BLHS 111 – 01 The New Millennium
Professor Michael Kessler, Department of Government and Berkley Center
mjk62@georgetown.edu
Tuesdays, 6:30 PM - 10:05 PM, Spring 2015
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. It 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.

The comprehensive theme for this version of the course is the question of progress—has the march forward of history and ideas, during which humans have seemingly advanced on so many fronts (including technology, notions of rights and law, commerce), been a time of progress or decline?

In the first part of the course, we will examine a few historical moments to try to view this question as various thinkers have done in the past. What are visions of human capability for progress? What are the limits? What are the dangers?

In the second part of the course, we will turn our attention to more recent thinkers and evaluate their arguments for the present and future of humanity. What can we hope for and what ought we do with our skills, goals, and capacities? What are the dangers?

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.

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 millenia.
2) Describe the basic issues of theories of human freedom, progress, 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) Articulate a general understanding about whether human progress is possible.
8) 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, including ‘being called upon’ 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.
    - For full participation credit, one must be adequately prepared. To help direct your preparation, students must complete 8 (eight) write-ups or postings about the readings. They should be the equivalent of a single page single-spaced, posted to blackboard, by noon of the day of class. Students should peruse their fellow classmates’ reflections prior to class. These write-ups should try to explain some aspect of the readings, pose a question provoked by the readings, or challenge some portion of the argument of the readings. They will be graded assignments. One of these must be done for the 2nd class meeting.
• 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, and in particular have read the following documents: Honor Council Pamphlet, “What is Plagiarism?”, “Sanctioning Guidelines”, and “Expedited Sanctioning Process.”
  o 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.*
  o Any sign of violations, including plagiarism, dishonesty, or cheating will be referred to the Honor Council and your Dean(s).
  o 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.

• **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.
  o Attendance will be recorded at each class.
  o **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.
  o 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.
  o 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 20th 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 steps:

- **NOTE:** due dates are subject to change given the pace of the class.
- **NOTE:** other, additional, intermediate steps will be due most weeks, assigned in class and due within a few days of the class.
- Construct a proposal that identifies a topic and a research problem, (for which you will argue toward a proposed solution in the paper) **worth 5% of your grade**
  - **Due Feb 6**
- 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 March 6**
- 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.**
- 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 May 9**

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%**
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)

Schedule

Week 1 (Jan 13): Introduction

Week 2 (Jan 20): Homer, Iliad, continued

Preliminary research on paper topic at library
Week 3 (Jan 27) Homer, *Iliad*, continued
Classtime peer Exercise on paper topic

Week 4 (Feb 3): Plato, *The Symposium*
Class discussion of paper topics (Feb 6 proposals due)

Week 5 (Feb 10): Classtime paper research session at Library

Week 6 (Feb 17): Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Making of Man*; Pico della Mirandola: *De Hominis Dignitate* (On the Dignity of Man) (online sources)
Classtime research Exercise at Library

Week 7 (Feb 24): Luther and Erasmus on Human Freedom (online source)
Classtime peer exercise for Outlines

Week 8 (March 3): Hobbes, *Leviathan* (online source)

Week 10 (March 17): American Constitutional Liberties (selections from online sources)
Peer review for Outlines

Week 11 (March 24): Pope Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum* (online source) (March 6 Outlines due)

Week 12 (March 31): Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*
Paper drafting peer work (class-time exercise)

Week 13 (April 7): Wendell Berry, *The Unsettling of America*
Paper drafting peer work (class-time exercise)

Paper drafting peer work (class-time exercise)

Week 15 (April 21): Michel Foucault, "What is Enlightenment?" (online source)

Final paper due on May 9