

Global Works and Society: Antiquity

GWA-UF 9101 DC1 and DC2

Instruction Mode: In-person

Fall 2021

If you are enrolled in this course 100% remotely and are not a Go Local/Study Away student for NYU Washington, DC, please make sure that you have completed the online academic orientation via Brightspace so that you are aware of site-specific support structure, policies and procedures. Please contact dc.academics@nyu.edu if you have trouble accessing the Brightspace site.

Syllabus last updated on 16th of August, 2021

Lecturer Contact Information

TBA

Units earned

Course Details

- M/W 9:30 to 10:45am and 11:00am to 12:15pm
- All times are Eastern (ET) - US Time Zone (for calculating time zone conversions, please note that Eastern-US Daylight Savings Time ends on November 7, 2021).
- Location: Rooms will be posted in Albert before your first class.

- Remote Participants: Your instructor will provide you with the Zoom link via NYU Brightspace.
- COVID-related details: In the interest of protecting the NYU Washington, DC community, we are closely following CDC and Washington, DC-specific guidance around COVID-19 and adjusting our recommendations and policies accordingly. Your health and well-being are our top priorities.
 - If you are attending in person, you will be assigned a seat on the first day and are expected to use that seat for the entire semester due to NYU COVID-19 safety protocol. Please note that you are expected to attend every class meeting in-person; however, this may change during the drop/add period if in-person student registration increases significantly or at any point during the semester if local COVID-19 regulations require additional physical distancing.

Course Description

This is a course about ideas in four great traditions of the ancient world: from India, Greece, China, and Rome. We'll read philosophical, religious, historical and literary texts. Each of them has something to say about the order of the human world: how it was created; how it is maintained; how it relates to natural or super-natural orders; whether that order should be challenged; and if so, how. As we read, we'll keep these points in mind—but also take note of other questions and claims that interest us, attract us, or irritate us. For more, see the course outline below.

Assessment Components

You are expected to attend class in person or remote synchronously. Failure to submit or fulfill any required component may result in failure of the class, regardless of grades achieved in other assignments.

Class Participation (25%)

Consistent preparation for, and participation in, class, whether in person or remotely. Write down your questions or thoughts about the text we're reading; I will call on people randomly in class, and even if you're really uncomfortable talking in class, you can read something out easily enough.

Presentations (15%)

Two presentations on two different readings: one individual, and one in a group. The presentation should give a very quick summary of the reading, but focus on a specific question

that the text raised for you: something you find interesting, puzzling, or worrying. How can one answer this question? And how do you answer it? Ideally, your presentation will make it easy for other members of the class to continue the conversation. Four pages of typed notes to be handed in at the end of each presentation.

Papers (35%)

Three four-page papers. You are able to write a paper for each of the four units; you can choose one unit to skip. Part of this assignment is thinking of a topic you're interested in; I'll help you with this, of course. The grade for your papers will be based on cumulative improvement, and not the simple average of your three papers. We will discuss how this works in class.

Tests & Quizzes (10 and 15%)

Both mid-term and final exam will be primarily multiple-choice, with one short answer for bonus credit.

Class Excursion

A class excursion will take place, should COVID lockdown rules allow.

Teaching and Learning Philosophy

I've been fortunate enough to study in a number of different fields, in two countries, with many wonderful—and a few not so great—teachers. And I've learned that there's no such thing as the right approach in the classroom. My best teachers often had nothing in common with each other. My best high school teacher was a master of the well-timed joke; compared to him my best college professor was dull, but made up for it with passion and precision. That makes sense: genetics can't be taught in the ways that the importance of history can be taught. Each discipline, and each course within each discipline, and more particularly still, each class—all have their own needs and demands. Just as no two teachers are alike, no two classes are alike, and I strive to see what my students need, and why they need it.

I believe the best way to think about learning is as a process of improvement. Rather than asking each student to measure up to an abstract ideal (the perfect A grade paper), I talk each student about where they are, what they would like to focus on, and how they can improve, step by step. For some students, this will mean writing and the form of argumentation; for others, thinking through their ideas more thoroughly to uncover assumptions or shaky evidence. Still other students might need help finding ways to get excited and inspired about whatever they are studying. In any case, laying out the steps of improvement clearly gives students some ownership in the assessment process. They know that I am not weighing them against each other, or against a pre-conceived goal. Instead, I am communicating to them how much they have improved, and how much more they can do so. Nobody takes quite the same path, and I'm

committed to spend whatever time is necessary to find the right way forward for each student.

This must all seem quite solemn! But I'm sure, too, that understanding is helped by enjoyment. I enjoy teaching, and my students enjoy my classes. This is the reward even for reluctant students of history: an expansion of the enjoyment you can get from life. And I, no less than my students, am always still learning how to read and how to enjoy new experiences. My students continually surprise me with interesting, complex and entertaining questions and ideas. And ultimately, for all the good that learning to analyze and think clearly can do in other spheres of life, I also want to pass on the pleasure of curling up with a challenging book.

Required Texts

Please have these texts in *these* editions for the relevant classes.

- *Dhammapada*, (Penguin: 978-0140449419)
- *The Bhagavad Gita*, (Oxford: 978-0199538126)
- Ivanhoe and Van Norden, *Readings in Classical Chinese Philosophy* (Hackett: 978-0872207806)
- I recommend finding yourself a good bible, as well; see below for recommendations.

All other texts will be available as PDFs or links on the course brightspace page.

Supplemental Texts (not required to purchase)

- Recommended bibles: *New Annotated Oxford Bible* has everything you'll need, *The Jewish Study Bible* or *The Five Books of Moses* (Robert Alter) have great versions of *Genesis* and *Exodus*.
- *History of Philosophy Without Any Gaps* podcast (good for the Indian and Greek thinkers, as well as Augustine).
- Hughes-Warrington, *Fifty Key Thinkers on History* (relevant chapters are on the course site)
- Frankopan, *The Silk Roads* (a history of the world that doesn't split the world up as we do in this course)
- Gethin, *Foundations of Buddhism*
- Boadt, *Reading the Old Testament*
- Van Norden, *Introduction to Classical Chinese Philosophy*

- Annas, *Very Short Introduction to Plato*
- Waterfield, *Creators, Conquerors, and Citizens: A History of Ancient Greece*
- Beard, *SPQR: A History of Ancient Rome*
- Clark, *Very Short Introduction to Late Antiquity* (For Eusebius, Augustine and so on).
- Chadwick, *The Early Church*
- Feel free to ask for reading suggestions if none of these appeal to you!

Course Schedule

Topics and Assignments

Week/Date	Topic	Reading	Assignment Due
Session 1 8 September	Introduction	None	
Session 2 13 September	India: Cosmos, self, society	<i>Dhammapada</i> chapters 1-12	
Session 3 15 September		<i>Dhammapada</i> 13-20	
Session 4 20 September		<i>Dhammapada</i> 21-26	
Session 5 22 September		<i>Bhagavad Gita</i> 1-6	

Session 6 27 September		<i>Bhagavad Gita</i> 7-12	
Session 7 29 September		<i>Bhagavad Gita</i> 13-18	
Session 8 4 October	Greece and Rome: Self, society, history	Plato, <i>Republic</i> , pages 44-69, 98-102.	
Session 9 6 October		Plato 115-158	
<u>No Class</u> <u>11 October</u>		<u>NYU Holiday! But... class tomorrow.</u>	First Paper
<u>Session 10</u> <u>12 October</u>	<u>Yes, class today!</u>	Plato, 227-249, 338-343	
Session 11 13 October		Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> . Selections from book I, II, X.	
Session 12 18 October		Stoicism: Inwood and Gerson, 203-232	
Session 13 20 October		Epicurus and Skepticism: Inwood and Gerson, 28-43, 63-65, 387-397	

Session 14 25 October		<p><i>On Writing History</i> pp. 4-6.</p> <p>Herodotus, <i>Histories</i> II. 2-5; 35-37; 124-135.</p> <p><i>On Writing History</i> pp. 13-15</p> <p><i>On Writing History</i>, pp. 182-187.</p>	
Session 15 27 October		<p><i>On Writing History</i> pp 51-57, 63-66, 74-5.</p> <p>Polybius, <i>Histories</i> VI. 2-18, 43-58.</p>	Midterm
Session 16 1 November	China: Self, society, history	Confucius. <i>Readings in Classical Chinese Philosophy</i> , pp 1-54.	
Session 17 3 November		Mozi. <i>Readings</i> pp 59-80, 90-94, 110-111.	Second Paper
Session 18 8 November		Mencius, <i>Readings</i> 115-157.	
Session 20 10 November		Laozi, chapters 1-5, 16-25, 32-38, 47-58, 63-67, 80. Zhuangzi, <i>Readings</i> , 221-243.	
Session 20 15 November		Xunzi, <i>Readings</i> , 255-266, 267-276, 286-292, 298-306.	
Session 21 17 November		Han Feizi, <i>Readings</i> 311-327, 335-351.	

Session 22 22 November	Judaism & Christianity: People, God and History	<i>Genesis</i> 1-9, 15, 22	
Session 23 24 November		<i>Exodus</i> 1-16, 19-20, 32-34	
Session 24 29 November		<i>Luke</i> 1-10	Third Paper
Session 25 1 December		<i>Luke</i> 11-24	
Session 26 6 December		<i>Acts</i> 1-12	
Session 27 8 December		The Desert Mothers: Sayings St. Basil: 'I Will Tear Down My Barns'	
Session 28 13 December		Conclusion	
15-21 December	Reading Day and Finals Week		Final Paper Final Exam

Course Outline

Throughout this course, we'll be thinking about how to answer fundamental questions about human life, taking our inspiration from some of the most influential answers of the ancient world. The course is separated into *traditions*. By 'tradition,' I roughly mean a way of asking and answering questions. Over time, some questions have stopped being meaningful, and new

questions have started being meaningful. We can describe a tradition as being where and how questions are given meaning. In the Christian tradition, for instance, one of the most important questions has always been whether you should do what God tells you to do, or what the king (or president) tells you to do, instead. For some people, that question makes sense. For others, it doesn't (because they don't believe in God; or because there is no ruler, and so on). But even if this question isn't meaningful for you, studying these traditions is important. They are influential in large part because the questions they deal with come up in different forms for most people. For instance, should you do what your rulers tell you to do, or what you know to be right? Why?

As you read through the texts, try to describe the key questions that they try to answer. This will get easier as we go through each unit, because many of the readings are directly responding to earlier readings. Also consider if the questions are meaningful for you; how you might answer them; and if there are key questions for you and your own tradition that you would like to discuss in this class.

And remember that traditions are something that people do. Later Chinese philosophers chose to respond to the answers that Confucius gave to important questions. They accepted the questions as important, and gave different answers; or they rejected some questions altogether, and posed new ones. And many people are still doing this tradition today. We are doing it in this class. One of the most important things you can do in a class like this is to learn what questions are important to you—that is, which traditions you choose to participate in.

1. India

We begin with two classical Indian texts, the *Dhammapada* and the *Bhagavad Gita*. They are both part of a much longer tradition dating back to the second millennium BC, and up to the present. Some of the key questions here are: how does the universe *work*? And what role should *we* play in its working? Answering that question will mean understanding what the universe is (not as simple as we make it out to be), and what *we* human beings are. The *Dhammapada* is an important book for Buddhists everywhere; Buddhism has a distinctive answer to the question what it means to be a person, and what we should do, given the way the universe works. Buddhism challenged earlier Indian thinking on these questions. The *Bhagavad Gita* gives us a very systematic response to that Buddhist challenge, and gives us basically the opposite answer to how the universe works, and what human beings are. But both books end up giving us very similar recommendations on what to do!

2. Greece and Rome

In Greece, meanwhile, Plato was writing one of the most influential texts in the European tradition, his *Republic* (380 BC). Like the Indian thinkers, Plato has a theory about reality as a whole and our individual role in it, but he comes at this theory with very different questions in mind. The book is a dialogue, in which some young men challenge Socrates—Plato's teacher in real life, and a character in the book—to *prove* to them that it's better to be good than evil. He

tries to prove it in a very round-about way. First, he argues that a city is like a person. Then, he describes what a 'happy' city looks like. Then he shows that you'd want to live in a city that is good, rather than one that is evil—and this proves that you would rather be good than bad, because goodness is the only true route to happiness. At the same time, he poses questions that still frustrate philosophers (and others) today: how can we know something? How should a city be ruled? What sort of person should I be? Many Greeks and Romans took up these questions after Plato. We'll look at the four most important responses: Aristotle, the Stoics, the Epicureans, and the Sceptics.

We'll also have a quick look at Greek and Roman history writing. So far we've focused on religious and philosophical texts, which think about the universe and how human beings should act. But each of them includes an understanding of *history*, too, and our next group of readings gives us a chance to think about our relationship to the past. Each of us has a past, but it's very difficult to say exactly what it includes, beyond immediate events in our lives. So, my history includes graduate school and the birth of my children and my moving from Australia to the USA. But does it also include events in American history? Or in Australian history? What about British history? In other words, how wide and how long is the history—or perhaps tradition—that I belong to (or that belongs to me)? The historians we'll be reading debated what was important enough to write about and think about, and how to write and think about those things. We'll be able to have the same debate about ourselves. This will help us be more specific about *our own* traditions, and how they come to be ours.

3. China

The Chinese philosophical tradition is one of the most important and influential of all. It begins, more or less, with Confucius (551-479 BC), who poses some of the most difficult questions imaginable, particularly about our relationship to the past and how it should influence our individual moral conduct: in short, he claims, we become a 'gentleman' by following the rites, reading literature, and so on. But how should rulers encourage us to do this? Can everyone do it? Much later, these problems gave rise to a central question for many Chinese philosophers: do we become good because we live in a good society, or because of something we do on our own? If you think people are basically good, we can probably do it ourselves. If you think people are basically bad, we probably need help from a good society—which means a good ruler.

After reading selections from Confucius, we will read a number of responses. Mozi (470-391 BC) stresses 'profit' rather than adherence to the rites—something is good, for him, if it has a good outcome, rather than if it respects historical precedent. So, history is important to Mozi in a very different way than it is for Confucius. Mencius (late 300s BC) rejects Mozi's claims; Mencius is perhaps best known for his optimistic understanding of human nature—which was later rejected by Xunzi (200s BC), who had a very pessimistic understanding of it, which he

seems to have passed on to Han Feizi (200s BC). Another response to Confucius came from the 'Daoist' books, *Laozi* and *Zhuangzi* (300s BC) which each rejected the very difficult process of following the rites in favor of doing what comes naturally. All of these thinkers understood themselves to be working in a specific tradition that was guided by history. But they worked out the questions posed by that tradition in very different ways. We conclude by looking at China's best-known historian, Sima Qian (100s BC), who makes some of this much more explicit.

4. Judaism and Christianity

We conclude with a fourth influential tradition, or perhaps pair of traditions. We'll read excerpts from *Genesis* and *Exodus* (500s BC), primarily a Jewish texts that are supposed to tell the most important events of Jewish history: Moses leading an enslaved people out of Egypt and into the promised land. These stories have been very important for oppressed peoples and revolutionaries throughout history, because they provide a model of how oppression can create, rather than destroy, a group. It is also a tremendously interesting story on its own, helping us to ask what it means to be a people, nation, state, or society—in other words, what goes into these things? This Jewish story was appropriated by the Christian tradition, and we'll end by looking at a few different texts from its first few centuries (note that the Christian tradition is also the Roman tradition, and the Jewish tradition, and the Greek tradition—and, in China, also the Chinese tradition... these things get complicated over the next few centuries!). The Gospel of *Luke* is one of the four stories we have of Jesus' life and what his life meant; the same author wrote the book of *Acts*, which is a history of early followers of Jesus. We'll then look at a slightly later moment in Christian history, with the sayings of the Desert Mothers, and St Basil's sermon based on a passage in Luke's gospel—these both show just how radical the Christian challenge was to the ancient Roman world.

Classroom Etiquette

To optimize the experience in a blended learning environment, please consider the following:

- Please be mindful of your microphone and video display during synchronous class meetings. Ambient noise and some visual images may disrupt class time for you and your peers.
- Cell phones should be put away and on silent mode during class time.
- Make sure to let your classmates finish speaking before you do.
- If deemed necessary by the study away site (i.e. COVID related need), synchronous class sessions may be recorded and archived for other students to view. This will be announced at the beginning of class time.

- Students should be respectful and courteous at all times to all participants in class.
- We will not be using laptops during class. Please do not bring them to class unless I ask you to.

Suggested Co-Curricular Activities

The Freer/Sackler Museum is great for Buddhist art and ideas.

Academic Policies

Grade Conversion

Your lecturer may use one of the following scales of numerical equivalents to letter grades:

A = 94-100 or 4.0

A- = 90-93 or 3.7

B+ = 87-89 or 3.3

B = 84-86 or 3.0

B- = 80-83 or 2.7

C+ = 77-79 or 2.3

C = 74-76 or 2.0

C- = 70-73 or 1.7

D+ = 67-69 or 1.3

D = 65-66 or 1.0

F = below 65 or 0

Attendance Policy

Studying at Global Academic Centers is an academically intensive and immersive experience, in which students from a wide range of backgrounds exchange ideas in discussion-based seminars. Learning in such an environment depends on the active participation of all students. And since classes typically meet once or twice a week, even a single absence can cause a student to miss a significant portion of a course. To ensure the integrity of this academic experience, class attendance at the centers, or online through NYU Brightspace if the course is remote synchronous/blended, is expected promptly when class begins. Attendance will be checked at each class meeting. If you have scheduled a remote course immediately preceding/following an in-person class, you may want to write to dc.academics@nyu.edu to see if you can take your remote class at the Academic Center.

As soon as it becomes clear that you cannot attend a class, you must inform your professor and/or the Academics team by e-mail immediately (i.e. before the start of your class). Absences are only excused if they are due to illness, significant mental or physical discomfort, Moses Center accommodations, religious observance, or emergencies. Your professor or site staff may ask you to present a doctor's note, a Wellness Counselor's note, or permission from an NYU-DC staff member or an onsite Residence Life Administrator as proof. Emergencies or other exceptional circumstances that you wish to be treated confidentially must be presented to staff. Doctor's or other notes must be submitted in person or by e-mail to the Academics team, who will inform your professors.

Unexcused absences may be penalized with a two percent deduction from the student's final course grade for every week's worth of classes missed, and may negatively affect your class participation grade. Four unexcused absences in one course may lead to a Fail in that course. Being more than 15 minutes late counts as an unexcused absence. Furthermore, your professor is entitled to deduct points for frequently joining the class late.

Exams, tests and quizzes, deadlines, and oral presentations that are missed due to illness always require a doctor's note as documentation. It is the student's responsibility to produce this doctor's note and submit it to site staff; until this doctor's note is produced the missed assessment is graded with an F and no make-up assessment is scheduled. In content classes, an F in one assignment may lead to failure of the entire class.

Regardless of whether an absence is excused or not, it is the student's responsibility to catch up with the work that was missed.

Final exams

Final exams must be taken at their designated times. Should there be a conflict between your final exams, please bring this to the attention of the Academics team. Final exams may not be taken early, and students should not plan to leave the site before the end of the finals period.

Late Submission of Work

- (1) Work submitted late receives a penalty of 2 points on the 100 point scale for each day it is late (including weekends and public holidays), unless an extension has been approved (with a doctor's note or by approval of NYU-DC site staff), in which case the 2 points per day deductions start counting from the day the extended deadline has passed.
- (2) Without an approved extension, written work submitted more than 5 days (including weekends and public holidays) following the submission date receives an F.
- (3) Assignments due during finals week that are submitted more than 3 days late (including weekends and public holidays) without previously arranged extensions will not be accepted and will receive a zero. Any exceptions or extensions for work during finals week must be discussed with the Washington, DC Site Director.
- (4) Students who are late for a written exam have no automatic right to take extra time or to write the exam on another day.
- (5) Please remember that university computers do not keep your essays - you must save them elsewhere. Having lost parts of your essay on the university computer is no excuse for a late submission.

Academic Honesty/Plagiarism

As the University's policy on "[Academic Integrity for Students at NYU](#)" states: "At NYU, a commitment to excellence, fairness, honesty, and respect within and outside the classroom is essential to maintaining the integrity of our community. By accepting membership in this community, students take responsibility for demonstrating these values in their own conduct and for recognizing and supporting these values in others." Students at Global Academic Centers must follow the University and school policies.

NYU takes plagiarism very seriously; penalties follow and may exceed those set out by your home school. Your lecturer may ask you to sign a declaration of authorship form, and may check your assignments by using *TurnItIn* or another software designed to detect offences against academic integrity.

The presentation of another person's words, ideas, judgment, images, or data as though they were your own, whether intentionally or unintentionally, constitutes an act of plagiarism. It is also an offense to submit work for assignments from two different courses that is substantially the same (be it oral presentations or written work). If there is an overlap of the subject of your assignment with one that you produced for another course (either in the current or any previous semester), you **MUST** inform your professor.

For guidelines on academic honesty, clarification of the definition of plagiarism, examples of procedures and sanctions, and resources to support proper citation, please see:

[NYU Academic Integrity Policies and Guidelines](#)

[NYU Library Guides](#)

Inclusivity Policies and Priorities

NYU's Office of Global Programs and NYU's global sites are committed to equity, diversity, and inclusion. In order to nurture a more inclusive global university, NYU affirms the value of sharing differing perspectives and encourages open dialogue through a variety of pedagogical approaches. Our goal is to make all students feel included and welcome in all aspects of academic life, including our syllabi, classrooms, and educational activities/spaces.

Attendance Rules on Religious Holidays

Members of any religious group may, without penalty, excuse themselves from classes when required in compliance with their religious obligations. Students who anticipate being absent due to religious observance should notify their lecturer *and* NYU DC's Academics Office in writing via email one week in advance. If examinations or assignment deadlines are scheduled on the day the student will be absent, the instructor will schedule a make-up examination or extend the deadline for assignments and can use the Academics Office for support as needed. Please note

that an absence is only excused for the holiday but not for any days of travel that may come before and/or after the holiday. See also [University Calendar Policy on Religious Holidays](#).

Pronouns and Name Pronunciation (Albert and Zoom)

Students, staff, and faculty have the opportunity to add their pronouns, as well as the pronunciation of their names, into Albert. Students can have this information displayed to faculty, advisors, and administrators in Albert, NYU Brightspace, the NYU Home internal directory, as well as other NYU systems. Students can also opt out of having their pronouns viewed by their instructors, in case they feel more comfortable sharing their pronouns outside of the classroom. For more information on how to change this information for your Albert account, please see the [Pronouns and Name Pronunciation website](#).

Students, staff, and faculty are also encouraged, though not required, to list their pronouns, and update their names in the name display for Zoom. For more information on how to make this change, please see the [Personalizing Zoom Display Names website](#).

Moses Accommodations Statement

Academic accommodations are available for students with documented and registered disabilities. Please contact the Moses Center for Student Accessibility (+1 212-998-4980 or mosescsd@nyu.edu) for further information. Students who are requesting academic accommodations are advised to reach out to the Moses Center as early as possible in the semester for assistance. Accommodations for this course are managed through dc.academics@nyu.edu.

Bias Response

The New York University Bias Response Line provides a mechanism through which members of our community can share or report experiences and concerns of bias, discrimination, or harassing behavior that may occur within our community.

Experienced administrators in the Office of Equal Opportunity (OEO) receive and assess reports, and then help facilitate responses, which may include referral to another University

school or unit, or investigation if warranted according to the University's existing Non-Discrimination and Anti-Harassment Policy.

The Bias Response Line is designed to enable the University to provide an open forum that helps to ensure that our community is equitable and inclusive.

To report an incident, you may do so in one of three ways:

- Online using the [Web Form \(link\)](#)
- Email: bias.response@nyu.edu
- Phone: 212-998-2277