Hono
rs 1392: From Empire to Christ endom

Prof. R. E. Houser

, Philosophy Messenger of Grace and Mercy ("O Gentle and Compassionate One")

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Office Hours: All Day, Every Day

Prof.
T Th 9:35 - 10:50. O'Rourke 101

Goals of Course:
In the opening paragraph of his encyclical on "Faith and Reason" (Fides et Ratio), Pope John Paul II wrote the following:

“Know yourself”

In both East and West, we may trace a journey which has led humanity down the centuries to meet and engage truth more and more deeply. It is a journey which has unfolded -- as it must -- within the horizon of personal self-consciousness: the more human beings know reality and the world, the more they know themselves in their uniqueness, with the question of the meaning of things and of their very existence becoming ever more pressing. This is why all that is the object of our knowledge becomes a part of our life. The admonition Know thyself was carved on the temple portal at Delphi, as testimony to a basic truth to be adopted as a minimal norm by
those who seek to set themselves apart from the rest of creation as “human beings,” that is, as those who “know themselves.”

“Moreover, a cursory glance at ancient history shows clearly how in different parts of the world, with their different cultures, there arise at the same time the fundamental questions which pervade human life: Who am I? Where have I come from and where am I going? Why is there evil? What is there after this life? These are questions which we find in the sacred writings of Israel, as also in the Veda and the Avesta; we find them in the writings of Confucius and Lao-Tze, and in the preaching of Tirthankara and Buddha; they appear in the poetry of Homer and in the tragedies of Euripides and Sophocles, as they do in the philosophical writings of Plato and Aristotle. They are questions which have their common source in the quest for meaning which has always compelled the human heart. In fact, the answer given to these questions decides the direction which people seek to give to their lives.”

The goal of this course, as with the University of St. Thomas as a whole, is to increase in our students the skills needed for this journey of self-discovery and self-knowledge. (The motto of the University, after all, is Crescamus in Christo: "Let us increase in Christ.") We your instructors believe that, as the Pope suggests, asking the fundamental questions constitutes the basic condition for living a truly human life, that this journey towards self-understanding is the key to human wisdom and human flourishing. If we are to become truly wise and fulfill the capacities inherent in our humanity, therefore, we must never cease to ask these fundamental questions that have always compelled the human heart, questions such as: Who am I? Where have I come from? Where am I going? What is the nature and destiny of the human person? What about free will, suffering, and death? And given all this, what is the meaning and purpose of human life?

The way we will be pursing that inquire in this class is by reading and reflecting on certain key texts from the Western intellectual tradition. With all due respect to the course instructors (however good or bad they may be), in the final analysis, one can have no better guides on one's journey than truly great thinkers and writers such as Cicero, Augustine, Bernard of Clairvaux, and Aquinas. Each of the works you will be reading this semester have inspired the lives and actions of thousands upon thousands of men and women over the centuries, each of whose journey was much like your own. Your own personal journey will of course be unique in its own ways. But that doesn't mean the wisdom of others, especially the wisdom of the some of the greatest thinkers in history, need be completely alien to you. Indeed, quite the contrary, you should welcome the chance to test your self-understanding against some of the best thinkers and writers history has to offer. You have nothing to lose but the chains of ignorance and small-mindedness. And perhaps a little sleep.

Note About Class Discussion:

There are many different ways to run a class discussion. One way would be to let the students "share" their thoughts with one another for an hour, unbridled either by instructors or indeed by any particularly accurate knowledge of the text. This will not be our practice in this class. There is plenty of time for such discussions outside of class.
Another way of running a class discussion -- a much better way -- is to throw out a controversial topic or idea to the class, much as an animal trainer throws a piece of raw meat to the lions, and let the students take their swipes at it. Although the results may sometimes be interesting, this also will not generally be our practice in this class.

Our way of proceeding -- although it will differ somewhat from instructor to instructor -- is much more dialectical. We both want to be sure of two things: first, that you have read and understood the assigned text; and second, that you can think about the text critically. Thus, rather than merely "throwing out" an idea and letting the students bat it around for a while, we tend to proceed by means of questions and answers. Sometimes our questions will merely be about what the text says, such as "What does Cicero say about the law?" or "What did Vibia Perpetu see in her vision before she was martyred?" But we will also be asking you to think about different issues raised by the text, such as "Is Cicero right about the law?" or "What does Vibia Perpetua's vision mean? Should she believe it?" Things of that sort. And once you've answered a question or made a point, we'll probably ask you to consider further what you've just said. So, for example, if you say, "I think the gods are unfair to Aeneas" (which is an entirely defensible claim, by the way), you can expect the next question to be something like: "What do you mean by 'fair'?" Or if you suggest that St. Francis's ideal of poverty is "just too extreme" (a not-uncommon reaction), the next questions will be: "Why? 'Too extreme' for what reason?"

Accordingly, there are two fundamental rules that should guide your conduct during discussions:
(A) You must first try to understand why the author is saying what he is saying and then express his or her position fairly.
(B) And second, you must never say anything in class that you don't really believe to be true.

So, for example, if we ask whether Aeneas ought to have killed his enemy Turnus, your task is:
(A) To try to understand as clearly as you can what Virgil was trying to express, but also
(B) To be very clear about what you think is actually true and why.

There may be times, of course, when you can't remember certain details from the reading. Learning to read with comprehension is a skill, like any other skill, and it takes practice to get better at it. Don't get discouraged, especially if at first you're not doing well on the Reading Quizzes. If you work at it, you can get better. But even if you can't remember particular details from the text, we will probably still ask you to think about the issues involved. If you're not interested in reading and understanding great books and learning how to think and talk about them seriously, then you want another class. We can't make it much clearer than that. If you don't want this sort of class, drop it now and save everybody involved a lot of misery.

Let me be clear about this, though: You don't have to like all the books. You don't have to agree with all the books (which would be impossible, since many of them take up contrary positions). Nor do you have to agree with the instructors about the books (which would also
be impossible, since the two instructors disagree frequently and take up contrary positions). What you are required to do is to read them, make every effort to understand them, and then be willing to put your ideas to the test in the give-and-take of rational dialogue. Thus we'll be expecting the students to show up to class having read the text and prepared to discuss the material. There will, in addition, be absolutely no whining about the work load allowed during the semester. There will be time enough to thank us (or vilify us) after the semester is over.

Requirements:

In-class tests = 40%.
(a) Midterm Exam (20%)
(b) Final Exam (20%)

Papers = 40%
(a) Trial of Aeneas (10%): Oral Presentation (5%), Paper (5%)
(b) Augustine Paper (10%)
(b) Executive Summaries (20%): We'll drop the four lowest scores before figuring your final average.

Class Participation and Quizzes = 20%
(a) Weekly Historical Quizzes (10%): We'll drop the lowest four scores before figuring your final average.
(b) Class attendance and participation (10%)

Book List:

Beowulf, tr. Seamus Heaney (Norton: 2000) 978 0 393 32097 8
Joinville and Villehardouin: Chronicles of the Crusades, tr. M.R.B. Shaw (Penguin: 1963) 978 0 140 44124 6
Song of Roland, tr. Glyn Burgess (Penguin: 1990) 978 0 140 44532 9

Schedule of Class Meetings and Reading Assignments:

Tu 13 Jan    Introduction to the Course
            Rome:  How it rose to prominence
            Rome:  What it became
Th 15 Jan  Roman Republic: Rome Readings I (H)
  Ancient Rome, Lecture 7: Beginning of the Republic
  Ancient Rome, Lecture 8: The Struggle of the Orders

Tu 20 Jan  End of the Roman Republic: Rome Readings II (S)
  Ancient Rome, Lecture 19: The Pressures of Empire
  Ancient Rome, Lecture 20: The Gracchi Brothers

Th 22 Jan  Cicero, *De Officiis* (H)
  Ancient Rome, Lecture 26: Pompey and Caesar
  Ancient Rome, Lecture 27: The Domination of Caesar

Tu 27 Jan  Virgil, *Aeneid*, Bks. 1, 2, 4, and 5 (S)

Th 29 Jan  Virgil, *Aeneid*, Bks. 6, 7, 10, and 12 (S)

Tu 3 Feb  Imperial Rome: Rome Readings III (H)
  Ancient Rome, Lecture 30: The Second Triumvirate
  Ancient Rome, Lecture 31: Octavian Emerges Supreme

Th 5 Feb  Acts of the Apostles (begin, however, with the final two chapters of the Gospel of Luke) (S)
  "St. Paul" by Jacques Maritain

Sat 7 Feb  Oral presentations: The Trial of Aeneas

Tu 10 Feb  Martyrs (H)
  *Pliny-Trajan Correspondence*
  Martyrdom of Ss. Perpetua and Felicity
  Ignatius, *Letter to the Romans*
  "Witnesses of the Passion," by Kenneth Whitehead
  Ancient Rome, Lecture 36: The Third-Century Crisis
  Ancient Rome, Lecture 46: The Restoration of Order

Th 12 Feb  Classical Philosophy and Early Christian Thought 1: A Wary First Encounter (S)
  Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*
  Justin Martyr, *Hortatory Address to the Greeks*
  Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* (selections)
  Basil of Caesarea, *Address to Young Men on the Reading of Greek Literature*
  Pope John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, Chapter IV
  Ancient Rome, Lecture 44: Roman Paganism
  Late Antiquity, Lecture 17: The Christianization of the Roman World

Tu 17 Feb  Classical Philosophy and Early Christian Thought 2: Philosophy, the Handmaid of Theology (S)
  Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* (selections)
  Clement of Alexandria, *The Stromata* (selections)
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<th>Date</th>
<th>Lecture Topic</th>
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<tr>
<td>Th 19 Feb</td>
<td>Classical Philosophy and Early Christian Thought 3: Two Wings on Which the</td>
<td>Athanasius, <em>On the Incarnation</em></td>
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<td>Mind Rises (S)</td>
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<td>Tu 24 Feb</td>
<td>Ambrose, <em>Letters</em> (H)</td>
<td>Symmachus's letter and Ambrose's reply</td>
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<td>Ambrose, <em>Letters</em> 17, 18, 20, 40, 41, 51</td>
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<td>Th 26 Feb</td>
<td>Augustine, <em>Confessions</em>, bks. 1-4 (H)</td>
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<td>Tu 3 Mar</td>
<td>Augustine, <em>Confessions</em>, bks. 5-6 (H)</td>
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<td>Th 5 Mar</td>
<td>Augustine, <em>Confessions</em>, Bks. 7-9 (H)</td>
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<td>Tu 10 Mar</td>
<td><strong>Spring Break</strong></td>
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<td>Th 12 Mar</td>
<td><strong>Spring Break</strong></td>
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<td>Tu 17 Mar</td>
<td><strong>Mid-Term Exam</strong></td>
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<td>Tu 24 Mar</td>
<td><em>The Song of Roland</em> (H)</td>
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<td>Th 26 Mar</td>
<td><em>Beowulf</em> (S)</td>
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<td>Tu 31 Mar</td>
<td>Joinville, <em>Life of St. Louis</em>; Reading on the Crusades (H)</td>
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<td>Th 2 Apr</td>
<td><strong>Easter Break</strong></td>
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<td>Tu 7 Apr</td>
<td>Bernard of Clairvaux, <em>The Steps of Humility and Pride</em> (S)</td>
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<td>Th 9 Apr</td>
<td>Abelard, <em>The History of My Misfortunes</em> (H)</td>
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<td>Tu 14 Apr</td>
<td>Francis of Assisi, &quot;Earlier Rule (<em>Regula non bullata</em>),&quot; &quot;Canticle of Creatures&quot;</td>
<td>(History Lecture: From Monasticism to the Friars) (H)</td>
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<td>Th 16 Apr</td>
<td>Bonaventure, <em>On the Reduction of the Arts to Theology</em> (H)</td>
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<td>Tu 21 Apr</td>
<td>Thomas Aquinas, <em>Summa of Theology</em>, I-II, Q. 90, 91, 92, and Q. 93 (S)</td>
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<td>Th 23 Apr</td>
<td>Thomas Aquinas, <em>Summa of Theology</em>, I-II, Qq. 98, 99, 100 (selections) (S)</td>
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<td>Tu 28 Apr</td>
<td>Thomas Aquinas, <em>Summa of Theology</em>, I-II, Q. 94; Qq. 95-97 (S)</td>
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Th 30 Apr  SUMMARY (Last Class Day)

Comprehensive Final Exam: