

IDS 104: The Great Conversation—Culture
Dr. John Kress and Dr. Gretchen Schulz
Tuesday/Thursday 11J plus Monday 3:00 to 5:00

Course Description:

The Great Conversation – Culture is a team-taught interdisciplinary course intended to introduce students to a selection of great works in the fields of literature, philosophy, theology, politics, and history from Greek and Roman times to the present. The focus will be on Western culture and civilization.

The works will be studied in roughly chronological order so that we might see how various thoughts and ideas have been developed and expressed throughout time. The purpose of the course, as is reflected in its title, is to promote our participation in the great conversation about our world, our society, and our humanity that has been going on for three thousand years and more. We will read the words of those who have preceded us and then add our own thoughts and ideas to the conversation. We'll be reading works whose titles are bolded in their entirety; we'll be reading only portions of other works, with the particulars of the reading TBA or "to be assigned." The classes will be discussion-based, with all of us taking turns in facilitating discussion from day to day. Guest facilitators (primarily faculty members from the Oxford campus) may join us upon occasion, both during the regular class sessions on Tuesday and Thursday at 11:30 and during the supplemental sessions on Monday afternoon from 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.

This year, we have chosen the works for study and discussion to ensure that we'll be giving due consideration to a topic that is becoming more important with every passing year: sustainability. As we will see, relevant views on nature itself, on human nature, and in some cases, on the supernatural in relation to nature and human nature have informed the major works of the Western world from the very beginning. We'll think and talk about how those views have impacted our attitudes towards (and treatment of) ourselves and our world in their own time and since. Some of your journals entries and at least one of your papers will deal with this aspect of the material we are working with, as well.

January	14 introduction to the course; discussion of some of "Genesis"
	18 Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
	19 Homer, <i>The Odyssey</i>
	21 Homer, <i>The Odyssey</i> ; journals checked (2 entries due)
	25 Plato, <i>Meno</i>
	26 Plutarch, " Solon " and " Lycurgus "
	28 Plato, <i>Republic</i> , readings TBA
February	01 Aristotle, readings TBA
	02 Thucydides, <i>The Peloponnesian War</i> , readings TBA
	04 Plutarch, " Caesar " and " Cato "; journals collected (6 entries due)

08 *Bible/Old Testament*: “Genesis” and “Exodus,” readings TBA

09 *Bible/New Testament*: “**Luke**”

11 Augustine, *Confessions*

15 *Beowulf*

16 Aquinas, readings TBA

17 *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*

19 **first paper due**

22 Dante, *Inferno*

23 Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*, “**The General Prologue**,” “**The Knight’s Tale**”

25 Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*, “**The Miller’s Tale**,” “**The Wife of Bath’s Prologue and Tale**”

March

01 Shakespeare, *As You Like It*

02 Machiavelli, *The Prince*

04 Shakespeare, *King Lear*; **journals collected (8 entries due)**

[attendance at the Atlanta Shakespeare Company production of *King Lear* required, Thursday evening, March 4]

SPRING BREAK: March 8-12

15 Bacon, readings TBA

16 Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, readings TBA; Guest: Dr. Kent Linville

18 Swift, *Gulliver’s Travels*, readings TBA

22 Wordsworth, readings TBA

23 other Romantic poets, including Coleridge, Shelley, readings TBA

25 Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*

29 Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*

30 Hegel, readings TBA

April

01 Darwin, readings TBA

02 **second paper due**

05 Nietzsche, readings TBA

06 Thoreau and Emerson, readings TBA

08 Twain, *Huckleberry Finn*

12 Husserl, readings TBA

13 Dostoyevsky, *Crime and Punishment*

15 African-American poetry, readings TBA

16 **journals collected (10 entries due)**

19 feminist poetry, readings TBA
20 ecological poetry, readings TBA
22 ecological non-fiction: Dillard, *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*

26 ecological film (fantasy): Tolkien and director Peter Jackson, *Return of the King*
27 ecological film (science fiction): Dick and director Ridley Scott, *Blade Runner*; **final journal entry collected (reflective)**
28 reading day: **third paper due**

Course Requirements:

Students are expected to read the assigned text prior to class and to come to class well prepared to make frequent intelligent contributions to discussion of the thoughts and ideas raised by the text. At regular intervals all of us will assume responsibility for facilitation of class discussion (working with one or two others to do so), initiating class discussion with an opening question and moderating discussion as it proceeds, using further questions as necessary. Those facilitating discussion will be expected to meet ahead of time to discuss the text for the class and to prepare questions. **At least some of those questions will deal with the ecological implications of the material assigned for the class.**

You will also be expected to keep journals of comments and questions stimulated by the texts read and by the class discussions of the texts. At a minimum, you should prepare a journal entry prior to and/or following at least two of the three weekly class meetings, dealing somehow with issues relevant to the text assigned for that meeting. **When it makes sense to do so, we will suggest that at least one of the entries for a given week deal with the ecological implications of the material discussed that week.** These journal entries may be written by hand (in a notebook of some sort) or typed (and then printed out to be put in a folder). The journal should be brought to class each session for we may make use of them to promote discussion at any time. They will be collected at intervals indicated on the syllabus by the chief facilitators (Dr. Schulz and Dr. Kress). They will not be graded in the usual fashion (letter grades), but their content will serve as an indication of the degree and quality of student engagement with the course material, and that information will factor into the overall grade assigned at the end of the term for the degree and quality of class participation.

Students will write three papers (of at least 1,000 words) due throughout the semester (as indicated on the syllabus). The format and content of these papers will be discussed in class. Students will be encouraged to bring a draft of each paper to a conference with the chief facilitators for the course, Dr. Schulz and/or Dr. Kress, so discussion may yield suggestions for revision which will strengthen the work. **We will ask that at least one of these papers address the ecological implications of the text(s) being dealt with.**

Grading: Class participation (including regular participation
 for 60 points and facilitation for 40 points) 100 points

3 papers (for 50 points each)	150 points
Journal entries	<u>50 points</u>
Total for the course	300 points

Please note that Dr. Kress and Dr. Schulz will be grading your work using the plus/minus grading system.

Policy on absences: Since class participation is such an important component of this course, attendance is important, and excessive absence will result in points deducted from your grade for participation and from your final grade. Only true emergency, significant illness, and required religious observance can excuse an absence. Please inform Dr. Schulz and Dr. Kress of the latter ahead of time.

Policy on late or missing work: A paper submitted late without an adequate excuse (true emergency or significant illness) will lose a letter grade for each calendar day it is late. A paper that is more than four calendar days late (without an adequate excuse) will not be accepted at all and will be given a zero. Missing or late journal submissions will affect the final grade. Failure to take an assigned turn as a facilitator-for-the-day (without an adequate excuse) or to prepare for that facilitation as required will also affect the final grade.

Please note that all work for the course must be done in accordance with the dictates of the Honor Code of the College. Your name on any work you do for the course constitutes an Honor pledge.