

Art, Nature & Knowledge: Pico to Tagore



HUMN 150 • Section 01 • CRN: 50359 • Comparative Humanities
Spring 2012 • TR 11:00–11:52 pm (COLE 118) & W 7:00–8:52 pm (OLRY 232)
Dr. James Mark Shields • #577-1336 • james.shields@bucknell.edu
Office hours: W 10:00–12:00, or by appointment • Marts 3C

This course surveys the most significant intellectual, political and artistic trends from the Renaissance through the beginnings of “modernity” in the late nineteenth century. While our focus will be primarily on the “West,” we will also discuss parallel works and movements representing south and east Asia. We will examine how concepts like “the Renaissance,” “the Reformation,” “the Scientific Revolution,” and “the Enlightenment” came into being and the ways in which they represent (or misrepresent) the history of this period. Along the way, we will examine how continuities and discontinuities in Western thought have been established and continue our exploration of how (or if) this intellectual heritage resonates in the present.

The primary objective of the course is to allow students to engage receptively and critically with various key texts and works of art from the period under consideration. You will be exposed to roughly twenty historically significant “works” (philosophical, religious, political, artistic and scientific treatises, as well as novels, poetry and paintings), with which you will be required to engage on a critical and interpretive level. This is an *interactive* course; you will be asked to respond and engage with the course material, and with the ideas and opinions of the instructor and other students—though, it is hoped, always in a civil and polite fashion. Evaluation for the course will be based largely on the demonstration of both oral and written critical engagement with course material.

Readings:

PDFs on Moodle:

- M01: Pico della Mirandola, “On the Dignity of Man”
- M02: Niccolò Machiavelli, extracts from *Discourses on Livy*
- M03: Martin Luther, “Letter to the Christian Nobility” & “Temporal Authority”
- M04: Wang Yangming, “A Record for Practice”
- M05: Thomas Hobbes, extracts from *Leviathan*
- M06: Isaac Newton, extracts from the *Principia Mathematica*
- M07: David Hume, “Abstract” from *A Treatise on Human Nature*
- M08: Watanabe Toshio, “The Western Image of Japanese Art in the Late Edo Period”
- M09: Modern Art (selections from Baudelaire, Buchon, Denys)
- M10: Chikamatsu Monzaemon, *The Love Suicides at Amijima*
- M11: Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*
- M12: Charles Darwin, extracts from *The Origin of Species* and *The Descent of Man*
- M13: Frederick Douglass, extracts from *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*

Books (available in the bookstore):

- B01: Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, trans. Mansfield (Chicago)
- B02: Galileo Galilei, *The Essential Galileo*, ed. and trans. Finocchiaro (Hackett)
- B03: René Descartes, *The Discourse on Method and Meditations on First Philosophy*, trans. Cress (Hackett)
- B04: Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, trans. Pike (Modern Library)
- B05: Mary Wollstonecraft, *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, ed. Poston (Norton)
- B06: Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, ed. Phil Gasper (Haymarket)
- B07: Rabindranath Tagore, *The Home and the World*, trans. S. Tagore (Penguin)

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

1. ATTENDANCE

Attendance is mandatory. Since this course requires significant student interaction and discussion, it is absolutely necessary for you to attend each and every class. Only sickness with a note is considered a valid excuse. Each absence without excuse will result in a 2-point deduction from the participation grade. Being late without an excuse will count as half an absence, thus a 1-point deduction. Five absences without a note will result in automatic failure.

2. PARTICIPATION

20%

Class participation, including discussion of readings and questions posed in class and on Moodle, is a requirement. Participation is a matter of quality not quantity. You do not have to speak every class, but rather show that you have done the readings and are willing and able to engage, in a thoughtful way, with the topics under discussion. Good questions are also an important aspect of participation.

3. ENGAGEMENT PIECES (EPs)

10% x 3= 30%

A large part of this course will be devoted to writing, understood as a *process* rather than simply a *means* of communication. In order to achieve this, we will be employing methods of *exploratory* writing, i.e., writing that is itself part of the process of developing one's thoughts and arguments. Each student will be required to write a total of three 1500-word "engagement pieces," in response to a major issue or question raised in the lectures or the readings. These pieces will take a variety of forms, and each will have its own specific requirements. Generally, the EPs will be graded in terms of the student's ability to critically engage with a specific text, issue or question (note: critically does not mean "negatively"). Any opinion or idea is valid, providing you can back it up evidentially (or, failing that, rhetorically). You will have the opportunity to hand in drafts of your work, and will receive written and oral feedback. As the term progresses, evaluation of the EPs will become more demanding.

4. READING QUESTIONS (RQs)

15%

For each and every reading, all students will be asked to submit TWO questions for discussion (one *intensive* and one *extensive*) on the Moodle page (instructions will be provided in class). Questions must be submitted by **midnight** on the evening before the class in which the reading will be discussed. The instructor will choose the best questions and we will use these as a basis for class discussion. At the end of the term, each student will be evaluated on the overall quality of their questions.

5. REVIEW EXERCISE

10%

A brief writing assignment in which you compose questions about each of the texts in the course for use at the oral examinations

6. ORAL FINAL EXAM

25%

A 15 minute oral exam on the semester's material, to be held in the final exam period. Those students wishing to major in comparative humanities or to enter the Humanistic Scholars' Program will be examined on HUMN 098/128 material as well for the comprehensive exam part of the program.

CONTRACTUAL OBLIGATIONS (the fine print):

- All written work is to be submitted electronically as an MS Word file with a ".doc" or ".docx" suffix and your last name in the filename; e.g., Smith-EP1(d) ['d' for draft; 'f' for final version].
- Note taking on laptops is NOT permitted. Cell phones are to be turned off BEFORE EACH CLASS.
- All late assignments will be penalized at a rate of one grade unit per day (i.e. a B becomes a B- and so forth). Technological excuses for lateness ("My printer cartridge ran out . . ."; "My roommate borrowed my laptop for the weekend . . ."; "My dog ate my hard drive . . ." etc.) will *not* be accepted, so please don't try them.

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SCHEDULE OF TOPICS & READINGS

I. (Re)Birth Pangs: Early Modernity

Wk 1	01/16–01/17	Ancient and Modern; East and West	M1–Pico
Wk 2	01/22–01/24*	Knowledge & Power: The Limits of Learning	B1– <i>Prince</i>
	W 01/23	LECTURE: Prof. John Hunter (Comp Humanities)	
Wk 3	01/29–01/31 [§]	The German Reformation	M2–Luther
	W 01/30	LECTURE: Prof. Jay Goodale (History)	

II. 17th & 18th-Century Transformations

Wk 4	02/05–02/07 [†]	Hearing Different Harmonies	M3–Galileo
	W 02/06	LECTURE: Prof. Matthew Slater (Philosophy)	
Wk 5	02/12–02/14*	The End of Tradition	B2– <i>Meditations</i>
	W 02/13	LECTURE: Prof. Peter Groff (Philosophy)	M4–Wang
Wk 6	02/19–02/21 [§]	A Comedy of Manners	B3–Molière
	W 02/20	LECTURE: Prof. Juliette Dade (French)	
Wk 7	02/26–02/28 [†]	The New Law of Nature	M5–Newton
	W 02/27	LECTURE: Prof. Tom Solomon (Physics)	M6–Hume
Wk 8	03/05–03/07*	Of Love and Dying	M7–Chikamatsu
	W 03/06	LECTURE: Prof. Harold Schweitzer (English)	B4– <i>Werther</i>
Wk 9	03/12–03/14	SPRING BREAK	
Wk 10	03/19–03/21 [§]	Nature, Man and Woman	B5– <i>Discourse</i>
	W 03/20	LECTURE: Prof. Ghislaine McDayter (English)	M8–Wollstonecraft

III. 19th Century Revolutions

Wk 11	03/26–03/28 [†]	Of Monkeys and Men	M9–Darwin
	W 03/27	LECTURE: Prof. Tristan Stayton (Biology)	
Wk 12	04/02–04/04*	All that is Solid Melts into Air	B6– <i>Manifesto</i>
	W 04/03	LECTURE: Prof. John Enyeart (Politics)	
Wk 13	04/09–04/11 [§]	The Pains & Paradoxes of Freedom	M10–Douglass
	W 04/10	LECTURE: Prof. ?? (English?)	
Wk 14	04/16–04/18 [†]	A Postcolonial Model of Freedom	B7– <i>Home & World</i>
	W 04/27	LECTURE: Prof. James Shields (Comp Humanities)	
Wk 15	04/23–04/25	Ways of Seeing: Development of Modern Art	
	W 04/24	LECTURE: Prof. Roger Rothman (Art History)	
Wk 16	04/30	Course Conclusions	

CODE: * = EP ASSIGNED § = EP DRAFT DUE † = EP FINAL DUE

GRADING POLICIES

In grading all written assignments I ask the following questions:

1. Does the paper have a thesis?
2. Is the thesis interesting / relevant to the course?
3. Is the paper free from long quotations / excessive borrowing of ideas?
4. Is the paper reasonably well written (i.e., sentence structure, grammar, spelling)?
5. Is it long enough / not too long?

If the answer to any of the above is 'no', the paper will receive a C grade of some form. If the answer to more than two of the above is 'no', the paper will receive a D grade. If all of the above are answered by 'yes', the following additional questions apply:

6. How thoughtful / original is the paper?
7. How well organized is the paper? Does it have a conclusion?
8. Is the style efficient, not wordy or unclear?
9. Does the writing betray any special elegance?
10. Does the paper go 'beyond' the course material to explore other possibilities?

Depending on the answers to these questions, the paper will receive some form of A or B grade.

Grading for the Oral Exam will be based on your knowledge of the material, as well as your ability to clearly and succinctly respond to significant issues and problems related to the works under discussion.

How to do well in the course? Here are some general tips:

- Sleep 7 hours per night, and eat breakfast; be energetic and enthusiastic, even if it requires espresso;
- Attend every class without exception, or let me know well in advance if you do need to miss a class;
- Read the material prior to each class, and make notes on the reading(s), including questions or points that intrigue, fascinate, confuse or repulse you (or any combination of the four);
- Try to relate the material to other topics discussed in the course;
- Bring your questions and comments to class and be prepared to speak;
- Be willing to engage with others, the instructor and guest lecturers, in a thoughtful and polite fashion;
- Talk about the class outside of class, with others, when you have the chance;
- Write well; and take into account my comments on your drafts; get help if you need it;
- Be nice to me (I like dark chocolate – anything 85% proof or higher).

When it comes down to it, there is absolutely no reason for anybody to get a grade lower than B– in this class. The only way you can get a C, D or F is if you fail to attend and/or do not do the work. Having said that, it is also very difficult to get an 'A' grade (95%+) in this course; to do so, you will need to: a) show consistent excellence in all of your work—both written and oral; and b) go above and beyond the expectations of the course, which may require taking creative risks.

GRADING RUBRIC:	95–100%	=	A	4.00	Near Perfect!
	89–94%	=	A-	3.67	Excellent
	83–88%	=	B+	3.33	Very Good
	77–82%	=	B	3.00	Good
	71–76%	=	B-	2.67	Average
	65–70%	=	C+	2.33	Below Average
	59–64%	=	C	2.00	Barely Acceptable
	53–58%	=	C-	1.50	Not Good
	47–52%	=	D	1.00	Poor
	0–46%	=	F	0.00	Not Acceptable

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ENGAGEMENT PIECE #1

Assigned: *Thursday, February 3 @ 11:45 am*
Draft Due: *Thursday, February 10 @ 5:00 pm*
Final Due: *Thursday, February 17 @ 5:00 pm*
Length: *1500 words, single-spaced, reasonable font-size (11-12)*
Submission: *As Word document, uploaded to Moodle*
Worth: *10% of final grade*

A large part of this course will be devoted to writing, understood as a *process* rather than simply a *means* of communication. In order to achieve this, we will be employing methods of *exploratory* writing, i.e., writing that is itself part of the process of developing one's thoughts and arguments. Each student will be required to write a total of three 1500-word "engagement pieces," in response to a major issue or question raised in the lectures or the readings. These pieces will take a variety of forms, and each will have its own specific requirements. Generally, the EPs will be graded in terms of the student's ability to critically engage with a specific text, issue or question (note: critically does not mean "negatively"). Any opinion or idea is valid, providing you can back it up evidentially (or, failing that, rhetorically). You will have the opportunity to hand in drafts of your work, and will receive written and oral feedback. As the term progresses, evaluation of the EPs will become more demanding.

ASSIGNMENT

In this first assignment, I would like you to reflect critically upon the writings of Machiavelli and Luther by developing an argument related to AT LEAST TWO of the following points: **1) the role of religion (or God) in human affairs; or 2) the concept (and limits) of human 'freedom'; 3) the role (and limits) of the secular state; 4) the meaning of human happiness or fulfilment.** While you may of course make note of differences and points and contrast, the point of this assignment is to have you develop an argument—based on these four texts and the two lectures—about the (perhaps surprising) similarities between Machiavelli and Luther. You may start with some general comments about each author's tone, style, rhetoric, imagination, etc., but be sure to focus in on specific passages to make your points (though do not over-quote). Any and all references can be made in-text (e.g., Luther, "Soldiers," 21). There is no need for a bibliography (or title page). There is no need to use outside sources (in fact this is discouraged). I DO want you to develop an argument or idea. DO NOT simply summarize the readings. Finally, in this and all your EPs, you should feel free to comment personally on the issues, but make sure what you say is a) relevant; b) backed up by evidence, logic, or sound rhetoric.

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ENGAGEMENT PIECE #2

Assigned: Tuesday, February 21 @ 11:45 am
Draft Due: Tuesday, February 28 @ 5:00 pm
Final Due: Tuesday, March 6 @ 5:00 pm
Length: 1500 words, single-spaced, reasonable font-size (11-12)
Submission: As Word document, uploaded to Moodle
Worth: 10% of final grade

A large part of this course will be devoted to writing, understood as a *process* rather than simply a *means* of communication. In order to achieve this, we will be employing methods of *exploratory* writing, i.e., writing that is itself part of the process of developing one's thoughts and arguments. Each student will be required to write a total of three 1500-word "engagement pieces," in response to a major issue or question raised in the lectures or the readings. These pieces will take a variety of forms, and each will have its own specific requirements. Generally, the EPs will be graded in terms of the student's ability to critically engage with a specific text, issue or question (note: critically does not mean "negatively"). Any opinion or idea is valid, providing you can back it up evidentially (or, failing that, rhetorically). You will have the opportunity to hand in drafts of your work, and will receive written and oral feedback. As the term progresses, evaluation of the EPs will become more demanding.

ASSIGNMENT

While your first assignment was an analysis of several texts from the 16th century, this assignment bring us back to the present, as in what's happening *right now*. As you are no doubt aware, since January 2011 numerous countries in the Islamic "Middle East"—Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and now perhaps Syria—have been undergoing a significant shift away from secular autocracy towards... we're not yet sure. What does this have to do with what we are now reading? Like Machiavelli, the influence of Hobbes on modern political discourse, or at least the insights of Hobbes into certain features of that discourse, is profound—even in places you might not expect it. In this assignment, I would like you to **analyse the recent so-called "Arab Spring" in terms of Hobbesian social and political theory, as expressed in *Leviathan*. Specifically, what would Hobbes say about these movements?** Focus your analysis on transcripts of four major speeches given by the respective leaders of Tunisia (Ben Ali), Egypt (Mubarak), Libya (Gaddafi)—all now deposed and or dead—and Syria (Assad, who still clings to power). Carefully consider the language, logic and assumptions of these speeches, and think about how they do or do not conform to Hobbes' theory. You may also draw in Machiavelli or even Luther, but make sure you focus primarily on Hobbes. Any and all references can be made in-text (e.g., L13:1). There is no need for a bibliography (or title page). There is no need to use outside sources (in fact this is strongly discouraged). As always, I DO want you to develop an argument or idea. DO NOT simply summarize the reports. Finally, in this and all your EPs, you should feel free to comment personally on the issues, but make sure what you say is a) relevant; b) backed up by evidence, logic, or sound rhetoric.

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ENGAGEMENT PIECE #3

Assigned: Tuesday, April 3 @ 11:45 am
Draft Due: Tuesday, April 10 @ 5:00 pm
Final Due: Tuesday, April 17 @ 5:00 pm
Length: 1500 words, single-spaced, reasonable font-size (11-12)
Submission: As Word document, uploaded to Moodle
Worth: 10% of final grade

A large part of this course will be devoted to writing, understood as a *process* rather than simply a *means* of communication. In order to achieve this, we will be employing methods of *exploratory* writing, i.e., writing that is itself part of the process of developing one's thoughts and arguments. Each student will be required to write a total of three 1500-word "engagement pieces," in response to a major issue or question raised in the lectures or the readings. These pieces will take a variety of forms, and each will have its own specific requirements. Generally, the EPs will be graded in terms of the student's ability to critically engage with a specific text, issue or question (note: critically does not mean "negatively"). Any opinion or idea is valid, providing you can back it up evidentially (or, failing that, rhetorically). You will have the opportunity to hand in drafts of your work, and will receive written and oral feedback. As the term progresses, evaluation of the EPs will become more demanding.

ASSIGNMENT

For this third and final engagement piece, I am asking you to explore your creative side. I would like you to **compose a dialogue involving AT LEAST THREE (but no more than four) of the following figures: Jihei, Koharu, Werther, Lotte, Rousseau & Wollstonecraft.** The specific topics you discuss are up to you, but try to focus on one or two issues, such as romantic love, suicide, happiness, the passions, the place of women in society, or any other topics that can reasonably connect three or more of these figures. Dialogues work best if there is some disagreement or tension between the people speaking. Their words need to be 'realistic'; i.e., ones that they might 'actually' say. Stick to the dialogue; i.e., avoid setting, descriptions, introductions, and stage directions. As always, the paper should be single-sided, 1500 words in length, and posted here as a Word document named in the following way: Smith-EP3d. First draft is due Tuesday, April 10th (before 5:00 pm). Have fun!

HUMN 150 – ORAL EXAM QUESTIONS

- 1) Both **Pico** and **Luther** discuss the concept of free will and responsibility. Compare and contrast their respective understandings of the role that God and humans themselves play in determining human destiny.
- 2) In *The Prince*, **Machiavelli** personifies Italy as a woman who has been raped by foreigners; he also describes Fortune as a woman that men must overpower sexually in order to succeed. How would Mary **Wollstonecraft** react to Machiavelli's analogies? How could she use these examples from *The Prince* to further her argument about gender equality?
- 3) Discuss the role of fear in the thought of **Machiavelli**, **Luther**, and **Hobbes**.
- 4) **Galileo** seems to invert the authority of the Bible and science. How so? What is the role of religion for Galileo? How does he interpret the Bible?
- 5) **Baudelaire** writes: "Reason has taken up a considerable position; with the other, Sensibility is almost the whole being. But genius nothing more nor less than childhood recovered at will—a childhood now equipped for self-expression with manhood's capacities and a power of analysis which enables it to order the mass of raw material which it has involuntarily accumulated." In what ways does this comment parallel either **Wang's** ethics of self-transformation or **Descartes's** meditations?
- 6) In terms of the two basic drives of love and death an argument could be made the **Hobbesian** state of nature is one based on the basic drive of death, while the **Rousseauian** state of nature is one based on the drive of love. But can either of these states of nature survive with only one of the two basic drives?
- 7) What underlying assumptions about the natural world do **Galileo** and **Newton** share? How would **Hume** criticize these assumptions?
- 8) Considering the essays by **Baudelaire** and the article on Japanese art by **Watanabe**, what are some of the issues addressed in deciding what is art—and modern art specifically?
- 9) Suicide is present in both **Chikamatsu's** *Love Suicides at Amijima* and **Goethe's** *Sorrows of Young Werther*. How do the motives to commit suicide differ in the two works? What does this tell us, if anything, about their respective societies?
- 10) The philosophical writings of **Rousseau** had a profound impact on the ideas of both **Marx** and **Darwin**. Discuss the connections between Rousseau's thought and the work of these formative nineteenth century thinkers. Be specific.
- 11) Both **Luther** and **Marx** were concerned with perceived abuses of power by the people on the top of the secular hierarchy. How did these thinkers propose solving this problem? In what ways were they similar, and what ways did they differ?
- 12) Both the *Communist Manifesto* and the *Autobiography* of Frederick **Douglass** focus on inequality. The *Manifesto*, however, lays out a more structured plan to fix such inequality. Would Douglass have agreed with the *Manifesto's* ideas? Why or why not? What would **Marx and Engels** have to say about Douglass's story and ideas?
- 13) Would **Darwin** agree with the statement that **painting** as a medium has evolved over time in order to portray images that are culturally appealing and relevant to the changing times? Why or why not?
- 14) How would **Wollstonecraft** react to the character of Lotte in **Goethe's** *Sorrows of Young Werther*? How would she react to the character of Bimala in **Tagore's** *Home and the World*? It seems as if most of the struggles in our readings between passion and reason occur within women whereas men are placed in one category or the other. Does this suggest that this is only a problem for females?
- 15) Consider how the audience, to whom writings were addressed, has changed through the texts we have read. Explore the role the intended audience plays on the way an author writes and the limitations that viewership put on various authors. Explain briefly what impact this could have had on the overall work- if the author had to modify their seemingly intended purpose because of the audience- and why the intended audience did or didn't change as history went on. Give two examples.