

**BLHS 111 – 01 The New Millennium**

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Tuesdays, 6:00 PM – 9:35 PM, Fall 2016

Berkley Center Conference Room, 3307 M Street NW Suite 200

Georgetown University (SCS)

Credits: 4

**General Course Description:**

This course is taken as the student's final course in the Core in that it draws on all the Core Courses. The class is a hybrid of traditional in-class seminar work and individual research and writing in directed exercises as part of the completion of a major research paper. The class is composed of two parts: 1) a seminar that studies a comprehensive theme drawing together many themes from the other core BALS classes; 2) the development of a significant research and writing project that the student completes, in collaboration with the professor and in dialogue with classmates.

- 1) The comprehensive theme for this version of the course is the question of creativity. Visions of human creativity are moral and political theories at their root. How we think about our skills and creative capacities, and how we cultivate them and to what ends, are primary ways in which we consider and shape how we ought to live. Through a close reading of thinkers, including Homer, Aristotle, Plato, Locke, Arendt, Marx, Thoreau, Pope Leo XII, Heidegger, Paul Tillich, Wendell Berry, Matthew Crawford and others, we will consider many questions about creativity, technology, and the meaning of life. What are humans capable of making and creating? What ought we do with our skills, goals, and capacities? How do capacities to create and make (crafts, tools, technology, things, cultures, homes, art, food, political institutions, ourselves) unlock our potentials? To what ends? What are the demands upon creativity: is there a telos to our making or is it pure convention? What are the limits and dangers to our making? What is the temporal meaning of creating artifacts and tools in a fluctuating world? What are the theological implications? How is politics itself a type of creation? How are creating and self-reliance a mode of politics? How does this set of questions permeate “big issues” of our era? The course will be conducted mostly through discussion and in-depth analysis of the assigned readings, with some background lectures as appropriate. Students should be prepared to participate actively, based on a thoughtful reading of the texts.
- 2) The other significant part of this course will be each student’s work on a significant research and writing project. Over the course of the semester, students will develop an in-depth research topic and draft a substantial research paper on a topic the student chooses. Ideal papers identify a significant problem (whether about an idea, or a geo-political challenge, or a public policy issue, for instance), analyze existing approaches to the issue, and argue for a well-justified approach to or solution for the problem.

**Course Goals**

This course will allow the student to analyze and summarize issues in a broadly synthetic way across the range of topics discussed in the other BALS core courses. Student learning will be documented through in class discussions and the production of a major paper that will show how the student reflects synthetically and analytically on the issues. Successful students will gain knowledge about the theoretical and historical issues of the BALS core and be able to engage in analytical reasoning about the following issues:

- 1) Articulate the diversity of thought about patterns seen across the intellectual, material, and historical material of the past four millennia.
- 2) Describe the basic issues of theories of human creativity, freedom, technological capacity.
- 3) Articulate the challenges faced by humans—both individually and in groups—as they develop new modes of material, intellectual, and social life.
- 4) Articulate the challenges to human life (especially economics, religions, and moral values) under past and present processes of globalization.
- 5) Understand and describe the new modes of human freedom, manifest in transformed moral, social, and political realities, in the modern world.
- 6) Describe the new modes of human knowledge of the self, of nature, and the Divine, analyzing the relation of these to changes in moral, political, and religious thought and institutions.
- 7) Develop a research project about an issue related to these topics and construct a substantial research paper, including all of the appropriate steps of research: choosing topics, problem identification, methodology, thesis development, outline production, and drafting.

### Expectations and Assignments

- You should strive to achieve the **ideals of a liberal arts education**: free and candid exchange of ideas, rigorous critique of claims, and toleration for considering variant positions.
- **Thoughtful reading** of the texts in preparation for the class is expected and essential.
- Students should be prepared to participate actively in each week's seminar discussions.
  - **Participation** is worth 15% of your grade.
    - In the seminar, students are expected to be 'ready' to participate at each moment and to discuss and analyze the arguments of particular texts. I will take note of students who do well, poorly, or are not adequately prepared for class. To receive the full credit for class participation, students do not need to ask brilliant questions or answer questions correctly in all circumstances; rather, the credit will be received when it is clear that a good faith attempt has been made by the student to read and comprehend the material and the student can ask reasonable questions about the material, even if they may on occasion not be perfectly correct in their understanding of a particular case or issue. If it is clear that students did not make a good faith effort to read and understand material, and do not make a good faith effort to participate in class (either in passing when directly asked a question or in never voluntarily contributing on their own), then they will receive reduced or no credit for class participation.
- You may use your **Laptop Computers** in class for note-taking, for looking up relevant items on the web related to class issues, and for referring to related class readings. All other uses of laptops during class time are unacceptable.
- Students must adhere to the principles of conduct set forth in the Georgetown University **Honor System** 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.*
- Any sign of violations, including plagiarism, dishonesty, or cheating will be referred to the Honor Council and your Dean(s).
- Any incident of plagiarism will constitute a failure in the assignment and zero credit for that portion of the grade. More severe sanctions may be administered by the Honor Council.
- **Turnitin.com** Students acknowledge that by taking this course all required papers may be submitted for a Textual Similarity Review to Turnitin.com for the detection of plagiarism. All submitted papers will be added as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers in the future. Use of the Turnitin.com service is subject to the terms of use agreement posted on the Turnitin.com site.
- **Attend the class sessions.** If you have a legitimate excuse, I need to know it (by email). Otherwise, be there. Legitimate excuses include illness, family situation, or other events or responsibilities that may occasionally draw you away from a regular class meeting. To be legitimate, I need to know about it beforehand, or it may be deemed legitimate if I receive a notice from your dean, in the case of more serious issues.
  - Attendance will be recorded at each class.
  - **Excused absences** *do not* yield a grade penalty, although I reserve the right to impose reasonable “make-up” meetings or assignments to ensure that the covered material is satisfactorily understood.
  - You will be penalized for **unexcused absences**. Penalties for unexcused absences are as follows:
    - 1    1 grade down (e.g. a B reduced to a C)
    - 2 or more unexcused absences will constitute a failure to complete the requirements of the course satisfactorily. Any student who misses more than two class sessions, including online sessions and assignments, for any reason may be deemed to have failed the course.
- Complete the **Final Research Paper**, and intermediate steps of its preparation, by the due dates.
  - The goal of the research paper is to allow you to dive deeply into a specific issue from the range of themes, issues, and problems you have addressed across the BALS core and to synthetically and analytically address this specific issue in a way that considers multiple time periods, traditions of culture and thought, and geographic diversity you have been exposed to in the core. The project is individualized and each student will be working on different issues. You may take up an issue previously written about in a course, in greater depth and with a greater range of material researched (e.g. if you wrote about Aquinas’ natural law theory in BLHS 104, you could write about natural law theory in the 20<sup>th</sup> century

- regarding just war theory and how it refers back to, yet transforms, Aquinas' thought).
- During the course of the semester, from the beginning, you will work toward the goal of a final research paper, including the following major steps:
    - NOTE: due dates are subject to change given the pace of the class.
    - **NOTE\*\*\*\*: other, additional, intermediate steps will be due most weeks. I will make these assignments in class, follow-up with a blackboard announcement, and they will be due within a few days of the class; these will be graded pass/fail**
    - Construct a topic proposal by week 2
      - Due Sept. 18
    - construct a refined proposal that identifies a topic and a research problem and a thesis, (the claim you will argue in the paper) worth 5% of your grade
      - Due Sept. 25
    - research relevant secondary and primary sources, including pertinent literature on the topic already in existence and within which you will contextualize your own argument
    - draft an outline and annotated bibliography (in which you identify important sources and how you will utilize them) worth 15% of your grade
      - Due Oct 16
    - write a first draft of a section, part of which will serve as the basis of a peer review and assessment of your paper and argument. The peer review will be worth 15% of your grade.
      - Due (section draft) Nov 6
      - Due (peer review) Nov 13
    - write a first draft of a 2<sup>nd</sup> section
      - Due (section draft) Nov 28
    - complete drafting of a 22-25 page research paper due at the end of the semester. This paper will be worth 50% of your grade.
      - Due December 20 by 5pm
  - More details about the topic of the individual assignments will be discussed in class.
  - Papers, insofar as they need citations, will conform to the citation style outlined by Turabian and/or the Chicago Manual of Style.
  - **Late submissions** will be penalized at a 1 grade step down (e.g. a B reduced to a B-) for every 3 hours the assignment is late.
  - **No Incompletes** will be granted except in exceptional circumstances warranted by a family or medical emergency. Arrangements will be made with the appropriate dean and all work will have to be completed by a date set by the dean.
- **Grades:** The grading scale for the course will be:
    - A 93-100 Excellent work
    - A- 90-92
    - B+ 88-89
    - B 83-87 Good work
    - B- 80-82
    - C+ 78-79

- C 73-77 Average work
- C- 69-72
- D+ 66-68
- D 60-65 Poor work
- F Below 60 Failure to present satisfactory work

- **Recap of Assignments and Grade %**

- Class Participation and reading reviews 25%
- Research paper proposal 5%
- Outline/Bibliography 10%
- Paper Peer Review 10%
- Final Draft 50%

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100%

- **Request for Accommodation** based on a physical, emotional or cognitive disability will be referred to the Academic Resource Center. The center's staff will assess the extent of any disability and recommend appropriate accommodations. If you believe you have a disability, then you should contact the Academic Resource Center at 202-687-8354 (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 (ADA) and University policies.
- **Instructional Continuity** During inclement weather or other emergencies on a day when we are scheduled to meet face-to-face, check the university's Web site or call (202) 687-7669 for information on whether the university is open. If the university is open, this class will meet. If the university is closed, this class will meet through distance means utilizing discussion exchanges and web-based assignments; check your e-mail for a message from me on how we will proceed in that situation. Due dates for written assignments submitted electronically will not be changed due to campus closings. The university recently has acquired the capability to send text messages and recorded messages about emergencies to cell phones and other mobile devices. Sign up on MyAccess.

## Readings

The seminar will involve close textual readings and discussion. Students are expected to attend class with the readings. Some readings will be distributed via email in .pdf format (and may be distributed as well in hard copy format). The following books are available for purchase at the SCS Bookstore:

- Wendell Berry, *The Unsettling of America* (Sierra Club Books: 978-0-87156-877-9)
- PA4025.A2 L38 2011 Homer, *The Iliad*, trans. Richmond Lattimore, (Chicago) 0-226-46940-9
- B385.A5 G55 1999 Plato, *The Symposium*, trans. Walter Hamilton (Penguin) 0-14-044024-0

## Schedule

- Week 1 (Sept 6): Introduction
- Week 2 (Sept 13): *What Meaning as Mortals?* Homer, *Iliad*  
Class discussion of paper topics
- Week 3 (Sept 20) Classtime paper research session at Library
- Week 4 (Sept 27): *Mortal Creators:* Aristotle and Plato  
Classtime peer Exercise on paper topic
- Week 5 (Oct 4): *Creating Political Society on Earth:* Luther *On Temporal Authority*
- Week 6 (Oct 11): *Creating Moral and Political Society,* continued: Hobbes, *Leviathan* and Locke, *2nd Treatise of Government* (online source)
- Week 7 (Oct 18): Classtime peer exercise for Outlines\_
- Week 8 (Oct 25): *Creating Moral and Political Society,* continued: Hobbes, *Leviathan* and Locke, *2nd Treatise of Government* (online source)
- Week 9 (Nov 1): *Creating Legal and Political Society,* continued: American Constitutional Law and Liberties (selections from online sources)
- Week 10 (Nov 8): *Creating a Good Life:* Thoreau and Marx  
Peer review for Outlines
- Week 11 (Nov 15) *Creating a Good Life:* Pope Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum* (online source)
- Week 12 (Nov 22): Paper drafting peer work (class-time exercise)
- Week 13 (Nov 29): *Crafting a Good Life:* Wendell Berry, *The Unsettling of America*  
Paper drafting peer work (class-time exercise)
- Week 14 (Dec 6): *Crafting a Good Life:* Matthew Crawford and Paul Tillich