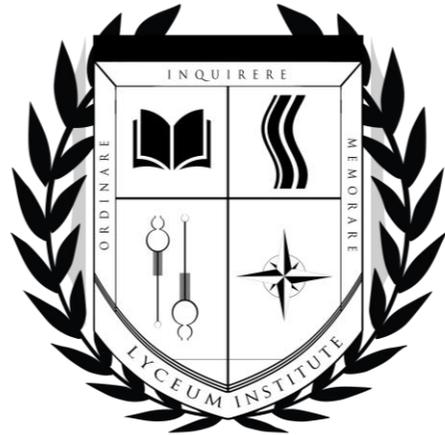


AN INTRODUCTION TO THE PHILOSOPHY OF CULTURE

SEMINAR SYLLABUS

[SUMMER 2022]



DESCRIPTION

In this seminar, we shall introduce the philosophy of culture, defining what culture is and where the study of culture fits into philosophy. We will then explore how there exists a speculative dimension to the philosophy of culture (i.e., explaining how culture exists in reality through human subjectivity and how it is determined by human nature), as well as a practical dimension (i.e., cultural values). After establishing the principles of this study, we will then look to its application to Western culture, in particular, the transition between the three major epochs of antiquity, the Middle Ages, and modernity. We will then analyze modern culture in particular with an eye toward its trajectory into the next age. Finally, we shall conclude with a practical examination of what the philosophy of culture (as we have studied throughout the course) tells us about the present age and our expectations in this life.



METHOD

The seminar is 8 weeks long, with one recorded lecture and one discussion session each week. Each discussion session is structured around a primary reading from Jacques Maritain, Josef Pieper, Pope St. John Paul II, C.S. Lewis, Fr. James Schall, John Deely, T.S. Eliot, Christopher Dawson, or Eric Voegelin. We will also be utilizing secondary sources on some of these authors. Participants are expected to have read the assigned reading and listened to the lecture prior to the session, so that they may engage in a semi-structured discussion directed and moderated by the instructor. As this is an advanced seminar, one *cannot* participate well without a *deep engagement* with the assigned reading. Moreover, *continual discussion* will foster that participation and engagement throughout the week. Participants will be expected to partake in these discussions on a regular basis, and will be challenged to do so directly.

READING

The texts for this seminar are various excerpts or articles which will be made available to you through Teams from various works by the authors noted above.

LECTURE

Each week there will also be a 20-40+ minute audio lecture, posted to Teams at the beginning of the week. This lecture will be based upon the assigned reading, but will also stray into related topics, or may use the reading as a launching point for addressing some related issue (perhaps one more general, or perhaps one more specific). The primary (but not sole) purpose of these lectures is to help clarify some of the more difficult concepts and arguments contained within the reading, as well as to raise specific questions that should help structure and guide our discussion sessions.

There *may* be accompanying visual aids (not necessarily) in order to provide some clarity as to textual points, but one *should* be able, in most cases, to simply listen to the lecture (and perhaps consult the visual aids later). This should allow more flexibility: making the lectures suitable accompaniment for a commute, while doing chores, going for a run, etc.

DISCUSSION

The heart of the seminar is the discussion session (**Saturdays at 2pm ET**): where all the thoughts emergent and encountered throughout the week—via the reading, lecture, and on-going conversations in the Teams channel—are brought into explicit conversation. This allows us to attempt a concerted effort at bringing resolution to our difficulties, and—failing such a resolution—to direct our inquiry further.

Each discussion session will begin with a brief synopsis of the week’s material and a focusing on whichever aspects of that material seem most pressing. Beyond the direction provided by the instructor, participants are encouraged to bring their own concerns explicitly into view and to engage with the instructor and one another in civil debate and collective inquiry.

CONTRIBUTION

It is hoped and expected that each participant in the seminar will provide a contribution: a piece of writing, recorded presentation, or something else, within one month of the seminar’s conclusion, as a way of coalescing what has been learned in a demonstrative manner. Topics are suggested, and the instructor is available for discussions and assistance in composing your contribution.

SESSION SCHEDULE

June 4	Introduction Lecture 1: What is “culture”? Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• John Paul II, “On Man, Culture, and the Apostolate of Culture” (From the <i>Apostolate of Culture</i>, pp. 7-21)• John O'Meara, “Some Thoughts on Christianity and Culture”• Mirosław Nowaczyk, <i>John Paul II’s Concept of Culture</i> (pp. 170-182)
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June 11	<p>The Philosophy of Culture</p> <p>Lecture 2: On the speculative and practical dimensions of the study of culture.</p> <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • John Deely, <i>Purely Objective Reality</i>, “The Social Construction of Reality” (pp. 110-120) • Donald Gallagher, “Philosophy of Culture in Maritain” • James Hanink, “Knowing Subjectivity: Jacques Maritain and John Crosby”
June 18	<p>The Philosophy of History</p> <p>Lecture 3: What is the philosophy of history, and what is its relation to culture?</p> <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jacques Maritain, <i>On the Philosophy of History</i>, chapter 1 (pp. 1-42) • Preface to Eric Voegelin, <i>Order of History</i>, vol. 1. (pp. 19-24)
June 25	<p>Culture in Relation to Religion and Politics</p> <p>Lecture 4: The intersection between culture, religion, and politics on matters of first principle with regard to the good and the true.</p> <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • T.S Eliot, <i>The Idea of a Christian Society</i>
July 2	BREAK
July 9	<p>Ancient vs. Medieval Culture</p> <p>Lecture 5: What marked the pagan era of antiquity versus the era of Christendom in the Middle Ages?</p> <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapters 1 and 2 of Josef Pieper, <i>Scholasticism</i> (pp. 15-43)
July 16	<p>The Transition from Medieval Culture to Modern Culture</p> <p>Lecture 6: How did the Middle Ages end and Modernity begin?</p> <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 1 of Jacques Maritain, <i>Integral Humanism</i> (pp. 157-173)
July 23	<p>The Present State of Culture</p> <p>Lecture 7: Where does modern culture stand today?</p> <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 1 of C.S. Lewis, <i>Abolition of Man</i> (pp. 1-26) • Fr. Schall, “Calvary or the Slaughterhouse?”
July 30	<p>Conclusions; Postmodernism</p> <p>Lecture 8: Where does “postmodern” culture fit into this picture?</p> <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • John Deely, “Maritain, Ratzinger, and the New Era of Intellectual Culture” • Chapter 1 of Christopher Dawson, <i>Beyond Politics</i> (pp. 3-31)