Sample Syllabus
SCLA 101-01

Transformative Texts: Critical Thinking & Communication I: Antiquity to Modernity

Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge?
Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?

T.S. Eliot

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Course Description

This is the first course in a two-semester liberal arts sequence, examining texts from antiquity to the birth of the modern era. It is part of the first level of the proposed certificate program, Cornerstone. It is a foundational course based on the premise that great texts – whether essays, legal documents, fiction, drama, historical writing, epistles or epics – provide not only models for intelligent and eloquent written and oral communication, but that they likewise inform us, inspire us, encourage our creative and imaginative capacities, allow us to see the world from different perspectives, and console us in times of adversity. We will examine a series of texts, seeking to understand the contexts in which they were produced, as well as what these texts mean to us today. What do these books tell us about the pains and pleasures of being human; the use and abuse of power; the existence and nature of God; and the power and limits of human reason? What do these texts tell us about ourselves and others? How do they advance our self-understanding? How do they increase our understanding of other people and their perspectives?

The readings below were chosen because they contain the concept of the ‘journey,’ sometimes in the form of the ‘quest,’ or ‘progress,’ or ‘evolution,’ whether physical, mental, or spiritual: through the forest, down the road, over the seas, around the world, across the ages, unto the heavens.

Required Texts
Sophocles, Antigone [441 BC] (Penguin Classics, 2008)

Materials Provided
Poetry packet and other handouts
The Inferno (various versions on DVD)
Hamlet (various versions on DVD)

Our understanding and enjoyment of these texts will be supplemented by extracurricular activities and presentations, such as plays, musical performances, films, galleries, poetry readings, and public lectures.
Learning Outcomes

1. Engage critically with transformative texts drawing on multiple perspectives to reflect on one’s position in the world.
2. Write with clarity, concision, and coherence in a variety of genres.
3. Present and discuss ideas orally with intelligence, eloquence and respect for a variety of audiences.
4. Identify, analyze and evaluate claims through deep reading of a variety of sources such as print, digital and visual.

Attendance at all class meetings is **MANDATORY**. Each class missed will result in the loss of a half-grade.

Rules of the Game:

Never walk into class late. Turn off all gadgets once you enter the classroom. If you use a laptop during class, you may only use a word processing program (absolutely no internet).

Use proper email etiquette (an email should begin with a salutation such as “Dear Professor X;” and end with a proper closing, such as “Sincerely” or “Yours”).

Students who plagiarize any portion of their written assignments will be removed from this course and the incident will be reported to the Dean of Students.

Schedule of Readings and Major Assignments

Week 1-3: *Antigone*. Individual 3-minute presentation (narrative)
Weeks 4-5: *The Inferno*. Essay 1
Weeks 6-8: *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* Individual 5-minute presentation (persuasion)
Week 9-12: *Hamlet* Essay 2
Weeks 13-14: Locke’s *Second Treatise*. Essay 3
Week 15: Group presentations on research techniques

Course Requirements

We will devote our time to reading deeply, discussing the questions and ideas these texts explore, and how to communicate these ideas.

Each student is responsible for two individual oral presentations, a group presentation and three essays. Students will also maintain journals in which they will record class notes and their reactions to the texts (see below).

**Grades will be calculated as follows:**

- Discussion and Attendance 20%
- Daily Journals 20%
- Oral Presentations 30%
- Essays 30%