Hofstra University Honors College
Culture and Expression 011 - H5 (TR 12:15-1:10) crn# 90685 Monroe 119
Fall 2015

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Office Hours: TR 10:30-11:00a, 2:30-3:50p

The Voice in Ancient and Medieval Cultures: Getting Heard as Self in Society

The use of spoken verbal language to communicate with others distinguishes humankind from its evolutionary predecessors as well as from other species (to some uncertain degree as we learn more about animal languages), and also occupies a central role in the development of community and culture, from the understanding of an individual's identity (in dialogue with one's self), to dialogues with others in family and community, to the articulation of philosophical and religious beliefs and the establishment of institutional structures that organize and link communities. These institutions in turn reflect shared beliefs and rituals, regional interests and topographies (also through the development of separate languages and dialects), family ties, needs and economies, along with shared histories and legacies, as chronicled in song and speech, stories and myths, and metaphysical inquiry or reflection. Voice gets used to identify one's self, to share thoughts, develop plans, persuade others, to entertain and amuse, to court and/or seduce, to plead or protect, threaten or defend, to interrogate and negotiate and ultimately to engage in life as a private and as a public person. This semester will examine how oral culture translates into written culture in the multiple dimensions of human inquiry and interaction that constitute culture and expression.

Our discussions will range from the origins of the human species and language, to works of ancient Greek literature and culture in the oral tradition, both broadly epic and intimately lyrical (Homer and the Song of Songs), to works of 'theological realism' (Dante) and militant protest in the vernacular Middle Ages. In each work the question of voice will provide a point of entry into the discrete and particular issues that define each work in its genre, historical period and society and the position of the vocal individual.

Professors: Bennington, Dardis, Doubleday, Frisina, Limnatis, Singer, Tan, Teehan (SocSci-HUHC 011) Donahue, Kozol, Lledo-Guillem, Levine, Mikics, Rich, Smith, Trasciatti (Hum-HUHC 013)

The Strategy

C&E consists of two related courses in both fall and spring semesters. *HUHC 011* and *HUHC 012* (Social Sciences) have their emphasis on understanding the structures and values of a culture or civilization through the disciplines of History, Sociology, Religion, Anthropology, Psychology, Philosophy, Economics and Geography. *HUHC 013* and *HUHC 014* (Humanities) have their emphasis on artistic expressions of the respective cultures through the disciplines of literary analysis (e.g. English, Classics, Romance and Comparative Literatures), Linguistics, Music, Drama, Dance, Fine Arts, Architecture and Aesthetics. Faculty on both teams develop a reading list and lecture schedule that work in tandem to reinforce students' insights into and understanding of the ancient world through to the Middle Ages, and then in the spring, the modern world since the Renaissance. Twice weekly faculty lectures set the context for student-based discussion sections.

Our discussion sections

Each section of the HUHC Culture and Expression course is distinctive, since for the most part the instructors for the various sections come from different academic disciplines. Although all of us will be reading the same books, and all of us will be meeting two times a week together, each section will have some of the flavor of the academic discipline of its instructor. My discipline is Philosophy.

Philosophy is about the big picture. It asks, in the most general way possible: what is there in the world? how can we know about what there is? how should we live? what can we hope for in this life on earth, and for life after this one?

These kinds of questions don't have easy answers. They may not be even be good questions (compare: how many children did Lady Macbeth have?). Since "the big picture" includes *us*, we who ask and try to answer these questions, philosophy is "meta" (= "above", "after", "about", "higher-level"). That is: it steps back and asks, how are we thinking about this? are these good questions? what methods are, or might be, appropriate for answering these questions? So a lot of philosophy is **thinking about thinking**. It's about trying out answers to these questions: looking for reasons to believe one rather than another, and then (more critically) trying to figure out what makes one reason better than another, and which ones win that race.

Wilfrid Sellars put it this way:

> The aim of philosophy, abstractly formulated, is to understand how things in the broadest possible sense of the term hang together in the broadest possible sense of the term ...To achieve success in philosophy would be, to use a contemporary turn of phrase, to 'know one's way around' ..., not in that unreflective way in which the centipede of the story knew its way around before it faced the question, 'how do I walk?', but in that reflective way which means that no intellectual holds are barred.[1]

In this section of Culture and Expression we'll begin with some of the basic ideas of reasoning: what an argument is, what a valid argument is, what a strong argument is, what a fallacy is. We'll use these tools to think about the works we're reading. There are two basic things we're trying to do:

- Learn the tools. Argument is (arguably) *the* most useful tool for *all* academic writing, and *all* reasoned interaction, inside and outside the university. The first step is to be more self-conscious, and more explicit, about *how* we are thinking about those works: what *kind* of arguments are we using (deductive? explanatory? statistical?) what kinds of standards are appropriate for the kind of argument we're using? how well does this argument stand up according to those standards? What are the powers and limitations of various kinds of logical tool?

- Figure out what are the concepts of voice, linguistic communication, self and society .... These ancient texts understood these concepts, their connections with one another, and their relations with life, meaning and happiness, in distinctive ways. Is their understanding like ours, or different, and what can we learn from them for our own lives?

Texts

In addition to the readings for the whole Culture and Expression class, there are a couple of handouts on philosophy, what it's about and how to do it, and on logic and argumentation for this section, available on Blackboard.

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[1]Sellars, W. (1963). Philosophy and the scientific image of man. In *Science, Perception and Reality*, pages 1–40. Routledge & Kegan Paul, New York.

Requirements

(1) Four short papers (750 words) plus a final project. Each short paper counts for 15% of your grade; the final project counts for 40% of your final grade. There is a handout describing the papers and final project.

(2) You must lead the classroom discussion at least once.

Class structure

Our class meetings will be structured as seminars. Our focus will be on our discussions of the books we are reading and the lectures we are attending together.

Each session we will talk about *the prior* lecture—that is, not the one we just came from, but the one before that. (So for example on Tuesday September 8 we'll talk about Professor Bennington's lecture on Thursday September 3.)

Most of our sections together will be led by one of you. You'll sign up early in the semester to commit to presenting the lecture and reading material for the prior lecture. You will write 2 pages prior to the class, in which you briefly describe what we have read, what the lecturer said about it, and in which you offer a critical commentary on these things. To run the discussion, plan on talking for 5 minutes or so about the lecture and the reading, then ask (roughly) 3 critical questions. "Critical" generally means: what alternative, unexpected perspective can we take on what we're looking at? "The lecturer said that X, but here'a reason to think that X is false" or "We all think that Plato (since he's way dead) must be wrong about X, but here's a reason to think Plato is right!".

Do not read what you have written. Instead, talk to the class and engage their critical curiosity and enthusiasm.

These presentations will not be graded but I will comment on them in writing. (Leading a class discussion on a given text or subject matter is an excellent way to work on a paper.)

For the first few weeks of the semester I will talk fairly regularly about reasoning and argument; my aim here is to be very explicit about what reasoning is, in part to guide our search for reasoning in what we are reading, in part to guide you (and me) in constructing good reasoning about what we are reading.

Reading, writing and argument

Your job is to be disagreeable.

Of course, your job is also to know what we're reading and talking about. Assume that's already done. What are you supposed to do with it?

Being disagreeable doesn't mean being unpleasant, or mean, or cruel. It does mean challenging what you encounter. It means asking why things are they way they are, asking whether there are other, better ways for things to be. It means asking what reasons people have for the things they say and believe, and asking whether they are good reasons. It does mean not letting other people off the hook: not our authors, not your professors, not your fellow students.

- Is what they say based on truths? Question: how do we know what is true? Who is to say? — Answer: you are. Use whatever you know and believe. Be disagreeable with yourself: if you believe it, are your reasons good?

- Does what they say follow from their evidence? Could what they say be wrong, even if the evidence really is what they say it is?

- Is there another way (are there many other ways) to think about what you're seeing? Are they preferable? In some ways rather than others?

Another name for being disagreeable is "critical thinking". You're trying to criticize. You're trying to figure out what's wrong with (some of) the thinking you are encountering. (Question: is there something wrong with it? Answer: there is always something wrong with human reasoning. Don't worry. You'll find something.)

I have put a couple of readings on Blackboard about logic, the science of being disagreeable. I will talk about them in class from time to time.

The result of your disagreeableness will be a collection of critical thoughts about our texts and things we've said about them. Normally they will have the form of an explanation. You'll find something odd or weird or just plain puzzlingly interesting about a text. Try to figure it out. You'll spin out an *interpretation*, a theory of what's going on. Perhaps I'll say something about one of the texts, and you will find it puzzling, and you will think I'm just wrong about it.

Whatever you come up with, you will have reasons for what you think. These reasons shouldn't be purely individual and "subjective". They should be reasons that can persuade anybody willing to think things through with you. (Compare: "The *Odyssey* is a long boring poem and I don't like it" and "The *Odyssey* glorifies unprincipled selfish violence and encourages individuals to ignore their social surroundings.") Feel free to use the word 'I', but just ask yourself whether you're telling your reader about *you* or saying something that your reader is going to agree with (*whoever* your reader is).

Reference and citation Your papers *must* include at least one bibliographic reference, in the form of a footnote or an endnote. I do not have any preferences about the form of the reference. If you are comfortable with some standard reference format (MLA, APA), use that; if you don't have one that you are comfortable with yet, pick one, Google it (or use the Hofstra Library links to citation style guides `http://www.hofstra.edu/Library/library_citation_style.html`), and learn it cold. Suggestion: use/get a good reference management system for your computer.[2] You should also include a reference if you find yourself using or discussing the ideas of others, for instance ideas that have come up in class from me or from your classmates.[3]

If you prepare a separate file for references, I've noticed that it's not unusual for people to *forget* to include this sheet when they turn in their papers. Better, however you manage your references, to have them in the same document as the paper itself.

Policies

- **Disabilities**: If you believe you need accommodations for a disability, please contact **Student Access Services (SAS)** (Student Center 104, SAS@hofstra.edu, 516-463-7075). In accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, qualified individuals with disabilities will not be discriminated against in any programs, or services available at Hofstra University. Individuals with disabilities are entitled to accommodations designed to facilitate full access to all programs and services. SAS is responsible for coordinating disability-related accommodations and will provide students

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[2]Hofstra computer services is enthusiastic about Zotero. EndNote is a very good professional reference manager but expensive. `http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Comparison_of_reference_management_software` describes many alternatives, some of which (for example, JabRef, which can work with Microsoft Word) are open-source—free—software. This *Syllabus* was prepared using LaTeX along with its reference management system, BIBTEX. These are very stable, very solid, very powerful programs; they are available (free) for Windows, Mac OS X, and Linux.

[3]I want to thank James Wilkerson for discussion of ideas about how to organize a syllabus.

with documented disabilities accommodation letters, as appropriate. Since accommodations may require early planning and are not retroactive, please contact SAS as soon as possible. All students are responsible for providing accommodation letters to each instructor and for discussing with him or her the specific accommodations needed and how they can be best implemented in each course.

- **Academic honesty**: Plagiarism is a serious ethical and professional infraction. Hofstra's policy on academic honesty reads: "The academic community assumes that work of any kind [...] is done, entirely, and without assistance, by and only for the individual(s) whose name(s) it bears." Please refer to the "Procedure for Handling Violations of Academic Honesty by Undergraduate Students at Hofstra University" to be found at `http://www.hofstra.edu/PDF/Senate_FPS_11.pdf`, for details about what constitutes plagiarism, and Hofstras procedures for handling violations. Also see the *Hofstra Writer's Guide* for a definition of plagiarism. If you are in any doubt, consult with me.

  If I have reason to believe that any kind of plagiarism whatsoever has occurred I will request a discussion of the work. If plagiarism has occurred, I will ask for the work to be completely rewritten. If rewritten work contains plagiarism, I will award the grade of F **for the course**. If there is plagiarism in the final paper, I will award the grade of F for the course. I will always file an academic dishonesty form with the Dean of Students if I believe that plagiarism has occurred.

- Attendance for our section meetings is required. I will take attendance. If you are not present *when* I take attendance, you will be marked absent that day. If you are absent more than 4 times you will receive the grade of F.

- (I will also take attendance at the start of lecture: if you are in H5, on Tuesday, H6, Thursday. Make sure I see you at lecture!)

- No late papers accepted.

- **A paper with no complete bibliographic reference will receive the grade of F.**

- All papers must be submitted **in hard copy only**.

- Any paper may be rewritten: a rewrite must be turned in by 2 weeks from the original due date.

- Excuse clause: stuff happens. If for some reason you are unable to hand in work or attend class, let me know as soon as possible, and be ready to provide documentation.

- If you must leave class early, please inform me before class starts.

- If you cannot attend class, please inform me.

- **Computers (etc).**: Prohibited. Two exceptions: (1) if you have a documented need through SAS, show me the documentation; (2) reference to an electronic version of one of our texts during class. This includes laptops, phones, iPads, iPods, pocket mainframes, robots with brains the size of a planet, connected refrigerators . . .

- Turn off your phone while you are in class.

Schedule

The plan is to discuss the *prior* lecture, rather than the one that happened just before the discussion.
See handout titled "Paper Topics" for details about papers and final project.

Date	Lecture	Assignments
Sep 3	Professor Bennington on the Birth of Symbolic Thought	
	Discussion: Syllabus, introductory concepts	
Sep 8	Professor Donahue on Homer's *Odyssey*	
Sep 10	Professor Tan on Homer's *Odyssey*	
Sep 15	Classes not in session	
Sep 17	Professor Smith on Homer's *Odyssey*	
Sep 22	Professor Bennington on flood myths	
Sep 24	Professor Mikics on the Hebrew Bible: Genesis	SP 1
Sep 29	Professor Singer on the Hebrew Bible: Job	
Oct 1	Professor Levine on the Hebrew Bible: Song of Songs	
Oct 6	Professor Singer on Sophocles' *Antigone*	
Oct 8	Professor Kozol on Sophocles' *Antigone*	SP 2
Oct 13	Professor Trasciatti on Gorgias	
Oct 15	Professor Tan on Hippocrates	
Oct 20	Professor Rich on Plato's *Symposium*	Conferences about final project
Oct 22	Professor Limnatis on Plato's *Symposium*	SP 3
Oct 27	Professor Smith on Ovid's *Metamorphoses*	
Oct 29	Professor Frisina on Paul's Letter to the Galatians	
Nov 3	Professor Kozol on Hildegard of Bingen	
Nov 5	Professor Teehan on Heretical Gospels	1 page: final project plans
Nov 10	Professor Lledo-Guillem on *El Cid*	
Nov 12	Professor Dardis on Aquinas	
Nov 17	Professor Donahue on Dante's *Inferno*	Second conferences: final project
Nov 19	Professor Dardis on Dante's *Inferno*	SP 4
Nov 24	Professor Lledo-Guillem on Dante's *Inferno*	
Nov 26	(Thanksgiving)	
Dec 1	Professor Doubleday on Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*	
Dec 3	Professor Rich on Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*	
Dec 8	Professor Doubleday on Joan of Arc	
Dec 10	Professor Trasciatti on Joan of Arc	
Dec 16, 17	Final project presentations	
Dec 17	Turn in final project	

HCLAS General Education Learning Goals and Objectives
(for Liberal Arts Distribution credit)
Applicable to HUHC Culture & Expression

Goal 1.   Students will demonstrate the ability to think critically and creatively.

Learning Objectives:

   1.a   Clearly and accurately summarize and evaluate the facts, presumptions, viewpoints, values, and arguments presented in a text or creative work.

   1.b   Gather and assess relevant information, and apply appropriate cognitive methods in solving problems or answering questions raised in a text or creative work.

   1.c   Construct well-reasoned solutions or conclusions; test and defend conclusions against relevant criteria and standards.

   1.d   Critically analyze one's own thinking by identifying one's presumptions, values, and viewpoints as well as problems, inconsistencies, and unanswered questions.

   1.e   Conceive and defend alternative hypotheses and viewpoints; offer and explain reasons for provisionally rejecting or accepting them.

Goal 2.   Students will apply analytical reasoning across academic disciplines.

Learning Objectives:

   2.a   Read with comprehension, and critically interpret written work in discipline-specific contexts.

   2.b   Critically interpret and analyze aesthetic qualities of works in literature and the fine or performing arts.

   2.c   Apply quantitative, inductive, and deductive reasoning.

   2.d   Apply abstract thinking and conceptual modeling.

   2.e   Apply the methods of social science to ethically investigate and analyze human social behavior.

   2.f   Describe, comprehend, and analyze the role of philosophical ideas, historical movements, or ethical debates in the development of civilizations.

Goal 3.   Students will demonstrate proficiency in written communication.

Learning Objectives:

   3.a   Compose grammatical sentences.

   3.b   Use various sentence forms to effectively modulate style and tone.

   3.c   Compose a sequence of paragraphs that develop a point.

   3.d   Summarize, quote, and respond to reliable texts to support and develop claims; apply relevant standards for citation.

   3.e   Write an effective argumentative essay.

   3.f   Respond to writing assignments using appropriate style, structure, and voice.

   3.g   Apply editing, proofreading, and revising strategies.

Goal 4.   Students will demonstrate proficiency in oral communication.

Learning Objectives:

   4.a   Demonstrate skill in oral communication for purposes such as informing, persuading, and/or defending.

   4.b   Compose and deliver effective, audience-appropriate oral presentations that develop and support a point; or participate in formal debates; or lead or participate in collaborative discussion of a question or a text.

   4.c   When appropriate, use visual, auditory, and/or technological aids.

Goal 5.   Students will develop an awareness of and sensitivity to global issues.

Learning Objectives:

   5.a   Provide and understand information on simple concrete subjects in a language other than English in both oral and written form.

   5.b   Demonstrate knowledge of the intellectual, social, political, economic, or cultural practices of at least one of the peoples in Africa, Asia, the Middle East, Latin America, or of the indigenous peoples of the Americas and Australia.

Goal 6.   Students will demonstrate information literacy. *Learning Objectives:*

   6.a   Conduct research using the variety of information sources available to them.

   6.b   Demonstrate the ability to evaluate the relevance and utility of different sources.

   6.c   Integrate sources effectively and ethically through proper citation.

Goal 7.   Students will demonstrate technological competency.

Learning Objective:

   7.a   Demonstrate the ability to use general or discipline-specific technologies to identify, retrieve, analyze, and communicate ideas and information.