

## Cultural Foundations I: Desire



“Eros,” ca. 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C.E., Greek, Walters Museum, Baltimore

**Class meets:** Tu/Thu 2:00-3:15 and 3:30-4:45

**Room:** 2:00-3:15 meets in 7E12 Rm. 121; 3:30-4:45 meets in Silver Center Rm. 409

**Professor:** Stefanie Goyette

**Office hours:** Tuesdays 10:00-1:45, and by appointment - <http://stefaniegoyette.youcanbook.me>

**Office:** Room 668 (Liberal Studies Dept., 726 Broadway, 6th Floor)

### Course Description:

In this course, we will explore major themes in art, literature, philosophy, religion, and culture from the earliest material and textual evidence of human social groups (about 30,000 B.C.E.) through Late Antiquity (about 700 C.E.).

❖ We will follow the thread of “Desire” in its many guises:

- As the primordial motive force of Eros, witnessing the creation of the world in Hesiod’s *Theogony*.
- As desire for knowledge and wisdom in Plato’s *Symposium*.
- As polymorphous sexual and romantic desire that may disguise social and political themes in the poetry of the Zhou era in China.
- As fragmentation, in Sappho’s lyric.
- As friendship and a thirst for glory, in *Gilgamesh* and *The Iliad*.
- As the desire for life eternal, in ancient Egyptian art and poetry.

In each of these objects of study, we will endeavor to glimpse our own desires to create, preserve, and experience art, and to analyze the ways that art produces desire. Our class objectives will be supported by group and individual visits to the art historical and anthropological resources New York has to offer, such as the Metropolitan Museum.

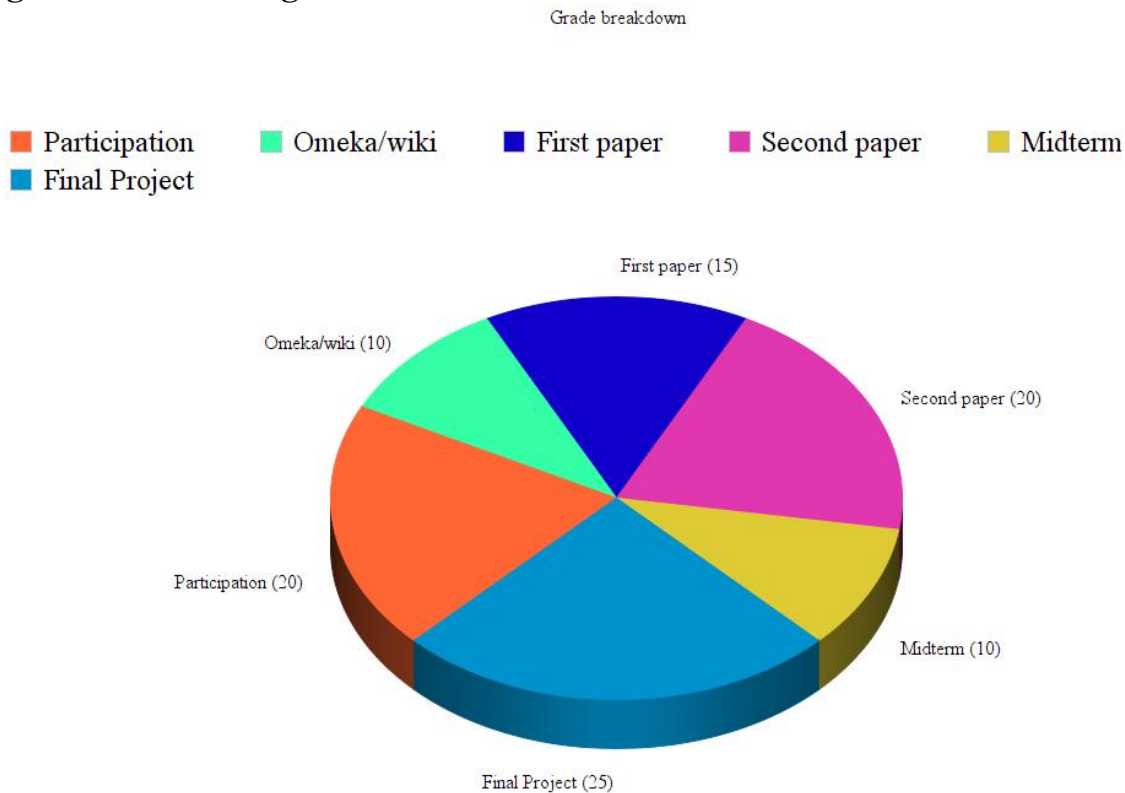
## Course Objectives

This is a Liberal Studies class: this means that you will learn to read, think, and write critically about global cultures individually and comparatively. You will also gain visual literacy and work on developing a critical apparatus for evaluating historical and cultural claims. Finally, you will develop increased awareness of *material, historical, and cultural conditions for the transmission of cultural objects both from the perspective of the culture that originates such objects and the one that consumes them.*

## Texts (please purchase only these editions, but feel free to buy used):

- **COURSEPACK:** \$40, available by the last week of August at Unique Copy at 252 Greene St, New York, NY 10003
- *Gilgamesh: A New English Version*, ed. Stephen Mitchell (Atria)
- Sophocles, *Three Theban Plays*, trans. Robert Fagles (Penguin Classics)
- Homer, *The Iliad*, trans. Richmond Lattimore (UChicago Press)
- Plato, *The Symposium*, trans. Christopher Gill (Penguin Classics)
- *The Bhagavad Gita*, trans. Patton (Penguin Classics)
- Any version of the New Revised Standard Version Bible (Oxford Study Bible is a good choice)
- All “Classes” readings will be posted under “Resources” (on the left-hand bar)

## Assignments & Grading:



- Attendance, preparation, active participation (includes 5% for class note taking\*) – 20%
  - Attend classes on time. **3 absences are allowed, no questions asked – this includes sick days, so plan accordingly.** More than 3 absences, unless for serious illness, will lower your grade one degree (A to B), more than 6 will result in a failing grade. **Notify me in advance of absences for religious holidays.**
  - About 40-50 pages of reading or equivalent viewing per week, longer assignments will be signaled in advance
  - \*Each student will act as designated class note-taker once over the course of the semester. The class notes will be posted to a shared Google Doc. Detailed instructions will be provided in the first week of class.
  - Passage preparation and reading questions for each class
  - Occasional reading quizzes
- Omeka/wiki contributions (detailed instructions will be provided) – 10%
- First paper or creative assignment, with revisions – 15%
- Second paper or creative assignment – 20%
- Midterm exam – 10%
- Final project or paper (counts as final exam) – 25%

#### Grading scale:

A	93.5-100	C	73-76.9
A-	90-93.5	C-	70-72.9
B+	87-89.9	D+	67-69.9
B	83-86.9	D	60-66.9
B-	80-82.9		
C+	77-79.9	F	less than 60%

#### Academic Integrity and Language Policy:

Carefully review <http://www.nyu.edu/about/policies-guidelines-compliance/policies-and-guidelines/academic-integrity-for-students-at-nyu.html>

- Plagiarism in any form (buying papers, copying online sources, citing without acknowledgment, etc.) is not tolerated. However, working with other students and exchanging essays for editing is encouraged, as long as topics, ideas, and language are original and individual.

#### Technology Policy:

Class discussion and attention to peers is essential – no laptops or phones permitted unless for specific assignments. I will ask you in advance to bring laptops if needed.

**Differently Abled Students:** Students needing special accommodations in this class are encouraged to contact the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities at (212) 998-4980 as soon as possible to ensure that such accommodations are implemented in a timely fashion. For more information, see the CSD website. <http://www.nyu.edu/life/safety-health-wellness/students-with-disabilities.html>

**Weekly schedule: subject to change. Changes may be communicated to you in-class or via email. All assignments, including videos, are obligatory unless noted here or in class.**

Week 1	<p><b>9/6 Introduction: Stone Soup</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paleolithic and neolithic art, cave painting, the “Magdalenian Bestiary”</li> <li>• Clip from Werner Herzog’s <i>Cave of Forgotten Dreams</i></li> <li>• Tablets, manuscripts, temples, pyramids from around the world</li> </ul> <p><b>9/8 Sex and Death: Inanna and Persephone</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reading: <i>The Descent of Inanna</i> (please print and bring to class)</li> </ul>
Week 2	<p><b>Friendship and Glory: <i>The Epic of Gilgamesh</i></b> (stories of Gilgamesh date to 2<sup>nd</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup> millennium B.C.E, c. 1200 B.C.E. for the standard version)</p> <p><b>9/13 Session 1:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Readings: <i>Gilgamesh</i>, Parts 1-3</li> <li>• Viewing: <i>Invitation to World Literature: The Epic of Gilgamesh</i>  <a href="http://www.learner.org/resources/series212.html">http://www.learner.org/resources/series212.html</a></li> </ul> <p><b>9/15 Session 2:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Readings: <i>Gilgamesh</i>, Parts 3-7</li> <li>• Optional resource: The Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature  <a href="http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/">http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/</a></li> </ul>
Week 3	<p><b>Desire, Birth, and Origins: Greek, Hindu, and Hebrew Accounts:</b></p> <p><b>9/20 Session 1: Greece</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Readings: Selections from <i>Theogony</i>, by Hesiod (Greek mythographer, 8<sup>th</sup> c. B.C.E.) (Coursepack)</li> </ul> <p><b>9/22 Session 2: Mesopotamia</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Readings: Selected hymns from <i>The Rig Veda</i> (c. 1000 B.C.E.) (Coursepack) and Hebrew Scriptures, “Genesis” 1-3 (c. 900-100 B.C.E.) (in your NSRV Bible)</li> <li>• Listen: BBC’s “In Our Time” Podcast on “Hindu Ideas of Creation”  <a href="http://bbc.in/1b7X5un">http://bbc.in/1b7X5un</a></li> <li>• Optional reading: “The Enuma Elish” (Babylonian creation myth, 12-14<sup>th</sup> c. B.C.E. <a href="http://www.etana.org/node/581">http://www.etana.org/node/581</a>)</li> </ul>
Week 4	<p><b>MET TRIP WILL BE THIS SATURDAY (10/1) or SUNDAY (10/2)– PUT IT IN YOUR SCHEDULE</b></p> <p><b>Art and Life Eternal</b></p> <p><b>9/27 WRITING WORKSHOP – come with ideas about paper 1</b></p> <p>Session 1: Old Kingdom Egyptian Art and Architecture</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reading/Viewing: Gardner’s <i>Art Through the Ages</i> Chapter 3: “Egypt Under the Pharaohs” (Classes)</li> <li>• Video: TBA (Classes)</li> </ul> <p><b>9/29 Session 2: Shared Worlds of the Living and the Dead in Egyptian Art and Architecture – Workshop and Discussion</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reading: Selections of the <i>Book of the Dead</i> (Coursepack)</li> </ul>

Week 5	<p><b>Community and Justice</b></p> <p><b>10/4</b> Session 1: Sophocles, <i>Antigone</i> (Greek, 441 B.C.E.) (in <i>Three Theban Plays</i>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Readings: Lines 1-666</li> </ul> <p><b>10/6</b> Session 2: Sophocles, continued</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Readings: Lines 667-end</li> <li>• Resources: Reading of “Antigone” with the Partially Examined Life Podcast crew and Lucy Lawless:  <a href="http://www.partiallyexaminedlife.com/2015/06/08/antigone-lucy-lawless-paul-provenza/">http://www.partiallyexaminedlife.com/2015/06/08/antigone-lucy-lawless-paul-provenza/</a>; Episode 117 (2 parts) of the PEL on “Antigone” and philosophy:  <a href="http://www.partiallyexaminedlife.com/2015/06/15/ep117-1-sophocles-antigone/">http://www.partiallyexaminedlife.com/2015/06/15/ep117-1-sophocles-antigone/</a> ;  <a href="http://www.partiallyexaminedlife.com/2015/06/15/ep117-2-sophocles-antigone/">http://www.partiallyexaminedlife.com/2015/06/15/ep117-2-sophocles-antigone/</a></li> </ul>
Week 6	<p><b>The Uses of Poetry, the Uses of Desire</b></p> <p><b>10/11</b> ***1<sup>st</sup> Writing Assignment DUE***</p> <p>Session 1: Who is the I?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Readings: Sappho (Greece – Lesbos, Aeolic Greek, 7<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> cent. B.C.E.) (Coursepack); Hebrew Scriptures, Song of Songs (in your NRSV Bible)</li> </ul> <p><b>10/13</b></p> <p>***2<sup>nd</sup> Writing Project Assigned***</p> <p>Session 2: What is the I?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Readings: Selected poems from the Book of Songs (Coursepack)</li> <li>• <b>Midterm review</b></li> </ul>
<b>Week 7 Midterm</b>	<p><b>10/18 – Midterm Exam</b></p> <p><b>10/20 – Catch-up day – no new reading</b></p>
Week 8	<p><b>Sex or Something Like It</b></p> <p><b>10/25</b> Session 1: Apuleius (Roman Empire, Latin, c. 124-170 B.C.E.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Readings: “Cupid and Psyche,” from <i>The Golden Ass</i> (Coursepack)</li> </ul> <p><b>10/27</b> Session 2: Plato (Greece, Greek, 5<sup>th</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> cent. B.C.E.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Readings: Plato’s <i>Symposium</i></li> </ul>
Week 9	<p><b>11/1 Catch up day – no new reading</b></p> <p><b>Desiring and Letting Go: Christian Accounts</b></p> <p>***2<sup>nd</sup> Writing Project DUE***</p> <p><b>11/3</b> Session 1: Introduction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Readings: Selections from the New Testament, “Gospel of Mark” (Palestine, Greek, 1<sup>st</sup> cent. C.E.) (in your NSRV Bible)</li> <li>• Viewing: Early Christian art, Byzantine Icons (Classes)</li> </ul>

Week 10	<b>Desiring and Letting Go: Hindu Accounts</b> <b>11/8</b> Session 1: Epic as religious scripture <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Readings: Selections from Book 2 of the <i>Mahabharata</i> (India, Sanskrit, origins 8<sup>th</sup>/9<sup>th</sup> cent. B.C.E., earliest versions c. 400 B.C.E.) (Coursepack)</li> </ul> <b>11/10</b> Session 2: Women and power <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Readings: Selections from Book 2 of the <i>Mahabharata</i> (Coursepack)</li> </ul>
Week 11	<b>Desiring and Letting Go: Hindu Narrative and Theology</b> <b>11/15</b> Session 1: Dharma <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Selections from the “Bhagavad Gita,” Book 6 of the <i>Mahabharata</i></li> </ul> <b>11/17</b> Session 2: Gods Incarnate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Selections from the “Bhagavad Gita,” Book 6 of the <i>Mahabharata</i></li> </ul> ***Final project workshop***: Prepare your ideas
Break	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>***Thanksgiving Break***</b></li> <li><b>No classes 11/23 – 11/27</b></li> </ul>
Week 12	<b>Sculpting the Heroic Friendship</b> <b>11/29</b> Session 1: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Readings: Selections of <i>The Iliad</i> (Greek, 8<sup>th</sup> cent. B.C.E.)</li> <li>Viewing: Greek and Roman sculpture (Classes)</li> </ul> <b>12/1</b> Session 2: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Readings: Selections of <i>The Iliad</i></li> <li>Viewing: Greek vase paintings (Classes)</li> </ul>
Week 13	<b>12/6 Session 1</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Readings: Selections of <i>The Iliad</i> ; Simone Weil, “The Iliad or the Poem of Force” (Coursepack)</li> </ul> <b>12/8 Session 2</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Readings: Selections of <i>The Iliad</i></li> </ul>
Week 14	<b>12/13 NO CLASS – LEGISLATIVE DAY</b>  <b>12/15 LAST CLASS</b> <b>***Final project discussion and final class***</b>
Final Exam	<i>Final project counts as final exam. Due date TBA.</i>

## Class Requirements: CHECKLIST

- **Attendance:** After the first 2-3 weeks of class, I do not take verbal attendance, but I note in my grade book whether you are present or not. You have three allowed absences, no questions asked. THESE INCLUDE SICK DAYS, so plan accordingly.
- **Notify me in advance of absences for religious holidays.** You are not required to specify your faith or the nature/name of the holiday if you do not want to do so.
- **If you miss class:** You are responsible for catching up on reading and obtaining notes from your classmates. It is important to do this, since we often discuss writing assignments in class, and you may miss vital clarifications. If you have questions, check the syllabus and course website on Classes for information, then ask a classmate. If you cannot find the answer by any of these means, email me.
- **Reading quizzes:** Your three allowed absences include a dropped reading quiz grade for that day.
- **Participation:** Good participation includes preparedness (having completed reading and viewing assignments) and active participation in discussion. I give a daily percentage grade for participation and it is a major part of the final grade.
- **Readings:** Come to class with your Coursepack or purchased book. On days when the assignment is available through Classes, you may bring your laptop, tablet, or a printout. If you do not have your text or a way to access it, you will be asked to leave.
- **Assignments:** You are responsible for handing in assignments on-time in the format called for by the assignment description. All assignment descriptions will be handed out in paper form and posted to the website (under “Resources”). I give extensions willingly IF you contact me in advance of the due date. The earlier the better. No extensions will be given after a missed due date.
- **Technology:** No cell phones, please. The class is only an hour and fifteen minutes long. Those texts can wait. Laptops are permitted on days when the reading is not included in the Coursepack or in a purchased book. On those days, please use your laptop responsibly.
- **Exams:** The midterm must be taken in our classroom on the day it is scheduled.
- **Food and drink:** Food and drink are permitted in class within reason. I occasionally provide snacks for the class – please inform me of any food allergies.