

Humanities 201  
Politics Track  
MWF 11:00-11:50  
Buckman 105

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## THE SEARCH FOR VALUES IN THE LIGHT OF WESTERN HISTORY AND RELIGION

### COURSE DESCRIPTION AND GOALS

This third semester of the two-year “Search” course carries forward the study of history, religion, literature, philosophy and political thought of the West from the early Middle Ages through the Renaissance, Reformation, and Enlightenment, with an emphasis on political topics, broadly understood. Politics involves answers to the question: what is the best life for individuals?--which must necessarily be individuals living in community. The great works of our intellectual tradition grapple with aspects of the political question: Is the best life devoted to fulfilling God’s purposes (and what might those be)? Does nature or reason (independently of revelation) point to the best human life? Are different visions of the human good compatible?

Throughout this course we will be confronted by various and conflicting answers to such fundamental questions as we canvass great ideas and great thinkers. The superficial goals of the course goals are:

- 1) to understand some of the seminal ideas in the tradition of political thought (in the widest sense) and their consequences for individuals and societies.
- 2) to develop the ability to read works of literature and philosophy carefully and critically.
- 3) to develop the ability to discuss and write about books and ideas effectively.

A deeper goal of the course is that you will experience “the bite and sting” to which Kafka refers in the quotation below, and that you will be able to reflect on what accounts for the frozen sea within you.

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*Altogether, I think we ought to read only books that bite and sting us. If the book we are reading doesn't shake us awake like a blow on the skull, why bother reading it in the first place? So that it can make us happy, as you put it? Good God, we'd be just as happy if we had no books at all; books that make us happy we could, in a pinch, also write ourselves. What we need are books that hit us like a painful misfortune, like the death of someone we loved more than we love ourselves, that make us feel as though we had been banished to the woods, far from any human presence, like a suicide. A book must be the axe for the frozen sea within us. That is what I believe.*

**Franz Kafka to Oskar Pollak, quoted in Alberto Manguel, A History of Reading.**

**The following books are required and may be purchased in the Rhodes bookstore:**

- Dante, *The Inferno* (trans. Ciardi)
- Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*
- Franklin, *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin*
- Hobbes, *Leviathan* (ed. Curley)
- Locke, *Second Treatise of Government* (ed. Macpherson)
- Machiavelli, *The Prince* (ed. Mansfield)
- Machiavelli, *Mandragola*
- Milton, *Paradise Lost*
- Shakespeare, *Measure for Measure* (Penguin edition)
- Smith, *Theory of Moral Sentiments*
- Golding, *Lord of the Flies*\*

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**Other required readings will be made available electronically or in handouts.**

**REQUIREMENTS**

The success of this course depends on your careful preparation for, attendance at and active involvement in each class meeting. You will be required to prepare questions or comments on some assignments and, occasionally, to lead a discussion (with at least one other member of the class). Your grade for the course will be calculated in the following way:

Exam	20%
Two 4-page response papers	20%
Daily written questions	15%
Final Comprehensive paper	35%
Class participation, oral presentations, etc.	10%

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**POLICIES**

- \* A penalty of 1/3 of a letter grade per day will be assessed for late papers.
- \* Attendance is expected and required; habitual tardiness or absence will be penalized
- \* All written work is governed by the Rhodes College Honor Code and should be signed and pledged.
- \*All exams and written work must be completed to pass the course

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### SCHEDULE OF TOPICS AND READINGS

Wednesday August 23: Introduction and overview

#### *Faith, reason and the holy life*

Friday August 25: *David Brooks*, “The Organization Kid”

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Monday August 28: *Rule of St. Benedict*, pp. 43-75

Wednesday August 30: *Rule of St. Benedict*, pp. 76-106.

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Friday September 1: Video, “Trappist”

Wednesday September 6: Aquinas on Virtue, Selections

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Friday September 8: Aquinas, Selections

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Monday September 11: *Contemporary theological accounts of sin*  
(Paul Tillich and John McQuarrie)

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Wednesday September 13: Dante, *Inferno*, Cantos 1 -7; 11:1-90; 15 (all)

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Friday September 15: *Inferno, Inferno*, Cantos 18-19; 21:1-60; 22 (all); 24: 79-149; Cantos 25-26; 32-34

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#### *The life of self-assertion*

Monday September 18: Machiavelli, *The Prince*, Dedicatory letter; Chapters 1, 6-8.

Wednesday September 20: *The Prince*, Chapters 15-18; 22-25

Friday September 22: *Mandragola*

#### *Reformations: Church and State, Body and Soul*

Monday September 25: Shakespeare, *Measure for Measure*, Acts I-II

Wednesday September 27: *Measure for Measure*, Acts III-V

Friday September 29: Scenes from *Measure for Measure*

Monday October 2: Martin Luther, Selections

- Wednesday October 4: John Calvin, Selections
- Friday October 6 Exam**
- Monday October 9: John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, **Book 1**:1-270; **Book 2**:1-505; **Book 3**: 1-302; **Book 4**:1-113, 393-535.  
(Also read the argument that begins each book)
- Wednesday October 11: *Paradise Lost*, **Book 5** (all); **Book 6**:1-188; **Book 7**:1-130, 494-640; **Book 8** (all)
- Friday October 13: *Paradise Lost*, **Book 9**:135-1189; **Book 10**: 95-263, 455-522, 845-1100

**The conquest of nature and the philosophies of self-preservation**

- Wednesday October 18: Francis Bacon, *The Advancement of Learning* (Selections)
- Friday October 20: Francis Bacon cont'd
- Monday October 23: Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Dedicatory Letter; Author's Introduction; Chapters 1-3, 6
- Wednesday October 25: *Leviathan*, Chapters 10-11, 13
- Friday October 27: *Leviathan*, Chapters 14; 15 (1-10, 40-41); 17, 18, 21
- Monday October 30: Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, Preface; Chapters 1-3
- Wednesday November 1: *Second Treatise of Government*, Chapters 5; 7; 8 (95-99); 9
- Friday November 3: *Second Treatise of Government*, Chapters 11 (134-138, 142); 12; 13 (149-153); 14; 18 (199, 202-204, 208-209); 19 (223-229)
- Monday November 6: William Golding, *Lord of the Flies*
- 'Bourgeois individualism'**
- Wednesday November 8: Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*, pp. 1-13, 33-72, 82-86.
- Friday November 10: *Robinson Crusoe*, pp. 91-97, 112-121, 124-128, 131-166, 204-205.

- Monday November 13: Benjamin Franklin, Autobiography, Part 1-2
- Wednesday November 15: Benjamin Franklin, Autobiography, Part 3
- Friday November 17: John Winthrop, "A Model of Christian Charity"
- Monday November 20: *Declaration of Independence; Federalist 10. Federalist 51*
- Monday November 27: Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations* (selection)
- Wednesday November 29: Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, pp. 9-31.
- Friday December 1: *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, pp. 78-85, 179-187
- Monday December 4: *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, pp. 212-264
- Wednesday December 6: Ralph Lerner, "The Tamed Ambition of the New Man of Commerce"

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Benjamin Franklin, Autobiography, Part 1-2

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