

READING THE CLASSICS

HIST0020-301, FALL 2024

T, 1:45-4:40

Prof. Antonio Feros
Office: 308B College Hall
E-mail: aferos@sas.upenn.edu
Office Hours:



Description of the Course

In this seminar, we will study the early roots of Western culture -the Biblical, Greek, and Roman traditions- and how sixteenth- to eighteenth-century European authors reproduced, rethought, and reshaped these early traditions. Instead of reading and discussing the required texts according to the date when they were written, in this seminar, we will focus our attention on a few themes that were central concerns to those living in different historical periods and that continue to influence modern ways of thinking and acting in Western societies:

- Conceptions of God and place of religion in society
- Nature of power and authority, and individual's rights and duties
- Good, evil, and ethical philosophy
- Views on women, their nature, and roles in society
- Ethnography and the perception of other cultures and societies

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

- 1) to attend and actively participate in classes
- 2) to do the weekly readings, write concise response papers for each week
- 3) a 12-15 pages final essay

EVALUATION METHOD:

Final grades for the course:

- 1) attendance, participation and response papers (50%)
- 2) final paper (50%)

Guide for Response Papers

TOPICS AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

August 27: Introduction to the Course

September 3: On Origins: Genesis & Exodus

September 10: On Community: Aristotle's Politics (Selections)

September 17: On Law, Society, and the Individual: Plato's Apology

September 24: On Women, War and Society: Sophocles' Antigone

October 1: The Invention of Realpolitick: Machiavelli's The Prince

October 8: Reading Shakespeare in 17TH and 20st Centuries: Othello and Hamlet

October 15: New Worlds, New Peoples: Sepulveda, Las Casas, Montaigne

October 22: On Women: Christine De Pizan, Marie de Gournay, & Maria de Zayas

October 29: The language of Toleration: John Locke

November 5: The Language of Rights

November 12: On Democracy: Alexis de Tocqueville

November 19: Individual meetings with instructor

November 26: Meeting the Librarians

December 3: Presentation Papers

FINAL PAPER: TBA