

The Crisis of Authority

Course description: The goals of the seminar are to improve your ability to read and analyze important texts, to give you an opportunity to discuss themes central to the human experience, and to help you to learn how to write coherent college-level essays based on the readings and class discussions. In this section of the seminar our theme is the crisis of governing authority.

Course requirements: All readings are required, and may be obtained in the Barnard Reserve Room or in local bookstores. Please use editions described in the reading list. You should be prepared to discuss the readings on the dates assigned. Class participation counts 20 percent toward the final grade and each of the four papers will count 20 percent. If you have more than four unexcused absences (excused absences include ill health, a family emergency and religious observances), your grade for the course will be lowered.

Contact Information: My office is 408 Lehman Hall (the Barnard Library Building). Office hours are Wednesday 4:00-6:00. E-mail is rpious@barnard.edu. If you cannot make office hours, e-mail for an appointment.

I. Language and Authority

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| September 9 | Course Orientation, first reading, and initial writing assignment: a critical review of Mark Edmundson, "On the Uses of a Liberal Education," <u>Harpers</u> , September 1997, due September 14. |
| September 14 | Plato "Apology" and "Crito" in <u>The Trial and Death of Socrates</u> (Hackett edition) |
| September 16 | George Orwell <u>1984</u> (Signet Edition), chs. 1-8 |
| September 21 | George Orwell <u>1984</u> , chs. 9 - end |
| September 23 | George Orwell "Politics and the English Language" ed. S. Orwell and I. Angus, <u>Collected Essays of George Orwell</u> , (Harcourt) William Lutz <u>Doublespeak</u> (Harper and Row) any two chapters De Tocqueville <u>Democracy in America</u> ch. 16: "How Democracy Has Modified the English Language" |
| September 28 | Discussion of writing techniques. Selections from <u>The New York Times Book Review</u> of September 20 or 27. |
| September 30 | First paper due in class. (Topics handed out September 23) Class will be held. No reading assignment. |

II. Knowledge as Authority

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| October 5 | Plato <u>The Republic</u> (Penguin edition) Parts 1, 2, 3, 4 |
| October 7 | Plato <u>The Republic</u> , Parts 5, 6 |
| October 12 | Plato <u>The Republic</u> , Parts 7, 8 |
| October 14 | Plato <u>The Republic</u> , Parts 9, 10, 11 |

October 19 Discussion of writing techniques: Selections from The New York Review of Books (most recent issue in library or on newsstands.)

October 21 Second paper due in class. (Topics handed out October 14)
Class will be held. No reading assignment.

III. True Lies

October 26 Machiavelli The Prince (Penguin edition)
chs. IV - X ("Why the kingdom of Darius. . ."
to "How the power of every principality . . .")
XV - XXIII ("The Things for Which men . . .
to "How Flatterers . . .")

Christine de Pisan The Treasure of the City of Ladies
(Penguin Ed. 1985)

October 28 Sissela Bok Lying: Moral Choice in Public and Private Life, (Vintage edition), chs. 1-3

November 4 Sissela Bok Lying, chs. 8-10, 12

November 9 Discussion of writing techniques: Selections from The Atlantic Monthly (most recent issue in library or on newsstands.)

November 11 Third paper due in class. (Topics handed out November 4)
Class will be held. No reading assignment.

IV. Power of the Powerless

November 16 A. de Tocqueville Democracy in America
"Unlimited Power of the Majority in the United States and its Consequences" "Causes Which Mitigate the Tyranny of the Majority in the United States"

November 18 J. and H. Mill On Liberty, (Library of Liberal Arts)
"Introductory" "Of the Liberty of Thought and Discussion" "Of Individuality"

November 23 Thoreau "On the Duty of Civil Disobedience"

M.L. King, Jr. "Letter From a Birmingham Jail" in
Why We Can't Wait (Collier edition)

November 25 No Class (Have a great vacation break.)

November 30 Adam Michnik Letters From Prison (University of California)
Forward, Introduction, "The Polish Way,"
"On Resistance" "Why You are Not Signing"
"Letter from Gdansk Prison"

December 2 Aung San Su Kyi Freedom From Fear (Penguin edition)
Read the title essay "Freedom from Fear"

December 7

Discussion of writing techniques: selections from The New Yorker. (Most recent issue in library or on newsstands)

December 9

Fourth paper due in class. (Topics handed out November 30)
This is the last class and the final assignment for the course.