

**Contemporary Civilization I**  
**Fall 2019**  
**M/W, 10:10–12, 313 Hamilton**

Emily Rutherford

[emr2213@columbia.edu](mailto:emr2213@columbia.edu)

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 2019?

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.

*Presentation and process paper*

Each one of you will give one five-minute presentation at the beginning of class in the course of the semester. (We will sign up for presentation slots on Monday, Sept. 9; I will do the first presentation to model the format.) Your presentation should offer some background

information about the text, its author, or their historical context that you think might be relevant to helping us understand what we are discussing that day, and end with two or three open-ended and thought-provoking discussion questions. Try to tell us something new in your presentation: for example, if you are the second presenter on Aristotle and the first presenter already gave us Aristotle's biography, you might want to tell us about the political events of Aristotle's lifetime, some of the other texts he wrote, or the influence his writing had after his death.

The day that you give your presentation, you should also submit a two-page "process paper" that narrates how you did the research for your presentation, the sources you consulted and what you learned from them, and what sources you would turn to if you were to do further research on this topic. The websites listed under "Additional Academic Resources" will be your friend here. We will discuss further in class the format of and expectations for this assignment.

### Paper #1: Text Explication

Choose one of five short passages from the *Republic* or *Nicomachean Ethics* (passage options will be posted on Courseworks a week before the assignment due date). In a 2–3 page paper, identify the claim or argument that the author is making in the passage and what its significance is within the larger text. Where does the passage come in the text? Is it part of a larger argument? How does it support (or undermine) that argument? Is there anything especially interesting about it? ***Paper #1 is due at the beginning of class on Wednesday, 9/25.***

### Midterm examination

We will have an in-class, timed midterm on **Wednesday, 10/23**. You will be asked to answer several short-answer questions and one from a choice of essay questions. More information about the format and content of the midterm will be available closer to the time.

### Paper #2: Intertextuality

In a 6–7 page paper, identify and discuss a relationship between two of the texts we have encountered so far in the course. Does the author of one text directly engage (agree? disagree?) with another, earlier text? Do two texts appear to share common themes or concerns, even if they respond to them in very different ways? Use specific examples from the texts to support your claim for a relationship between them. We will talk further in class about possible approaches to this assignment. ***Paper #2 is due at the beginning of class on Wednesday, 11/6.***

### Paper #3: Contemporary Application

In a 6–7 page paper, connect one of the texts we have studied this semester to the present. Is there something happening in the world today that is an example of a problem or question raised by one of our writers? Is there a hypothetical situation drawn from everyday life that allows you to work through some of the implications of a particular author's political philosophy? Is there a public figure today whom you think embodies the worldview of one of the authors on our syllabus? Is there a public policy proposal that would be made better (or worse) if it took the moral or political framework of one of our texts into account? Feel free to take this assignment in any direction you like (come to me if you would like some suggestions), but be

sure that your paper contains a cogent summary of your chosen text and its argument. ***Paper #3 is due at the beginning of class on Monday, 11/25.***

### Final examination

The final exam, which will be cumulative, will be on **Friday, December 13 at 1 p.m.** More details about the format of the exam will be distributed closer to the time. We will spend ample time in class discussing how to prepare for the exam, and I will also facilitate a review session during reading period.

### **Grading Criteria**

Attendance, preparation, and participation: 25%  
Presentation and process paper: 10%  
Paper #1: 10%  
Paper #2: 15%  
Paper #3: 15%  
Midterm: 10%  
Final: 15%

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, except in exceptional circumstances (for which see below)—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

You may submit assignments either electronically or in hard copy, but all assignments are due at the beginning of class on the due date. 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

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. If you don't yet have a certified accommodation letter from the Office of Disability Services, please contact ODS at 212-854-2388 or [disability@columbia.edu](mailto:disability@columbia.edu). 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](mailto:asp@columbia.edu)

#### Office of Disability Services

The Office of Disability Services helps to meet the needs of students with disabilities who require additional support/accommodations to succeed in class. If you think you may require accommodations for a documented disability, please contact ODS at 212-854-2388/  
[disability@columbia.edu](mailto:disability@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. If you're looking for background—especially if you are working on your presentation—start here:

- "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. Reserve copies are also available through Butler Library. If you source the books elsewhere, please use these editions so that translations and paginations are consistent. Please be in touch with me should you have difficulty obtaining the books for any reason.*

Plato, *Republic* (Hackett)  
 Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* (Oxford, trans. Ross, Brown)  
 Aristotle, *Politics* (Hackett)  
*New Oxford Annotated Bible with Apocrypha* (Oxford)  
 Augustine, *City of God* (Penguin)  
*The Qur'an*, ed. Abdel Haleem (Oxford)  
 Machiavelli, *The Prince* (Hackett)  
 Machiavelli, *The Discourses* (Penguin)  
 Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy* (Broadview)  
 Hobbes, *Leviathan* (Oxford)  
 Locke, *Political Writings*, ed. Wootton (Hackett)  
 Rousseau, *The Basic Political Writings* (Hackett)

### **Course Schedule**

*Readings indicated with an asterisk are available on Courseworks.*

W 9/4	Introduction: *Kwame Appiah, "There is no such thing as Western Civilization" ( <i>Guardian</i> , 2016) Plato, <i>Republic</i> , Book I
M 9/9	Plato, <i>Republic</i> , Books II–IV
W 9/11	Plato, <i>Republic</i> , Books V–VII
M 9/16	Plato, <i>Republic</i> , Books VIII–X
W 9/18	Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , Books I, II:1–6, III:1–5
M 9/23	Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , Books V:1–7, VI:1–8 & 12, VIII:1–12, X
W 9/25	Aristotle, <i>Politics</i> , Book I (Chs. 1–9, 12–13), Book II (Chs. 1–5), Book III (Chs. 1–13), Book IV (Chs. 1–5)

***Paper #1 due!***

- M 9/30 Hebrew Bible: Exodus 1–24; Deuteronomy 1–6; 1 Samuel 2, 8–10, 17–20; Ecclesiastes (entire)
- W 10/2 New Testament: Matthew 3–7; Galatians (entire); Romans (entire)
- M 10/7 Augustine, *City of God*, I (preface, 1, 8–11, 16, 18, 19, 29, 35, 36); IV (1–4); V (preface, 9–11); VIII (6, 8, 9, 11); XI (1, 13); XII (1–9, 21–23)
- W 10/9 Augustine, *City of God*, XIV (1–7, 9–19, 24–28); XVIII (1); XIX (1, 12–17, 24–25); XXII (23–24)
- M 10/14 *Al-Qur'an*: suras 1, 114, 112, 111, 107, 98, 96, 81, 74, 68, 63, 56, 55, 49, 45, 43, 42, 39, 30, 28, 26, 19, 17, 15, 12, 11, 10, 4, 3, 2
- W 10/16 Medieval Islamic Philosophy:  
\*Al-Ghazali, *The Rescuer from Error*  
\*Ibn Tufayl, *Hayy ibn Yaqzan*
- M 10/21 \*Aquinas, *The Summa Against the Gentiles* (pp. 1–7); *On Kingship* (pp. 14–29); *The Summa of Theology* (pp. 30–38, 44–53)
- W 10/23 **MIDTERM EXAM**
- M 10/28 Machiavelli, *The Prince* (entire)
- W 10/30 Machiavelli, *Discourses* I (preface, 1–6, 9–18, 33, 55, 58); II (preface, 1–3, 29); III (1, 41)
- M 11/4 **Election Day holiday—no class!**
- W 11/6 The New World:  
\*Council of Castile, "El Requerimiento"  
\*Nahuatl Accounts of the Conquest of Mexico (Book 12 of the *Florentine Codex*)  
\*Felipe Guamas Poma de Ayala, "Appeal Concerning the Priests"  
\*Vitoria, "On the American Indians," pp. 231–51, 264–65, 271–72, 277–291
- Paper #2 due!***
- M 11/11 \*Luther, "Preface to Romans," "On Governmental Authority," and "Twelve Articles of the Swabian Peasants"

- W 11/13 \*Descartes, *Principles of Philosophy* (Introduction and Preface)  
Descartes, *Discourse on Method*
- M 11/18 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, "To My Most Honor'd Friend," Introduction, Chs. 1–2, 6, 8–16
- W 11/20 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Chs. 17–21, 27
- M 11/25 Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Chs. 29–33, 38, 43, Review and Conclusion  
***Paper #3 due!***
- W 11/27 **Thanksgiving holiday—no class!**
- M 12/2 Locke, *Second Treatise*, Introduction, Chs. 1–9, 18, 19
- W 12/4 Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality* (entire)
- M 12/9 Rousseau, *Social Contract*, Books I-II; Book III (1–4, 10, 15); Book IV (1–3, 8)
- W 12/11 *Optional review session (location TBA)*
- F 12/13 FINAL EXAM, 1–4pm (location TBA)**