

As a result of the Piedmont Project seminar, I have modified my course below (changes in bold) in order to emphasize the importance of environmental thinking about sustainability in relation to the ecosystem and in order to open up a larger view of our fragile world in which the making of history must include the “goods” of much more than individual or even human specific interests. The goods of other species and indeed of all things are intrinsically part of our own destinies as they are also the concern of any developed stewardship for both place and space. I have included a field trip to Hahn Woods in Week 1 to foreground the significance of locale and familiar place, so often overlooked, extra topics on the environment for essay/research work, and a 2 week segment on the environment and on the history and importance of ecological ideas together with 2 specific works in the bibliography on these questions from Antiquity to the Present. These will be augmented with select readings from Arne Naess and Howard Frumkin (whose presentation at the seminar was first-rate). This final segment is not an addendum to the course, but fits integrally into the overall design, since Homer’s *Iliad* for instance is very much about human and cosmic ecology just as much as Camus’ *Plague* is about sustainability issues, disease and healing in an ever fragile balance between city, nature and cosmos.

This is only one aspect of my project. I intend also to develop a book project on ancient thought and ecology, since ironically it is Aristotle, elements of whose thought had to be rejected by the Medieval and Modern worlds in order for modern science to develop, who is explicitly of the view not only that the goods of all species have to be recognized and protected but also that economic, moral, and political education has to be capable of developing in human beings a perspective beyond their own interests. Plato’s notion of the cosmos as a great living organism speaks for itself, but what is little known is later Platonism’s crucial role in the development of an ecological point of view and then of course its pervasive influence in the rise of modern empirical science from Grosseteste and Bacon to Nicolas of Cusa, Copernicus, Kepler, and Newton. The complexity of Neoplatonic scientific thinking and its ability to include value without patronization deserves special attention in the absence of any treatment whatsoever.

I intend also to develop the links between Science and the Arts broadly conceived as far as I can within the ILA, promoting links wherever possible between different schools and colleges. My immediate interest here is to help to develop the Science and Society option into a program more fully integrated with the ILA. I want then to pursue this option with Arri Eisen.

IDS 114WR

Making History

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Description:

This is an interdisciplinary course with 5 major goals: 1) to introduce students to a sense of history by a study of some of the major texts representative of different ages or epochs in the history of humankind; 2) to provide a much broader view of history from recent developments in the history of science; 3) to provide a critical survey of the various roles that “history”, both as a discipline and as a body of perceived knowledge, plays in the modern and contemporary worlds; 4) to develop students’ writing skills so that their compositions can properly reflect some of the complexities of the worlds that they study; and 5) to give students a clearer sense of the fragile nexus of all these different senses of “history” by providing a context for understanding the need for a balance between nature, science, humanity and the universe in modern and contemporary approaches to sustainability issues, ecology, and the environment.

Course Requirements

Writing assignments will involve a) at least 20 minutes each week of essay writing discussion and brief workshop and b) the preparation, discussion, and presentation of a research paper (principally in the second part of the semester). There will also be available for at least 7 weeks of the semester a movie evening in which films related to the texts or themes we are working on in class will be shown with a brief discussion to follow.

Short Essay

Students will have 2 options: either a 5 page mid-term equivalent essay paper or a 5 page critical biography or brief history to be presented by the mid-term deadline or 2 weeks before the author and topic come up in class (or whichever is earlier).

Option 1:

Midway through the semester students will write a 5-page paper, outlining the topic, resources, and steps of the argument that they will pursue in their final research paper. This proposal will be returned with comments, and students will submit a revised version a week later, expanded into 7 pages. This work will be graded accordingly and evaluated as the mid-term essay project.

Option 2:

Students who wish to adopt option 2 should choose from the list of topics below by the end of week 2 and sign up for the topic chosen. Students will write a 5 page critical biography or brief history (see topics below) either 2 weeks before the topic or author comes up in class or by the same deadline as option 1 (whichever comes earlier). This historical material will be shared with the rest of class for information and discussion, and it will then be connected and incorporated into the final research essay where the historical information uncovered can be more easily connected with the thesis topic.

The rest of the term will be dedicated to a final written assignment of no less than 15 pages. Students will be expected to expand, re-examine and deepen their midterm paper proposals in close consultation with the class instructor. A draft of the final paper will be required at least two weeks before the due date. The draft, which will be returned to students with comments, as well as the weekly and mid-term feedback, will allow ample opportunity to improve students' writing skills.

Participation

Active and informed participation in class discussions will be expected of all students and will constitute an important part of the final grade. In addition

Grading will be as follows:

- 10% for weekly essay writing workshop
- 20% for the mid-term essay proposal/ biography-history (5 pages)
- 50% for final research paper (minimum 15 pages)
- 20% for class participation.

TEXTS:

Homer, *The Iliad*; Sophocles, *Antigone*; Plato, *Apology*; Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations* (selections); Epictetus, *Handbook* (selections); Boethius, *Consolation of Philosophy*, bk. 5; Chaucer, *Knight's Tale*, *Wife of Bath's Tale*; Shakespeare, *Henry IV*, pt. 1; Jonathan Swift, *A Modest Proposal*; Hegel, *On Art* (selections); Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*; Willa Cather, *My Antonia*; Stephen Hawking, *A Brief History of Time*; Albert Camus, *The Plague*; **Donald Worster, *Nature's Economy: A History of Ecological Ideas*, Cambridge, 1994 (2nd ed); T. M. Robinson and L. Westra, eds., *The Greeks and the Environment*, Binghampton: Albany State Press, 2002),**

Week 1

Introduction: outline and brief discussion: History versus art; **a field trip to Hahn Woods**

Week 2

The Iliad: The notion of the hero

Week 3

The Iliad: The face of the enemy

Week 4

Plato/ Marcus Aurelius: The price of self-knowledge

Week 5

Epictetus/ Boethius: Pagan and Christian Sensibility: the image of the sage

Week 6

Chaucer: Gender conflict and the face of colonialism

Week 7

Shakespeare: The education of the king ***5 page paper due***
(recommended reading: Machiavelli, *The Prince*)

Spring Recess

Week 8 ***Proposals returned***

Shakespeare

Week 9

Swift and Hegel: Philosophy of History: two versions of reason

Week 10

Shelley and Cather: Science and new frontiers: finding the new world

Week 11 *First draft of essay due*

Scientific Revolutions: from Newton to Einstein. Hawking

Week 12 **Nature's Economy: value, nature, and science.**

Week 13 *Research essay due*

Camus: the urban nightmare- disease and healing

Retrospective. Conclusions.

Possible topics for Option 2

1. Marcus Aurelius: contemplative versus political reality.
2. Boethius: philosophy and theology in the face of death
3. A brief history of the crusades (re Chaucer)
4. Hegel, Napoleon or Beethoven
5. Mary Shelley's family—father, mother, husband
6. Percy Shelley's view of the French Revolution
7. Willa Cather's life and thought
8. Biography of Swift
9. Scientific Revolutions: Galileo, Newton, Einstein, the internet
10. New worlds and colonialism
11. Colonialism in America: segregation and liberation (e.g., W. B. Dubois; Martin Luther King)
12. Camus: France and Algiers
- 13. Globalization and localization: environmental issues**
- 14. Ecological thinking: impact and challenges**
- 15. Urban sprawl: the need for holographic thinking**

Movies (time and place to be determined)

Troy

The Last Days of Socrates

Rome and the Stoics

Medieval Crusades

Henry IV, part 1

Frankenstein

Romanticism

