

Kalliopi Nikolopoulou
Department of Comparative Literature
Office Hours: M W 10:30–11:30 and by appt., 643 Clemens Hall
Tel.: 645–2066 (ext. 1099)

Fall 2005—UGC 111S: World Civilizations M W 12:00–12:50, 104 Knox Hall

Course Description

The principal objective of this course is to introduce us to the rich diversity of human culture around the globe, ranging from the prehistoric paintings of Lascaux to the Middle Ages. Given such an enormous spatio-temporal span and the limitations of a fifteen-week semester, we will have to be selective: we will concentrate on several chronological and geographical areas, starting with the birth of art in the cave and leaping forward to the societies of ancient Mesopotamia, Egypt, and India, Homeric and Classical Greece, Christian Rome, Islam, and late-medieval Europe.

Although we will try to place each of these cultures and epochs within their respective historical contexts, we will focus on some specific overarching themes and questions that remain vital to our contemporary understanding of culture: we will examine the ways in which law becomes the site where the ethical, religious, and philosophical values of a culture converge or contest with each other. In other words, how does each of these civilizations understand the concept of law—not only in its narrow legal, but in its broader moral, sense? How does divinity relate to law, legitimacy, and justice? Is there a separation between divine and human law, should there be one, and what are the consequences of this separation? Is law always just? How do the great epic and tragic heroes of world literature exemplify in their quests this powerful stronghold of the law? This means that our general approach to these cultures will be supplemented with the more nuanced work of close, textual readings—namely, the use of literary methodology to interpret the meanings of both literary and non-literary works. This method of reading will help us see the profoundly comparative nature of any project such as ours, which involves the study of other peoples and other eras: 1) understanding the specifics of a text within its particular cultural tradition is the first step toward establishing commonalities and differences from other contemporary texts and cultures (synchronic comparison); 2) analyzing a text's persistent themes or questions reveals to us connections between the past and our present (diachronic comparison). Thus, the intellectual and ethical aims of a world civilization course involve our becoming ever more open and aware of cultural multiplicity, self-reflexive, and thus also humble, concerning our relative position in the world today as practitioners and interpreters of culture and—why not?—as world citizens. As such, the course will rely less on factual information and more on sharpening your critical and analytical skills of interpretation and comparison.

Required Texts

Benton and DiYanni, *Arts and Culture*, Volume One, Second Edition
Gilgamesh (Penguin)
The Baghavad Gita (Penguin)
Homer, *The Iliad* (trans. Richmond Lattimore)
Sophocles, *Antigone* (trans. Richard Emil Braun)
Dante, *Inferno* (trans. Mark Musa)
Short photocopied excerpts will be passed around as in-class hand-outs

Teaching Assistants

June Kwon (Comparative Literature)

Sol Pelaez (Comparative Literature)

Birger Vanweesenbeck (Comparative Literature)

Since this is a large course, your TAs will be invaluable in your learning process. Get to know them. I encourage you to contact them or me as early as possible with any problems that may arise throughout the course.

Course Requirements

Attendance: Attendance in this course is mandatory. Lectures, recitations, and readings complement rather than repeat each other. You will be evaluated continuously for your performance in ALL these three components of the course, and you will be examined on factual and critical knowledge that draws from all these three components. I am aware that many of you are taking this course just because it is a requirement, that the class is far too large, that you may have different interests. However, enrolling in this course means that you take the responsibility to fulfill your side of this "contract": you are to attend the main lectures as well as your recitations, complete the reading and writing assignments on time, and participate actively in the learning process (ask questions during lecture if you need clarifications, contribute to your recitation discussions, take advantage of office hours, take good notes, be responsible in catching up with material you may have missed, etc.). Make sure that you have contact information for other students in this course, so that you can consult their class notes, catch up on recitation discussion, or receive hand-outs in case of absence. It is your responsibility to obtain and cover missed material. If after covering this material, you still have questions about it, stop by your TA's or my office. Please do not make it a policy to be absent from classes and expect your instructors to be responsible for what you have missed. We are here to explain material, not to make photocopies for every single absence of every single student.

Written Assignments: Throughout the semester you will take 5 quizzes, the lowest of which will be dropped, and 2 tests. The quizzes will be taken during your recitation, while the tests will be during the main class. The mid-term test will cover the first half of the course, while the second test will be taken on the last day of class and will cover the material after the mid-term. Both tests involve a multiple choice/ID component and an essay component. Whereas multiple choice and ID questions check your mastery of important information, essays stress your comparative and interpretive skills. Before each test, I will give more details concerning format and content. Each of your recitation instructors has his/her own style of working with you and assigning you other related work. This work must be completed and will count toward the overall percentage of your recitation grade.

Examination Schedule:

Quiz 1	Week 4
Quiz 2	Week 6
Quiz 3	Week 8
Mid-term Test	Week 9 (October 17)
Quiz 4	Week 12
Quiz 5	Week 13
Second Test	December 7

Grading Percentages

Quizzes: 20% (5% each, one will be dropped)

Tests: 60% (30% each)

Recitation (overall attendance, participation, and other related work): 20%

Course Policies

Attendance: Attendance will be kept regularly in recitation and periodically during lectures. I allow for a maximum of 3 absences (excused or unexcused). The fourth absence in my attendance sheet will cost you half a letter grade. For every added absence after the fourth (whether from the lecture or the recitation) I will subtract another half a grade. Cases of medical emergency involving long hospitalization are of course treated individually.

Make-up policy: There will be **NO make-up tests or quizzes, except in case of medical emergency and upon submission of proof of hospitalization or note from the Dean.** That the alarm did not go off, that the car broke down, or that last night's party kept longer than usual, are not legitimate excuses! Before a test, make sure that you have alternate plans to arrive at your classroom on time, in case your habitual plans fail to get you there. We are all willing to work with serious crises, but prioritizing your problems remains ultimately your responsibility. Please keep in mind that I will not accept "emergencies," unless I deem them to be emergencies. On this point, think also of your peers: every time you make your case into an emergency when it is really not one, you are lessening someone else's chances (and your own) to be given a break when there is a real crisis. The exception ought to stay the exception, not become the rule!

Grade Objections: If for some reason during the semester, a student does not understand/agree with the assignment of a grade, the student should write down concisely his/her objections within 3 days of the return of the assignment and submit it to his/her TA during their conference. The 3-day limit guarantees that the issue is dealt with as early as possible, when the material is still fresh on everyone's mind. Writing down your objections helps you articulate your disagreement cogently, so that your TA can address your concerns effectively. If the conference with your TA does not resolve the issue, your statement will be of help to me in considering your case.

Special Needs: Students with special needs should contact me during the first two weeks of the semester so that appropriate accommodations can be arranged. For further information, contact the Office of Disability Services, 25 Capen Hall, 645-2608.

Scholastic Dishonesty: According to UB's Student Conduct regulations, academic dishonesty refers to cheating, plagiarism, forgery, and related offenses. Cheating includes but is not limited to: use of unauthorized assistance in taking quizzes or tests; dependence on sources beyond those authorized by the instructor; the acquisition, without permission, of tests or other academic material belonging to a UB faculty or staff member. Plagiarism involves the use, by paraphrase or direct quotation, of work other than one's own without full acknowledgement and citation of its authorship. This includes the Internet. Part of what we learn in College is to be responsible scholars, which means that we have to be committed to the ethics of academic research. Academic dishonesty of any kind is unethical, constitutes an institutional offense, and will not be tolerated. Suspected instances of academic dishonesty will be first dealt with informally between the instructor and the student(s) concerned; if informal consultation fails to resolve the issue, or if the problem recurs, the case will be referred formally to the Adjudication Committee.

Course Schedule

- 8/29 **Introduction:** Course objectives and requirements; relevance of World Civilization in the era of globalization.
- 8/31 **Prehistory: The Cave of Lascaux (wall paintings)**
Reading: *Arts and Culture*, pp. 4–8 (Earliest Cultures, Paleolithic, Neolithic)
Some terms: *homo erectus*, *homo sapiens*, Venus of Willendorf, Paleolithic, Neolithic, Bronze Age, cromlech, henge
- 9/5 **Labor Day—No Class**
- 9/7 **History: Periodization; civilization; writing; Ancient Mesopotamia**
Reading: *Arts and Culture*, pp. 8–13 (Mesopotamia: Sumer)
Some terms: cuneiform, hieroglyphic, phonetic, and alphabetic writing, ziggurat, polytheism
- 9/12 **The *lex talionis*: Hammurabi's code of law**
Reading: *Arts and Culture*, p. 13 (Akkad and Babylon); Hammurabi's laws (web link)
Some terms: stele, *lex talionis*, Hammurabi's stele
- 9/14 **The *lex talionis*: Hammurabi's code of law**
- 9/19 ***Gilgamesh*: journeys and quests; the law of fate; gods and heroes**
Reading: *Gilgamesh* (Prologue—Book 3)
Some terms: myth, mythopoesis, epic, epic hero
- 9/21 ***Gilgamesh* (Book 4–Book 7)**
- 9/26 **Judaism and the *lex talionis*: the Hebrew code; Mosaic law and Leviticus; the emergence of monotheism**
Reading: *Arts and Culture*, pp. 205–209 (Judaism); excerpts from Leviticus (hand-out)
Some terms: chosen people, Torah, covenant, monotheism
- 9/28 **Leviticus**
- 10/3 **Ancient Egypt: monumental art; beliefs of immortality**
Reading: *Arts and Culture*, pp. 26–47
Some Terms: Palette of Narmer, stepped pyramid of Zoser, Book of the Dead, *ka*, Sphinx, Queen Hatshepsut, Ramesses II (Ramesses the Great), Akhenaten and Nefertiti (the Amarna period), Amen-Ra versus Aten (the sun-disk), Tutankhamen
- 10/5: **Homeric Greece: the honor code; the Heroic Age; Homer's anticipation of tragedy**
Readings: Richmond Lattimore's introduction to his translation of *The Iliad* (pp. 14–17 and 45–54); *Arts and Culture*, pp. 62–69 (Mycenaean Culture)
Some terms: Heroic Age, geometric style, polis, Peisistratus, epic simile, palace at Mycenae, Heinrich Schliemann

10/17 **Mid-term (NO MAKE-UP TEST!)**

10/19 *The Iliad* (Books 20–24)

10/24 Indian Civilization: Hinduism versus Buddhism; duty and detachment in the *Gita*
Readings: *Arts and Culture*, pp. 278–284 (Hinduism and Buddhism); *The Gita* (Books 1–9)

Some terms: Sanskrit, Vedas, Upanishads, Brahman, dharma, karma, Vishnu, Shiva, Krishna, Hindu caste system, Mahabharata, Siddharta Gautama (Buddha), nirvana, yoga

10/26 *The Gita* (Books 10–18)

10/31 Classical Greece: The invention of theater; tragedy, philosophy, and law

Reading: *Arts and Culture*, pp. 105–112 (The Emergence of Drama–Philosophy)

Some terms: tragedy, Dionysus, chorus, protagonist, Thespis, Aristotle’s definition of tragedy, tragic error, dramatic irony, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle

11/2 *Antigone*

11/7 *Antigone*

11/9 Greek Art: From Archaic to Classical (Comparisons with Egypt and Mesopotamia)

Reading: *Arts and Culture*, pp. 73–76 (The Greek Temple and Archaic Sculpture) and pp. 94–104 (Archaic to Classical, Golden Age, Architecture, Sculpture)

Some terms: column, capital, kouros, kore, Archaic smile, Solon, Pericles, acropolis, Phidias, the Greek architectural orders (Doric, Ionic, Corinthian), Parthenon, Erechtheion, caryatids, *contrapposto*, Praxiteles

11/14 Christianity: The law of grace

Readings: *Art and Culture*, pp. 210–211 (Early Christianity, Early Christian History), pp. 216–218 (The New Testament as Literature); Paul to the Romans (hand-out)

Some terms: Messiah, Jesus Christ, evangelist, Gospel, epistle, Edict of Milan, Council of Nicaea, Nicene Creed

11/16 Islam: The Mosque; Sharia; schisms in juridical interpretation

Reading: *Arts and Culture*, pp. 256–264 (Islamic Civilization, Philosophy, Art and Architecture)

Some terms: Muhammad, Mecca, Medina, hegira, Islam, Quran, Sharia, Ali, Umayyad and Abassid caliphates, Sunni and Shia schism, Sufism, dervish, Jalaloddin Rumi, mosque, mihrab, minaret, Hagia Sophia

11/21 The poetry of Rumi

Reading: *Arts and Culture*, p. 274 (“The Question,” poem by Rumi)

11/23 **Fall Break—No Class**

11/28 Byzantium to Europe: East–West divisions within Europe; the division of Christianity; Crusades

Reading: Arts and Culture, pp. 220–22 (Byzantine Civilization, Golden Age of Constantinople); reread pp. 210–211 as well

Some terms: Constantine the Great, Edict of Milan, Nicene Creed, Byzantium, Justinian and Theodora, Hagia Sophia, Tribonian code, Charlemagne, Crusades, Investiture Controversy, schism

11/30 Late Medieval Europe: Divine justification in Dante's *contrapasso*

Readings: *Arts and Culture*, pp. 415–417 (Dante's *Divine Comedy*); *The Inferno* (Cantos I–IV)

Some terms: *contrapasso*, allegory, Florence, Virgil, *Purgatorio*, *Paradiso*

12/5 *The Inferno* (Cantos XIII, XXIII, XXVIII, Canto XXXIV)

12/7 **Second Test (NO MAKE-UP TEST!)**