SYLLABUS
Honr1103-1104.11 and 15
Spring semester, 2015
Stokes S286 TTh 9-11 and 1-3
Instructor: Timothy Duket, Professor of the Practice of the Humanities
Stokes S277: Office hours MW 9-12 and by appointment

Continuation of Honr1101-1102, fall semester, 2014. . . .

As the first semester explored Greek and Hebrew texts in isolation, the second semester encounters combinations and permutations of various texts from literature, Christianity, and philosophy. The texts on the syllabus make manifest interrelationships and syntheses, not splendid isolation and exclusivity.

Anxiety of Reciprocal Dependence

The readings in chronological order are Plato, Aristotle, Ovid, New Testament, Augustine, Dante and Chaucer. These are organized in a spiraling curriculum on the course calendar, however. The curriculum returns to texts in a recurrent fashion across fifteen weeks, making the fact of dependence and allusion useful to understanding. Three spiraling threads appear and reoccur. The most explicit is Chaucer’s Canterbury Tales. The schedule includes work with individual “tales” in every one of four months of the semester. A second thread is cosmology and ancient “science”, a concern in Plato, Ovid, and, climactically, in Dante. The third is a recurring influence, that of Plato. His influence on Aristotle, Ovid, the Gospel of John, Augustine and, again, Dante Alighieri are explicit. Likewise, the New Testament figures powerfully in Augustine, Dante and even in Chaucer’s Wife of Bath’s Prologue. The approach here requires a bit of juggling. For example, the study of Chaucer in Middle English occurs simultaneously with the discussion of other texts from the second week of the semester to the end. Lastly, Philosophy, Theology and Poetry are pitted against one another. The poetics of Dante and the vernacular language of Chaucer intertwine with religious teachings and philosophical arguments. The culmination of the course is the masterly synthesis of Dante Alighieri when the poet puts vernacular language (Italian, in this case) to work contrasting physical reality (Inferno) with the ineffable (Paradiso) in verse. Ovid, Dante and Chaucer are considered to be as persuasive in representing the world as it is (i.e. in developing a “scientific” view) as Plato or Aristotle. In April this last will be explored by means of the Christopher Nolan-Kip Thorne collaboration in the film Interstellar. The range of the course is wide. The greatest distance travelled is from Plato’s sun (Republic VI) to Dante’s dark hole at the center of his universe (Inferno XXXIV) to modern gravitational theory (Thorne).

General Expectations

The seminar fulfills university requirements in literature, writing, philosophy, theology and the social sciences. These requirements are satisfied over the span of
four semesters and 24 credit hours. This semester is a double course that should occupy fully 40% of a student’s time. Since a seminar meets twice each week and for 110 minutes each session, much of the earned credit derives from private study and preparation following an “old school” Oxbridge model.
Course Requirements

1. There is a two hour final exam at the end of the semester – 30 points;

2. There is a one hour midterm exam on Chaucer and Ovid before spring break - 20 points;

3. Daily seminar preparation, attendance and participation are a *sine qua non* for the seminar. Participation includes all daily activities including work in Canvas. This was the case in the first semester and will be doubly significant in the second – 30 points;

4. Products written and spoken. Essays and various types of class performance will complement class discussions. Formal recitations, two 2000 word essays, and one major group project are required for 30 points. The recitations will be assigned from Chaucer’s “General Prologue”.

5. *Canvas* and email, dynamic syllabus and www. The course calendar may be updated at any time. *All changes of the syllabus on the web supersede earlier versions of the syllabus and all other written handouts.*

6. Adherence to the university standards for academic integrity. “Academic integrity is central to the mission of higher education. Please observe the highest standards of academic integrity in this course. Please review the standards and procedures that are published in the university catalog and on the web at: [www.bc.edu/offices/stserv/academic/resources/polict/#integrity](http://www.bc.edu/offices/stserv/academic/resources/polict/#integrity). Make sure that the work you submit is in accordance with university policies. Violations will be reported to the Dean’s Office and reviewed by the College’s Committee on Academic Integrity. This could result in failure in the course or even more severe sanctions.”

   Dean’s Office, January 13, 2005.

**Spring Semester Books (Required translations and editions)**

*Oxford Annotated Bible, 4*<sup>th</sup> *edition.*
Plato, tr. Allan Bloom, *Republic* (u Chicago P)
Aristotle, tr. Irwin, *Nicomachean Ethics* (Hackett, second edition)
Ovidius Naso, tr. Stanley Lombardo, *Metamorphoses* (Hackett)
Augustine of Hippo, tr. Sheed, *Confessions* (Hackett)
Dante Alighieri, tr. Alan Mandelbaum, *Divine Comedy* (Everyman Library)