

HONS 2103 - Colloquium on the Early Modern World

Fall 2025

Course Description

This course takes us from the period of the Protestant Reformation through the first several decades of the nineteenth century. An important aim of the course will be to try to understand what we mean when we speak of the "modern" world. What is it that makes our world "modern"? How did it come about? We will trace the development of the notion of "modernity" as that term is broadly understood: in historical, social, economic, political, religious, philosophical, scientific, and literary terms. As is the case with all four of the Honors colloquia, we are guided in our reading by two overarching questions or themes: 1. What does it mean to be human, and what are the social, political, economic, and cultural consequences that flow from such an understanding? 2. What counts for knowledge?

This course is a colloquium, which means its purpose is to investigate through the discussion of ideas. Your professors will certainly do their part, but we also expect students to take responsibility for the class. That means – among other things – being actively engaged in discussion. The best way to take this course is to come every day having done the assignment, with an open mind and lively curiosity, and with a readiness to engage, discuss, inquire, question, or think aloud.

Like the other Honors Colloquia, this course is team-taught. Your instructors are (for section HA) Dr. Dermot Quinn (D.Phil, History) & Prof. Chelsea Wegrzyniak (M.A., Philosophy) and (for Section HB) Dr. Arundhati Sanyal, (Ph.D, English) & Dr. Peter Shoemaker (Ph.D., Romance Languages). Please don't hesitate to contact us if there is something you would like to discuss.

Contact Information for Dr. Quinn
Email: dermot.quinn@shu.edu

Contact Information for Dr. Shoemaker:
Email: peter.shoemaker@shu.edu

Contact Information for Dr. Sanyal:
Email: arundhati.sanyal@shu.edu

Contact Information for Prof. Wegrzyniak:
Email: chelsea.wegrzyniak@shu.edu

Course Objectives

1. Through the study of primary texts, to be able to understand the emergence and development of the modern world;
2. To discuss the principal ideas embodied in the texts we have studied;
3. To understand these ideas in their historical contexts, and to be able to compare them with each other;
4. To analyze a primary text and to be able to defend your interpretation based upon the primary source itself;
5. To be able to follow and explain an author's argument or point of view;
6. To compare texts and draw conclusions on the basis of close reading and critical analysis.

Proficiencies: This course satisfies the requirements for both the Critical Thinking and the Reading/Writing proficiencies, which are required as part of the University Core Curriculum. In addition to the content, subject matter, and themes of the course, it is also crucial to develop those skills and practices that help us to develop our abilities to read carefully, understand precisely, and articulate our insights clearly. Not only are these skills cross-disciplinary; they are an essential component in our development as intelligent persons.

To satisfy the requirements for the Reading/Writing proficiency a course must include a significant amount of writing. We are committed to helping students become good writers, and the requirements for this Colloquium have been designed with this goal in mind. Readings for the course are taken entirely from primary sources. This is based on the conviction that it is good to read and analyze the authors' own words, rather than beginning with what others have written about them. A goal of the course is to increase your ability and confidence in being able to read, analyze, and write about primary texts.

It is one thing to run your eyes over the words on a page; it is quite another to read attentively and critically. The Critical Thinking proficiency is geared toward developing your abilities to understand and think through the course readings. This means, among other things, learning to read texts carefully, being able to follow the author's train of thought, becoming attentive to nuance within a text, and being able to articulate your insights clearly and precisely, both in your writing and in class discussion. Critical thinking also means raising questions about what an author has to say. Is the author's point convincing? Why or why not? How does a particular author's point of view compare with that of another author dealing with the same issue? Who do you think is right? Not only is critical thinking an essential component in reading texts; it is also necessary to apply to your own writing, so that what you write comes across as clear, well-organized, and coherent. A number of course assignments are aimed at helping you develop the practice of critical thinking.

Required Texts:

Introduction to Contemporary Civilization in the West (Columbia UP) – ISBN 9780231024235
You should have this already from the second colloquium.

The Colombia Reader (Duke UP) – ISBN 978-0822362289 This text will be used in the fourth colloquium as well.

The Communist Manifesto and Other Revolutionary Writings, ed. Bob Blaisdell (Dover) – ISBN 9780486424651 This text will be used in the fourth colloquium as well

Potter, ***Readings in Epistemology*** (Fordham UP) ISBN 9780823214921

Sources of Chinese Tradition, Volume 2, ed. deBary & Lufrano (Columbia UP) – ISBN 9780231112710 This text will be used in the fourth colloquium as well

Norton Anthology of World Literature, Edition: 4th Vol. C, Ed. Puchner (Norton) – ISBN 978-0-393-60283-8 You should have Edition 4 already if you purchased the 3 volume set for class in freshmen year.

The Norton Anthology of World Religions: Islam, 1st Edition W.W.Norton 978-0-393-91898-4
You should have this already from the second colloquium.

Frankenstein, Mary Shelley, Penguin Paperback Edition– ISBN 9780141439471

Course Packet (to be distributed in class – cost tbd)

You are responsible for having hard copies of the texts with you in class on the days that they are discussed. You are also responsible for keeping track of all changes, including changes to the readings that have been announced in class or by email.

Course Requirements

1. Participation: Class participation counts for 20% of your final grade. This course is meant to be a genuine colloquium: an ongoing conversation about the readings and the questions that arise from them. Your preparation for each conversation will include your reading the assigned texts before the class. Obviously, active participation is important in this type of class, and each person's input is valuable. Come to class prepared to discuss the readings, even if that means just asking relevant questions about material you did not understand. Come to class prepared to be active and engaged. The participation grade depends on both the quality and the quantity of your participation.

Obviously the most basic form of class participation is regular attendance. Attendance is mandatory.

Those who miss either half of class will be considered absent for the entire class. In cases of an extended absence (due to serious illness or emergency) you must notify the Office of Student Affairs so that the office can notify your professors. As a rule, please contact the Office of Student Affairs if you expect to be out for more than 3 consecutive classes. If you are a student athlete, please speak to your professor about how many classes you may need to miss for sporting events. The Athletic Department will reach out to your professor. If you stop attending class, it does not mean you have withdrawn from the course. In order to withdraw you have to fill out a withdrawal form (obtainable from the dean's office or the Honors office). Non-attendance is not withdrawal. Being late 3 times is the equivalent of one absence. This includes returning to class late after the break. Chronic lateness is disrespectful and disruptive of the learning process. While a break is given during class, the timing of the break is at the discretion of your professors. Please take care of personal matters before class (e.g., bathroom, meals, etc.); apart from an emergency there is no good reason to get up and leave the classroom while class is going on. Regardless of the reason (with the exception of those absences for which your professors have received notification from Student Affairs), more than 3 absences will result in a failing grade for class participation; more than 7 absences will result in a failing grade for the course.

Since this is a text-based class, having the required texts with you in class is essential – it is not optional. Bring the necessary hard copies of the texts with you to class; failure to do so will negatively affect your grade, since it indicates a lack of preparedness. Doing work for other classes during this class is unacceptable. Electronic devices (laptops, etc.) may not be used in class except for purposes of quiz or test taking. Please silence your cell phones before class, put them out of sight and do not check for text messages. Texting is appropriate during your private time, but it is disrespectful toward your classmates and teachers when done in class. You are responsible on a daily basis to keep up to date with what is happening in our class.

Criteria for evaluating class participation	Grade Range
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • participates actively and voluntarily every class by contributing to classroom discussion • demonstrates familiarity with readings • insightful • answers questions knowledgeably • asks questions relevant to readings and displaying intellectual curiosity • responds to others' comments with respect and interest • takes responsibility for the success of the class on a daily basis • always has hard copies of the relevant texts present 	A (if all of these criteria are met most of the time)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • participates voluntarily and actively most days and at least every week • shows some familiarity with readings • always has hard copies of the relevant texts present 	B (if all these criteria are met most of the time)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • participates occasionally and/or usually only when called upon • shows some familiarity with reading, but little specific knowledge • does not always have relevant texts with them 	C (if one or more of these criteria are present)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • in general, responds only when called upon • does not ask or answer questions • does not always seem prepared • does not always have relevant texts with them • comes late to class • checks cell phone, does work for other classes • shows lack of respect to classmates or teacher 	D-F (if one or more of these criteria are present)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • has more than the equivalent of 4 absences 	F

A note on email etiquette: When contacting your professors, be sure to address them properly (e.g. Dear Professor..., Hello Dr. ..., Hi Father...) and add your name to the end of the message.

2. Quizzes (20%) There will be a quiz every class. Quizzes may only be made up in cases of illness or when you have an excused absence that you have previously discussed with your teachers. Quizzes must be made up within a week of the date of the missed quiz. No more than three quizzes may be made up during the course of the semester.

3. Papers (20%) Three 5-6-page papers will be assigned during the course of the semester, requiring you to analyze one or more of the primary sources we will be reading for class. You will be given a list of topics from which to choose. These are not a research papers; the goal is to be able to understand the author(s) accurately and to write about the question clearly and with nuance, while being able to substantiate your interpretation by careful and thorough use of textual citations. Papers must be submitted by the end of class on the date is due. Papers submitted after class will be considered late (and will receive a lower grade than they otherwise would have). Do not place papers in your professors' mailboxes or under their office doors.

4. Tests (20%) Three tests will be given during the semester. These tests will involve identification of passages taken from the primary texts we have read, and you will be required to name the author, the work from which it is taken, and to explain what it means in its context.

5. Final Exam (20%) The final exam for the course will be oral. It will be based upon comprehensive questions provided in advance. Individual exam appointments will be arranged, and the exams will be offered at several times during the final exam period.

Violations of Academic Integrity

Cheating means the giving, receiving, taking, or purchasing of any information or written work not your own during exams or on any written assignments.

Plagiarism means copying the ideas and/or language of any source without acknowledging that source, without proper quotation of any language (even single words or short phrases) taken directly from that source, and without citation of all paraphrased as well as quoted ideas from that source. Plagiarism occurs when anyone attempts to present the published or unpublished work (ideas and/or language) of any person as his or her own.

Penalties: To be determined at the discretion of your instructors. Among the possibilities would be that those found to be guilty of cheating or plagiarism the first time would receive a 0 (zero) for the assignment; the second time, automatic failure for the course; the third time, recommendation to the dean for expulsion.

Grading scale

93-100 A	90-92 A-	86-89 B +	83-85 B	80-82 B-
76-79 C +	73-75 C	70-72 C-	66-69 D +	63-65 D
60-62 D-	0-59 F			

Disability Services Statement: Students at Seton Hall University who have a physical, medical, learning or psychiatric disability, either temporary or permanent, may be eligible for reasonable accommodations at the University as per the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and/or Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. In order to receive such accommodations, students must identify themselves at the Office of Disability Support Services (DSS), provide appropriate documentation and collaborate with the development of an accommodation plan. The DSS phone number is 973-313-6003. For further information, please go to <http://studentaffairs.shu.edu/health/DisabilitySupportServices.html>.

Course Schedule

DATE	
Tues., Aug. 26	What's modern about the modern world? The World of the Reformation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Luther, <i>On Christian Liberty</i>, Introduction to Contemporary Civilizations in the West (hereafter, ICCW) 717-728 Luther, <i>Address to the Nobility of the German Nation</i> ICCW 702-704, 713-17; "On Temporal Authority" Course packet (hereafter CP) 1-4
Thurs. Aug. 28	The Reformation of the World <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Calvin, <i>Institutes of the Christian Religion</i>, ICCW 731-751 St. Ignatius of Loyola, Thinking with the Church, ICCW 767-773 The Council of Trent (ICCW 770-773)
Tues., Sept. 2	Conquest, Conversion, and Encounter in New Spain <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Instructions to Nicolas de Ovanda, Governor of Hispaniola, from King Ferdinand and Isabella, CP 5-6 Sepulveda, <i>Democrates Alter</i>, ICCW 523-529 Las Casas, <i>Apologetic History of the Indies, Thirty Very Juridical Propositions, A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies</i>, ICCW 530-43, Norton Anthology of World Literature (hereafter NAWL) 566-571 Gonzales Jimenez de Quesada, "One After Another, they All Fell under Your Majesty's Rule," Colombia Reader 22-33
Thurs., Sept. 4	Early Modern England: Divine Right or Democracy? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Queen Elizabeth I speech to the troops at Tilbury, 1588, CP 7 King James I, <i>The Trew Law of Free Monarchies</i>, ICCW 923-931 "An Agreement of the People," ICCW 941-957
Tues., Sept 9	Early Modern France: The Creation of the Sovereign State <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cardinal Richelieu, <i>Political Testament</i>, ICCW 867-871 Montaigne, "Intro" and "To the Reader," NAWL 318-321; "That it is Folly to Measure Truth and Error by Our Own Capacity," CP 8-10 Fenelon ICCW 880-885 <i>The Jesuit Relations</i>, CP 11-21
Thurs., Sept. 11	A New Science of Politics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hobbes, <i>Leviathan</i>, ICCW 961-972, 979-993

DATE	
Tues., Sept. 16	Late Ming and Early Qing China <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chinese responses to early Christian contacts, Sources of Chinese Tradition, Volume II (hereafter SCT) 142-154 The Chinese Rites Controversy, CP 22-23 Yuan Huang, Ledger of Merit and Demerit, Sources of Chinese Tradition, Volume I, 906-911 (<i>note that this is taken from Volume I</i>) Huang Zongxi, <i>Waiting for the Dawn</i>, SCT 4-12 Wang Fuzhi, selections, SCT 26-35
Thurs., Sept. 18	Politics and Property <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Locke, <i>Second Treatise of Government</i>, ICCW 1010-1025, 1032-1039, 1044-1053
Tues., Sept. 23	A Revolution in Science <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bacon, <i>Novum Organum, The Advancement of Learning</i>, CP 24, Readings in Epistemology (hereafter RE) 3-10 Galileo, <i>The Assayer, Letter to Grand Duchess Christina</i> ICCW 786-799 Bellarmino, "Letter on Galileo's Theories," CP 25-26 Newton, <i>Principia</i>, ICCW 849-852 First Paper Due
Thurs., Sept. 25	Rationalism and Method <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Descartes, <i>Discourse on Method, Meditations on the First Philosophy</i>, RE 19-33, 35-43, 46-53
Tues., Sept. 30	Europeans and Ottomans <ul style="list-style-type: none"> De Busbecq, <i>The Turkish Letters</i>, CP 27- 28 Celebi, <i>The Book of Travels</i>, NAWL 70-75 Lady Montagu, <i>Turkish Embassy Letters</i>, CP 29-36 Pasha, <i>The Book of Counsel for Viziers and Governors</i>, CP 37-40 Status of Christians & Jews 1772, CP 41-43 Test 1
Thurs. Oct. 2	Has modern society made us better? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kant, "What is Enlightenment," CP 44-47 Rousseau, <i>Discourse on the Origins of Inequality, The Social Contract</i>, The Communist Manifesto and Other Revolutionary Writings (hereafter CMRW) 1-19; ICCW 1269-1282, 1295-1306
Tues., Oct. 7	Empiricism and Skepticism <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hume, <i>An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding</i>, RE 129-152

DATE	
Thurs., Oct. 9	Reason and Its Limits <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kant, <i>Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics, Critique of Pure Reason, Preface to the First Edition, Preface to the Second Edition</i>, RE 155-171, 188-201
Tues, Oct. 14	FALL BREAK
Thurs., Oct. 16	Qing China: tradition and adaptation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Sacred Edict, SCT 70-72 Chen Hongmou, selections, SCT 156-168 Hong Liangji, selections, SCT 172-179 Emperor Qian Long, "Letter to King George III," CP 48-50
Tues., Oct. 21	Money and Morals <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Smith, <i>The Theory of Moral Sentiments, The Wealth of Nations</i>, CP 53-57; ICCW 1314-1333
Thurs., Oct. 23	The Holy Spirit in Colombia and Mexico <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Anna Maria Splendiani and Tulio Aristizabal, <i>Miracles Made Possible</i>, Colombia Reader 105-109 Francisca Josefa Castillo, <i>My Soul Impoverished and Unclothed</i>, Colombia Reader 110-112 Sor Juana de la Cruz, <i>You Foolish Men</i>, CP 51 Sor Juana de la Cruz, <i>Reply to Sor Filotea</i>, CP 52
Tues., Oct. 28	Revolution: Those Unruly Colonies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Paine, "Appendix to Common Sense," CMRW 56-62 Jefferson, "A Summary View of the Rights of British America," CMRW 41-55 Gordon and Trenchard, <i>Cato's Letters</i>, CP 58-64 <p>Second paper due</p>
Thurs., Oct. 30	Revolution: Liberté, égalité, fraternité! <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sieyes, What Is The Third Estate? CMRW 70-74 Decree upon the National Assembly, CMRW 75-76 The Tennis Court Oath, CMRW 77-78 Marat, "Are We Undone?" CMRW 82-84 "La Marseillaise," CP 65-66 <p>Test 2</p>

DATE	
Tues., Nov. 4	Virtue, Terror and Slavery in France and Haiti <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Burke, <i>Reflections on the Revolution in France</i>, CP 67-73 Robespierre, "Speech on the Principles of Political Morality," CP 74-77 Ottobah Cugoana, "Thoughts and Sentiments on the Evil of Slavery," CP 78-81 Toussaint L'Ouverture, Final Declaration 1801, CP 82-83 Anonymous, "The Revolution in Saint-Dominique..." CP 84-90 Wordsworth, To Toussaint L'Ouverture, CP 91
Thurs., Nov. 6	Rights Talk <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Declaration of Independence, CMORW 63-66 Madison, <i>The Federalist</i>, no. 10, ICCW 1307-1313 The Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, CMORW 79-81 Wollstonecraft, <i>The Vindication of the Rights of Women</i>, CP 92-97
Tues., Nov. 11	The Emergence of Nationalism <ul style="list-style-type: none"> DeMaistre, <i>Considerations on France, Study on Sovereignty</i>, CP 98-99 Fichte, <i>Addresses to the German Nation</i>, CP 100-102 Hegel, <i>Introduction to the Philosophy of History</i>, CP 103-107
Thurs., Nov. 13	Bolivar and South American Independence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To Santafé! To Santafé!, Colombia Reader 182-188 Gregorio José Rodríguez Carrillo, Bishop of Cartagena, A King of Cups, Colombia Reader 113-117 Bolivar, "War to the Death," Colombia Reader 328-330 Bolivar, <i>Address to the Congress of Angostura</i>, 1819, CP 108-114 Bolivar "Letter to General Juan Jose Flores, 9 November 1830," CP 115 <p>Third paper due</p>
Tues., Nov. 18	Romanticism and Science <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mary Shelley, <i>Frankenstein</i>
Thurs., Nov. 20	The Romantic Sensibility I <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rousseau, <i>The Confessions</i>, CP 116 Wordsworth <i>Lines Written a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey...</i>, CP 117-120 John Keats, <i>Ode to Autumn</i>, CP 121 Goethe, <i>Poetry and Truth, Conversations with Eckermann</i>, CP 122-125

DATE	
Tuesday, Nov. 25	The Romantic Sensibility II Romanticism in Music: Professor Dena Levine <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schiller, Ode to Joy, CP 126-127 • Adam Mickiewicz, Selections, CP 128 • Thomas Moore, The Last Rose of Summer, CP 129 • Percy Bysshe Shelley, Ozymandias, CP 130 • Margaret Fuller, <i>Meditations</i> and <i>Flaxman</i>, CP 131-133 • Samuel Taylor Coleridge, <i>Frost at Midnight</i>, CP 134-135
Thurs. Nov. 27	THANKSGIVING
Tues., Dec. 2	Modernity and the Middle East <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Al Wahhab, <i>The History and Doctrines of the Wahhabis</i>, Norton Islam 250-56 • Ottoman Imperial Proclamation “The French Revolution Refuted,” CP 136 • Al-Jabarti, <i>Chronicles</i>, Norton Islam 518-26 • Al-Tahtawi, <i>The Extraction of Gold or an Overview of Paris, The Honest Guide for Girls and Boys</i>, CP 137-143 • The Gülhane Decree, CP 144-147
Thurs., Dec. 4	The ambivalence of modern democracy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tocqueville, <i>Democracy in America</i>, selections, CP 148-162 Test 3