You will understand less after I have explained it.
All that I can hope to make you understand
Is only events: not what has happened.
And people to whom nothing has ever happened
But how can I explain, how can I explain to you?
Cannot understand the unimportance of events.

(T.S. Eliot, The Family Reunion)

The great books are classics because they have stood the test of time and survived by virtue of the universal human conditions they address. In today’s world of the global electronic super highway, disunifying deconstruction, non-theoretical post-modernism, history as textural narrative (or historian as merely a good story-teller), and nagging nihilism, the human spirit of the classic texts - is as valid as ever. This class will examine the classics for their intrinsic merit and for the influence they have exerted throughout history. These works plunge into the timeless struggle of the needs of the individual to be true to self and still reach some sort of equilibrium with society. This class will ask: How is Plato’s cave analogous to the Internet? How the metaphors and lyrics of Sappho and Lucretius capture the human joy and the suffering of loneliness, pain, and love? How does one perceives the differences and similarities in the universe and the divine? Class discussions will explore the classic texts in their relations to contemporary life’s dilemmas of consumerism and spiritualism, individual rights and community rights, love and family, vocation and career, God and the afterlife, rebellion and escape from freedom.

LECTURES
May 24  INTRODUCTION - HUMANISM  
May 26  ANTHROPO-CENTRISM VS. THEO-CENTRISM  

Inferno 1-3, 5, 11

May 31  HELL’S GREAT SINNERS  

Inferno ,8,10,13, 15

June  2  PROPAGDEIA OF THE EDUCATION OF DESIRE  

Inferno 26, 27, 30-34

June  7  ON THE NATURE OF THE UNIVERSE  

Lucretius, (1-3)

June  9  CLOISTERS & ST. JOHN THE DIVINE CATHEDRAL LIMINALITY  

June 14  NOTHING COMES FROM NOTHING: ATARAXIA  

Lucretius (4-6) The Lost Horizon

June 16  TRADITIONS: SACRIFICE AND CANNIBALISM  

Agamemnon

June 21  THE TRIUMPH OF LAW  

The Eumenides  
Blade Runner (cinematic reproduction)

June 23  METIOTTICS : CAN VIRTUE BE TAUGHT?  

Protagoras

June 28  TRIAL  

Paper due

REQUIRED TEXT BOOKS: Available for purchase at the NYU Book Ce.  

Aeschylus, The Oresteian Trilogy (Penguin Classics, 1974).  
Plato, Protagoras and Meno (Penguin Classics,1986).  
Dante, Inferno (Hollander trans.).

RECOMMENDED TEXTS:  

Cervantes, Don Quixote,  
Cicero’s On the Laws,  
Dante, Purgatorio (Mendelbaum trans.).  
Sappho’s Poems,  

CINEMATIC RECREATIONS:  
Blade Runner  
The Lost Horizon

AUDITORY RECREATIONS:  
Pergolesi, Stabat Mater  
Dvorjak, Stabat Mater
REQUIRED READINGS ON BLACKBOARD WILL BE ASSIGNED

COURSE REQUIREMENTS
The grade in the course will be based on five essays, an examination, a paper, a trial, reading of Inferno, museum trip and class attendance/participation. **There will be a grade penalty for coming in late and for late-papers. ONLY HARD COPIES OF ESSAYS AND PAPERS WILL BE ACCEPTED. NO I-PADS, I-PHONES, I-PODS, BLACK-BERRIES, COMPUTERS (ALL-SORTS), CELL-PHONES AND OTHER (BLUE TOOTH, EAR-PHONES, etc..) WILL BE ALLOWED TO BE USED IN CLASS.**

1. **ESSAYS:** each week essay questions will be posted on blackboard. You are to select one essay question and write a one page response (single or double spaced). five essays [25pts]

2. **STUDENT PRESENTATION:** Students will present and give a literary analysis/interpretation to the class of an assigned TOPIC from the reading list. [15pts]

3. **READING OF **Inferno** (10pts) time and place to be announced.**

4. **MUSEUM ATTENDANCE AND ESSAY:** [10 pts]
   Based on your experience from the trip to the Cloisters and St. John the Divine on June 9th you will write an essay of your trip’s liminal experience

5. **PAPER/TRIAL:** Students will be assigned a historical or a literary character from the readings and asked to investigate, impersonate and defend in a mock trial (following the guideline of Oreste's trial in the *Eumenides*). The following are possible characters to be assigned: Helen, Achilles, Agamemnon, Zeus, Protagoras, Orestes, Athena, Eumenides, Electra, Aeschylus, Clytaemnestra, Homer, Ulysses, Oedipus, Venus, Tiresias, Ajax, Chorus, Apollo, Timeus, Socrates, Agrippina, Caesar, Aristotle, Plato, Lucretius, Cicero, Epicurus, Marcus Aurelius, Dante, St. Bernard, Beatrice, Machiavelli, Cesare Borgia, Isabella of Aragon, Lorenzo de Medici and any Concept. Papers should be typed, double-spaced, between five and eight pages long. Footnotes or endnotes may be in any accepted style (MLA, Chicago Manual, Turabian, APA) provided it is used consistently and correctly. (15 points for the research paper, due on June 28th and 15 points for the Trial)

6. **ATTENDANCE** is necessary since we will be covering a lot of material. Ten (10) points will be assigned for participation and attendance. More than two class absences will result into a failing grade.

**OFFICE HOURS:** I will see students before and after class. If a problem arises do not hesitate to call me or email (ar31@nyu.edu).