

DRAFT

History 3402G Homer to St. Augustine: Classic Texts and Debates in Western Culture

Instructor: Eli Nathans
Office: 2217 Lawson Hall
Email: enathans@uwo.ca

Course Description:

This course seeks to acquaint students with a series of classic texts in the Western tradition by juxtaposing debates that helped define the cultural climate of the eras in which they took place. All had an enduring influence on the culture of the West. The half course is conceptualized as the first part of a two-part sequence, together with History 3404F/G.

The first pair of texts on which the course focuses are the *Odyssey* and Aristotle's *Nichomachean Ethics*. The *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, both traditionally attributed to the poet Homer, remained for centuries a guide to the conduct of individual lives and the true nature and goals of Greek society, even as this society fundamentally changed. Both poems emphasized a heroic and military ideal. Aristotle formulated an ideal that was both more philosophical and ethical, clearly in conscious opposition to the models found in Homer. The influence of the Aristotle's work is suggested by the fact that in medieval Europe the authority of Aristotle was considered in the academic schools to be next only to that of the Bible.

The course then examines excerpts from the Hebrew Bible and their interpretations, with a particular focus on Genesis and the Adam and Eve story. It examines how these and related stories within the Hebrew Bible themselves constituted - arguably - a kind of internal dialogue. It then turns to the *Confessions* of St. Augustine, a fourth and fifth century Christian Bishop whose writings reflected the influence of Greek and Roman authors, contemporary religious and ideological debates, and the dire contemporary circumstances of the Roman Empire. Augustine proposed his own interpretations of the Hebrew Bible. St. Augustine's work has been deeply influential in the history of Christianity.

While there will be some lectures, for the most part this course will be discussion based. Students should be prepared to participate actively in analyzing the assigned texts.

Learning Outcomes:

Students who take this course will be able to explain the meaning or meanings of the

assigned texts, and place them in their historical context, and explain their relationships to each other.

Grading:

Response papers on assigned readings:	10 points
Class participation:	20 points
Two six to eight page essays, on readings assigned for the course:	35 points each

Books

St. Augustine, *The Confessions* (New York: Oxford World's Classics, 2008).

M.I. Finley, *The World of Odysseus* (New York: New York Review Books, 2002).

Homer, *The Odyssey*, translated by Richmond Lattimore (Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 2007).

Coursepack comprising starred sources.

Schedule of classes:

Week One

Introduction.

Homer, *The Odyssey*, book 1.

Week Two

Homer, *The Odyssey*, books 2-7.

Finley, *The World of Odysseus*, 5-45 (chapters 1-2).

Week Three

Homer, *The Odyssey*, books 8-12.

Finley, *The World of Odysseus*, 46-108 (chapters 3-4)

Week Four

Homer, *The Odyssey*, books 13-24.

Finley, *The World of Odysseus*, 109-46 (chapter 5)

*A.W.H. Adkins, *Moral Values and Political Behaviour in Ancient Greece. From Homer to the end of the Fifth Century* (New York: Norton, 1972), 10-21.

Week Five

*Aristotle *Nichomachean Ethics*, translated with commentaries and glossary by Hippocrates Apostle (Grinnell: Peripatetic Press, 1984), 21-34 (Book Beta).

*Adkins, *Moral Values and Political Behaviour in Ancient Greece. From Homer to the end of the Fifth Century*, 22-31.

*Jonathan Barnes, *Early Greek Philosophy* (Toronto: Penguin Books, 2001), xi-xxv.

*Jonathan Barnes, "Aristotle," in R.M. Hare, Jonathan Barnes, and Henry Chadwick, *Founders of Thought* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 89-101, 164-74.

*Jonathan Barnes, introduction to Aristotle, *The Nichomachean Ethics* (New York: Penguin Books, 2004), ix-xxi.

Week Six

*Aristotle *Nichomachean Ethics*, translated with commentaries and glossary by Hippocrates Apostle (Grinnell: Peripatetic Press, 1984), 140-61 (Book Theta)

Week Seven

*Genesis 1-3; 6-9:17.

*Marc Zvi Brettler, *How to Read the Jewish Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 7-12, 29-47.

*Thomas Pangle, *Political Philosophy and the God of Abraham* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2003), 21-47.

Week Eight

Judy Klitsner, *Subversive Sequels in the Bible. How Biblical Stories Mine and Undermine Each Other* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2009), xv-xxxii, 95-133.

Week Nine

Early Christianity: Lecture.

Week Ten

Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, selections

Week Eleven

The Confessions of St. Augustine,

Book One, chapters 7, 16, 19

Book Two, chapters 1-4

Book Four, chapters 1, 2, 4

Book Five, chapters 13, 14

Book Six, chapters 3, 4, 12, 13, 14, 15

Book Eight, chapters 6, 12

Book Ten, chapters 3, 4, 22

Week Twelve

The Confessions of St. Augustine,

Book Twelve, chapters 7, 24, 27, 28, 30, 31

Book Thirteen, chapters 22, 23, 28

Week Thirteen

Lecture