THE MAKING OF THE MODERN MIND
HON 1010 – THE CLASSICAL AND MEDIEVAL AGES

FALL SEMESTER 2006

CLASS MEETS: 1:00-1:50 Daily
CLASS LOCATION: ENS 345
PROFESSORS: Mr. Terry Chamberlain, Fine Arts 25, #3213
Dr. Marc Clauson, Collins 17, #7934
Dr. David Mills, Founders 316, #7986
Dr. John Mortensen, DMC 112, #7734

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

The freshman honors sequence is an attempt to develop an integrated understanding of the development of Western civilization. Historical inquiry of this kind is an exercise of the imagination engaged with various evidences. We do not know, nor will we ever know, exactly what happened two hundred or two thousand years ago. Instead, we seek to explain events by asking specific kinds of questions, gathering information in the form of primary sources (letters, diaries, legal records, works of art, philosophical writings, etc.), and then weaving the data into a narrative answer to these questions. Because neither our questions nor our evidences are ever perfect, no historical narrative is perfect. Yet even our flawed and fragmented inquiries can help us to grapple with the questions and complexities of our own historical contexts, and we can in fact talk in terms of the truth about our cultural history, as long as we do so with humility and a willingness to learn from others.

With these facts in mind, we will examine those cultural artifacts that help us construct a picture of the ever-changing structures of life and thought during the past several thousand years of Western civilization. We will examine the artistic expressions, the written records of philosophical inquiry, and the historical accounts that have emerged from various cultures within the Western tradition. As we study these evidences, we will examine the presuppositions of various individuals and groups, looking at how they used history, art, and abstract conceptual inquiry to orient their lives. It is our hope that as we do so, not only will we strengthen our critical thinking about art, history, and philosophy, but also our critical self-reflection. We desire to recognize the truth wherever we encounter it, to engage our world with a humble sensitivity to our own limits, failures, and historical conditioning as well as that of others, and to rely upon God to glorify himself in and through those limits, failures, and conditions. It is truly God that is the hero of the story we will be exploring this year.

In the fall semester we will begin this story in the ancient Near East and the early civilizations of Mesopotamia, Egypt, Greece, and Rome. The story will continue with the movement of Christianity out of the catacombs and into the palaces of the Roman Empire, spreading across the Western world through the Middle Ages. Our final chapter for this semester will explore the gradual rise of a new paradigm in Europe through renaissances, reformations, and revolutions of ideas. In each chapter of this story, we will explore common themes that develop politically, socially, intellectually, aesthetically, and spiritually as the story unfolds.
COURSE GOALS:

After completing this year-long sequence of courses (HON-1010 & 1020), the students should:

1. Understand more fully the key ideas, people, and events that have helped to shape contemporary Western ways of thinking, feeling, and acting.
2. Be more skilled in the critical evaluation of ideas, both their own and those of others, from the perspective of a Christian worldview.
3. Be able to communicate more effectively what they believe, and why they believe it, especially in dialogue with those whose worldviews differ from theirs.
4. Value truth, no matter where it is found, and be able to integrate a coherent picture of truth from its multiple sources.
5. More fully appreciate what it means to live humbly, yet courageously, by faith in dependence on God, who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

TEXTBOOKS:


Additional selected readings will be handed out in class or accessed online.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

You will be required to do the assigned readings and submit online reading reports at the time of the class for which the readings are assigned.  For each assigned reading, a full reading report must be submitted according to the guidelines provided.  These readings must be turned in on time – no credit is given for late assignments.  Your completion of these assignments will account for 20% of your final course grade.

At the end of each unit of the course, you will be required to submit a written essay that summarizes, interacts with, and applies the material from that unit.  These will be written outside of class, and will be graded by the teaching team.  There will be a total of 4 such essays, each worth 15% of your final course grade, for a total of 60%.

You will also be required to read 500 pages of material on your own, in addition to any specific readings assigned in class and listed on the schedule below.  These readings should be divided evenly between the following four categories: Art, History, Literature, and Philosophy.  You will also be required to maintain daily (or nearly so) reading of a major metropolitan newspaper (a minimum of 75 days of reading for the semester).  Your completion of these reading requirements will be worth 10% of your final course grade.
Because we are striving to learn together as a community, class participation will contribute 10% of your final course grade. Class attendance, attentiveness, and contribution to the life of the learning environment are included in this category. Many of the course expectations (see below) speak to this category of your grade.

COURSE EXPECTATIONS:

It is our hope that as students and professors in this year-long course, we will not remain autonomous individuals, but will instead develop into a close-knit community of learners. To that end, we should esteem each other more highly than ourselves and endeavor to serve one another with our actions, attitudes, thoughts, and words. Here are some practical suggestions of how you can do so as you participate in this course this year:

1. Be faithful in attendance.
2. Be attentive and involved, contributing to the life of the class, participating in discussion, taking notes, and using your abilities to their fullest in the context of this class.
3. If you take notes on a laptop computer, show respect for your professors and your fellow students by unplugging your wireless card (if you have one) and not using your computer for any activity other than taking notes (e.g., IM-ing, facebooking, game playing, surfing, emailing, checking your stocks, selling your organs on ebay, etc.).
4. Have a positive attitude about the course material, readings, discussions, assignments, and people in the course.
5. Work to build bonds of community with others in the class. Don’t expect it to happen automatically, or assume that others will reach out to you if you don’t reach out to them. Start now to live out the truth of I Corinthians 12.
6. Sleep enough (but not in class!). Live a balanced life that provides you the physical, emotional, and spiritual resources necessary to invest fully in this class and the lives of those around you.
7. Stay on top of the workload, and don’t give up. Turn in your work on time. If you are struggling, please talk to one of us professors. We’re here to help.
8. Don’t stress out over grades. There’s no such thing as a satisfied perfectionist. We grade on a 5-point scale in this class in order to take off some of the pressure. We want you to strive for excellence, but we also don’t want to penalize you for taking on the extra challenge of Honors courses.
9. Keep a sense of humor about it all, and enjoy this time in your life.
10. Remember that this is a year-long process. You may develop questions that don’t get immediate answers. You may face a challenge to your worldview that you can’t immediately resolve. Even if it’s not clear where things are going or how resolution is possible, stick with the process, and keep communicating. Talk to your professors (in this class and others), your fellow students, upperclassmen, your parents, your pastor(s), etc.