HUMANITIES 403: "BAROQUE AND ENLIGHTENMENT"

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Office hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays 11.30 - 12.30
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BOOKS REQUIRED:


Michel de Montaigne: The Essays. A Selection (Dover)

Miguel de CERVANTES: Don Quijote. a novel

VOLTAIRE: Candide, (Dover Thrift Edition)

Jean-Jacques ROUSSEAU: On the Social Contract

(With reference to above mentioned books, I have ordered the least expensive editions available with our campus bookstore, but any other editions is acceptable if you should already have any of these titles in your possession.)

Our course is as fascinating as it is overwhelming in scope. We shall therefore proceed selectively through the various fields of history, the arts, the sciences, philosophy, music and literature of the periods between the 1550s until the French Revolution in 1789. While we shall cast a detailed look at Europe's major achievements and calamities over some 250 years, we should consider our endeavor as a journey not through the past but rather through ourselves. Anyone who might thus possibly say "I don't care", would necessarily basically indicate he or she does not care about themselves. Yet we all wish to live a life connected to beauty, pleasure and meaning.

Our textbook seems rather small at first sight, yet it not only contains the most basic of facts, it also provides hints and ideas for a great amount of additional reading/listening and inspiration. While studying with this book is mandatory, your regular attendance in the classroom and your note-taking during our lectures will be your major assurance for good understanding as well as for academic success. You are also required to read four full length primary literary texts - philosophically-literary milestones of Western Civilization. You will then have to write a PERSONAL READING REPORT (i.e. an evaluation and analysis of your reading experience) of FOUR PAGES minimum length (type written or printed, double-spaced) on at least TWO of these four very different books. This assignment is due on NOVEMBER 8th, of course the texts will be discussed earlier in the classroom as well. No delay is accepted.

Your semester's work will not just consist of reading: the Baroque Period is essential and rich for its musical contributions and inventions. We shall therefore study two major OPERAS during our semester - and it might be helpful (but is NOT required) if you acquire them on CD or even DVD or Video cassette for your home listening. (We shall select Monteverdi's "ORFEO" and Mozart's "LE NOZZE DI FIGARO"; you must hear and/or see these operas in their entirety!)

We shall write TWO MAJOR EXAMINATIONS - one midterm and one second end-of-semester exam; both will take the form of substantial written essays. The midterm will be written in the classroom on OCTOBER 25th; the second examination will take the form of a major take-home essay assignment with scholarly scope and ambition. It will have a minimum length of eight typewritten or printed (double-spaced) pages exclusive of index, source and reference list. Your assignment will be handed out on NOVEMBER 15th - allowing you for a full four weeks of solid preparation and serious writing; your paper is due on DECEMBER 13th, our last day of classes. No delay will be acceptable. We will then meet and discuss