

Great Books, level 9

Year: Senior (12)
Course Code: W234439

Prerequisite: English 3
Course Code (Short): GB9

Description: Great Books delves into three core topics via multiple types of texts from Ancient Greece to the modern day: gender, societal norms, and philosophies of religion. Through deep analysis and synthesis of each text, students grapple with essential questions regarding gender roles, race and immigration, and philosophies of religion. A final unit is devoted to an individual student topic of research and reading based on choice.

This course is built upon both the Great Books Methodology, and Adler's method for reading books critically. The Great Books method teaches students to construct thoughtful and engaging discussion questions for assigned texts and asks them to lead their peers in discussion concerning the author's ideas and their relevance to our modern world. Most of class time is structured around student-led discussions and all instruction is centered around the core skills of writing questions, effectively leading peers, developing critical reading skills, and participating in the day's conversations. Readings are largely non-fiction and introduce students to philosophical and ideological theories and practices.

Core texts and films: *We Have Always Lived in the Castle* (Jackson), *Civilization and Its Discontents* (Freud), *Paradise Lost* (Milton), *Man's Search for Meaning* (Frankl), *How to Read a Book* (Adler).

Students are expected to participate daily, citing textual references and inferences, as well as posing questions, and actively listening. Nightly reading homework is assessed through discussion. Students will be evaluated on the ability to write and lead discussion questions on assigned texts, with the expectation of teacher meetings outside of class time to thoroughly work through the process. A desire to learn from authors, an interest in being an active member of a community of thinkers, and a willingness to listen and disagree are all characteristics of a successful Great Books student.

WRITING EXPECTATIONS

SEMESTER 1:

Process:

1. College Essay
2. Literacy Autobiography
3. Reflective journals on each reading
4. Process paper on Freud and/or Epictetus

SEMESTER 2:

Process:

1. Reflective journals on each reading
2. Process paper on the role of religion/spirituality
3. Process paper & presentation on the Meaning of Life

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READING EXPECTATIONS

Students are expected to read closely and use Adler's method for annotating works of non-fiction. Students will lead discussions, and the number in brackets next to each text indicates the number of leading days available in the text.

READING LIST

(works in **bold** are core texts)

(works in **red** must be ordered through the bookstore)

SUMMER READING:

Unit 1. The Sense of an Ending. Barnes, Julian (2011)

SEMESTER 1:

Required:

Unit 2. College Essay

Unit 3. Gender

EQ: How does gender inform our sense of self, social status, and identity?

- a. **Antigone, Sophocles** [2]
- b. **Lysistrata, Aristophanes** [2]
- c. "A Jury of her Peers", Glaspell [1]
- d. "The Yellow Wallpaper", Gilman [1]
- e. "The Miseducation of the American Boy", [1]
- f. Rebel Without a Cause, Ray film
- g. Hidden Figures, Melfi film
- h. Ma Vie En Rose, Berliner film

Unit 4. Society and the Expectations of the Community

EQ: How does our society shape our identity and how can we push back against repression?

- a. The Stone Reader: one selection from Section IV [1]
- b. **The Handbook, Epictetus** [2]
- c. Tao Te Ching (Tzu) [1-2]
- d. Essays from Freakonomics and The Tipping Point [1-3]
- e. Short Story selections [3-5]
 - 1. "Spilled Water"; Ibrahim, Djamila
 - 2. "The Medicine Bag"; Sneve, Virginia Driving Hawk
 - 3. "American History"; Cofer, Ortiz
 - 4. "Where I'm From"; Sugiura
 - 5. "The Kind of Light that Shines on Texas"; McKnight
- f. **Civilization and its Discontents: Ch 2-6, Freud** [5]
- g. Do the Right Thing, Lee film
- h. Mulan; Bancroft, Cook film

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SEMESTER 2:

- Unit 1: Religion and Spirituality
EQ: How can religion bring us hope and community?
- a. The Bible: "Book of Genesis" 1-3 [1]
 - b. **Paradise Lost, Milton** [5]
 - 1. Book 1, excerpts
 - 2. Book 3, excerpts
 - 3. Book 9
 - c. Quran selections [2]
 - 1. Book 2 V. 30-39
 - 2. Book 20 V 116-124
 - d. **Man's Search for Meaning, Frankl** [3]
 - e. Tibetan Book of Living and Dying, Rinpoche (excerpts) [1]
 - f. "Why I am not a Christian", Russell [1]
 - g. Life is Beautiful, Benigni film
 - h. Schindler's List, Spielberg film
 - i. Ida, Pawlikowski film
- Unit 2: Existentialism
EQ:
- a. "Myth of Sisyphus", Camus
 - b. "Rhinoceros", Ionesco
 - c. "The Guest", Camus
 - d. Stone Reader: one selection from Sections I or II
 - e. **The Plague, Camus**
 - f. Groundhog Day, Ramis film
 - g. 13 Conversations About One Thing, Sprecher film
 - h. The Fantastic Mr. Fox, Anderson film
- Unit 3: Meaning of Life Project