Fate and Virtue

HUM 2008 Section 2 / André Lambelet
Semester 1, 2010
November 24 - December 17, 2010
M-F 12:20-3:20 / A.315

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Instructor Information

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Course Description

In this course — one of three in the Humanities foundation series — we will read one of the greatest poems ever written (Homer's *Iliad*), excerpts from two writers who can lay claim to have created the discipline of history as we understand it (Herodotus and Thucydides), two of the world's greatest philosophers (Plato and Aristotle), and the playwright known as the "father of comedy" (Aristophanes).

Why study the Greeks? Why study these authors? In part because the questions they raised are fundamental. Each, in his way, asked the question, "How should we lead our lives?" We will take up this question, and focus particularly on the themes of "fate" and "virtue." We will read them for themselves, seeking to understand what their answers were. We will also compare them to each other, and see where they converge and diverge. In the process, we will seek to discover how and why our own views differ from theirs.

Learning Objectives

The general aim of this course is to encourage the students to engage in dialogue with the course material and with each other. Students who successfully complete the course will develop their skills as critical readers, attentive listeners, persuasive writers, and effective contributors to classroom discussion.

At the end of the course, students should have a deeper appreciation of the role of the humanities and of the place of the liberal arts in a well-rounded education.

By closely studying the assigned texts, students will engage directly with the arguments raised by some of the most important thinkers of Ancient Greece. At a minimum, students will be able to discuss lucidly the major issues raised by those thinkers and place them in their broader intellectual and historical contexts.

More specifically, students who successfully complete this course should be able to:

- Understand and explain differences between poetic, historical, and philosophical approaches to the themes of fate and virtue
- Understand and explain Greek ideas about the "good life" and justice

- Understand and explain why the Greeks thought the unexamined life was not worth living
- Understand and explain the philosophical principles in the Platonic dialogues we are reading and Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*
- Understand and explain the importance of history for Herodotus and Thucydides

Methods of Instruction

Short lectures

Large group discussion

Small group discussion

Student presentations

Required Texts

The following texts will be available in the University Bookstore:

Coursepack (available November 29) containing:

Homer. *The Odyssey*. Tr. Robert Fagles. New York: Viking, 1996. 249-270.

Herodotus. *Herodotus: The Histories*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998. Translated by Robin Waterfield. 3-45, 116-119, 188-193, 466-488.

Thucydides. *The Landmark Thucydides: A Comprehensive Guide to the Peloponnesian War*. New York: Free Press, 1996. 3-27, 80-85, 110-128, 175-193, 350-357.

Books:

Aristophanes. *Lysistrata and Other Plays*. Translated by Alan H. Sommerstein. Revised Edition. Penguin Classics, 2002.

Aristotle. *Nicomachean Ethics*. Translated by Terence Irwin. 2nd ed. Hackett Publishing Co., 2000.

Homer. *The Iliad*. Translated by Robert Fagles. Penguin Classics, 1990.

Plato. *Five Dialogues*. Translated by G. M. A. Grube. 2nd ed. Hackett Pub Co, 2002.

Doing well in this course

Reading

Reading is a vital part of your education. *It is not a passive activity*. You will be expected to understand and assimilate the assigned material. You will be asked to master the material in a comprehensive and sophisticated way.

Ask yourself the following questions when you read or study a work:

- Who wrote or created it? (If you don't know, look him or her up.)
- When was it written or produced? (Ditto.)
- What does the work say?
- How is the work structured?
- What is the form of the work?
- What kinds of imagery does the work use?
- What questions is it attempting to answer?
- What is the author's argument? What are the argument's strengths and weaknesses?
- What kinds of evidence does the author provide for her or his argument? What kinds of sources does the author use?
- To what kinds of arguments is the author responding?

Pay careful attention to the clues the author gives you:

- Read (and decipher) the title. What does it tell you about the piece you are reading?
- If the piece is a book, read the introduction and conclusion of the book; if the piece is an article or a chapter, read the first and last paragraphs. These should help you figure out what the piece's argument is. Ask yourself what the thesis of the piece is.
- Read the entire work (or all of the assigned portions). Try to decide which parts or passages are most important. If you own the work, make notes in the margins next to important or interesting parts. (Do not do this in library books!)
- Write down your responses to the work in a notebook. Think of note-taking as a way of organizing your thoughts. You need not write down everything; instead, jot down notes about interesting ideas, problems in the argument, or surprising aspects of the piece. (This is actually a formal requirement — see the section on "Reading Journal," below.)
- Re-read the work. You will find that a second (and often, a third and fourth) reading greatly improve your understanding.
- Finally, summarize the author's argument in a few lines. If you can complete a sentence beginning "The author of this book/article argues…," you have read intelligently and productively.

If you do all this, you should be ready for *classroom discussion*.

N.B.: One of your assignments for the block is to keep a journal; see the section on "Assignments," below. The steps above should help prepare you for this.

Writing

The heart of literature, history and philosophy as intellectual disciplines is the written word. Successful students in these fields must be able not only to read carefully but write clearly. In other words, they must be able to understand and use words precisely. Sloppy expression — in writing and in discussion — is as big a problem in the humanities as

getting formulae wrong is in chemistry; sloppy expression results in papers that fizzle out rather than illuminate.

You may consult your tutor if you have specific questions; we also urge all students to make use of the Learning Commons and Peer Tutors.

Writing well requires at least three things: *content*, *expression*, and *structure*.

Content: You need to have read carefully (and, it should go without saying, taken notes) before you begin to write. You must *think* about what you have read. You must *understand the question* you are asked to answer. And, of course, you must have something to say. All of this will give your paper *content*.

You must supply *evidence* in the form of (properly-cited) quotations. That evidence will, in the main, come from the assigned readings for this course. If you use evidence from elsewhere, you must be sure that the evidence is *reliable*. (Please do not think that Wikipedia, sources drawn haphazardly from the web, or other sketchy sources will help persuade your reader of the merits of your work!)

Expression: *How* you say things is crucial. If your writing obscures your meaning, then it is impossible for your reader to evaluate the content of your paper. Style matters: it makes your content accessible and your ideas intelligible.

Papers for this course must be written in formal, standard English. You must:

- punctuate properly;
- use proper grammar;
- make appropriate word choices.

If you are not certain of a word's precise meaning, look it up in a good dictionary before handing in your paper. (If you don't yet own a good dictionary, get one.)

Structure: Good papers will have a crisp **introduction**. This introduction will let readers know the topic or subject of the paper *and* will let readers what *problem* that the paper aims to discuss. (This is the *thesis statement*.) The introduction should let readers what the limits of the discussion will be.

Good papers will have a solid **conclusion**. A conclusion is not just a summary of what has been discussed before: it emphasizes the importance of the thesis statement, provides the essay with a sense of completeness (it *concludes*) the thoughts of the essay), and leaves the reader with a final sense of what the paper is about. (The conclusion should answer the dreaded "so what?" question — it should give the reader a sense of why s/he read it.)

Good papers will be built around solidly-constructed **paragraphs**. Paragraphs are the building blocks of good writing: they are are built around one thought or idea.

Moving from paragraph to paragraph also requires good **transitions**. Transitions connect the ideas in an essay, and allow the reader to understand the flow of your ideas.

Overall: It takes time and effort to write well. Good writing, you will scarcely need to be reminded, is *re-writing*. Plan to write at least two drafts before you submit an essay. And ask for help: ask your peers to read your drafts critically and unsparingly; get advice from the Learning Commons; and raise questions in class.

Assessment

Your grade for the course will be based on the following elements:

Category	Assignment	Weight (%)
Reading and preparation	Journal	15%
Participation and presentation	Participation	15%
	Devil's Advocacy	5%
	Presentation	10%
Essay writing	Essay 1	15%
	Essay 2	15%
	Essay 3	25%

A letter grade will be assigned for the course. See the *Quest University Calendar 2010-2011*, p. 19, for details on the grades awarded.

We will be using teaching and marking rubrics in this course. We will go over their use in the first session.

You may, if you wish, opt not to have grades appear on your individual assignment. If you choose this option, you will of course receive an evaluation of your work, and grades will still be recorded for your final grade.

Assignments

Journal Responses - 15%

You will keep a journal for this course; its purpose is to focus your attention on the works assigned for class, to spur you to think about what you read, and to provide you with material for classroom discussion. Please bring your typed (***not*** handwritten) journal with you to class *every day*.

Five times during the block (chosen at random — you will *not* be forewarned), your tutor will collect your response for that day's assigned reading. Each response collected is worth 3% of your overall grade. *Late responses will not be accepted.* In addition, you may also be called on in class to read your journal entry, or to discuss it in small group discussions.

As a rough guideline, you should write between 250 and 500 words, or one to two typed, double-spaced pages. While this is not "formal" writing, and you need not write a finished essay, you must nevertheless write clearly and intelligibly. (You must still **cite your sources**; if only one text is assigned, you may refer to the page number without bothering with the other stuff that goes in a formal citation; if there is more than one text assigned, please be sure to identity which text you are citing.)

Your response should indicate:

- The main point(s) of the assigned work.
- The main characters of the assigned work, if relevant.
- Your reaction to the assigned work. (Do you like the piece? Why or why not? Do you agree with it? Why or why not?)
- Your assessment of the significance of the assigned work. (Is it important? Why or why not? To whom?)
- Questions that the assigned work raises for you — or for others.

You might also note:

- The author's purpose in writing or creating the assigned work.
- How you think this piece fits in with the larger themes of the course.

Participation - 15%

The tutor's role is to facilitate discussion and to act as a guide when necessary. Your responsibility is to be prepared to engage in serious discussion of the materials. Participation is a crucial part of this course — not only because you can show what you know and how you think, but also because your participation helps other students learn.

You should come to class prepared to contribute to the discussion. This means that you must have read and reflected upon the assigned material; it also means that you should have formulated questions about the material. (It is good practice to write these questions down and bring them to tutorial.)

On the other hand (there is always an other hand, isn't there?), you should know that not every thought springs up full-grown like Athena from the brow of Zeus. Please do feel free to try to articulate an idea that is still not fully formed; part of our task as a group is to develop and test these ideas. Our aim is to make discussions free and unfettered.

Remember, too, that the point of discussion is to gain a deeper or better understanding of the topic at hand. In that spirit, we understand that what you say about a topic may not necessarily reflect your own likes, dislikes, politics, preferences, or prejudices.

Because discussion and engagement is a central part of what we do, participation counts for 15% of your grade. So how do you demonstrate your engagement?

- By being there every day and on time. (Note that unexcused absences will have a serious, even devastating, effect on your grade.)
- By being fully prepared; in other words, having read and thought about the material assigned for this class. (See the section on reading below.)
- By raising pertinent questions. ("Pertinent" does not mean complex or obscure; sometimes, simple questions work very well.)
- By taking your classmates' questions seriously, and taking the time to think about what they have said.
- By being willing to go out on a limb from time to time. (Not literally.)
- By treating your classmates and tutor with courtesy and respect.
- By volunteering to read passages for discussion.

- By having the courage to say (or ask) out loud what others may be thinking but are afraid to say (or ask): “I’ve lost the plot here.” “I don’t understand.” “What does eudemonia mean?” And so on.
- By playing the devil’s advocate. (See below; this is also a separate formal requirement.)

A general note on participation: Some people are shy. Some people find themselves tongue-tied in class. Some people think that other people are better at articulating their questions or comments. Nevertheless, taking part in a discussion is a useful, even vital, skill. You can prepare questions ahead of time. (Your journal will help you with this.) You can jot down important points before class begins. And you can wait for your tutor to call on you — which he will do (gently) at some point if he does not hear from you.

Devil's advocacy - 5%

Twice during the block you will be called upon to act as a “devil’s advocate.” Your function on these days is to challenge the ideas, opinions, and arguments expressed by your peers. Your job is to ask your peers to back up their assertions with textual evidence; to point out flaws in their reasoning; and, in general, to exhort them to be rigorous and vigorous in the presentation of their ideas. We will discuss this requirement on the first day of class, and you will sign up for specific dates on the first day.

Wednesday, December 1, 2010
Thursday, December 2, 2010
Friday, December 3, 2010
Monday, December 6, 2010
Tuesday, December 7, 2010
Wednesday, December 8, 2010
Thursday, December 9, 2010
Friday, December 10, 2010
Monday, December 13, 2010
Tuesday, December 14, 2010
Wednesday, December 15, 2010
Thursday, December 16, 2010

Presentation - 10%

You will be called upon to make a presentation in this course. You will be assigned a partner with whom you will provide a five- to seven-minute talk on a topic related to the day’s discussion. This will be a spare presentation: no PowerPoint, no audio, no video. Just lucid, clear talk and sharp questions.

Your presentation should *situate* the assigned reading. You might include biographical material about the author, historical material about the period or place, and information about the importance of the work or author.

You should carefully prepare your presentation, rehearse it before you give it, and **respect the time limit**. You may find that your tutor or your classmates cut you off if you go beyond seven minutes.

At the end of the class in which you make a presentation, you must *turn in the notes for your presentation*. These notes need not be in essay form — an outline will do — but they *must* include the sources upon which you drew to construct your presentation.

Assignments will be made during the first meeting of the block; we will go over the details of the presentation in the first class.

Dates for presentations:

Thursday, November 25, 2010
Friday, November 26, 2010
Monday, November 29, 2010
Tuesday, November 30, 2010
Wednesday, December 1, 2010
Friday, December 3, 2010
Tuesday, December 7, 2010
Wednesday, December 8, 2010
Friday, December 10, 2010
Monday, December 13, 2010
Tuesday, December 14, 2010
Wednesday, December 15, 2010

Essays

You will be asked to write two essays for this course: two short essays (1000-1200 words or so each) and a somewhat longer essay (approximately 1500-1800 words).

Rough (but **complete**) drafts of these papers are due *at the beginning of class*; you will need to bring three copies to class.

Final drafts are due by 5 pm in both hardcopy and in electronic form on D2L.

Topics handed out:	Rough draft (due at the beginning of class)	Final draft (due at 5 pm)
Monday, 29 November 2010	Thursday, 2 December 2010	Friday, 3 December 2010
Monday, 6 December 2010	Thursday, 9 December 2010	Friday, 10 December 2010
Friday, 10 December 2010	Thursday, 16 December 2010	Friday, 17 December 2010

Course and university policies

General Expectations

You are not on your own. You can expect your tutor to take an active interest in the course and in your work.

If you have questions about any aspect of the course, do not hesitate to ask your tutor.

Your tutor has consultation hours, which are posted on his door and on the D2L site for this course. (If you cannot meet with your tutor during consultation hours, you may make an appointment at a mutually convenient time.)

Your tutor expects you to:

- Read the syllabus and all handouts and therefore be aware of policies, homework, and due dates.
- Check D2L and your Quest e-mail account frequently; changes to the syllabus and to assignments will be posted there.
- Attend every class.
- Arrive on time.
- Be prepared.
- Make use of the tutor's office hours.
- Obtain notes and handouts in the event of an absence.
- Turn in assignments at the beginning of class on the due date given in the syllabus.

Please:

- Be courteous.
- Turn off your cell phone before class.
- Help keep the classroom neat and tidy.

Please do not:

- Bring food into the classroom. (Beverages are ok.)
- Use laptops, iPads, electronic tablets, netbooks, smart phones, stupid phones, Wii controllers, Gameboys, or other devices in class unless specifically authorized to do so by the tutor. (If you have a special need, please discuss this with the tutor.)

Special needs

If you have a disability for which you seek accommodation, please let the tutor know.

Absences

There are—infrequently—valid reasons to miss class: illness, family emergencies, war, famine, pestilence, and so forth. If you have a really good reason for missing class, your case will be stronger if you notify your tutor *before* you miss class. (Please be forewarned:

unexcused absences may lead to a failing grade for the course.) You are in any event responsible for obtaining notes, handouts, and assignments.

Academic Integrity

As the Quest University Calendar notes, "Quest is committed to the principle of academic integrity, itself grounded in the fundamental values of honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility in all academic work." (Quest University Calendar, p. 17.) We depend on the honesty and responsibility of all of our members — scholars and teachers alike.

In keeping with the Honour Principle, you will do your own work, and you will conscientiously and meticulously credit sources.

Citing sources is not optional in academic work — it is a fundamental principle. As you should know, plagiarism is, broadly speaking, passing off someone else work or ideas as your own, failing to properly identify and credit the source of material you submit, or using cited material improperly. Please be aware that failure to observe the rules of citation will result in charges of plagiarism or academic dishonesty.

Charges of plagiarism or of academic dishonesty are not taken lightly, and may have dire consequences: failure on the assignment, failure of the course, and expulsion from the university. To avoid this sort of unpleasantness, please be sure to read "University Policies: Quest Honour Principle and Protocol" on page 17 of the University Calendar.

If you have questions about citation, crediting sources, or anything else relating to academic integrity, please ask *before* you turn in the work. (Information about plagiarism can also be obtained from the Learning Commons.)

If the *principle* of citation is the same across academic disciplines, the *particular format* of citation varies from discipline to discipline, and even within disciplines. Your tutor will discuss citation formats and principles with you in class.

Fate and Virtue Class Schedule: November 2010

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24 Introduction Syllabus Book of Job (in-class)	25 The *Iliad* Books I-VI	26 The *Iliad* Books VII-XII **COMMUNITY DAY** **Note exceptional meeting time: 9:00-10:30 am**	27
28	29 The *Illiad* Books XIII-XVIII	30 The *Illiad* Books XIX-XIV	December 1 Herodotus. *Herodotus: The Histories*. 3-45, 116-119, 188-193, 466-488.	December 2 Thucydides. *The Landmark Thucydides*. Selection of texts to be determined. Rough drafts due at the beginning of class.	December 3 Thucydides. *The Landmark Thucydides*. Selection of texts to be determined. Papers due 5 pm.	December 4

Fate and Virtue Class Schedule: December 2010

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
November 28	November 29 The *Illiad* Books XIII-XVIII	November 30 The *Illiad* Books XIX-XIV	1 Herodotus. *Herodotus: The Histories*. 3-45, 116-119, 188-193, 466-488.	2 Thucydides. *The Landmark Thucydides*. Selection of texts to be determined. Rough drafts due at the beginning of class.	3 Thucydides. *The Landmark Thucydides*. Selection of texts to be determined. Papers due 5 pm.	4
5	6 Homer. *Odyssey*. 249-270. (In course reader.) Review the readings we have done so far.	7 Plato - *Euthyphro*	8 Plato - *Apology*, *Crito*	9 Plato – *Meno* Rough drafts due at the beginning of class.	10 Plato – *Phaedo* Papers due 5 pm.	11
12	13 Aristotle – *Nicomachean Ethics*, Books I, II	14 Aristotle – *Nicomachean Ethics*, Books III, VI	15 Aristotle – *Nicomachean Ethics*, Books VII, X	16 Aristotle – *Nicomachean Ethics*, Books VIII, IX Rough drafts due at the beginning of class.	17 In-class: Aristophanes - *Lysistrata* Papers due 5 pm.	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	