

## **Pathways of World Literature Core Curriculum**

### **Money and the Good Life**

#### **COREP-AD 38**

*Professor Alide Cagidemetro*

*Spring 1 (7 weeks)*

#### **Description:**

This course examines a variety of cultural conceptions of money and wealth, and the ethical questions that money or wealth allows a writer to probe. Is the value of men measured by the value of their money, or are there other criteria for wealth? Is someone's wealth possible without someone else's poverty? How is human ambition rewarded or punished in the "pecuniary culture"? The course will look for answers to these and other questions in key works of literature, sociology, economics and other fields, reading classical texts ranging from Aristophanes' *Plutus*, Ihara Saikaku's "A dose of what the doctor never orders," and William Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*, to Honoré de Balzac's *Père Goriot*, Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* and F. Scott Fitzgerald's *Great Gatsby*. Readings will be supplemented by excerpts from works by Ibn Khaldun, Adam Smith, Thorstein Veblen, Max Weber, and Albert Hirschman.

#### **Learning outcomes:**

To think critically about cultural conceptions of money and wealth

To read literary classics from a thematic perspective

To appreciate similarities and differences in times, places and texts

To develop skills in close readings

To identify keywords in interdisciplinary and intercultural discourses

To foster a community of learning by sharing questions and insights on the course material

#### **Teaching and learning methodology:**

Lecture, discussion, class presentation, writing

#### **Course requirements:**

Attendance and active participation in classroom discussion

Two short papers (1200 words each) based on oral presentations in class. Class presentations will focus on a particular aspect of a text and end with relevant questions for class discussion (10-15 minutes). Papers and class presentations related to the following works:

*The Merchant of Venice*, *The Passions and the Interests*, *Robinson Crusoe*, *Père Goriot*, *The Great Gatsby*, *The Muqaddimah*, "The Spirit of Capitalism," *The Theory of the Leisure Class*.

Presentations will start on the second class of week 2; topics are to be discussed the previous week in office hours. Papers are due a week after the class presentation.

One midterm exam (in class)

Final term paper (2500 words); paper due on last day of class. Topic and paper outline to be presented in writing and discussed with professor in the fourth week of classes.

### **Grading distribution:**

Attendance and active participation in classroom discussion: 10%

Two oral presentations and papers: 20% + 20%

Midterm exam: 20%

Final term paper: 30%

### **Required texts:**

Aristophanes, *Wealth in The Birds and Other Plays*, New York, Penguin Classics, 2003

William Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*, Washington, Folger Shakespeare Library Paperback, 1992

Saikaku Ihara, *The Japanese Family Storehouse, or the Millionaires' Gospel Modernized* (1688), Cambridge, Cambridge U.P., 1959: Book 3, pp 59-80\*

Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*, ed. by John Richetti, New York, Penguin Classics, 2003

Honoré de Balzac, *Père Goriot*, ed. by Peter Brooks and Burton Raffel, New York, Norton, 1997

F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, New York, Penguin Classics, 2010

Albert Hirschman, *The Passions and the Interests*, Princeton, Princeton UP, 1997: Part One

Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah*, ed. by Franz Rosenthal, Princeton, Princeton UP 1969: Chapters Four and Five

Max Weber, "The Spirit of Capitalism" in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism and Other Writings*, New York, Penguin Twentieth Century Classics, 2002

Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, New York, Oxford World's Classics, 2009: Chapters One to Seven

- Text will be provided.

### **Selected bibliography:**

Horatio Alger, *Ragged Dick: or, Street Life in New York with the Boot Blacks*, New York, Signet Classics, 2005

Sven Beckert & Julia Rosenbaum (eds.), *The American Bourgeoisie*, New York, Palgrave, 2010

Janet Beizer, *Family Plots, Balzac's Narrative of Generations*, New Haven, Yale U.P., 1986

Ronald Berman, *The Great Gatsby and Modern Times*, Champaign, University of Illinois Press, 1996

John Cawelti, *Apostles of the Self-Made Man*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1988

Andrew Carnegie, *The Gospel of Wealth, Essays and Other Writings*, New York, Penguin Classics, 2006

Benjamin Franklin, *The Way to Wealth*, Bedford, Applewood Books, 1986

Charles B. Guignon (ed.), *The Good Life*, Indianapolis, Hackett Publishing Co., 1999

David Landreth, *The Face of Mammon: The Matter of Money in English Renaissance Literature*, Oxford, Oxford U.P., 2012

Jacques Le Goff, *Money and the Middle Ages*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 2012

Mike W. Martin, *Happiness and the Good Life*, Oxford, Oxford U.P., 2012

Marcel Mauss, *The Gift*, New York, Norton, 2000

Franco Moretti, *The Bourgeois*, New York, Verso, 2013

Jerry Muller, *The Mind and the Market*, New York, Anchor Books, 2003

Michael Sandel, *What Money Can't Buy: the Moral Limits of Markets*, New York, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2012

Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, (Texts in Culture), ed. by Kathryn Sutherland and Stephen Copley, Manchester, Manchester U.P., 2013

*The New Yorker Book of Money Cartoons*, ed. by Robert Mankoff, New York, Wiley, 2012

Marc Shell, *Money, Language and Thought*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins U.P., 1993

Georg Simmel, *The Philosophy of Money*, New York, Routledge Classics, 2011.

Michael Sponder. *American Literature and Social Change*, London, Macmillan, 1983

Roger Williams, *A Key into the Language of America*, London. George Dexter, 1643.

Eric G. Wilson, *Against Happiness: In Praise of Melancholy*, New York, Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2008.

### **Course outline:**

This is an outline of the course that may be subject to alterations based on the class's evolving interests and needs. This outline is intended to help you plan readings and prepare for your oral presentations and class discussions.

#### **Week 1**

1-1: Money and the good life: introduction and course overview, reading of selected passages

1-2 Gods, wealth and poverty: Aristophanes' *Wealth*

#### **Week 2**

2-1 Passion and interest: Albert Hirschman and *The Merchant of Venice*

2-2 *The Merchant of Venice*: Is the good life for all?

### Week 3

3-1 The spirit of capitalism: Max Weber and Robinson Crusoe's adventures

3-2 *Robinson Crusoe*: shaping the keywords of a bourgeois good life.

### Week 4

4-1 The way to prosperity: Ihara Saikaku

4-2 Midterm

### Week 5

5-1 Life in the city: Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah* and Balzac's *Père Goriot*

5-2 *Père Goriot*: ambition and generational exchanges

### Week 6

6-1 Thorstein Veblen and the search for status

6-2 *The Great Gatsby*: status and authenticity

### Week 7

7-1 *The Great Gatsby*: Money and sentiment, a love-story?

7-2 Discussion and conclusion