

IDS 104: The Great Conversation—Culture
Dr. Michael Rogers and Dr. Gretchen Schulz
spring semester 2008

Course Description:

The Great Conversation – Culture is an interdisciplinary course intended to introduce students to a selection of great works in the fields of literature, art, music, philosophy, theology, politics, and history from ancient 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 expressed throughout time and how certain concepts have developed. 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 (and view and hear the works) of those who have preceded us and then add our own thoughts and ideas to the conversation. 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) will join us upon occasion, both during the regular class sessions on Monday, Wednesday, Friday at 9:35 a.m. and during the supplemental sessions on Tuesday afternoon from 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Contact information:

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Course schedule:

January	16 introduction to the course 18 <i>Bible/Old Testament</i> : “Genesis,” chh. 1-22 21 Martin Luther King, Jr. Day 22 <i>Bible/Old Testament</i> : “Exodus,” chh. 1-20; “Job” 23 Homer, <i>The Odyssey</i> 25 Homer, <i>The Odyssey</i> ; check on journals (3 entries due) 28 Thucydides, <i>The Peloponnesian War</i> 29 Plato, <i>The Republic</i> , Books VI, VII, and X; Guest: Dr. Ken Anderson 30 Plato, <i>Symposium</i>
February	01 Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> 04 Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> 05 <i>Bible/New Testament</i> : “Luke”; Guest: Dr. David Gowler

06 Virgil, *Aeneid*
08 Plutarch; **journals collected (9 entries due)**

11 Catullus, Horace, Ovid
12 Greek and Roman art and architecture; Guest: Dr. Dick Corbin
13 Augustine, *Confessions*
15 *Beowulf*, other Old English poetry

18 *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*
19 Marie de France lais, *Melusine*; Guest: Dr. Matt Morris
20 Dante, *Inferno*
21 **first papers due**
22 Dante, *Inferno*

25 Petrarch, Boccaccio
26 medieval and Renaissance music, *Carmina Burana*; Guest: Dr. Maria Archetto
27 Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*, “The General Prologue,” “The Knight’s Tale”
29 Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*, “The Miller’s Tale,” “The Wife of Bath’s Prologue and Tale”

March 03 Machiavelli, *The Prince*
04 medieval and Renaissance art; Guest: TBA
05 Shakespeare, *King Lear*
07 Shakespeare, *King Lear*; **journals collected (12 further entries due)**

SPRING BREAK: March 10-14

March 17 Hobbes, *Leviathan*
18 Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*; Guest: Dr. Kent Linville
19 Rousseau, *The First and Second Discourses*
21 Voltaire, *Candide*

24 celebration of spring: poetry
25 Austen, *Mansfield Park*
26 Wordsworth
27 **second papers due**
28 Locke, Wollstonecraft

April 31 Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*
01 the symphony, Mozart and Beethoven; Guest: Dr. Maria Archetto
02 Marx; Guest: Frank Maddox
04 Nietzsche

07 Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*; *The Federalist Papers*
08 the opera, Mozart and Verdi; Guest: Dr. Maria Archetto
09 slave narratives: Frederick Douglass, Harriet Jacobs

11 Twain, *Huckleberry Finn*; **journals collected (12 further entries)**

14 Freud

15 Harlem Renaissance, African American poetry; Guest: Dr. Adriane Ivey

16 Harlem Renaissance, jazz; Guest: Dr. Brad Hawley

18 20th century art and architecture; Guest: TBA

21 folk music, Bob Dylan; rock music, The Rolling Stones

22 Angela Carter, *The Bloody Chamber*

23 feminist poetry

24 **third papers due**

25 Sartre; Guest: Dr. Ken Anderson

28 film festival: Cocteau's *Beauty and the Beast*

29 film festival: Scott's *Blade Runner*

30 **journals collected (7 further entries due)**

Course Requirements:

Students are expected to read the assigned text (or, in the case of art or music or other non-literary work, study any assigned work) 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 (or work). 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.

All who are participating in the ongoing great conversation of the course will keep journals of comments and questions stimulated by the texts read (or works studied) and by the class discussions of the texts (or works). At a minimum, each of us should prepare a journal entry prior to and/or following at least three of the four weekly class meetings, dealing somehow with issues relevant to the text (or work) assigned for that meeting. 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). These journal entries should be brought to class each session for we may make use of them to promote discussion at any time. These journals will be collected at intervals indicated on the syllabus by the chief facilitators (Dr. Schulz and Dr. Rogers). They will not be graded in the usual fashion, 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. Rogers, so discussion may yield suggestions for revision which will strengthen the work.

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. Schulz and Dr. Rogers 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 your final grade. Only true emergency, significant illness, and required religious observance can excuse an absence. Please inform Dr. Schulz and Dr. Rogers 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) 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.