

The Concourse of Core Questions and Ideas

Friday 12:30-2:30

Concourse Lounge, 16-128

Our fall seminar is an opportunity to develop the inquiry into human life and human endeavor that begins in our humanities classes and to expand that inquiry across a range of disciplines. We seek to find and explore the crucial questions or investigations that span the disciplines and also underlie our pursuit of all worthwhile activities. The fall seminar is thus devoted to the common ground and common themes of knowledge. In the spring, we will examine the ways in which different disciplines approach these questions differently. Most Fridays, you will have a short reading assignment, which is either already linked below or will be posted ahead of time, or a film to watch (for films, we will hold a showing on Thursday evening, but you can also see the film on your own time), and we will all gather together for lunch and discussion. Concourse faculty will lead the discussion, but we want you to be active participants. Come hungry – physically and intellectually!

September 6, Welcome Picnic

Burton Connor BBQ Pit

Familiar Words; New Meanings

September 13, What is Education (do we live in a cave?)

Reading: selection from Plato's Republic

September 20, **NO CLASS**

September 27, What is Happiness? Reading: Nietzsche, thus Spoke Zarathustra, prologue (section 5)

Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, Book 1, chapter 7

TED talk: http://www.ted.com/talks/dan_gilbert_asks_why_are_we_happy.html

October 4, What is Knowledge?

Reading: Bacon, Descartes (selections)

October 11, What is Motion?
Reading: Aristotle, *Physics* (selection)

October 18, What is the Soul?
Reading: TBD

Justice, Morality and the Human Nature

October 25 (Family Weekend), Science and Religion: the Grounds of Morality
Reading: Pinker, http://www.newrepublic.com/article/114127/science-not-enemy-humanities?utm_campaign=tnr-daily-newsletter&utm_source=hs_email&utm_medium=email&utm_content=9913442#
Douthat, http://douthat.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/08/07/the-scientism-of-steven-pinker/?src=recg&_r=0

November 1, Why are we Moral?
Discussion of Woody Allen's *Crimes and Misdemeanors*

November 8, Science and Human Nature
Reading: Primo Levi, *The Periodic Table* (selections)

November 15, Love
Reading: Nygren, *Eros and Agape*

Problems and Promises of Modernity

November 22, Modern Science and Modern Life
Reading: Yuval Levin "The Moral Challenge of Modern Science" <http://www.thenewatlantis.com/publications/the-moral-challenge-of-modern-science>
Mark Helprin "The Acceleration of Tranquility"

November 29, **No Class**

December 6, The Modern Temper

Reading: Wallace Stevens, *Sunday Morning*

http://masi.cscs.lsa.umich.edu/~crshalizi/Poetry/Stevens/sunday_morning.html

December 13, End of Term Celebration