**The Birth of Learning: A Survey of Classical Education**

CLAS 4040 R01/Fall 2017 *The Birth of Learning* Thursday 4:00 — 6:30 PM Campbell Hall 124

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**Course Overview and Scope**

At a time in our nation’s history when so much is in upheaval, and we inhabit a world undergoing such rapid transformation, it is precisely now, in this context of radical departure from the past, that an examination of just what constitutes the inheritance of western civilization appears most imperative. For throughout the past two and a half millennia, there has existed a cultural ideal of education, a cultivation of values, ideas, and tastes that has persisted despite radical political, religious, and economic changes, and this ideal, together with the texts used to achieve it, comprises the substance of classical education. Our course together will offer a survey of this education from antiquity through its reception in early Christian writers, and onward into the present day. We will study many of the seminal texts that discuss education in the classical model throughout these various epochs, but the perennial focus of our inquiry will always return to the purpose and essential value of an education in the humanities.

It is hoped that by the end of the semester students will have striven to meet the following goals:

• knowledge of classical education in antiquity;

• awareness of the revaluation of teaching the Classics in early Christian writers;

• deep consideration for the importance of a liberal arts education in their own lives;

• sustained reflection on values, and how to become a more engaged citizen in the world.

Course Requirements: This class is reading, writing, and discussion intensive. There will usually be weekly writing assignments in a variety of forms — fable, letter, analytical paper, biography, reflective essay — that will be collected in a writing portfolio over the course of the semester. The portfolio will also include all in-class assignments — essays, quizzes, peer-reviews, personal and professional epistles — and form the basis of a capstone paper (7-10 pages) on classical education in light of its history, reception, and current practice that will be defended orally on the last day of class. It is expected that students will put in 5—6 hours per week to prepare for class. Grades will be determined on the basis of work in class, *i.e*. attendance, preparation, and participation (40%), writing assignments (35%), and the capstone paper and oral exam (25%). Out of 100 points: 94-100 = **A**, 90-93 = **A-**, 87-89 = **B+**, 83-86 = **B**, 80-82 = **B-**, 77-79 = **C+**, 73-76 = **C**, 70-72 = **C-**, 60-69 = **D**, 59 and below = **F**.

Class Routine: The class will meet once a week to analyze and discuss the readings on the syllabus and share our reflections. I will be distributing the readings in two ways: 1) as handouts in class; 2) as PDFs via email or my website MagisterKeil.com. The only books which you need to acquire on your own are Allan Bloom’s *The Closing of the American Mind*. **ISBN-13:** **978-1451683202**, and Victor Davis Hanson’s *Who Killed Homer?* **ISBN-13:** **978-1893554269**. They are available at Amazon.com very cheaply, and also in audio format at Audible.com. They will not be needed, however, until the weeks of November 30th  and December 7th, respectively.

Schedule of Classes

Week 1 August 31 Introduction. Historical and Chronological Parameters. Beginnings of education in ancient Greece. Selections from Homer’s *Iliad*  6 & 9, and Werner Jaeger’s *Paideia*, Vol. I: 35-56, “Homer the Educator.” (1939)

Read for next class: Henri Marrou, *A History of Education in Antiquity*, chapter 4: 36-45, “The Old Athenian Education,” (1956), and J. W. H. Walden, *The Universities of Ancient Greece*, chapter 1: 10-26, “Education at Athens in the Fifth and Fourth Centuries.” (1909)

Week 2: September 7 The Sophists. Excerpts from Protagoras, Gorgias, Prodicus, and the *Dissoi Logoi*. The impact of sophistic education on Thucydides, as seen in excerpts from his *Histories*, and on Euripides, as seen in excerpts from his *Medea* & *Alcestis*.

Read for next class: Henri Marrou, *A History of Education in Antiquity*, chapter 5: 46-60, “The Pedagogical Revolution of the Early Sophists.” (1956)

Write for next week a three to five page argumentative essay on Sophism: For or Against?

Week 3: September 14 Socrates as antagonist to the Sophists. The “Socratic Method.” Isocrates 7, *Against the Sophists.*

Read for next week: Plato *Gorgias* Henri Marrou, *A History of Education in Antiquity*, chapter 6: 59-92, “The Masters of the Classical Tradition.” (1956)

Week 4: September 21 Excerpts from Plato, *Republic* & *Meno*.

Write for next week a two-page essay describing a philosopher-king for the modern age.

Week 5: September 28 Hellenistic and Roman Education

Excerpts from Cicero’s *Brutus, De Oratore*, *De Inventione*, *Orator*, *Rhetorica Ad Herrenium*, and various speeches.

Read for next class: Henri Marrou, *A History of Education in Antiquity*, 229-314, on Roman education. (1956) Plutarch’s *Lives of Demosthenes* and *Cicero*.

Write for next class: A Plutarchian Life for Modern Times.

Week 6: October 5 Roman Education, continued

Quintilian, excerpts on the “Ideal Education” from the *Institutio Oratoria.*

Read for next class: Stanley Bonner, *Education in Ancient Rome*, 328-333, “A Few Lessons From the Past,” (1977) and Mark Roche, *Why Choose the Liberal Arts?* (2010). Write for next class a three to five page analytical essay on why, or why not, a college-student in 21st century America should choose to study the liberal arts.

Week 7: October 12 Classical Philosophical Education

Excerpts from Seneca’s *Moral Epistles*, as well his treatises *On Anger*, *On Clemency*, *On* *Tranquility of Mind*, & *On the Shortness of Life*. Write for next class: A Philosophical Epistle for Modern Times.

Week 8: October 19 Hellenism and Empire

The *progymnasmata*. The Second Sophistic.

Read for next class: Plutarch’s *The Training of Children* & *On How to Listen to Lectures*.

Write for next class: A Fable for Modern Times (250-500 words).

Week 9: October 26 Early Christian reception of classical education: Greek. St Justin Martyr. Clement of Alexandria. St. Basil, *Address to Young Men Concerning Pagan Literature*. St. Gregory of Nyssa. Origen. St. John of Damascus.

Read for next class: D.S. Wallace-Hadrill, *The Greek Patristic View of Nature*. (1968)

Week 10: November 2 Early Christian reception of classical education: Latin. Tertullian, Arnobius, Lactantius, St. Augustine, *De Magistro*. St. Jerome.

Read for next week: St. Augustine, *On Christian Teaching.*

Week 11: November 9 Medieval Education.

Sidonius, Ausonius, Priscian, Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy.* Cassiodorus, *The Institutes*.

Sr. Miriam Joseph, C.S.C, “The Liberal Arts,” from *The Trivium: The Liberal Arts of Logic, Grammar, and Rhetoric*. (2002)

Read for next class: Ben House, *Classical Christian Education*. (2008) Write for next class a three to five page reflective essay regarding your thoughts on the proper relationship between contemporary religious education and the liberal arts.

Week 12: November 16 The Renaissance.

Erasmus, *The Sacred Feast*. John Milton, *Of Education*. John Amos Comenius, *Didactica Magna*.

Read for next class: Andrew Delbanco, *College: What It Was, Is, and Should Be.* (2012) Write for next week a three to five page reflective essay on what you think college is and should be.

Week 13: November 23 Thanksgiving recess, no class.

Week 14: November 30 The Enlightenment.

Claude Adrien Helvétius. Jean Jacques Rousseau, *Émile*.

Read for next class: Allan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind*. (1987)

Week 15:December 7 Contemporary Education.

The Frankfurt School. Critical Theory. Cultural Marxism.

Bertrand Russell, *The Superior Virtue of the Oppressed*. (1950)

Read for next class: Victor Davis Hanson and John Robert Heath, *Who Killed Homer?* (1998)

Week 16: December 14 Conclusion— the Liberal Arts in our Lives. Presentation of cap-stone papers and oral defenses.