IDS 2935: Conflict and Character: Great Books in the Ancient World Quest 1: The Examined Life

I. General Information

Class Meetings

- Spring 2024
- 100% In-Person, no GTAs, 35 residential students
- Tuesday, Period 8-9 (3:00 PM 4:55 PM in WEIM 1076); Thursday, Period 9 (4:05 PM 4:55 PM in WEIM 1070)

Instructor

- Prof. David McPherson
- Office: CSE E572
- Office hours: Tuesday 2-2:45 pm, Thursday 2-3:45 pm, and by appointment
- davidmcpherson@ufl.edu

Course Description

In this course, we ask the question: how do we develop the character to handle life's conflicts and tragic events? We will pursue answers to this problem through a study of ancient Greek drama and philosophy. We will read Plato and Aristotle Stoics to grapple with classical philosophical accounts of the relationship between virtue, practical reasoning, and human flourishing. We will also read four tragedies: Sophocles' *Antigone* and *Oedipus the King*, Aeschylus's *Prometheus Bound*, and Euripides' *Hecabe*. Through our study of these plays, we will explore questions concerning ethics, responsibility, and luck. We will reflect on how the study of philosophy and dramatic literature can enrich our experience and understanding of each, and how that knowledge can help move us through the deepest difficulties of life. Students will compare conflicts faced in life at UF with those studied in Greek drama, to find parallels in how such events can help to shape character. Students will complete the course with an expanded and enriched knowledge of the philosophy and drama of ancient Greece, and a deeper understanding of how the wisdom of antiquity can inform the development of their own personal character and responses to difficulties and conflicts in their own lives.

Ouest and General Education Credit

- Quest 1
- Humanities

Writing Requirement (WR) 2000 words

This course accomplishes the <u>Quest</u> and <u>General Education</u> objectives of the subject areas listed above. A minimum grade of C is required for Quest and General Education credit. Courses intended to satisfy Quest and General Education requirements cannot be taken S-U.

The Writing Requirement (WR) ensures students both maintain their fluency in writing and use writing as a tool to facilitate learning.

Course grades have two components. To receive writing requirement credit, a student must receive a grade of C or higher and a satisfactory completion of the writing component of the course.

Required Readings and Works

- Students should purchase the following text: Sophocles, The Three Theban Plays: Antigone, Oedipus the King, Oedipus at Colonus, translated by Robert Fagles (New York, NY: Penguin 1984); Plato, Gorgias, trans. Donald J. Zeyl (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1987); Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, trans. C. D. C. Reeve (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 2014).
- 2. All other readings will be made available in Canvas or provided in class; bibliographic information is included in the weekly schedule.
- 3. Papers will need to follow MLA style. The writing manual for this course is: Wayne C. Booth, *The Craft of Research*, 4th ed. (Chicago, Univ. of Chicago Press, 2016).
- 4. Materials and Supplies Fees: n/a

II. Graded Work

Description of Graded Work

Active Participation and Class Attendance: 20%

- An exemplar participant shows evidence of having done the assigned reading before each class, consistently offers thoughtful points and questions for discussion, and listens considerately to other discussants. See participation rubric below.
- This is a discussion-driven course. If you a reluctant to speak in class, then you should reach out to Professor McPherson to discuss this.
- On-time class attendance, with no more than 2 unexcused absences, is required for this component of the course grade.
- Documentation is required for excused absences, per university policy. Excessive absences (past 6) can result in failure of the course.

• Reading Reflections and Responses (5 all term - worth 4 points each): 20%

• 5 times over the semester you will have Reading Reflections and Responses Due, which will be turned in on the Canvas Discussion Board (labeled "Discussions") for the course. The Reading Reflections will be due before the start of class on Tuesday of the week it is assigned. You will need to find two significant points for reflection in the reading or readings (if there are two readings, you should have a reflection on each). This could be raising a question or communicating your own thoughts on a particular point (for instance, providing an assessment). In each case, you

should connect your reflections in some way with your own experience, and you should also quote and cite the text (author last name and page number) to indicate what part of the text you are reflecting on (or raising a question about). Before class on Thursday of that week, you should reply with thoughts on both points of another student's reflections (how do these reflections connect with your own thinking?). Both the Reflection and the Response should be at least 200 words apiece.

- Due Weeks 2, 4, 6, 9, 11
- All writing assignments will be run through anti-plagiarism and Al-detecting software.

• Experiential Learning Paper, due Week 12: 25%

- You will watch a filmed theater production of either Sophocles' Antigone or Oedipus the King and
 write a 1,500-word analytical essay focused on a thesis that describes how a particular scene
 reflects aspects of character-shaping conflict (or hardship) that we have studied in class. You will
 also find a parallel character-shaping conflict (or hardship) at UF, and draw comparisons between
 the two. You will also reflect on whether these support or challenge the views about the
 relationship between virtue and happiness found in the works of Plato and Aristotle that we
 studied. See "Experiential Learning Component," in syllabus, below. See grading rubric in Canvas.
- · Professor will evaluate and provide written feedback.
- · You may want to access the university's Writing Studio at www.writing.ufl.edu
- An additional writing guide website can be found at https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/
- See Writing Assessment Rubric on syllabus, below
- · All writing assignments will be run through anti-plagiarism and AI-detecting software.

Self-Reflection Paper, due Week 14: 10%

- You will write a short paper (500 words) on your own personal experience to answer the question,
 "Is personal character best developed through difficult circumstances?" See "Self-Reflection
 Component," in syllabus, below. (R) This is graded not as an analytical paper, but instead as a
 personal reflection. The "Writing Assessment Rubric" will be used, excepting the grade for use of
 sources.
- All writing assignments will be run through anti-plagiarism and Al-detecting software.

• Final Exam: 25%

- Tuesday, April 23rd
- Short-answer questions; allowed full 1:55 minute class period to answer
- Review session preceding class period with study guide provided in advance

Grading Scale

For information on how UF assigns grade points, visit: https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-grading-policies/

Α	93 – 100%	С	73 – 76%
A-	90 – 92%	C-	70 – 72%
B+	87 – 89%	D+	67 – 69%
В	83 – 86%	D	63 – 66%

B-	80 – 82%	D-	60 – 62%
C+	77 – 79%	Е	<60

Grading Rubric(s)

Participation Rubric

	Excellent (90-100%)	Good (80-89%)	Average (70-79%)	Insufficient (60-69%)	Unsatisfactory (below 60%)
Knowledgeable: Shows evidence of having done the assigned work. Thoughtful: Evaluates carefully issues raised in assigned work.					
Considerate: Takes the perspective of others into account and listens attentively.					

Writing Assessment Rubric

	Α	В	С	D
Thesis and Argumentation	Thesis is clear, specific, and presents a thoughtful, critical, engaging, and creative interpretation. Argument fully supports the thesis both logically and thoroughly and effectively uses sources.	Thesis is clear and specific, but not as critical or original. Shows insight and attention to the text under consideration. May have gaps in argument's logic.	Thesis is present but not clear or specific, demonstrating a lack of critical engagement to the text. Argument is weak or ill-thought out, missing important details or making logical leaps with little support.	Thesis is vague and/or confused, demonstrates a failure to understand the text. Argument lacks any logical flow and does not utilize any source material.

Use of Sources	Primary and secondary texts are well incorporated, utilized, and contextualized throughout.	Primary and secondary texts are incorporated and utilized but not contextualized as neatly or as significantly.	Primary and secondary texts are mostly incorporated and utilized but are not properly contextualized.	Primary and secondary texts are absent.
Organization	Clear organization. Introduction provides adequate background information and ends with a thesis. Details are in logical order. Conclusion is strong and states the point of the paper.	Clear organization. Introduction clearly states thesis, but does not provide as much background information. Details are in logical order, but may be more difficult to follow. Conclusion is recognizable and ties up almost all loose ends.	Significant lapses in organization. Introduction states thesis but does not adequately provide background information. Some details not in logical or expected order that results in a distracting read. Conclusion is recognizable but does not tie up all loose ends.	Poor, hard-to-follow organization. There is no clear introduction of the main topic or thesis. There is no clear conclusion, and the paper just ends. Little or no employment of logical body paragraphs.
Grammar, mechanics, and MLA Style	No errors.	A few errors.	Some errors.	Many errors.

- 1. The student must earn a grade of C or better in the course. AND
- 2. The student must earn an S (satisfactory) evaluation on the writing requirements of the course.

III. Annotated Weekly Schedule

Week	Topics, Homework, and Assignments
	Topic: Introducing Character and Conflict
Week 1 (Jan 9, 11)	• Summary: To what extent is our well-being up to us, and to what extent is it up to chance, luck, fate, or providence? How can our character help us to confront the conflicts and hardships that we encounter in life? How is it shaped by them? We

Week	Topics, Homework, and Assignments
	will introduce and begin exploring these major questions of our course.
	 Required Readings (22 pages): Martha Nussbaum, The Fragility of Goodness (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1986): 1-22.
	Topic: Sophocles's Antigone: tragedy and character
Week 2 (Jan 16, 18)	 Summary: Can moral principles conflict? How should we address apparent conflicts between family duties and political duties? Should duties of piety supersede other duties? We will examine these questions through discussing Sophocles' Antigone and how different characters exhibit different virtues and vices that drive the plot of the play.
	 Required Reading (55 pages): Sophocles, Antigone: lines 1-626 (59-88); Paul Woodruff, Reverence: Renewing a Forgotten Virtue, pp. 1-11.
	First Reading Reflection and Response Due
	Topic: Sophocles's Antigone: tragedy and character, continued.
Week 3 (Jan 23, 25)	• Summary: Is personal character most strongly developed in tragic circumstances? We continue our discussion of <i>Antigone</i> , with a particular focus on individual characters' choices, and the relationship between character, practical reasoning, and deliberation.
	 Required Reading (51 pages): Sophocles, Antigone: lines 636-1353 (88-128); Paul Woodruff, Reverence: Renewing a Forgotten Virtue, pp. 77-96.
	Topic: Plato on piety and the examined life
Week 4 (Jan 30,	• Summary: We will examine Plato's discussion of the nature of piety in his dialogue the <i>Euthyphro</i> , where the principal character is Socrates, and we will also examine Socrates' defense against charges of impiety along with his defense of what he calls "the examined life" in Plato's <i>Apology</i> .
Feb 1)	• Required Reading (36 pages): Plato, Euthyphro (pp. 1-16); Plato, The Apology (pp. 17-36)
	Second Reading Reflection and Response Due
Week 5 (Feb 6, 8)	 Topic: The project of mastery: seeking to overcome luck through science and technology
	 Summary: To what extent can we be masters of our own fate? What role do science and technology play in this project of mastery? We will consider these questions through engagement with Aeschylus's Prometheus Bound and Plato's Protagoras.
	 Required Reading (58 pages): Aeschylus, Prometheus Bound (pp. 20-52); Plato, Protagoras, lines 309-338 (pp. 746-770)
Week 6	Topic: The Project of Mastery continued
(Feb 13, 15)	 Summary: We will continue the discussion of the previous week about the project of seeking to mastery over luck/fortune through reflection on Plato's Protagoras. We will also begin reflection on Plato's Gorgias, which seeks to defend the ethical

Week	Topics, Homework, and Assignments
	life as necessary and sufficient for happiness.
	• Required Reading (54 pages): Plato, <i>Protagoras</i> , lines 339-362 (pp. 770-790); Plato, <i>Gorgias</i> , lines 447-470 (1-34).
	Third Reading Reflection Due and Response Due
	Topic: Is it better to suffer injustice than to cause injustice?
Week 7 (Feb 20, 22)	• Summary: We will take up the key question explored in Plato's <i>Gorgias</i> , which is in the topic line: Is it better to suffer injustice than to cause injustice? We will also discuss the following questions Is moral harm worse than physical harm? Can the unjust be happy? Can the just be unhappy?
	Required Reading (79 pages): Plato, Gorgias: lines 471-527 (pp. 34-113).
	Topic: The city-soul analogy: Plato on internal and external harmony
Week 8 (Feb 27, 29)	• Summary: We will consider Plato more developed attempt to show that the ethical life is necessary and sufficient for true happiness in his book <i>The Republic</i> . We will give particular attention to his city-soul analogy where there is an analogy between internal harmony and harmony within the political community.
	Required Reading (52 pages): Plato, Republic I-II (pp. 971-1022).
	Topic: Aristotle on virtue and the quest for happiness
Week 9 (Mar 5, 7)	Summary: We will explore Aristotle's view on the relationship between virtue and happiness. While Aristotle thinks that virtue is necessary for true happiness, he does not think it is sufficient because misfortune can mar our happiness, though even here he thinks nobility "shine through." We will focus in particular on Aristotle's discussion of the tragic case of King Priam. We will explore his account of the virtues of character and how they are acquired.
	• Required Reading (39 pages): Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , Books I-II, IX.9 (pp. 2-34, 190-195)
	Fourth Reading Reflection and Response Due
Week 10 (Mar 19, 21)	Topic: Aristotle on responsibility, courage, temperance, generosity, and lack of self-control
	Summary: We will explore Aristotle's views on how we are responsible for our character, and we will focus in on three specific virtues: courage, temperance, and generosity. We will explore the problem of weakness of the will, or lack of self-control, where we do not do the good that we know we should do.
	• Required Reading (42 pages): Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, Books III-IV.1, VII.1-10 (pp. 35-61, 113-129)
	Topic: Aristotle on justice, friendship, and contemplation
Week 11 (Mar 26, 28)	Summary: We will consider two most important other-regarding virtues in Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics: justice and friendship. We will also explore why Aristotle says: "if people are friends, there is no need for justice, whereas people who are just need friendship in addition to justice [and] of just things the most

Week	Topics, Homework, and Assignments
	just of all seems to be fitted to friendship." We will also explore Aristotle's argument for the claim that the contemplation is the highest form of human activity, and how there appears to be a tension between this claim and he is advocacy of a life of virtue within political community.
	• Required Reading (31 pages): Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, V.1-2; VIII.1-4, 8; IX.4-9; X.6-8 (pp. 77-81, 136-141, 145-146, 160-170, 184-190)
	Fifth Reading Reflection and Response Due
	Topic: Euripides's Hecabe: tragedy and the loss of virtue
Week 12	• Summary: Through engaging with Euripides's <i>Hecabe</i> , we will consider and discuss how tragedy in some cases can erode virtuous character rather than build it up, and thus further contribute to the tragedy.
(April 2, 4)	Required Reading (41 pages): Euripides, Hecabe, pp. 63-103
	 Assignment: 2,000-wd Experiential Learning analytical papers due on Thursday, April 4th before the start of class
	Topic: Sophocles's Oedipus the King: ignorance and luck
Week 13 (April 9, 11)	• Summary: When we act in ignorance, are we responsible for what we do and for what we bring about? Does it have any impact on our sense of our character? We will discuss Sophocles's <i>Oedipus the King</i> ; and consider ignorance and the nature of moral luck.
	• Required Reading (52 pages): Sophocles, Oedipus the King, lines 1-995 (159-210).
	Topic: Sophocles's Oedipus the King: ignorance and luck, cont.
Week 14 (April 16, 18)	 Summary: We will continue to examine responsibility during tragic personal circumstances in Oedipus's story arc, and consider Oedipus as the paradigmatic tragic figure.
	• Required Reading (40 pages): Sophocles, Oedipus the King, lines 707-1684 (211-251).
	Assignment: Self-reflection papers due on Tuesday, April 16 before start of class
	 We will have a review for the final exam on Thursday, April 18th (A study guide will be given in advance)
Week 15 (April 23)	Final Exam on April 23rd

IV. Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

At the end of this course, students will be expected to have achieved the <u>Quest</u> and <u>General Education</u> learning outcomes as follows:

Content: Students demonstrate competence in the terminology, concepts, theories and methodologies used within the discipline(s).

- Identify, describe, and explain the methodologies used across humanities disciplines to examine
 essential ideas about character formation and its relation to tragic events (Quest 1, H).
 Assessment: final exam, experiential learning analytical essay, reading reflections.
- Identify, describe, and explain key ideas and questions about the nature of virtue, happiness, and tragedy as presented in the philosophical and dramatic traditions of ancient Greece (Quest 1, H). **Assessment**: final exam, experiential learning analytical essay, reading reflections

Critical Thinking: Students carefully and logically analyze information from multiple perspectives and develop reasoned solutions to problems within the discipline(s).

- Analyze how philosophical and dramatic works from ancient Athens explore the pursuit of wisdom and proper choice in the face of personal, familial, political, and divine conflict. (Quest 1, H). Assessments: analytical essay, reading reflections
- Analyze and evaluate specific accounts of human reaction to tragedy and the development of
 virtue and character across diverse texts and works from ancient Greece, using close reading,
 critical analysis and group discussion, and personal reflection. (Quest 1, H). Assignments:
 reading reflections, self-reflection paper, experiential learning paper

Communication: Students communicate knowledge, ideas and reasoning clearly and effectively in written and oral forms appropriate to the discipline(s).

- Develop and present clear and effective written and oral work that demonstrates critical
 engagement with course texts, visual and auditory media, and experiential learning activities
 (Quest 1, H). Assessments: experiential learning paper, discussion questions, final exam, selfreflection paper, class participation
- Communicate well-supported ideas and arguments effectively within class discussion and debates, with clear oral presentation and written work articulating students' personal experiences and reflections on ideals of virtue and tragedy in the pursuit of a good life (Quest 1, H). Assessments: active class participation, experiential learning paper, reading reflections

Connection: Students connect course content with meaningful critical reflection on their intellectual, personal, and professional development at UF and beyond.

- Connect course content with students' intellectual, personal, and professional lives at UF and beyond. (Quest 1). Assessments: self-reflection paper, experiential learning paper, discussion questions
- Reflect on students' own and others' experience with handling conflict and tragedy while
 maintaining a sense of personal character and integrity, in class discussion and written work
 (Quest 1). Assessments: experiential learning paper, self-reflection paper, reading reflections

V. Quest Learning Experiences

1. Details of Experiential Learning Component

The George A. Smathers Library has a database of theater productions online. At the link https://guides.uflib.ufl.edu/theatreguide, you will find the "Digital Theatre Plus" database. There you

will find filmed theatre productions of Sophocles' *Antigone* and *Oedipus the King*. You will watch one of these and write a 1,500-word analytical essay focused on a thesis that describes how a particular scene reflects aspects of character-shaping conflict (or hardship) that we have studied in class (in your essay you will identify the time on the video of the play you watched). You will also find a parallel character-shaping conflict (or hardship) at UF, and draw comparisons between the two, underlining how Greek tragedy can offer parallels for our own choices in the contemporary world, and at UF. Regarding the particular scene, you should describe it and why you chose it. You should also discuss whether you think the scene and contemporary situation challenges or supports the views about the relationship between virtue and happiness found in the works of Plato and Aristotle that we studied (this will be part of your thesis). No later than the end of Friday of Week 10, you should write to the instructor with the work (play and scene) on which you wish to write and a 150-word description of the scene's relevance to our course. This emailed proposal is worth 10% of the total grade for this assignment. The final essay should be turned into the "Assignments" section of Canvas on Thursday, April 4th before the start of class.

2. Details of Self-Reflection Component

In the texts we read, we hear competing accounts of how strength of character affects responses to conflict and tragedy. In the plays we read, we see a variety of stories in which vice and personal flaws result in disaster. In an essay of 500-600 words, please answer the question: "Is personal character best developed through difficult circumstances?" Your answer should draw on specific examples NOT primarily from our texts, but from your own experience. You may use anecdotes to describe how you came to the view you hold, and how your view of the relationship between hardship and character may have changed or developed over time. Finally, you should include in your essay a few sentences of commentary on how you have brought your sense of your personal character to your life at the University of Florida.

VI. Required Policies

Attendance Policy

See policy in the syllabus, above, for attendance grade details. Other requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found at: https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx

Students Requiring Accommodation

Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the disability Resource Center by visiting https://disability.ufl.edu/students/get-started/. It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs, as early as possible in the semester.

UF Evaluations Process

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in

a professional and respectful manner is available at https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/.

University Honesty Policy

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, "We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: "On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment." The Honor Code

(https://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor or TAs in this class.

Counseling and Wellness Center

Contact information for the Counseling and Wellness Center: http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/, 392-1575; and the University Police Department: 392-1111 or 9-1-1 for emergencies.

The Writing Studio

The writing studio is committed to helping University of Florida students meet their academic and professional goals by becoming better writers. Visit the writing studio online at http://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/ or in 2215 Turlington Hall for one-on-one consultations and workshops.

In-Class Recordings

Students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures. However, the purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. The only allowable purposes are (1) for personal educational use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the university, or (3) as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. All other purposes are prohibited. Specifically, students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor.

A "class lecture" is an educational presentation intended to inform or teach enrolled students about a particular subject, including any instructor-led discussions that form part of the presentation, and delivered by any instructor hired or appointed by the University, or by a guest instructor, as part of a University of Florida course. A class lecture does not include lab sessions, student presentations, clinical presentations such as patient history, academic exercises involving solely student participation, assessments (quizzes, tests, exams), field trips, private conversations between students in the class or between a student and the faculty or lecturer during a class session.

Publication without permission of the instructor is prohibited. To "publish" means to share, transmit, circulate, distribute, or provide access to a recording, regardless of format or medium, to another person (or persons), including but not limited to another student within the same class section. Additionally, a recording, or transcript of a recording, is considered published if it is posted on or uploaded to, in whole or in part, any media platform, including but not limited to social media, book, magazine, newspaper, leaflet, or third party note/tutoring services. A student who publishes a recording without written consent may be subject to a civil cause of action instituted by a person injured by the publication and/or discipline under UF Regulation 4.040 Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code.