



Texts and Ideas: Power, Political Leadership, and the Renaissance

Course Number
CORE 9400 F01

Brightspace course site <https://brightspace.nyu.edu/d2l/home/347536>

Spring 2024

Please contact florence.academicsupport@nyu.edu if you have trouble accessing the Brightspace site.

Syllabus last updated on: 22-01-2024

Lecturer Contact Information

Matteo GIGLIOLI

matteo.giglioli@nyu.edu

OH: Tuesdays & Thursdays, 1:30pm to 2:30pm (by appointment), Villa Ulivi, office 5

Prerequisites

None

Units earned

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Course Details

- Class meeting day/time: Tuesdays & Thursdays, 3:00pm to 4:15pm
- All times are Central European Time (CET). Please note that in Europe, Daylight Saving Time begins on Sunday, March 31, 2024 and clocks will be set one hour forward.
- Location: Villa Natalia, Room INCONT.
- COVID-related details: In the interest of protecting the NYU Florence community, we are closely following CDC and local guidance around COVID-19 and adjusting our recommendations and policies accordingly. Your health and well-being are our top priority.

Course Description

Politics is about power and leadership, but over whom? Historically, political communities have been united by language, religion, and culture in complex ways and with long-term consequences. The course aims to explore these relationships. It is an overview of topics in intellectual history, presented through a close reading of major texts in the Western canon. The overarching theme is community in its many shifting incarnations, considered both in their cultural and political significance. The readings are clustered around four key historical



periods: Classical Antiquity, the Italian Renaissance, the English Civil War, and the French Revolution. The study of philosophical and literary sources will be complemented by reference to works in the visual arts present in the city of Florence, with a view to explore the importance of imagery in personifying communities. Students will gain a broad exposure to traditional forms of conceiving of nation, people, and country.

Texts and Ideas introduces students to the ideals of liberal education and the central role of humanistic study in the liberal arts and fosters appreciation of the importance of humanistic learning for society at large. Students become acquainted with some of the literary and philosophical works that have been most influential in shaping the contemporary world and with significant instances in which the ideas in these works have been debated, developed, appropriated, or rejected. Texts and Ideas is an examination of how texts influence subsequent thinking, create traditions, and reflect societal ideals. Texts and Ideas thus aims to provide a richer understanding of how cultures are constructed, modified, and represented.

Course Objectives

- Introduce students to different methodologies and forms of textual analysis.
- Acquaint students with certain seminal texts, following the arc of intellectual traditions.
- Explore how literary genre and cultural context affect the transmission of ideas over time.
- Encourage critical reflection on the role of humanistic study for ethical and civic growth.
- Recognize the areas of conflict and exclusion embedded in the Western canon, as well as the resources present within it to overcome them.

Examples of some questions we will ask in this course are:

- Who is part of the political community?
- What is the relationship between political belonging and war?
- How has the notion of political identity changed over time?
- Are strong ties necessary for a thriving society?
- How important is historical tradition for political life?
- What makes the government of a political community legitimate?
- How are images connected to collective identities and group stereotypes?

Assessment Components

Assessment will be based on in-class participation and six pieces of individual work; their relative contribution to the overall class grade is as follows:

- Participation: 15%
- Critical analysis take-home paper 1: 10%
- Critical analysis take-home paper 2: 10%
- Critical analysis take-home paper 3: 10%
- In-class midterm: 20%
- In-class presentation: 10%
- Final take-home paper: 25%

– The critical analysis take-home papers are short (3-4 pp.) pieces of writing, asking students to reflect upon certain texts and themes discussed in each third of the course. The topics will be circulated between sessions 9 and 10, 17 and 18, and 26 and 27 in weeks V, IX, and XIII, respectively, and the assignments will be due exactly 48 hours later, at the end of those same weeks, i.e. on **Friday, February 23rd**, **Friday, March 29th**, and **Friday, April 26th**, at **4:15pm**.

– The midterm is a 75-minute, closed-book exam with multiple short essay questions related to material in the first part of the course; it will be held in session 15, i.e. on **March 12th**.



– The in-class presentation is a 10-minute, 5-slide oral account of an individual research activity linking a theme or reading in the course with an element of the built environment of Florence. Presentations will be scheduled in sessions throughout the **second half of the semester**. The rest of the class will be expected to participate actively in the discussion of the presentations: feedback on presentations by others will be a major component of each student's in-class participation grade.

– The final paper is a 7-to-8-page essay covering the reading and in-class discussion material from the course. No further reading or bibliographical research is required. The topic will be circulated on **April 26th** and the assignment will be due two weeks later, on **Friday, May 10th at 4:15pm**.

In addition to the mandatory assignments, the assessment structure for the course allows for optional **extra-credit work** worth up to 5% additional points in the final grade. Extra credit will accrue for completion of multimedia projects linked to the topics of the course. Extra credit activities will be available in the second half of the semester. Details will be circulated by the instructor in class.

You are expected to attend class in person. Failure to submit or fulfill any required component may result in failure of the class, regardless of grades achieved in other assignments.

Midterm and Final Exams recap:

- Midterm: 12 March 2024, timed exam in class (75 minutes)
- Final: 26 April – 10 May 2024, take-home paper

Attendance Policy

Studying at Global Academic Centers is an academically intensive and immersive experience, in which students from a wide range of backgrounds exchange ideas in discussion-based seminars. Learning in such an environment depends on the active participation of all students. Since classes typically meet once or twice a week, even a single absence can cause a student to miss a significant portion of a course. To ensure the integrity of this academic experience, class attendance at the centers is expected promptly when class begins. Attendance will be checked at each class meeting. Site visits and field trips are considered regular class meetings and the attendance policies outlined here apply equally to these as well.

Regardless of whether an absence is excused or not, it is the student's responsibility to recoup the work that was missed by getting notes from a classmate and consulting with your faculty member. Remember: Not all class activities can be made up and frequent absences may affect the participation, commitment or engagement component of the final grade.

Unexcused absences may be penalized with a two percent deduction on the participation, commitment or engagement component of the final grade for every week's worth of classes missed. Four unexcused absences in one course may lead to a Fail in that course. Being more than 15 minutes late counts as an unexcused absence. Furthermore, your professor is entitled to deduct points if you frequently join the class late.

As soon as you become aware that you cannot attend a class, you must immediately inform your professor and the Office of Academic Support. Absences are only excused if they are due to illness, Moses Center accommodations, religious observance or emergencies. **Exams, tests, quizzes, oral presentations, and other important deadlines that are missed due to illness always require a doctor's note as documentation to be**



submitted to the Office of Academic Support. For regular class sessions, health-related absences require a doctor's note to be submitted only if you miss four consecutive days due to illness. To have these absences excused, please send the doctor's note via email to the Office of Academic Support at florence.academicssupport@nyu.edu.

Please note that absences cannot be excused retroactively.

****If there is a pattern of single day non consecutive absences for health reasons over the course of the semester, you may be contacted by the Academics team.****

Religious Holidays

Members of any religious group may, without penalty, excuse themselves from classes when required in compliance with their religious obligations. Students who anticipate being absent due to religious observance should notify their professor and the Office of Academic Support in writing via email to florence.academicssupport@nyu.edu one week in advance. If examinations or assignment deadlines are scheduled on the day the student will be absent, the Academics Office will schedule a make-up examination or extend the deadline for assignments. **Please note that an absence is only excused for the holiday but not for any days of travel that may come before and/or after the holiday. See also [Religious Accommodations at NYU](#). If you have further questions, please do not hesitate to contact religiousaccommodations@nyu.edu**

Final exams

Final exams must be taken at their designated times. Should there be a conflict between your final exams, please bring this to the attention of the Academics team. Final exams may not be taken early, and students should not plan to leave the site before the end of the finals period.

The complete Global Attendance Policy is posted in the Academic Policies tab in Brightspace and on the [NYU Florence Student Portal](#) website. After you have read and reviewed the policies, if there is anything that still needs further clarification or raises a question, please reach out to florence.academicssupport@nyu.edu.

Late Submission of Work

Please refer to Academic Policies in [Brightspace](#).

Teaching & Learning Philosophy

Students learn in a variety of ways: some intelligences are more visual, others text-based; some prefer individual reflection, others open debate; some shine in research, others in careful study of evidence provided; some enjoy the systematic nature of learning, others thrive by questioning. In an introductory course, it is optimal, both for the purpose of transmission of knowledge and for assessment, to offer a broad scope of different activities that will allow most to experience some pedagogical mode familiar to them, while challenging all to broaden their analytic and communication skills.

Required Text(s)

The texts covered by the course come in a wide variety of editions and translations. Students may use editions of their choosing, as they see fit. The editions that will be quoted



from in the lectures and that are made available through the NYU library system are as follows:

- Coogan, M.D., Brettler, M.Z., Newsom, C.A., Perkins, P. (Eds.), 2010. *The New Oxford Annotated Bible: New Revised Standard Version with the Apocrypha*. Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Aeschylus, 1996. *Persians*. Edith Hall translation, Aris and Phillips, Warminster.
- Herodotus, 2008. *The Histories*. Robin Waterfield translation, Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Virgil, 2006. *The Aeneid*. Robert Fagles translation, Viking, New York, NY.
- Aquinas, T., 1982. *On Kingship to the King of Cyprus*. Gerald Phelan translation, Pontifical Inst. of Mediaeval Studies, Toronto, ON.
- Machiavelli, N., 1998. *The Prince*. Harvey Mansfield translation, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, IL.
- Machiavelli, N., 1988. *Florentine Histories*. Banfield & Mansfield translation, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ.
- Guicciardini, F., 1990. *Maxims and Reflections*. Mario Domandi translation, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, PA.
- Tasso, T., 2000. *Jerusalem Delivered*. Anthony Esolen translation, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, MD.
- Milton, J., 1909. *The Complete Poems of John Milton*. Charles Eliot edition, Collier & Son, New York, NY.
- Hobbes, T., 1998. *De Cive; or, the Citizen*. Tuck & Silverthorne translation, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Rousseau, J.-J., 1987. *Basic Political Writings*. Donald Cress translation, Hackett, Indianapolis, IN.
- Wollstonecraft, M., 2004. *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. Miriam Brody edition, Penguin Books, London.
- James, C.L.R., 1963. *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution*. Vintage Books, New York, NY.
- Renan, E., 2018. *What Is a Nation? And Other Political Writings*. Matteo Giglioli translation, Columbia University Press, New York, NY.

All readings are available online on the NYU Brightspace course site. Hard copies of some textbooks are available for consultation and semester-long loans in the [Villa Ulivi Library](#). Please email florence.library@nyu.edu to reserve a copy. To request scans from books on reserve please fill out the [Ulivi Library Book Scan Form](#).

Supplemental Text(s) (not required to purchase)

Students may find the following general and reference texts helpful for background knowledge. They are available through the NYU library system.

- The Oxford Classical Dictionary.
- A. Classen (ed.), *Handbook of Medieval Culture*, De Gruyter.
- J. Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*.
- M. Bennett (ed.), *Historical Dictionary of the British & Irish Civil Wars*, Rowman & Littlefield.
- D. Brewer (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the French Enlightenment*.



| Session/date | Topics | Readings | Assignments |
|---|----------------------------------|--|--|
| Session 1 23 January 2024 | Course introduction. | / | |
| Session 2 25 January 2024 | The Old Testament. | <i>The Book of Judith.</i> | |
| Session 3 30 January 2024 | Aeschylus. | <i>Persians.</i> | |
| Session 4 1 February 2024 | Herodotus. | <i>Histories</i> , book V. | |
| Session 5 6 February 2024 | Virgil. | <i>Aeneid</i> , books I-IV. | |
| Session 6 8 February 2024 | Virgil. | | |
| Session 7 13 February 2024 | Aquinas. | <i>On Kingship.</i> | |
| Session 8 15 February 2024 | Aquinas. | | |
| Session 9 20 February 2024 21 February 2024 | Machiavelli. | <i>Florentine Histories</i> , books III-IV. | Critical analysis paper 1 topic circulated |
| Session 10 22 February 2024 23 February 2024 | Site visit: Orsanmichele. | | Critical analysis paper 1 due, 4:15pm |
| Session 11 27 February 2024 | Machiavelli. | <i>The Prince.</i> | |
| Session 12 29 February 2024 | Machiavelli. | | |
| Session 13 5 March 2024 | Guicciardini. | <i>Maxims and Reflections.</i> | |
| Session 14 7 March 2024 | Guicciardini. | | |
| Session 15 12 March 2024 | Midterm. | | In-class closed-book midterm (75 mins.) |
| Session 16 14 March 2024 15 March 2024 – 24 March 2024 | Site visit: Cappelle Medicee. | Images packet. | |
| Spring break – No class | | | |
| Session 17 26 March 2024 27 March 2024 | Tasso. | <i>Jerusalem Delivered</i> , cantos I, VIII, XII. | In-class presentations scheduled Critical analysis paper 2 topic circulated |
| Session 18 28 March 2024 29 March 2024 | Milton. | <i>Paradise Lost</i> , bks I-II; “On the late massacre in Piedmont”. | In-class presentations scheduled Critical analysis paper 2 due, 4:15pm |
| Session 19 2 April 2024 | Hobbes. | <i>On the Citizen</i> , chaps. 1-3, 5-8, 10, 12. | In-class presentations scheduled |
| Session 20 4 April 2024 | Hobbes. | | In-class presentations scheduled |



| Session/date | Topics | Readings | Assignments |
|---|--------------------|--|---|
| Session 21 9 April 2024 | Rousseau. | <i>The Social Contract.</i> | In-class presentations scheduled |
| Session 22 11 April 2024 | Rousseau. | | In-class presentations scheduled |
| ***Session 23 Make-up day: Friday, 12 April 2024*** | Wollstonecraft. | | In-class presentations scheduled |
| Session 24 16 April 2024 | Wollstonecraft. | <i>A Vindication of the Rights of Woman</i> , chaps. 1-3, 9, 12. | In-class presentations scheduled |
| Session 25 18 April 2024 | C.L.R. James. | | In-class presentations scheduled |
| Session 26 23 April 2024 | C.L.R. James. | <i>The Black Jacobins</i> , Prefaces, Prologue, chaps. I-IV. | In-class presentations scheduled |
| 24 April 2024 | | | Critical analysis paper 3 topic circulated |
| 25 April 2024 | | Public Holiday – No class | |
| 26 April 2024 | | | Critical analysis paper 3 due, 4:15pm Final take-home paper topic circulated |
| Session 27 30 April 2024 | Renan. | “What Is a Nation?” | |
| Session 28 2 May 2024 10 May 2024 | Course conclusion. | / | Final take-home paper due, 4:15pm |

Suggested Co-Curricular Activities

Sessions 10 and 16 will consist of site visits to the complex of Orsanmichele and to the Medici Chapels in San Lorenzo, two key locations for public life in Medieval and Renaissance Florence. Other individual visits in connection with the presentation project and extra-credit work will be discussed during the course.

Among the many extracurricular talks offered at NYUF this semester, two are particularly relevant for the topics of the course:

- “Antiquity in a Renaissance Panel: Its Theme, Function, and Appreciation”, at Villa La Pietra, Thursday 4 April, 1:30-2:30pm;
- “Panel on European Elections”, location TBA, Monday 22 April, 6:00-8:00pm.

Your Lecturer

Matteo Giglioli received his Ph.D. in Politics from Princeton in 2010, and has since taught and conducted research in a number of institutions of higher learning, including UC Berkeley, Columbia, Sciences Po Paris, Johns Hopkins SAIS, and the Università degli Studi di Bologna. Among his publications is the first English-language translation of the political works of Ernest Renan.



Academic Honesty & Plagiarism

As the University's policy on "[Academic Integrity for Students at NYU](#)" states: "At NYU, a commitment to excellence, fairness, honesty, and respect within and outside the classroom is essential to maintaining the integrity of our community. By accepting membership in this community, students take responsibility for demonstrating these values in their own conduct and for recognizing and supporting these values in others." Students at Global Academic Centers must follow the University and school policies.

NYU takes plagiarism very seriously; penalties follow and may exceed those set out by your home school. Your lecturer may ask you to sign a declaration of authorship form, and may check your assignments by using TurnItIn or another software designed to detect offenses against academic integrity.

The presentation of any improperly cited work other than your own, as though it is your own, including words, ideas, judgment, images, data, or AI-generated work (like ChatGPT or Google Bard), whether intentionally or unintentionally, constitutes a breach of academic integrity. It is important that all work submitted for this course is your own. It is also an offense to submit your own work for assignments from two different courses that are substantially the same (be they oral presentations or written work). If there is overlap of the subject of your assignment with one that you produced for another course (either in the current or any previous semester), you must inform your professor.

For guidelines on academic honesty, clarification of the definition of plagiarism, examples of procedures and sanctions, and resources to support proper citation, please see:

[NYU Academic Integrity Policies and Guidelines](#)

[NYU Library Guides](#)

Wellness and Counseling Resources

Mental health resources are available to students studying at NYU Florence through NYU's Wellness Exchange. Students can speak to a counselor about a variety of topics, including, day-to-day challenges, stress, health concerns and medical issues. Students may call the Wellness Exchange and talk to a Counselor 24/7 at 800879563 (free from Italian phone numbers) or +1 212 443 9999. You can also download the [Wellness Exchange app](#) and chat live with a Counselor 24/7. In case of emergency, students can call the Office of Student Life Florence duty phone 24/7 at +39 055 5007450. Alternatively, students can also make an appointment with NYU Florence's onsite Global Wellness Counselors. If you would like to arrange an appointment with Dr. Thiago Fernandes or Dr. Silvia Fiammenghi, please send an email to florence.counseling@nyu.edu with your weekly schedule attached.

Inclusivity Policies and Priorities

NYU's Office of Global Programs and NYU's global sites are committed to equity, diversity, and inclusion. In order to nurture a more inclusive global university, NYU affirms the value of sharing differing perspectives and encourages open dialogue through a variety of pedagogical approaches. Our goal is to make all students feel included and welcome in all aspects of academic life, including our syllabi, classrooms, and educational activities/spaces.



Pronouns and Name Pronunciation (Albert and Zoom)

Students, staff, and faculty have the opportunity to add their pronouns, as well as the pronunciation of their names, into Albert. Students can have this information displayed to faculty, advisors, and administrators in Albert, NYU Brightspace, the NYU Home internal directory, as well as other NYU systems. Students can also opt out of having their pronouns viewed by their instructors, in case they feel more comfortable sharing their pronouns outside of the classroom. For more information on how to change this information for your Albert account, please see the [Pronouns and Name Pronunciation website](#).

Students, staff, and faculty are also encouraged, though not required, to list their pronouns, and update their names in the name display for Zoom. For more information on how to make this change, please see the [Personalizing Zoom Display Names website](#).

Moses Accommodations Statement

Academic accommodations are available for students with documented and registered disabilities. Please contact the Moses Center for Student Accessibility (+1 212-998-4980 or mosecsd@nyu.edu) for further information. Students who are requesting academic accommodations are advised to reach out to the Moses Center as early as possible in the semester for assistance. Accommodations for this course are managed through NYU Florence.

Bias Response

The New York University Bias Response Line provides a mechanism through which members of our community can share or report experiences and concerns of bias, discrimination, or harassing behavior that may occur within our community.

Experienced administrators in the Office of Equal Opportunity (OEO) receive and assess reports, and then help facilitate responses, which may include referral to another University school or unit, or investigation if warranted according to the University's existing Non-Discrimination and Anti-Harassment Policy.

The Bias Response Line is designed to enable the University to provide an open forum that helps to ensure that our community is equitable and inclusive.

To report an incident, you may do so in one of three ways:

- Online using the [Web Form \(link\)](#)
- Email: bias.response@nyu.edu
- Phone: 212-998-2277
- Local Telephone: 055 5007277

Community Engagement at NYU Florence

NYU Florence offers students the opportunity to engage with the Florentine community through off campus volunteer activities and placements which vary based on the student's availability, academic interests and language skill level.



There are two levels of participation:

- Short-term, single day, community-wide events
- Sustained weekly interaction with a local school, or nonprofit association

Some students choose to do both! The experience is well worth it!

To learn more about Community Engagement at NYU Florence, please email the Community Engagement office at florence.ce@nyu.edu