Clashes of Cultures: Authority, Conflict and Repression in World History

The course’s primary readings will be read in the context of the course’s theme: “Clashes of Culture.” The working thesis, or operating assumption, of this course is that the body of recorded human history we recognize as “the world of great ideas” is borne of the agonistic struggle between those who represent and enforce the constituted authority of a society and those who are the subjects of that authority. Each of these collective entities represents and inhabits a “culture” of its own. This course will explore the dialectical relationship between the cultures of the individual, the group, and the constituted authority in terms of conflict and repression. I should note that this idea is not new: Marx and Engels do much the same thing in *The Communist Manifesto*, as does Freud in *Civilization and Its Discontent*. The difference in what I am proposing is that we will be applying this paradigm to the production of ideas, the “great ideas” of human civilization, and not to the production of goods and services.

The readings from the textbook will be supplemented with secondary readings that will reflect the ideas or arguments from the primary readings and exemplify the fundamental theme of the course. Many of these secondary readings will cover a period which is often overlooked and woefully under-represented on reading lists, namely Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages.

**Course Texts:**
Supplementary Reading Packet to be provided by instructor.

**Course Requirements:**
1) Complete one Midterm and one Final Examination.
2) Lead one Shared Inquiry Discussion.
3) Write 7 Critical Response Papers.
4) Write one Cultural Review assignment.

**Exams:**
There will be a midterm and a final exam. The exams are not cumulative. The midterm exam will be an in-class, open-book exam, and the final exam will be a “take-home” exam. The format of the exams will be two or three essay questions that require a comprehensive response and the use of the class texts.

**Shared Inquiry Discussion:**
One student will be the designated “Shared-Inquiry Discussion Leader” for each reading. Since Shared-Inquiry Discussion begins with a basic interpretive question, this student
will be responsible for framing, composing, and posing a question on his/her reading to the community. The only criterion I have for the question is that it be a genuine question about the significance or meaning of the selection that continues to be puzzling or challenging even after careful reading. The discussion leader will be responsible for “guiding” the discussion on his/her reading; most often this will mean simply following up on the ideas that are expressed in response to the question, asking further questions about how the responses relate to the original question, and returning to the text itself sufficiently often to ground our discussion in the “ideas” of the text. To facilitate these discussions, the student Discussion Leader should also be prepared to present briefly the author’s life and background and a brief summary of the main thesis of the text. The object of these Shared-Inquiry discussions is to foster a habit of critical questioning and thinking. This approach encourages patience and reflection in the face of complexity and promotes respect for the opinion of others.

Critical Response Papers:
Approximately every week students will hand in a short (2-3 pages) Critical Response Paper (CRP) in which they explore an issue that arises in the primary text. I will provide prompt questions for this assignment in the previous week. The CRPs are not to be simple summaries of the readings; they should be well-reasoned and textually-supported mini-analyses of (i.e., critical responses to) the texts, based on the prompt question. CRPs will be due at the beginning of the class in which they are due.

Cultural Review assignment:
Every student will be required to attend and write a review of an on-campus event (i.e., a play, lecture, presentation, or musical performance). Other off-campus events may come up, but at this time I haven’t determined what those venues might be. This assignment is described more fully in the handout entitled, “Guidelines for Review of Cultural Events.”

Classroom Policies:
Absences:
You are allowed three (3) absences during the semester. Upon the fourth absence, five (5) points will be deducted from your semester total of points. For every absence after the fourth, five (5) additional points will be deducted. If you have five absences before midterm, you should strongly consider dropping the course.

Late Work:
Formal essays written outside class will be accepted only at the beginning of the class session on the day they are due. The scores of essays submitted after that time will be reduced by 25% of the total possible points. Late essays are due within two weeks of the original due date; no essays will be accepted after that two-week period. All other assignments are due at the beginning of the class period. There is no extra credit work.

Plagiarism:
Plagiarism constitutes grounds for failure of the course. Familiarize yourself with Harper College's Academic Honesty Policy, which is found in the Harper College Catalog.
According to Harper's Academic Honesty Policy, "Plagiarism involves the presentation of another person's words, ideas, or work as one's own. It includes but is not limited to copying any material (written or non-written) without proper acknowledgement of its source, and paraphrasing another's work or ideas without proper acknowledgement. . . . Any form of academic dishonesty as defined by the faculty member or department is a serious offense requiring disciplinary measures. Discipline for academic dishonesty involving a specific course shall be first determined by the instructor of the course and may include failure of the specific assignment, project or test or failure of the course" (26).

Grading:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Your Score</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eight Critical Response Papers: 3 pages @ 50 pts each</td>
<td>400</td>
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<tr>
<td>Share-Inquiry Discussion Leader</td>
<td>150</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midterm Exam</td>
<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Review of Cultural Event</td>
<td>50</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Research Project</td>
<td>200</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td>TOTAL POSSIBLE POINTS</td>
<td>1000</td>
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Final Grades are computed by letter, not numerical, grades according to the following equivalents: A= 900-1000 points; B= 800-899 points; C= 700-799 points; D= 600-699 points; F= anything less than 600 points.

Finally, your success in this class is important to me. If you have a disability and may require some accommodations or modification in procedures, class activity, instruction, requirements, etc., please contact me early in the semester so we can discuss and arrange for necessary accommodations and/or modifications with the Center for Students with Disabilities (Building D, Room 119, Extension 6266).

**Weekly Schedule of Assignments**

**Sigla:**

**WI:** Lee A. Jacobus, *A World of Ideas*

**A:** Supplementary Reader

**Week One:**

A. Introduction to course: aims, assumptions, expectations, and procedures. Introductions to each other and books. Go over syllabus and course requirements.

B. In-Class Exercise: “Porphyria’s Lover”
Week Two:
A. Plato, “Allegory of the Cave” (WI)
Pope Gelasius I, “A Letter on Spiritual and Temporal Power” (A)

B. St. Augustine, from City of God (A)
Critical Response Paper 1

Week Three:
A. Ralph Waldo Emerson, “Self-Reliance” (WI)
“Declaration of the Rights of Man” (A)
James Madison, Federalist Paper No. 10 (A)

B. Gregory the Great, “Account of Benedict’s Life” (A)
Plato, “Apology” (A)
Critical Response Paper 2

Week Four:
A. Ruth Benedict, “The Individual and the Pattern of Culture” (WI)
Sigmund Freud, from Civilization and Its Discontent (A)

B. Aldo Leopold, “The Land Ethic” (WI)
Peter Singer, from Animal Liberation (A)
Critical Response Paper 3

Week Five:
A. Francis Fukuyama, “Genetic Engineering” (WI)
Aldous Huxley, from A Brave New World (A)

B. Jeremy Rifkin and Stephen J. Gould selections (A)
Critical Response Paper 4

Week Six:
A. José Ortega y Gasset, “The Greatest Danger, the State” (WI)
Franz Kafka, from The Trial (A)
Submit 3 questions for Midterm Examination

B. Stanley Milgram, from Perils of Obedience (A)
Video excerpts of Milgram’s “Perils of Obedience”
Janice T. Gibson and Mika Haritos-Fatouros, “The Education of a Torturer” (A)
Critical Response Paper 5
Week Seven:
A. John Rawls, “A Theory of Justice” (WI)  
   Martin Luther King, Jr. “Letter from Birmingham Jail” (WI)
B. Carl Becker, “Ideal Democracy” (WI)  
   Thomas Bender, “Academic Knowledge and Political Democracy in the Age of the University” (A)

Week Eight
A. Midterm Examination (In-class, open book)
B. Sophocles, Antigone (A)

Week Nine:
A. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, “The Origin of Civil Society” (WI)  
   Critical Response Paper 6
B. Benito Mussolini, “The Doctrine of Facism” (A)  
   Alejandro Sanz de Santamaria, “Education for Political Life” (A)

Week Ten:
A. Niccolo Machiavelli, from The Prince (WI)  
   Critical Response Paper 7
B. Adolf Hitler, from Mein Kampf (A)  
   Video Triumph of the Will

Week Eleven:
A. Ngugi wa Thi’ongo, “The Language of African Literature” from Decolonising the Mind (A)  
   Christopher L. Miller, “Theories of Africans: The Question of Literary Anthropology” (A)
B. Adam Smith, “Of the Natural Progress of Opulence” (WI)

Week Twelve:
A. Karl Marx, from The Communist Manifesto (WI)  
   Submit Abstract of Final Project
B. Robert B. Reich, “Why the Rich are Getting Richer and the Poor, Poorer” (WI)
Week Thirteen:
A. Marcus Tullius Cicero, “The Defense of Injustice” (WI) __________________
B. Hannah Arendt, “Total Domination” (WI)
   “Port Huron Manifesto” and
   “Black Panther Party Platform” (A) __________________
   Critical Response Paper 8

Week Fourteen:
A. Frederick Douglass, from Narrative of the life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave. (WI) __________________
   Submit 3 questions for Final Examination
B. W.E.B. Dubois, “Of Mr. Booker T. Washington and Others,” from Souls of Black Folks (A) __________________

Week Fifteen:
A. Mary Wollstonecraft, “Pernicious Effects Which Arise from the Unnatural Distinctions Established in Society” (WI) ________________
   Susan Faludi, from Backlash: The Undeclared War Against American Women (A) ________________
B. Claude Levi-Strauss, “Men, Women, and Chiefs” (WI)
   Midge Wilson and Kathy Russell, from Divided Sisters: Bridging the Gap between Black Women and White Women (A) ________________
   Review of Cultural Event due in class

Week Sixteen:
A. Presentation of Research Projects
B. Presentation of Research Projects
   Final Examination due in class