Augustine and Culture Seminar: Moderns (ACS 1001)

Professor: Dr. Alan Pichanick

Term:
Class Time:
Classroom:
Office Hours:
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Welcome to the Augustine and Culture Seminar, one of the required foundational courses at Villanova. The guiding question of this seminar is *Who Am I?* The question is an invitation to us to explore the hidden possibilities and limits of being human. We will thus gather together each meeting, having read a profoundly significant text, in order to have a *conversation* about our human experience and our search for self-knowledge. Through reading, analyzing, writing about, and, *most importantly*, *discussing* intellectually engaging texts, our goal is to challenge ourselves and each other to think critically about our world and about ourselves.

The texts we will read this semester are literary and historical, religious and philosophical, poetic and political. They will all enable us to address the following fundamental questions, all related to the guiding question, *Who Am I?*:

- Where do I belong and where am I going? What is my **purpose** in life and why? **What does it mean to find home in the world?**
- Am I **free**? What makes me free? And what should I do with my freedom?
- Should I follow my **desires**? If so, which ones? Are all desires equal or are some better than others? What’s the difference between desire and love? Or are they same thing?
- What, if anything, is my responsibility towards others? What is justice and from whom should I expect it? **How is justice related to the common good?**
- Does the world have an **order**? How do we learn what this order is, if there is one? Does that make a difference to how we live our lives?
- What finally is a life that is **well-lived**? **How does the question change if we ask: what is a life imbued with dignity and aimed toward the common good?**
This semester, we will read and discuss several influential, enduring, and provocative modern texts to raise these questions for us. We may find that these modern texts ask these questions in ways that are more familiar to us than did the authors of antiquity. We should thus be deeply concerned this semester to ask ourselves how the modern world differs from the ancient world and thinkers that we studied last semester. What does it mean to be “modern” and what kind of relationship should we have to our ancient past, especially if we are concerned to ask the question “who am I?”

The Foundational Courses and Foundational Questions:

There are four foundational courses in the University: ACS (1000 and 1001); Theology 1000; Philosophy 1000; Ethics 2050. All students regardless of college take ACS 1000/1001 and Theology 1000 along with an Ethics course. In addition, most students take Philosophy 1000. The Foundational Courses are meant to address four central questions which will guide you on your path through the University intellectual experience. The four questions are:

- Who am I? (ACS)
- What can I know? (Philosophy)
- What do Christians believe? (Theology)
- How should I live? (Ethics)

The Foundational Courses and Questions provide the distinctive stamp of an Augustinian education, including a deep exposure to the writings of Saint Augustine, one of the most significant thinkers in world history, and the patron saint of the Augustinian Order here at Villanova. Each of the Foundational courses will introduce students to different aspects of his works.

The Augustinian Connection to ACS:

In ACS, all students will have the opportunity to read Augustine’s spiritual autobiography, entitled Confessions. In addition, ACS teaches students not only about Augustine, but how to be like him in his passionate engagement with “the higher things”: literature, history, and politics; truth and moral values; the gods and God. Like Augustine, we seek to come to terms with the biblical, Greek, and Roman traditions; also like him, we engage with the best of what has been written and thought, whether it belongs to our tradition or not and whether we agree with it or not, in order to respond creatively to the needs of the present. We ask our students to explore truth and ideas as Augustine did, “with heart and voice and pen.” Finally, and again following Augustine’s lead, ACS seeks to help students develop a richer inner life and an appreciation for community. The seminar is founded on the belief that seeking the truth (veritas) with respect and love (caritas) toward one another leads to deep and lasting community (unitas).
Goals and Expectations:

Our goal is intellectual engagement and true understanding, so you are asked to READ assigned texts before class and with full presence of mind! Make sure you understand the vocabulary used and the main ideas conveyed in these texts. Assigned readings are listed on the class schedule for the day they are due.

Our goal is to become a community of inquirers, so you will be invited to DISCUSS the texts with one another in a spirit of genuine curiosity. If you actively enter into class discussions and critically engage the texts and each other, you will be amazed at what you can learn!

Our goal is not only to reason together about many important ideas, but also to practice expressing our thoughts in a more formal, well-thought out and logical way, so you are asked to WRITE about the texts we encounter. You will be given writing assignments that invite you to analyze and evaluate the texts and their significance. Your goal should be to write papers that are well organized and thoughtful, free of spelling and grammatical errors, and that answer the question asked to the best of your ability. All writing will be graded on thoughtful content, organization, logic and grammar.

Required Texts:


The Tempest, William Shakespeare, (Folger Library)

Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844 & The Communist Manifesto, Karl Marx


Home, Toni Morrison (Vintage, 2004)

Selected Papal Encyclicals

PLEASE NOTE: You must bring a copy of the book under discussion for each class! You may obtain books by ordering them online, purchasing them from the university bookstore, borrowing them from the library or, in the case of shorter readings, making a printed copy of the text. If you come to class without the reading, I will ask you to go and get it, since there is no point to being here without it! Do not ask to use your electronic device or share with a
neighbor if you have forgotten your book. Go get it. If there is no way for you to find the text for class, do not attend. But you will be marked absent.

Reading assignments use page numbers as found in the specific editions of books mentioned above, and we include links for purchasing the texts on Amazon. Consulting multiple translations is an aid to reading and understanding, so you may look at and use other translations. However, if you do use another edition, you will have to find the relevant section that corresponds to our assignments in your version.

Attendance and Being "Present":

One of the most important purposes of this class is for you to become an actively engaged member of the dialogue that takes place in our classroom. It therefore does not make sense for your seat to be empty! You should try, as much as possible, to attend all classes. Excessive or unexcused absences adversely affect the spirit of communal inquiry we are striving for. The fact that your participation determines 50% of the grade for this course emphasizes its importance! Five absences will result in an “F” for the attendance/participation portion of the grade; Six absences will result in a deduction of a full letter grade from the final grade (so a “B” would be a “C”); and seven or more absences will result in an “F” for the course. If you must miss a class, you should make arrangements to copy a classmate’s notes for that day, and you will be responsible for completing the assigned work. NOTE: the Attendance/Participation portion of the course grade is a combination grade. Perfect attendance is not enough to merit an “A” for this portion of the grade. A student must also be truly “present” in the class discussion and demonstrate thoughtful preparation for each session during the semester.

Course Requirements/ Grading:

I. Participation: worth 50%. You are asked not only to attend class, but also to participate in class discussions. Excellent participation includes: 1) Being punctual: arrival 5 minutes late or more may be counted as an absence. 2) Paying attention: use of cell phones or laptop computers to talk or text message or do anything unrelated to class will count as an absence. 3) Carefully reading the material for each class and, most important of all, 4) Being an active learner—listening carefully and respectfully to the thoughts of others, asking relevant and illuminating questions, participating often in discussions and during oral presentations, being willing to share ideas in order to deepen the conversation between you, us, and the text. We are asking you to show independence of mind as well as a serious approach to readings and discussion. If you take the act of self-examination and cooperative inquiry to heart, you will learn so much more and enjoy yourself doing it!

II. Written work: worth 50%: You owe me twenty pages of polished writing by the end of the semester. ALL PAPERS MUST BE HANDED IN ON BLACKBOARD. I strongly
encourage you to send me an outline, or thesis statement, or introductory paragraph before you write your essays. I will be happy to talk with you and give you feedback. You will also have the opportunity to rewrite. Rewriting essays requires a conference with Pichanick, and the rewritten essay must be submitted within a week of the return date.

1. **TWO Short essays, 2-3 pages each (total = 20%),** in response to assigned reading or discussions. One will be due before midterm break, one after.

2. **TWO Long essays, 5-6 page each (20%).** Each of these is worth 10% of your total grade. One will be due before midterm break, one after.
   
   a. I encourage you to make an appointment with the Writing Center at least once this semester. You will love the Writing Center. They have great candy.

3. **THREE 1 page responses to cultural events.** These will be graded pass/fail. Essays not receiving a passing grade must be resubmitted.

4. **TAKE-HOME FINAL REFLECTION:** (10%) 2-3 pages.

**Written work: Important information**

**Portfolios:**
You must keep all the writing you do for this class in a portfolio, submitted electronically to Blackboard. I will assign a reflective writing assignment for you to look back and think over your work from the semester. At the end of the semester, your ACS Professor will ask for a culminating portfolio. So do not get rid of your previous work from this semester!

**“Late” policy for written assignments.**
In the interest of fairness, and to keep both you and me on track throughout the semester, I expect you to hand in written work in on time. Barring extraordinary circumstances, we will hold to the following penalties for late work:

- **Five points** will be deducted for every 24 hour period a short essay is late, and NO late short essays will be accepted after **two days**.

- **Half a letter grade** will be deducted (for example an A becomes an A-) for every 24-hour period a longer paper is late, and NO late papers will be accepted after **three days**.

- **Five points** will be deducted from the final grade for failure to hand in any ungraded written assignment.

For all writing assignments:
All work is to be your own. There is no reason to parrot Website information or use secondary sources in your reading assignments and papers. While of course you may want to do some additional reading on your own, all written work should solely consist of your work that you have done with these texts from THIS SEMESTER.

PLAGIARISM IS NOT ACCEPTABLE:

Any detected plagiarism will result in an “F” for the course and a report submitted to the University Disciplinary Committee. I will be happy to answer any further questions on this.

Disability resources:

Villanova seeks to make reasonable academic accommodations for students with disabilities. If you are a person with a disability, please contact me by email, in the office, or after class, and register with the Learning Support Office (610-519-5636; nancy.mott@villanova.edu), which is in Vasey. Do this sooner rather than later so that you get all the support you need to succeed in this class.

Assignment Schedule (I do reserve the right to revise this schedule, according to the needs of our discussion. Assignments are due the day they are listed.)

Weeks 1 -3: Introduction to course and syllabus
Hobbes, Leviathan, selections.

Weeks 4- 5: Locke, Second Treatise, selections.

Week 6: Selections from Rerum Novarum & Economic Justice for All

Weeks 7-8: Shakespeare, The Tempest

Week 9: Mid-semester Recess

Weeks 10-11: Marx, selections from 1844 Manuscripts and Communist Manifesto

Weeks 12-13: Freud, Civilization and Its Discontents

Week 14: Selections from Populorum Progressio & Laborem Exercens

Week 15: Toni Morrison, Home

Week 16: Selections from Deus Caritas est & Pacem in Terram