers a Note Taking Workshop several times each semester. They also offer workshops in time management and test taking should you feel in need of help in those areas.

For students who are interested in pursuing the course topics in more depth, I have indicated optional readings after the course schedule. These readings are not on reserve. If you check them out of the library, please return them as soon as you are done so that
other students may use them.

N.B. The edition of Dante’s *Inferno* that is on reserve contains the same translation as the one in the bookstore, but the pagination is different because it contains illustrations. The reading assignments from Dante are given by canto rather than by page numbers.

**Course schedule, with assigned readings**

**Wed. 1/28** Lecture—Introduction to Western Civilization

**Part I: Ancient Greece**

**Fri. 1/30** Discussion
Reading: Read the syllabus carefully; handout from Wednesday.

**Mon. 2/2** Lecture: Archaic Greece
Reading: Homer, *Iliad*, Books 1, 2, 6.

**Wed. 2/4** Lecture: The rise of classical Greek culture
Reading: Homer, *Iliad*, Books 9, 12.337-381, 16, 18; Archilochus and Sappho (in reading packet).

**Fri. 2/6** Discussion: Homer, Archilochus, Sappho

**Mon. 2/9** Lecture: Greece and the barbarians

**Wed. 2/11** Lecture: The Peloponnesian war

**Fri. 2/13** Discussion: Homer, Herodotus, Thucydides

**Mon. 2/16** NO CLASS (Presidents’ Day)

**Wed. 2/18** Lecture: Greek religion and literature
Reading: Heaney/Sophocles, *The cure at Troy*.

**Fri. 2/20** Discussion: Sophocles

**Mon. 2/23** Lecture: The Greek *polis*
Reading: Aristotle, *Constitution of Athens*.

**Wed. 2/25** Lecture: Greek philosophy

*** First paper topic announced ***

**Fri. 2/27** Discussion: Aristotle
### Part II: Rome, the Jews, and Early Christianity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Reading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fri. 3/6</td>
<td>Discussion: Sallust, Cicero</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mon. 3/9</td>
<td>Lecture: The Roman Empire</td>
<td>No reading for today; begin reading for Wednesday.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wed. 3/11</td>
<td>Lecture: The Hebrews</td>
<td><em>Genesis</em> 1-22; <em>Exodus</em> 1-12; <em>I Kings</em> 1-11; <em>Job</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fri. 3/13</td>
<td>Discussion: Old Testament</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mon. 3/23</td>
<td>Lecture: The origins of Christianity</td>
<td><em>Gospel according to St. Matthew</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fri. 3/27</td>
<td>Discussion: New Testament</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mon. 3/30</td>
<td>MIDTERM</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Part III: The Christian Middle Ages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Reading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fri. 4/3</td>
<td>Discussion: Augustine, Jerome</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mon. 4/6</td>
<td>Lecture: “Pray and Work,” the monastic ideal</td>
<td><em>Rule of St. Benedict</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wed. 4/8</td>
<td>Lecture: The Christianization of Europe</td>
<td>No reading for today; start reading for next week.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fri. 4/10</td>
<td>Discussion: Rule of St. Benedict</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Wed. 4/15  Lecture: Dante's vision of the world
          Reading: Dante, *Inferno*, Cantos 15, 19-23, 26, 29-34.

Fri. 4/17  Discussion: *Inferno*

Mon. 4/20  NO CLASS (Patriots Day)

**Part IV: Renaissance and Reformation**

Wed. 4/22  Lecture: The origins of the Renaissance
          No reading for today; begin reading for Thursday.

          *** Second paper topic announced ***

Thurs. 4/23 Lecture: Renaissance culture and politics
          (Monday schedule in effect)
          Reading: Machiavelli, *Discourses* (reading packet).

Fri. 4/24  Discussion: Machiavelli

Mon. 4/27  Lecture: Renaissance humanism
          Reading: More, *Utopia*, Book I (pp. 3-41).

Wed. 4/29  Lecture: The Old World and the New
          Reading: More, *Utopia*, Book II (pp. 42-111); Montaigne, “Of
          Cannibals” (reading packet).

          *** Second paper due ***

Fri. 5/ 1  Discussion: More, Montaigne

Mon. 5/ 4  Lecture: The Protestant Reformation
          Reading: Luther, *Christian Liberty*.

Wed. 5/ 6  Lecture: The Catholic Reformation
          Reading: Montaigne, “That it is folly....” “Of the inconstancy....,” and
          “Of freedom of conscience” (reading packet).

Fri. 5/ 8  Discussion: Luther, Montaigne

Mon. 5/11  Lecture: Review, part 1

Wed. 5/13  Lecture: Review, part 2

Final Exam: Date to be announced
Suggested reading

These books are only a starting-point for further inquiry. Please see Prof. Ogilvie if you would like more suggestions. Selections are arranged in roughly chronological order, when possible.

Part I: Ancient Greece


Part II: Rome, the Jews, and early Christianity


Part III: The Christian Middle Ages
(See also Frend, Lane Fox, and Brown in the suggestions for part II.)

Le Goff, Jacques. *Medieval civilization, 400-1500*. Trans. Julia Barrow. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988. The French original is now 34 years old, but this is still an excellent account. The first part of the book provides a chronological overview; the second part addresses several important themes in medieval civilization.


**Part IV: Renaissance and Reformation**


**Acknowledgements**

Thanks to Prof. Daniel Gordon of the University of Massachusetts Amherst, Prof. Constantin Fasolt and other members of the staff in the History of Western Civilization at the University of Chicago, and members of the H-Teach and H-W-Civ electronic discussion groups for ideas and readings used in this syllabus.