

Contemporary Civilization II
Spring 2020
M/W 10:10–12, 109 Hartley

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Office hours: Tuesday, 2:15–3:15; Wednesday, 12:15–1:15; and by appointment, Brownies Café

Course Description

Established in 1919 as "War and Peace Issues," Contemporary Civilization (CC) has evolved over the last century to become a discussion-based course in which we examine collectively a selection of texts—written between the fourth century B.C.E. and the present—that can help us to understand the social and political institutions in which we live today. Through reading and talking about these texts together, we will seek to understand each within the context of the time in which it was written, but also the ways in which it might (or might not) allow us to respond to contemporary social, political, and ethical questions. In this section of CC, we will also reflect on how syllabi are constructed narratives: what story does the common CC syllabus tell us about the history of Western moral and political philosophy? (Are there alternative stories one could tell?) What does it tell us about the history of higher education in the United States over the last hundred years? What do these texts and the course of which they are a part tell us about what college is for in 2020?

The course requirements of this section of CC have been designed to promote sustained critical engagement with the texts, to lead to a productive classroom experience despite the many other things going on in your lives outside of this class, and to allow you to practice analytic writing skills that you can apply in other classes in the future.

Course Requirements and Assignments

Preparation and participation

CC is a discussion-based class. In order to get something out of it, it is essential that you prepare for every class session by doing the reading, reflecting on the reading, coming to class with questions and comments to contribute to the discussion, and engaging respectfully with your classmates. (Writing out some contributions you might make beforehand is a great way to prepare for class!) Please feel free to contact me or come to office hours if you would like to talk about how best to stay on top of the reading and prepare for class.

At the beginning of every class, a student presenter will give a brief (five minutes, max) presentation that provides some basic background historical context about the day's reading. We will sign up for presentation slots at the start of the semester. These presentations will be evaluated as part of your participation grade.

Your participation grade is a qualitative assessment of your attendance and preparation for class. I will evaluate preparation and active engagement, which does not always take the form

of speaking out in a large-group class discussion (though I encourage you to challenge yourself to do so!). I will deduct points for unexcused absences, but otherwise your participation should only help rather than hurt your final grade.

Writing assignments

Part of the purpose of CC is to allow you to develop your analytic writing skills. In this section, you will produce four short writing assignments, each of which will allow you to develop a different perspective on a given text. You will submit the assignments over the course of the semester, receiving on each one a letter grade and detailed written feedback. You will then have the opportunity to revise all four assignments, either knitting them together into a unified research paper or submitting them as a portfolio with an introduction that identifies themes and concerns common to all four papers. Please note that you can choose to write each assignment on *any* spring-semester text, even if we haven't yet discussed it together in class. All the writing assignments offer you free choice as to text and theme: please come see me if you would like guidance about finding a topic.

Assignment 1: Textual Analysis/Close Reading (3–4 pages). Choose a key passage from a text we have read in the class and analyze the passage within the context of the text. You may want to consider issues such as the language or rhetorical strategies the author uses, why they chose to address this particular theme/question/example, and whether the passage strengthens (or undercuts) the text's overall claim or project.

Assignment 2: Historical Context (4–5 pages). Choose a text and, using appropriate academic sources, research an aspect of the historical context in which it was created or in which later readers have engaged with it. For example, you may wish to investigate the life of the author, any political events to which they might have been responding, or the later reception of the text. Your paper should have a central claim which articulates a relationship between this context and the argument or content of the text. Your paper should cite **at least three** appropriate academic sources (books, academic journal articles, serious reference works such as the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy). We will talk further in class about the nature of "appropriate academic sources" and where to find them.

Assignment 3: History of CC (3–4 pages). Identify a text from the S2020 syllabus and, using our syllabus database, research its presence on the CC syllabus over the last hundred years. When did this text first appear on the syllabus? Has it been a consistent presence in the course? Can you speculate about why it might have appeared when it did, and the reasoning that might have gone into its inclusion? We will spend a class period on the history of the course and this assignment.

Assignment 4: Contemporary Application (4–5 pages). Choose a text and write an essay which explores that text's continuing relevance in 2020. Is there a contemporary political or social issue, or experience from your own life, that this text helped you to understand? Do we read and interpret this text in a different light today than when it was originally published? What would the text's author make of the political or social circumstances of 2020? Do you think that future

college students, in general, should be assigned to read this text? Your essay should demonstrate your understanding of the text's content, argument, and stakes, but also include your own personal reflection on its significance.

Final Portfolio (16–20 pages). This can take two different forms:

Option 1. Using some or all of the material from your Assignments #1–4, write one large term paper with a single unifying argument. You may wish to knit together your previous essays, or to expand just one of them into a project appropriate for an assignment of this length. If you are pursuing this option I *strongly* encourage you to come see me to discuss your topic and approach.

Option 2. Submit a portfolio that consists of new versions of Assignments #1–4 that you have revised in response to my written comments, along with a short (1–2 page) introduction that draws out unifying themes among the four papers and explains why you are presenting them together as a portfolio.

Midterm and final examinations

As a CC instructor, I am required to administer an in-class midterm and final examination. The midterm will be held in-class on **Wednesday, March 11**, and the final will be held in a three-hour block on **Friday, May 8**. Both exams will include a short-answer section with basic factual questions about the content of the texts and their context, and an essay section inviting you to draw larger thematic questions between texts.

Grading Criteria

Attendance, preparation, and participation: 20%

Writing Assignment 1: 10%

Writing Assignment 2: 10%

Writing Assignment 3: 10%

Writing Assignment 4: 10%

Final Portfolio: 20%

Midterm: 10%

Final: 10%

I will return all submitted work with substantial written feedback, but please feel free to meet with me if you are ever unclear about the rationale for your grade. I am also available to read drafts of papers and to provide guidance about exam study techniques, reading strategies, and improving your class participation. There is no extra credit or opportunity to redo an assignment—please seek help well in advance of the assignment deadline.

Course and University Policies

Attendance

Attendance is mandatory and will be factored into the participation component of your grade. Class will start on time, and late arrivals may miss out on important information as well as disrupting their classmates. If you need to be absent in exceptional circumstances (illness, family emergency, religious observance), please notify me via email as far in advance as possible. Here is the Core Curriculum's official attendance policy:

Students are expected to attend every session of their Core classes. In the event that a student must miss a class due to religious observance, illness, or family emergency, instructors are expected to provide students with the opportunity to make up any missed work. Instructors may also encourage (though not require) that students complete additional assignments to help make up for lost class participation. Whenever possible (in the case of religious holidays, for example), students should provide advance notification of absence. Students who miss class without instructor permission should expect to have their grade lowered.

Classroom Climate

CC is a discussion-based course in which we will sometimes encounter sensitive and difficult topics. Regardless of the topic, we will all commit to treating our colleagues with respect, thinking before speaking, and being aware of how our words might impact others. Especially disruptive behavior will have consequences for your participation grade. We will work together in class to develop further guidelines for respectful communication. Please feel free to meet with me if you ever have concerns about the classroom climate.

Electronic Devices

You are welcome to bring laptops and tablets to class in order to view the readings and look up information relevant to class discussion. All phones should be on silent and out of use during class, as they can be disruptive to others' learning. I reserve the right to ban electronic devices if I find that they are becoming a distraction. Remember that active engagement in the discussion is likely to lead to better learning than focusing on taking notes.

Deadlines and Assignment Submission

All writing assignments are due at the beginning of class on the due date. You may submit assignments either electronically or in hard copy. Late assignments will result in a grade penalty. In exceptional circumstances (e.g. illness, family emergency), please contact me in advance of the deadline to discuss an appropriate revised deadline.

Disability Accommodation

In order to receive disability-related academic accommodations for this course, students must first be registered with the Office of Disability Services. Please refer to the ODS website for information regarding deadlines, disability documentation requirements, and drop-in hours.

To receive ODS accommodations for this course, students are not required to have testing forms or accommodation letters signed by faculty. However, students must complete the Student

section of the form and submit the form to Disability Services. Master forms are available in the Disability Services office or online: <https://health.columbia.edu/services/testing-accommodations>

Please contact me as soon as possible if you would like to discuss any disability-related accommodations you may require in order to succeed in this course. Further information on Columbia's policy on disability accommodation can be found here: <http://www.college.columbia.edu/rightsandresponsibilities>.

Academic Integrity

The Core Curriculum's academic integrity policy is as follows:

Columbia College is dedicated to the highest ideals of integrity in academia. Therefore, in Literature Humanities and Contemporary Civilization, any instance of academic dishonesty, attempted or actual, will be reported to the faculty chair of the course and to the dean of the Core Curriculum, who will review the case with the expectation that a student guilty of academic dishonesty will receive the grade of "F" in the course and be referred to dean's discipline for further institutional action.

For more information on what constitutes plagiarism, please see: <https://www.college.columbia.edu/academics/academicintegrity>

Contacting the Instructor

My office hours are Tuesday, 2:15–3:15 and Wednesday, 12:15–1:15 in Brownies Café. You may also email me to make an appointment at other times. Meeting with me in person is the best way to discuss anything more complex, but you are welcome to email me with quicker or more straightforward questions or concerns. I will respond to all emails within 24 hours.

Additional Academic Resources

Campus Resources

The Writing Center

The Writing Center offers one-on-one consultations with peer tutors to support students at any stage in the writing process. Find them in 310 Philosophy Hall or visit their website at <https://www.college.columbia.edu/core/uwp/writing-center>.

Academic Success Programs

ASP offers tutoring, workshops in study skills, and a wide range of other resources to help you succeed academically. Find out more at <http://www.studentaffairs.columbia.edu/asp>. 212-854-3514 asp@columbia.edu

Research Resources

There are a number of excellent online resources that can provide you with background contextual information on the texts we are reading in this class:

- "Explore the Literature" — this part of the CC website includes further reading and reference works for every week of the course, chosen by the CC instructional committee.
- Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy — there is a detailed and substantive entry here, written by an academic expert, for almost every author we will read in this course.
- Oxford Dictionary of National Biography — biographical essays by academic experts, with bibliographies of primary and secondary sources, for any historical figure with a connection to Britain/the British Empire.
- In Our Time podcasts — produced by the BBC, these are accessible discussions with academic experts of a wide range of topics in the history of ideas, philosophy, literature, etc. Many of our authors/texts are represented.
- Wikipedia — you could do worse. It's totally fine to start with Wikipedia, but just don't let it be the last thing you read/reference!

Required Texts

The following books are available for purchase at Book Culture on 112th St. and in the University Bookstore. Copies can also be borrowed at no cost through Butler Library Reserves, the FLIP Library, and the Core Office. If you source the books elsewhere, please use these editions so that translations and paginations are consistent. If you are having difficulty obtaining the books, please feel free to reach out to me or to the Dean of the Core, Larry Jackson (lj2504).

Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (Cambridge)
 Smith, *Wealth of Nations* (Modern Library)
 Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (Oxford)
 Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (Oxford)
 Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (Penguin)
 Mill, *On Liberty, Utilitarianism, and Other Essays* (Oxford)
The Marx-Engels Reader (Norton)
 Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals / Ecce Homo* (Vintage)
 Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (Norton)
 Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (Harvest)
 Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political* (Chicago)
 Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (Grove)
 Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* (Vintage)

Course Schedule

Readings indicated with an asterisk are available on Courseworks.

W 1/22 Introduction
 *Kant, "What Is Enlightenment?"

- M 1/27 *Smith, *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, pp. 11–32, 60–68, 72–76, 128–138, 155–164, 209–218, 279–289, 295–307
- W 1/29 Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, author's introduction, Book I (Chs. 1–5), Book II (Introduction, Ch. 3), Book IV (Chs. 1–2)
- M 2/3 Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, Part 1, Part 2 through §421
- W 2/5 Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, remainder of Part 2
Paper #1 due!
- M 2/10 *US Declaration of Independence, Constitution, and Bill of Rights
 **Federalist Papers* #10 and #51
 **Anti-Federalist Writings* 1–3
- W 2/12 *"Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen"
 *De Gouges, "Declaration of the Rights of Woman"
 *Sieyès, "What Is the Third Estate?"
 *Haitian Declaration of Independence and Constitution of 1805
- M 2/17 Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, pp. 3–23, 29–53, 58–97, 124–129, 135–142, 165–174
- W 2/19 Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, I–IV, IX
- M 2/24 Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, Introduction, Volume I (Part I, Chs. 3–4; Part II: Chs. 6–7, pp. 370–376 & 398–405); Volume II (Part I: Ch. 5; Part II: Chs. 1–2; Part IV: Chs. 3, 6)
- W 2/26 Mill, *On Liberty* (excerpts TK)
- Paper #2 due!**
- M 3/2 *Tocqueville, "Essay on Algeria," pp. 59–73, 93–116
 Mill, *Considerations on Representative Government*, Chs. 2–4, 6, 8, 16
- W 3/4 *Taylor Mill, "The Enfranchisement of Women"
 *Bentham, "Essay on Pederasty"
- M 3/9 *Douglass, "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?"
 *Cady Stanton, "Address to the Legislature of New York"
 *Truth, "Ain't I a Woman?"

W 3/11 MIDTERM EXAMINATION

SPRING BREAK

- M 3/23 Readings in Marx reader: "On the Jewish Question," "Economic-Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844," "The German Ideology"
- W 3/25 Readings in Marx reader: excerpt from *Capital* (pp. 294–329), "The Communist Manifesto"
- M 3/30 *Darwin, *On the Origin of Species*, Introduction; *The Descent of Man*, Introduction & Conclusion
*Huxley, "Evolution and Ethics"
- W 4/1 Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Essays I and II
- Th 4/2 Coursewide lecture: Souleymane Bachir Diagne, "Contemporary Civilization and the Decolonization of the History of Philosophy" (location TBA)
- M 4/6 History of CC (reading: syllabus database)
- W 4/8 Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, I–VI, IX, XI, XIV
*DuBois, "The Souls of White Folk"

Paper #3 due!

- M 4/13 *Gandhi, "Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule" (excerpts TK)
- W 4/15 Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political* (entire)
- M 4/20 Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, pp. 290–302, 305–318, 322–341, 389–398, 415–419, 437–479
- W 4/22 Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (excerpts TK)
- M 4/27 Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, Part 1 (ch. 1), Part 2 (pp. 73–85), Part 3 (pp. 135–141, 162–169, 170–194, 200–209, 293–308)
- W 4/29 *Catherine MacKinnon, "Difference and Dominance: On Sex Discrimination"
*Kimberle Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color"

Paper #4 due!

- M 5/4 *Sedgwick, *The Epistemology of the Closet*, "Introduction: Axiomatic"

W 5/6 Optional review session (location TBA)

F 5/8 FINAL EXAMINATION, 1–4 p.m. (location TBA)

Portfolios due May 15!