

# Georgetown University

BLHS-111  
The New Millennium

Summer, 2012  
W 6:00 - 10:35 PM  
Clarendon TBD

## SYLLABUS

Don Ross, Instructor

**Course Description:** This course will be divided into two parts. In keeping with the goal of drawing on all the Core Courses, the first part will be an overview of the intellectual history of the previous four millennia. Thus we will be exploring some of the main ideas stemming from the Ancient Near East (2nd millennium BCE); the Classical Period in China, India, and Greece (1st millennium BCE); the Age of World Religions (1st millennium CE); and the Age of the Science in the West (2nd millennium CE). The second part of the course will consist of student presentations applying the ideas studied in the first half to the present and the future. Regarding the present, students will explore the effects of these ideas on the politics (e.g. human rights, feminism, "animal rights," environmentalism), religion, economics, technology (e.g. genetics, computers), philosophy, historiography, the fine arts, and literature of contemporary America. Regarding the future, students will debate whether human intellectual history suggests the domination of one culture or a synthesis of major cultures, whether that future will exhibit a cyclical or linear pattern, whether we are likely to see a radical break with the past or a continuation of the trends of the past, and whether the next millennium is likely to be progressive or regressive. In all cases, students will be asked to present their ideas as to what such a world would look like.

## OBJECTIVES

For writing assignments, students will be evaluated on the basis of their ability to:

1. Adhere to the grammar and plagiarism rules handed out at the start of the semester.
2. Accurately research targeted topics of interest.
3. Articulate how ideas from the past have affected some aspect of contemporary American culture.
4. Articulate a general philosophy of history.
5. Articulate a theory of the influence of language on human thought.

For the midterm exam, students will be evaluated on the basis of their ability to:

1. Draw a diagram of the Mesopotamian picture of the cosmos.
2. Explain why the ancient Mesopotamians regarded humans as the slaves of the gods.
3. Enumerate the various events comprising Gilgamesh's fruitless quest for immortality.
4. Enumerate the various events in the Gilgamesh Epic pertaining to the life-death theme.
5. Enumerate the various events in the Gilgamesh Epic pertaining to the wild-civilized theme.
6. Contrast the Mesopotamian and Egyptian attitudes toward immortality.
7. Explain the transcendent and immanent aspects of the Re in *The Story of Re*.
8. Explain the difference between the Egyptian concepts of the *ba* and the *ka*.
9. Contrast the concept of the Way (*Tao*) as it appears in Confucius and Lao Tzu.
10. Relate the Confucian concepts of goodness (*jen*), righteousness (*i*), and ritual (*li*).
11. Explain the Confucian doctrine of the mean.
12. Explain the Confucian Golden Rule.
13. Explain what Confucius hoped to achieve by his teaching and how that determined both its content and its audience.
14. Explain the Confucian concept of the rectification of names (*cheng-ming*).
15. Explain the reason for the use of metaphor and paradox in the *Tao Te Ching*.
16. List four characteristics of virtue (*te*) in the *Tao Te Ching*.
17. Enumerate the various arguments for immortality in the *Phaedo*.
18. Explain Plato's view of the scientific method in the *Phaedo* and how the arguments for immortality illustrate that view.
19. Explain Plato's understanding of cause (*aitia*) and soul (*psuchê*).
20. Explain the relations between the various speeches in Plato's *Symposium*.
21. Explain the two principal aspects of *erôs* in the *Symposium*.
22. Explain Lucretius' arguments for the existence of atoms and void.
23. Explain Lucretius' distinction between primary and secondary qualities.
24. Explain Lucretius' theories of minimal parts and the swerve, and their relationship.
25. Explain Lucretius' theory of sensation.
26. Explain Lucretius' hedonistic ethics and its relation to the removal of the fear of the gods and of death.
27. Explain how Lucretius anticipates the theory of evolution.
28. Explain Lucretius' social contract theory.
29. Explain how the *Bhagavad Gita* resolves the question of whether Arjuna should fight.
30. Explain the difference between Sankhya-Yoga and Vedanta.
31. Explain the difference between spirit (*purusha*) and matter (*prakriti*).
32. Explain the difference between harmony (*sattva*), activity (*rajas*), and inertia (*tamas*).
33. Enumerate the four levels of the self (*atman*) in the *Bhagavad Gita*.
34. Explain the Vedanta concept of illusion (*maya*).
35. Explain the concept of devotion (*bhakti*) and why it is superior to the goals of Sankhya and Yoga.
36. Give examples of the attitude of *The Questions of King Milinda* to Vedanta.
37. List the six fields of sensation (*ayatanas*).
38. List the five aggregates (*khandas*), including name (*nama*) and form (*rupa*).

39. Explain the Buddhist concept of reality (*dhamma*) and how it underlies the doctrine of impermanence (*anicca*).
40. Explain how the doctrine of impermanence provides the foundation for Buddhist ethics.
41. Explain each line of Hui-neng's poem in the *Platform Sutra* and how that relates to the difference between the Northern and Southern Schools of Zen Buddhism.
42. Explain the three-bodied Buddha and Hui-neng's interpretation of that doctrine.
43. Enumerate three Taoist concepts in the *Platform Sutra*.
44. Enumerate the three Plotinian hypostases.
45. Explain the difference between emanation (*eklamptsis*) and the return (*epistrophe*) in Plotinus.
46. Explain the difference between sensible matter (*hulê aisthetikê*) and intelligible matter (*hulê noetikê*) in Plotinus.
47. Explain the difference between the lower and higher soul in Plotinus.
48. Enumerate four differences between Plato's and Plotinus' conception of the forms.
49. Explain why the One is unknowable and inexpressible.
50. Explain time and memory (*memoria*) and their relationship in Augustine's *Confessions*.
51. Explain Augustine's theory of allegorical interpretation as presented in the *Confessions*.
52. Give examples of Augustine's allegorical interpretations of "heaven and earth" and of the six days of creation.
53. Reconstruct al-Ghazali's exoteric and esoteric arguments for the existence and nature of God.
54. Explain the relation between the present life and the afterlife, according to al-Ghazali.
55. Explain the difference between absolute and relative space and time in Newton.
56. Enumerate Newton's three laws of motion.
57. Reconstruct Newton's mathematical proof for Copernicanism.
58. Explain Newton's ideas on the relevance of science to theology.
59. Explain why Newton postulated the existence of the ether.
60. Explain the difference between natural selection and sexual selection.
61. List the four factors affecting natural selection according to Darwin.
62. List the four advantages Darwin sees in his theory and how they apply to human origins.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

	<u>Phone</u>	<u>E-mail</u>
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## POLICIES

The instructor will be available by telephone or e-mail any time, day or night.

Papers must include appropriate and specific citations. Papers exhibiting plagiarism will receive a grade of F for the first offense, failure of the course for the second. No specific citation system is required, as long as it is consistently used.

Long papers with more than three spelling/grammatical errors per page will be lowered one grade.

There will be an initial test on the materials on grammar and plagiarism listed at the end of this syllabus. Students will have to retake the test until it is error-free.

Grades will not be recorded for short papers until they are free of grammatical/spelling errors. If papers are not satisfactorily corrected by the end of the semester, they will be lowered one grade.

Grammatical/spelling and plagiarism rules will be defined by *Common Grammatical Errors*, *Webster's Dictionary*, and *What is Plagiarism?*, cited below under References.

Late papers will be lowered one grade.

Make-up exams will be arranged only for emergencies.

Regular class attendance is insisted on. Students who are absent for two classes run the risk of being recommended for involuntary withdrawal.

Tardiness will be counted as a fractional absence.

Students will be held responsible for all material covered in class; absence from class does not absolve a student from this responsibility. Students will also be held responsible for all material in the required readings, whether explicitly covered in class or not.

Laptops will be permitted for viewing on-line assignments and note taking only. If a student is caught using the laptop for any other purpose, that student will not be accorded laptop privileges for the remainder of the semester.

Students who do not complete all the requirements or who are convicted of academic dishonesty will receive a grade of F. Incompletes will be granted only for extreme emergencies.

### **REQUIRED TEXTS**

*The Epic of Gilgamesh*. Trans. N. K. Sandars. Penguin. 014044100X.  
Confucius. *The Analects of Confucius*. Trans. A. Waley. Vintage. 0679722963.  
Lao Tzu. *Tao Te Ching*. Trans. G Feng and J English. Vintage. 0679724346.  
Plato. *Dialogues of Plato*. Trans. B. Jowett. Simon & Schuster. 1439169489.  
Lucretius. *On the Nature of the Universe*. Trans. R. Melville Oxford. 0192817612.  
*The Bhagavad Gita*. Trans. J. Mascaro. Penguin. 0140449183.  
Plotinus. *The Essential Plotinus*. Trans. E. O'Brien. Hackett. 0915144107.  
Augustine. *Confessions*. Trans. H. Chadwick. Oxford. 0199537828.  
Newton. *Principia*. Trans. A. Motte. Prometheus. 0879759801.  
Darwin. *Darwin: The Indelible Stamp*. Running. 0762430516.

### **RECOMMENDED TEXTS**

*Sacred Books of the East: Volume 35. The Questions of King Milinda*. Trans. T. W. Rhys Davids.  
Adamant Media. 1402185928.  
al-Ghazali. *The Alchemy of Happiness*. Trans. C. Field. Dodo. 1406565180.

### **ON-LINE MATERIALS**

*Enuma Elish*. <http://www.theologywebsite.com/etext/enuma/enuma.shtml>.  
*The Epic of Gilgamesh*. <http://www.aina.org/books/eog/eog.htm>  
*The Story of Re*. <http://www.egyptianmyths.net/mythre.htm>  
*Discourse of a Man with His Ba*. <http://www.maat.sofiatopia.org/ba.htm>  
*The Questions of King Milinda*. <http://www.sacred-texts.com/bud/sbe35/index.htm>  
Hui-neng. *Platform Sutra*. <http://zen.thetao.info/read/platform.htm>  
al-Ghazali. *Alchemy of Happiness*. <http://majalla.org/books/2005/The-Alchemy-of-Happiness.pdf>

## CLASS SCHEDULE

### Lectures and Discussions

May 23 Introduction  
Grammar/Plagiarism Test

### The Past

#### Ancient Near East (2nd Millennium BCE)

[unknown]	<i>Enuma Elish</i>	Mesopotamia	on-Line
[unknown]	<i>Epic of Gilgamesh</i>		61 - 117
[unknown]	<i>The Story of Re</i>		on-Line
[unknown]	<i>Discourse of a Man with His Ba</i>	Egypt	on-Line

#### Classical Period (1st Millennium BCE)

May 30	Confucius Lao Tzu	<i>Analects</i> <i>Tao Te Ching</i>	Confucianism Taoism	83 - 233 3 - 83
Jun. 6	Plato	<i>Phaedo</i> <i>Symposium</i>	Platonism	153 - 255 259 - 336
Jun. 13	Lucretius	<i>Nature of the Universe</i>	Epicureanism	3 - 217
Jun. 20	[unknown] [unknown]	<i>Bhagavad Gita</i> <i>Questions of King Milinda I - III *</i>	Hinduism Buddhism	3 - 86 1 - 136 or on-Line

#### Age of World Religions (1st Millennium CE)

Jun. 27	Hui-neng Plotinus	<i>Platform Sutra</i> <i>The Three Primal Hypostases</i> <i>Matter</i> <i>The Descent of the Soul</i> <i>The Intelligence, the Ideas, and Being</i> <i>The Good or the One</i>	Buddhism Neoplatonism	on-line 91 - 104 handout 62 - 70 46 - 57 73 - 88
Jul. 4			Independence Day	
Jul. 11	Augustine al-Ghazali	<i>Confessions X - XIII</i> <i>Alchemy of Happiness I - IV *</i>	Christianity Islam	179 - 305 19 - 48 or on-Line

\* Outside the millennium chronologically, but inside it in spirit.

## Emergence of the West (2nd Millennium CE)

Jul. 18	Newton	<i>Principia</i> Prefaces	Nature	3 - 5
		<i>Principia</i> Definitions		9 - 18
		<i>Principia</i> Laws		19 - 20
		<i>Principia</i> III Hyp. I - Prop. XII		337 - 338
		<i>Principia</i> III General Scholium		439 - 443
	Darwin	<i>Origin of Species</i> III - IV	Life	378 - 415
		<i>Origin of Species</i> XIII		560 - 584
		<i>Descent of Man</i> I		615 - 629
Jul. 25			Review	
			Mid-Term	
			Consultations	

## Term Papers and Presentations

### The New Millennium (3rd Millennium CE)

#### The Present

- Aug. 1 How has the thought of the past affected politics in contemporary America?  
How has the thought of the past affected religion in contemporary America?  
How has the thought of the past affected education in contemporary America?  
How has the thought of the past affected economics in contemporary America?  
How has the thought of the past affected technology in contemporary America?  
How has the thought of the past affected philosophy in contemporary America?  
How has the thought of the past affected historiography in contemporary America?  
How has the thought of the past affected the fine arts in contemporary America?  
How has the thought of the past affected literature in contemporary America?  
How has the thought of the past affected education in contemporary America?

#### The Future

- Aug. 8 Does the history of human thought suggest that we are heading toward the domination of one culture over all others? OR does the history of human thought suggest that we are heading toward a synthesis of cultures? In either case, what will the next millennium be like?  
Does the history of human thought suggest a cyclical view of history (i.e. that history swings between extremes like a pendulum)? OR Does the history of human thought suggest a linear view of history (i.e. that history is progressive, such that one can extrapolate from current trends)? In either case, what will the next millennium be like?  
Does the history of human thought suggest that the thought of the next millennium will radically break with the past? OR Does the history of human thought suggest that the thought of the next millennium will continue the trends of the past? In either case, what will the next millennium be like?  
Does the history of human thought suggest that in the next millennium the human race will progress from its present state? OR Does the history of human thought suggest that in the next millennium the human race will regress from its present state? In either case, what will the next millennium be like?

Aug.15

Final

## GRADING

Grammar Test	(5% of grade)	must be resubmitted until error-free
Plagiarism Test	(5% of grade)	must be resubmitted until error-free
Short Papers/Presentations	(25% of grade)	1 - 2 pages on a question assigned weekly due weekly
Long Papers/Presentations	(25% of grade)	10 - 15 pages on a topic about the present or the future due the day of the presentation
Mid-Term	(20% of grade)	30 short answer questions
Final	(20% of grade)	1 take-home essay question

The grammar and plagiarism tests will be graded on the basis of their adherence to *Common Grammatical Errors*, *Webster's Dictionary*, and *What is Plagiarism?* cited below.

The short and long papers will be graded based on the adequacy, in the instructor's opinion, with which the topic of the paper is covered.

For papers accompanied by presentations, half the grade will be based on content and half on the presentation.

Test and final grades will be curved. That means that numeric averages will be set out on a graph and grades issued on the basis of the resultant groupings: the highest group will be given the highest grade, the second-highest group the second-highest grade, and so forth. Depending on the distribution of groups, however, it is possible that there might be no instances of a given grade.

For final grades, an effort will be made to adhere as closely as is reasonable to the grade distribution recommended by the University: 30% A's, 54% B's, 13% C's, 2% D's, and 1% F's. Note, however, that these are targets only and merely one of the factors considered in determining final grades.

## REFERENCES

<i>Common Grammatical Errors</i>	Handout
<i>Webster's Dictionary</i>	<a href="http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary">http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary</a> .
<i>What is Plagiarism?</i>	<a href="http://gervaseprograms.georgetown.edu/honor/system/53377.html">http://gervaseprograms.georgetown.edu/honor/system/53377.html</a> Look under "Examples of Plagiarism."

## **SYNOPSIS OF ASSIGNMENTS**

Grammar Test	due first class, must be resubmitted until error-free
Plagiarism Test	due first class, must be resubmitted until error-free
Reading Assignments	due weekly (see Class Schedule)
Short Papers/Presentations	due weekly, must be resubmitted until error-free
Midterm	given at the end of the study of the past
Long Papers/Presentations	due after consultations for study of the present and the future
Final	due the first day of final exams (negotiable)

## **DISABILITIES NOTICE**

If you believe you have a disability, then you should contact the Academic Resource Center at 202-687-8354 ([arc@georgetown.edu](mailto:arc@georgetown.edu)) for further information. The Center is located in the Leavey Center, Suite 335. The Academic Resource Center is the campus office responsible for reviewing documentation provided by students with disabilities and for determining reasonable accommodations in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (AGA) and University policies.

## **WRITING HELP**

If you think that you need help with writing, you should contact the Writing Center at <http://writingcenter.georgetown.edu>.

## **GEORGETOWN HONOR SYSTEM**

All students are expected to follow Georgetown's honor code unconditionally. I assume you have read the honor code material located at [www.georgetown.edu/honor](http://www.georgetown.edu/honor), and in particular have read the following documents: *Honor Council Pamphlet*, "What is Plagiarism?", "Sanctioning Guidelines", and "Expedited Sanctioning Process."

Submitting material in fulfillment of the requirements of this course means that you have abided by the Georgetown honor pledge:

*In the pursuit of the high ideals and rigorous standards of academic life, I commit myself to respect and uphold the Georgetown Honor System: To be honest in any academic endeavor, and to conduct myself honorably, as a responsible member of the Georgetown community, as we live and work together.*