

**V55.0404.010 Conversations of the West: Antiquity and the Nineteenth Century
Fall 2006**

Tuesdays and Thursdays 11:00 a.m.–12:15 a.m., 19 University Place, Room 102

Professor Cyrus R. K. Patell
Department of English
New York University
19 University Place, Room 504

Phone: 998-8827
E-mail: cyrus.patell@nyu.edu
Office Hours: Thursdays 2:00 to 4:00
sign-up 2:00-3:30; walk-in thereafter

The course website is available through **Blackboard**. Go to <http://home.nyu.edu>, enter your netid and password, and click on the “Academics” tab in the right-hand corner of your NYUHome page. Notes and questions for further thought will be posted to the site after each lecture.

Course Description

Herman Melville’s *Moby-Dick* is widely thought to be one of the greatest masterpieces of American, and indeed Western, literature. This genre-defying book mixes comic, tragic, and epic modes as it wrestles with questions about the relationship between free will and fate that have tantalized humankind from antiquity to the present. By studying Melville’s engagement with his classical and biblical inheritances, we seek to understand the sources of the cosmopolitan vision from which his novel springs. If *Moby-Dick* is “the Great American Novel,” then what does that tell us about the nature of “America”? From what kind of “America” does *Moby-Dick* arise, and how different is that “America” from the one that the novel seeks to promote? What might we learn about what is valuable in Western intellectual traditions from Melville’s critical engagement with them?

Texts Ordered for the Course

Please use the editions listed below. All texts are available at the NYU Book Center. Additional readings will be posted to the Blackboard site. Please bring the assigned readings to each lecture and section meeting.

Kwame Anthony Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers* (Norton)

Aristotle, *Poetics* (Dover Thrift Edition)

The New Oxford Annotated Bible, 3rd Edition (ed. Michael Coogan)

Paul Kriwaczek, *In Search of Zarathustra* (Vintage Departures)

George Lakoff, *Moral Politics* (Chicago)

Herman Melville, *Moby-Dick* (Norton Critical Edition; 2nd ed.)

Plato, *The Republic* (Dover Thrift Edition)

Plato, *Symposium and Phaedrus* (Dover Thrift Edition)

Shakespeare, *Hamlet* (Washington Square Press, Folger Shakespeare Library)

Sophocles, *Oedipus Rex* (Dover Thrift Edition)

Vergil, *Aeneid* (Dover Thrift Edition)

Course Requirements

Attendance at lecture, participation in section, and performance on in-class exercises (25%); midterm (15%); papers (35%); final exam (25%). You must complete **all** assigned coursework in order to pass the course.

Papers must be submitted both on hard copy *and* electronically to the Blackboard site's digital dropbox. **No extensions** will be given on assignments or papers without sufficient extenuating circumstances and prior approval by the Professor Patell.

In-class exercises will be conducted in lecture and section **without previous notice**. If you are absent when an in-class exercise is given and do not have a written doctor's excuse, you will receive a failing mark for that exercise. We will drop your exercise grade when tabulating your semester grade.

Discussion Sections

Discussion sections (sometimes called "recitations") meet once per week. You must enroll in a section when you enroll in the course. Attendance is required. The following sections times are scheduled:

011 Fri. 9:30–10:45 a.m.	194 Mercer 201	Spencer Keralis
012 Fri. 11:00 a.m.–12:15 p.m.	Silver 407	Spencer Keralis
013 Fri. 9:30–10:45 a.m.	Silver 509	Paul Grimstad
014 Fri. 11:00 a.m.–12:15 p.m.	Silver 509	Paul Grimstad
015 Thurs. 3:30–4:45 p.m.	UHall Study Lounge	Melissa Hillier
016 Thurs. 4:55 p.m.–6:10 p.m.	UHall Study Lounge	Melissa Hillier

Sections 015 and 016 meet in University Hall located at 110 East 14th Street (south side, between 4th and 3rd Avenues). If you are in one of those sections and are not a U-Hall resident, you should check in at the guard's desk, where your name will be on a list, then proceed down the hall. The Study Lounge is the first door on the right after the courtyard.

Schedule of Readings and Assignments

Tues. 9/5	Introduction.
Thurs. 9/7	Bender, "New York as a Center of Difference" (Blackboard); Melville, "Hawthorne and His Mosses" (Norton 517–32); Letters to Dana and Bentley (Norton 532– 34); <i>Moby-Dick</i> : Etymology, Extracts, Chapter 1.
Tues. 9/12	Appiah, <i>Cosmopolitanism</i> (read entire book).
Thurs. 9/14	<i>Moby-Dick</i> , Chapters 2–17.
Tues. 9/19	Boyce, <i>Zoroastrians</i> , chapters 1–2 (Blackboard); Nigosian, <i>The Zoroastrian Faith</i> , chapter 1 (Blackboard); Kriwaczek, <i>In Search of Zarathustra</i> (read entire book).

- Thurs. 9/21 Zoroastrian Texts: Malandra, *An Introduction to Ancient Iranian Religion* “Introduction”; excerpts from the *Gathas* (Blackboard).
- Tues. 9/26 The Bible (pages and sections refer to *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*): “The Canons of the Bible” (453–60 ESSAYS); “The Interpretation of the Bible: From the Nineteenth to the Mid-Twentieth Centuries” (491–97 ESSAYS); “Contemporary Methods in Bible Study” (497–505); “Cultural Contexts” (507–10, 514–15 ESSAYS); Introduction to the Pentateuch” (3–7 HB); “Introduction to Genesis” (9–10 HB); Genesis (11–81 HB); “Introduction to Exodus” (82–84 HB); Exodus (84–141 HB).
- Thurs. 9/28 The Bible: “Introduction to the Poetical and Wisdom Books” (721–25); “Introduction to Job” (726–27 HB); Job (728–74 HB); “Introduction to Jeremiah” (1073–74 HB); Jeremiah 1–6 (1075–88 HB) and 30–31 (1125–30 HB); “Introduction to Jonah” (1321 HB); Jonah (1321–24 HB).
- Tues. 10/3 The Bible: “Introduction to the Gospels” (3–6 NT); “Introduction to the Matthew” (7–8 NT); Matthew (9–55 NT); “Introduction to the Letters/Epistles in the New Testament” (240–41 NT); Romans (242–66 NT); 1 Corinthians (267–92 NT); “Introduction to the Revelation to John” (420–21); Revelation (422–49).
- Thurs. 10/5 The Bible: Winthrop, “A Model of Christian Charity” (Blackboard); Bill McKibben, “The Christian Paradox” (Blackboard).
- Tues. 10/10 Lakoff, *Moral Politics*. Required: chapters 1–9, 14–16, 19–23, Epilogue, Afterword.
- Thurs. 10/12 *Moby-Dick*, Chapters 16 (reread), 18–28.
First Paper Assignment Due in Lecture.
- Tues. 10/17 Plato, *Symposium* (read entire dialogue).
- Thurs. 10/19 Plato, *Symposium* (continued).
- Tues. 10/24 Republic, Books 7 and 10; *Moby-Dick* 29–35.
- Thurs. 10/26 *Moby-Dick*, 36–44.
- Tues. 10/31 Aristotle, *Poetics*; Sophocles, *Oedipus Rex*.
- Thurs. 11/2 **Midterm Examination.**
- Tues. 11/7 Vergil, *Aeneid*: Books I–IV, VI.
- Thurs. 11/9 Vergil, *Aeneid*: Book XII.
- Tues. 11/14 Shakespeare, *Hamlet* (read entire play).
- Thurs. 11/16 *Hamlet* (continued).
- Tues. 11/21 *Hamlet* and Nineteenth-Century American Literary Culture.
- Thurs. 11/23 **Thanksgiving.**
- Tues. 11/28 Melville, *Moby-Dick*: Chapters 45–89.
- Thurs. 11/30 Melville, *Moby-Dick*: Chapters 90–93.
Proposal for Final Paper Due in Lecture.
- Tues. 12/5 Melville, *Moby-Dick*: Chapters 94–110.
- Thurs. 12/7 *Moby-Dick*, 111–125.
- Tues. 12/12 Melville, *Moby-Dick*: Chapters 126 to end.
- Thurs. 12/14 **Final Paper Due by 5:00 p.m.** in your section-leader’s box at the English Department, 19 University Place, Fifth Floor.
- Tues. 12/19 **FINAL EXAMINATION – 10:00 a.m.**

Classroom Decorum and Disciplinary Policies

Your section-leaders and I are committed to creating a classroom environment in which the pursuit of knowledge can thrive. It is crucial to respect the ideas of others, to listen carefully to their arguments about readings and intellectual concepts, and to recognize that we are all engaged in a collaborative learning enterprise.

To help create a collegial atmosphere, we ask that you:

- Arrive on time to lectures and section meetings and stay for the duration of each class (barring any emergency);
- Turn off and put away any cell phones and pagers for the duration of each class; if, because of an emergency situation, you must keep one of these devices turned on, you must get permission from the lecturer or section-leader before the class begins;
- Do not engage in text-messaging, writing e-mail, or any disruptive activities during class; violation of this policy will result in your being asked to leave the class and your receiving a grade-penalty;
- Sign the attendance sheet at each class.

Students are encouraged to take notes in lecture and section, but **you may not make audio or visual recordings of any kind in class**. Students who are caught taking notes in exchange for remuneration will receive a failing grade in the class.

You are responsible for understanding the concept of **plagiarism** and for knowing what is contained in this syllabus and in the attached “Academic Guidelines for Students” and “Statement of Academic Integrity.”

Students who plagiarize or cheat in any way will receive a failing grade in the course and will be reported to their school’s academic dean.

Advice from the Professor

This class meets in a lecture-discussion format that is typical of university courses but rather different from the kinds of classes you had in high school. A course like this one requires you to synthesize material from a variety of sources – readings, lectures, discussion sections, and independent research – and to take responsibility for making sure that you grasp the course’s key concepts and arguments. The course’s assignments – in-class exercises, exams, and papers – are intended, in part, to help you pace yourself as you navigate your way through the syllabus.

This course has a relatively heavy reading load. To stay on top of it all, please make sure to **read** the assigned **texts before** the **lectures** and **sections** in which they will be discussed. **In-class exercises** about the reading will be given without prior notice both in lecture and in section.

Listen closely to the **conclusions** of lectures, when I will recapitulate the day's arguments and offer advice about how to approach the next set of readings.

Be an **active participant** in your discussion sections. The discussion sections complement the lectures and are crucial to the course: they are your chance to talk about your ideas, to ask questions, and to test out interpretations that you may want to use in your writing. It is in section that you will hone the skills of argumentation that will enable you to write successful papers for this and other courses. You will be graded on your participation in section – not on the basis of whether you always have the “right” answer, but on the basis of being an intellectually engaged participant who respects the ideas of others and is committed to the pursuit of knowledge.

Your **section-leaders** are not simply teaching assistants, but in fact are instructors who work closely with me to plan every aspect of the course. Your section-leader will have primary responsibility for grading your work and is your main contact if you find that you are having difficulty with the course. You should, however, feel free to visit me in office hours or contact me by e-mail to discuss any aspect of the course.