

**INTERIM PERFORMANCE REPORT**

**AQ-50358-11**

**NEH Enduring Questions Course on the Value of Work**

Project Director  
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The primary goals of this project were the development and teaching of a general-education undergraduate course investigating the value of work at King's College. In working toward these goals, the project was highly successful. The course was offered in Fall 2011 and Spring 2012. The course was well-received by students and outside evaluators and has proven effective in improving students' abilities in ethical reasoning, according to assessments carried out in both semesters. It has also launched a new academic interest for Dr. Malesic, who has recently begun a research project on Christian ethics of work in contemporary America.

### Enrollment

Enrollment is one measure of the course's success, indicating the level of student interest in the course. Enrollment was capped at 18 students in order to facilitate discussion and intellectual community. In Fall 2011, 16 students finished the course. Eighteen were registered at the beginning of the semester, but one dropped it during the first week and another was removed from the rolls after not actually attending a single class session. The Spring 2012 offering was fully enrolled at the 18 student limit.

### Reading list

The reading list on the final syllabus varied little from the list of core readings given at the time of application. The reading list changed slightly from Fall 2011 to Spring 2012.

### Assignments

The major assignments changed slightly from Fall 2011 to Spring 2012. The two interview-based papers were combined into one that was completed in three stages. The paper on work and visual culture was also completed in stages, as students compiled an online "visual culture notebook" that became the basis for their analysis in their papers. A midterm exam was added to the course in Spring 2012 in order to give students an opportunity to demonstrate their learning in the first two content units of the course.

### Ancillary activities

The real value of the ancillary activities emerged on the final day of each semester, when students turned in their final papers, incorporating analysis of the films and art objects they viewed outside of class time.

On October 21, 2011, and April 13, 2012, students visited the Philadelphia Museum of Art, where Justina Barrett, one of the museum's educators, led them on a 90-minute tour of the museum's collection. Ms. Barrett, an expert in early American decorative arts, focused on artworks from the colonial and industrial eras, inviting students to consider not only work as a theme in the objects, but also on the objects as products of the artists' labor.

Students' rate of participation in the museum visit was better in Spring 2012 than in Fall 2011. In Spring 2012, 13 students went on the trip, compared with 10 in Fall 2011. Those who did not go were required to do a make-up assignment involving visiting, on their own time, a small art museum in nearby Scranton, PA, and writing a report based on that experience and on an online tour of the Philadelphia Museum of Art. (One student who did not take part in the trip or the make-up assignment did not turn in the final paper and failed the course.)

On May 1, 2012, four students presented their work to an audience of about 35 during a grant supported symposium on Spirituality and the Value of Work. Student presenters were selected based on abstracts they submitted to Dr. Malesic for evaluation. The symposium featured a keynote address by Julie Burkey, D.Min., Director, Center for Workplace Spirituality, Immaculate Conception Seminary School of Theology, Seton Hall University. Dr. Burkey also visited the class meeting that day and discussed work and spirituality with students.

Presenters at the symposium engaged student and faculty attendees regarding key issues about the value of work, informed by their research and class work investigating the conjunction and conflict between work and spirituality. Dr. Burkey developed insights from key figures in the Roman Catholic tradition about work's role in developing the human person. The student presenters connected concepts from the course readings to their own expectations for working life. The symposium showcased the course for the college community as a whole and brought students' voices quite directly into larger conversations about the value of work.

### Pedagogical Supplements

The summer 2011 course preparation time allowed for considerable background reading that has enriched the course content substantially. Most of the readings are from time periods quite foreign to students, but more recent works listed in the proposal bibliography were added in order to connect the reading assignments with work-related issues in our society. In addition, class sessions often involved students responding to print and multimedia sources that reflected on current events pertaining to the value of work.

### Intellectual conclusions

In a course with readings that span 2,500 years and a range of philosophical, political, and religious commitments, it should be no surprise to find that no single answer to the question, "why work?" emerged from the course. Indeed, students themselves, with diverse histories and hopes regarding their working lives, came to varied conclusions. Still, there were a few consistent conclusions worth noting.

First, the course featured close study of two major figures in American literature, Booker T. Washington and Henry David Thoreau, selected for their contrasting work ethics: Washington sees independence in persistent hard work, which wins the esteem of others, while for Thoreau, self-sufficiency entails reducing one's material needs in order to avoid working for anyone but oneself. Of these two classic articulations of an American ethos, students expressed far more appreciation for Washington. They consistently drew comparisons between Washington's work ethic and the work ethic of friends and family members students interviewed about their work. While students acknowledged that Thoreau's outlook took better account of the ecological costs of the ethic of hard work, most students dismissed his vision as unrealistic and undesirable, given his disdain for society and consumerism.

To someone acquainted with the goals and background of the typical King's College student, this preference for Washington is not surprising. Broadly speaking, King's students tend to be very pragmatic; they seek not to question the American economic ethos but to use it to secure their socio-economic standing. Students, the overwhelming majority of whom were white, viewed

Washington as addressing Americans of all races (indeed, consistent with Washington's own goals), presenting a strong personal challenge to anyone seeking success in America.

Though students were reluctant to question the American work ethic, they did use the readings to raise questions about the morality of capitalism and the settling of North America by Europeans. As the course was taking place at a time when unemployment remained above 8% and the Occupy movement gained a prominent place in public consciousness, students were eager to apply Marxian theories about alienation and class conflict to the present day, raising questions (in line with Terry Eagleton's argument in *Why Marx Was Right*) about whether widening economic inequality was an inherent feature of capitalism. Furthermore, students linked John Locke's labor theory of value to the English colonial project; Native Americans' food-gathering practices were not, to Locke's eyes, "improving" the lands of North America, and thus they could stake no legitimate claim to the land. Some students argued that even "hunter-gatherer" societies work to make the lands near their settlements more fruitful (echoing Jared Diamond's *Guns, Germs, and Steel*, which was not used in the class), and so Locke's pro-colonialist argument fails even by its own standards.

There was some consensus surrounding the more explicitly religious readings in the course. Most notably, students in both semesters agreed that the bible does not offer anything like a consistent work ethic. Work is variously seen in the bible as punishment for sin, as a fruitless activity, and as a means of demonstrating one's virtue. Some students found it surprising that work was not held in higher esteem by the bible, especially when the bible itself is contrasted to the Protestant work ethic as presented by Max Weber. Students did, however, appreciate the ethic of Benedictine monks, as outlined in the *Rule* of St. Benedict. In contrast to contemporary American professionals, whose work knows few limits and seems estranged from nature and the cosmos, the monks placed limits on their working time, living by the natural clock of the sun and stars. Still, to the students, monastic asceticism held no more appeal than did the asceticism of Thoreau. Though relentless work can take a toll on a person's well-being, few of us are ready to scale back our commitment to work, given that work is the means for attaining social status and the pleasures and security of material goods.

### Dissemination

Dr. Malesic presented the course and his pedagogical findings at the College Theology Society Annual Convention in San Antonio, TX, on June 1, 2012. The presentation situated the course within the current American economic scene, arguing that changes in the nature of work in America necessitate reflection on work's role in moral and social life. The presentation then discussed the design, development, implementation, and assessment of the course, and offered a prospectus on the course's future.

The session was very well attended, and the presentation generated considerable discussion among attendees, most of whom teach at small Catholic colleges like King's. Despite the need for undergraduates to reflect seriously on work, very few college and university religion departments offer courses focused on work. Session attendees are well-situated to put what they learned at the session into action at their home institutions, developing analogous courses that will fit their colleges' curricula.

## Assessment

Assessment of the first course offering was completed in December 2011 and of the second course in May 2012. In both courses, students produced commendable work, and the liveliness of class discussion and thoughtfulness of their answers to the online quiz questions shows that they were engaged with the material. Interview and analysis papers showed that students bridged the gaps between the class, their family lives and career aspirations. In some cases, it was clear that in fulfilling the requirements of the assignment, students had conversations with family members that they never had before and saw work as an intellectual problem for the first time.

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The Fall 2011 course was evaluated by King's faculty member James Wallace, who attended the class on November 9. His evaluation is as follows:

## **Syllabus**

The syllabus for CORE 269: Why Work? establishes the key themes and important questions for the course and underscores the central question of "how work fits into a meaningful life." The language and structure of the syllabus clearly identify the course as one in which students will be invited to explore enduring questions and to think and write analytically and reflectively. The introductory note also details the skills that students will develop in the course as they work their way through various assignments. A substantial but manageable quantity of reading and writing is expected from students in the course.

Readings are arranged chronologically, beginning with *Genesis*, and represent a wide variety of approaches to the question "why work?" The reading list includes essays, chapters and books from influential thinkers in religion, philosophy, literature, sociology, and economics. Several faith traditions and political perspectives are represented. The readings are challenging but accessible and are likely to interest students from any major or background. The reading list is complemented by several films shown outside of class time and a trip to the Philadelphia Museum of Art.

## **Class Visit**

On the day I attended a session of Why Work?, Dr. Malesic was beginning the final unit, "Post-Enlightenment suspicion of industrial capitalism." He briefly reviewed several of the principle tenets of the previous section on the growth of industrial capitalism and highlighted the central themes in readings from Franklin, Weber, Frederick Taylor, and Booker T. Washington. He invited the class to begin considering what critical approaches might be taken toward the emergence of an industrial ethic.

As a bridge between the two sections, Dr. Malesic's remarks were clear and helpful. He moved quickly to the focus of the lesson, William Blake, the first of the artists and writers chosen to illustrate opposing attitudes toward the rise of industry and capitalism. Blake's labor-intensive and innovative method of printing presented a stark contrast to industrial manufacturing, and his poetry addressed the industrial revolution's impact on children and the natural world. Dr.

Malesic had chosen Blake's work to introduce this section of the course because of both the content of the poetry and the form of Blake's decidedly un-industrial art.

Dr. Malesic established historical context for Blake, showed (in PowerPoint) several plates from *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*, distributed a worksheet to guide discussion, and divided the class into four groups, asking each to examine closely a poem from *Innocence*. The students took immediately to the task, reading the poetry aloud to one another and analyzing the language according to the questions on the worksheet. While they worked, Dr. Malesic visited each group several times to address questions and prompt deeper readings. After several minutes, the groups presented their ideas to the class and then resumed their group discussions, this time analyzing and interpreting the companion poem in *Experience*. The majority of students participated enthusiastically in their groups and in the wider class discussion that took place afterward. A number of students drew comparisons and contrasts between the poems and the work they had read earlier in the semester, and Dr. Malesic several times asked for direct connections to the previous works and to the overriding course content, asking, for example, about the identity of Blake's shepherd as a "worker" as the term had been defined in earlier texts. Dr. Malesic ended the class with a slide of Blake's "Preface" to *Milton*, which generated some very insightful commentary from several class members and a discussion that had to be cut short because of time constraints. Clearly, these students enjoy the class, feel comfortable participating in discussions, and can speak competently about the material and the course content.

### **Conclusions/Recommendations**

My review of the syllabus and my visit to Dr. Malesic's class have left me with a very strong impression of the rigor and effectiveness of this course.

Dr. Malesic seems the ideal person to lead a class on the subject of work. He encouraged student participation in an inviting and welcoming manner, took all comments seriously, complimented students on their insights and interpretations, and addressed students with respect and humor. I was especially struck by Dr. Malesic's notable patience as he allowed time for students to think about his questions or, in several cases, to articulate a lengthy reply. His respectful, encouraging and very genial approach to the class—and his students' willingness to participate without fear of censure—helped to create a classroom in which ideas could be produced and contemplated rather than merely consumed. At the beginning of class, Dr. Malesic had invited the class to put aside their assumption that poetry was accessible only to teachers with special knowledge and the key to hidden meaning. He did not intend to present authoritative readings but to facilitate a workshop where students would feel comfortable wrestling with questions, crafting interpretations, and sharing their ideas with one another and the professor.

The syllabus for the course is very well thought out. The historical approach allows students to track changes in the meaning of work and to locate the roots their own burgeoning moral outlook in the ideas of history's most influential thinkers on the subject of labor. The chronological arrangement also allows Dr. Malesic to focus on recurring themes and arguments and to ask students to imagine writers in conversation with one another.

My suggestions for improving the course are minor. There is little that I would suggest changing in the way that class is conducted. Because some students eager to voice their questions and thoughts on Blake's "Preface" were unable to do so, perhaps they might be invited to share their comments through an online journal or blog.

The syllabus is especially interesting and varied. Perhaps one change could be made: Although I recognize that feminist perspectives are represented and addressed in the course, perhaps a female writer might be added to the reading list. If there is room to expand the reading list (and there simply might not be), perhaps something from the perspective of a worker might also be added, something from Studs Terkel's *Working*, for example. The brief oral histories in that book might be used to bolster or challenge some of the theoretical concepts covered in the course.

My final suggestion for improvement would simply be to pay close attention to the evaluation of the course given by some of the section's brighter students. Several struck me as very insightful, attentive, and interested in the material. Perhaps they will have thoughtful recommendations for improvement.

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The Spring 2012 Course was also reviewed on April 12, 2012 by Laurie Sterling, professor of English at King's College. Her evaluation is as follows:

### **The Class Session**

In his course description for Core 269: "Why Work," Dr. Jonathan Malesic begins: "Our culture is conflicted about work." He continues, asking questions that underscore this conflict. Two of those questions seemed particularly relevant to the class that I attended on April 12, 2012: "Is the purpose of work primarily to acquire goods for oneself, or to contribute to one's community? What counts as work?" I visited during the unit entitled "Post-Enlightenment suspicion of industrial capitalism." This was the first of a two classes on Thoreau's *Walden*, and students were to have read the first chapter, "Economy," for this class session.

Dr. Malesic began by introducing the broader theme of the class session: work and the standard of living," and the discussion commenced with a review of previous material—the standard of living and the per capita G.D.P. Asking students to consider this discussion in light of their earlier reading from Booker T. Washington, Dr. Malesic asked what Washington assumed about work and the standard of living. Throughout the class the students proved to be eager participators with a good deal of intellectual curiosity, and they quickly took to this task. Using this new lens, they considered Washington's arguments, and Jonathan deftly summarized their conclusions, arguing that Washington "buys into" modern economic understandings of the standard of living.

He followed with an exercise in brainstorming, asking students to respond to the question, "If we *as a country* wanted to improve the standard of living, what could we do?" Once again, the students enthusiastically volunteered ideas while Dr. Malesic acted as the class stenographer. As the class brainstormed, Jonathan occasionally asked students to clarify or reframe their answers.

As a way of turning students toward the values that underlie *Walden*, he introduced Juliet Schor's "Plentitude: The New Economy of True Wealth," following the video with a suggestive statement: "It sounds to me like she's saying that we should lower our standard of living." Once again, Dr. Malesic worked effectively with the students' responses. They concluded, finally, that Schor's point was that we needed to measure our standard of living differently. One of the students provided a perfect transition to Thoreau, saying, "she advocates self-sufficiency." Dr. Malesic asked the students what Thoreau might think of Schor's plentitude economy, and they began to list Thoreau's values on the board. The ensuing discussion explored the values and beliefs behind Thoreau's rejection of commercialism and circled back to examine Thoreau's attitudes and philosophies about work. Soon another student asked a question that focused on those fundamental questions posed in the course description: "What about community?" Here Dr. Malesic asked students to work specifically with the text as they probed Thoreau's statements about communication (specifically the telegraph) and community.

Working from Thoreau's consideration of the costs associated with railroad travel and his argument that "the swiftest traveler is he that goes afoot," Dr. Malesic posed a hypothetical question, asking whether a bicyclist or a person in a car would win a thousand mile race. Although initially resistant to his argument, students were soon able to bring this back to the discussion that opened the class as they considered how Thoreau would ask us to measure our standard of living.

In the final minutes of the class, Dr. Malesic gave the students one last task, asking them to think of two or three words to describe their general impression of Thoreau and to use textual references to support their characterization of him. Their responses were wide ranging, moving from "open-minded" and "self-sufficient" to "hypocrite." Dr. Malesic suggested two other words: "minimalist" and "thrifty," and these ideas set up the next class meeting on Thoreau.

## **Observations**

I was quite impressed with Dr. Malesic's methods and his abilities in the classroom. The course is intellectually rigorous, so much so that it has the potential to intimidate students in a Core-level class. I was pleasantly surprised (and a bit envious) of the enthusiasm with which students tackled both the reading and the questions posed in class. No doubt, Jonathan's classroom demeanor bears much of the responsibility for the wonderful rapport in the classroom. He is amiable and encouraging and quite adept at using students' responses as building blocks in discussion. He ably encourages them to develop their thoughts and sharpen their insights. In addition, he is patient with them. At times during their discussion some students were rather determined to pursue their own particular agendas. Rather than shutting them down as they began down tangential paths, Dr. Malesic allowed them to pursue these paths and then ably (and kindly) steered the discussion in more productive directions.

Dr. Malesic also evidenced great skill in designing both the course and the individual classroom session, and he was careful to place the day's discussion in context. The class came full circle, and it set up the next session quite well. The class also included a great deal of variety. Dr. Malesic effectively guided students from one task to the next, and his students were quick to draw connections between the different facets of the discussion.



As a teacher of the American Renaissance, I admired Jonathan’s ability to make Thoreau relevant to modern times and to contemporary students. At the same time, even in this introduction to *Walden*, he made sure that students could make specific reference to the text when they expressed opinions about Thoreau’s philosophies and attitudes. I assume that even more close work with the text followed in the next class session.

I have no substantial suggestions for improving the course; it is well-designed and is rigorous but clearly accessible to the students. Given the course’s historical orientation, it might prove interesting to include some more contemporary writing on the value of work in contemporary America. Barbara Ehrenreich’s writing comes to mind as potentially relevant. Dr. Malesic is an excellent and engaging professor, and he has designed a course that is innovative, interesting, and important.

### Quantitative assessment results for CORE 269: Why Work?

To assess the course’s effectiveness in helping students develop skills in moral reasoning, Dr. Malesic scored students’ responses to a question about work’s moral significance at the beginning and end of the course according to the AAC&U’s VALUE rubric for ethical reasoning. This was the question:

*In a few paragraphs, explain what you think are one or two principal purposes of work in people’s lives. If work has some connection to your core religious or moral outlook, then explain that connection.*

The two standards assessed were “ethical self-awareness” and “ethical issue recognition.”

#### Fall 2011

Pre-assessment ( $n = 11$ )

	0	1	2	3	4	Mean
Self-awareness	0	5	5	1	0	1.6
Issue recognition	1	7	2	0	1	1.4

Post-assessment ( $n = 11$ )

	0	1	2	3	4	Mean
Self-awareness	0	3	3	3	2	2.4
Issue recognition	0	3	4	2	2	2.3

#### Spring 2012

Pre-assessment ( $n = 14$ )

	0	1	2	3	4	Mean
Self-awareness	3	8	3	0	0	1.0
Issue recognition	3	8	2	1	0	1.1

Post-assessment ( $n = 9$ )

	0	1	2	3	4	Mean
Self-awareness	1	2	3	3	0	1.9

Issue recognition	1	2	2	3	1	2.1
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Shaded cells indicate the median for each standard. The amount of improvement, about 1 point, is consistent across semesters and standards, suggesting that the course does succeed in incrementally improving students' abilities to think about work as a moral issue and to express the core moral and religious beliefs that inform how they think about work.

### Qualitative assessment results from students' end-of-course reflections

- “In the beginning of this course ... I looked at work as a job that you more than likely did not like but went to anyways to provide for yourself and your family.... While I still think that everyone needs to work regardless if they prefer their job or not I am more open to the idea of work being a part of your life and not having two completely different lives or personalities.” Female student, spring 2012
- “I refuse to hold the ideals of my family members who believe a job is a job, and I should appreciate having one in this terrible economy.... We work to develop ourselves, to expand our hearts, to become enlightened, and to benefit the world as much as we possibly can.” Female student, spring 2012
- “When first thinking about work the thought of religion is something that does not factor in for most people. This assumption would be proven wrong thanks to *The Rule of St. Benedict*, Weber’s *Protestant Ethic* and Heschel’s *The Sabbath*.” Male student, spring 2012 final exam
- “At the beginning of this course I believed that people worked in order to gain freedom economically. Not many people have a choice in whether they work or not because of the pressures put on a person by modern day society.  
     “My opinion has not changed....  
     “Not everyone hates the job they do, but the underlying factor that remains is the fact that the world runs on money. I’m not saying that I agree with the way the system is set up, but it is what it is.” Male student, spring 2012
- “In the first answer [to the question of what was the best reason to work], I said ... how work was important and should be to help others. I still hold this idea, but I have been able to define and outline the ideas better.  
     “First off, work and spirituality still stand as two different things for me....  
     “Second, work should be something you’re passionate about.... [Calvin’s idea of vocation] was driven with spirituality in mind, but the secularized idea is very appealing. I think that if you don’t work at something that excites you, you are basically wasting your time. Helping others is important, but you can’t be as helpful if you are unhappy.” Female student, spring 2012.
- “I feel [that] people automatically assume that The Bible tells you to work hard because that’s what God wants. But that’s not necessarily the case. If more people read the Bible

they'd realize that it more or less says work is fruitless. If I remember correctly there's nothing in there that really says that you should work as hard as possible.... I still essentially feel we work to acquire money in order to live but the WAY we do doesn't have to make us miserable." Female student, fall 2011.

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### **General summary, by Jonathan Malesic**

Overall, the NEH Enduring Questions Course on the Value of Work has been highly successful. Students were asked to work fairly hard in the course, and they performed admirably. The ancillary activities greatly enhanced the course and students' learning, demonstrating to them that their work in class is part of a much larger conversation, not only in a range of academic fields, but in American culture at large. The quantitative assessment shows that students made gains in ethical reasoning, a major learning goal of the King's College general-education curriculum. Anecdotally, students told me and other of my colleagues that this was the best course they have taken in college.

I plan to continue offering a version of this course in the future. Students get a lot out of it, both intellectually and personally, and I enjoy teaching it. Indeed, teaching it has helped to expand my intellectual and pedagogical range to the issue of work. Developing the course raised for me many questions about the meaning and value of work to which I do not think my field of Christian theology has offered adequate answers. As a result, I am now embarking on a research project investigating Christian ethics of work, with the goal of completing a book that offers a new theological vocabulary for talking about work in a precarious, postindustrial economy.

The NEH Enduring Questions Course helped 34 students, many of them children of the working class, to think through an essential intellectual and personal question they will consistently face in their post-collegiate lives. It helped King's College accomplish its mission of offering a diversified liberal-arts education to students like these. It also launched the next stage of my scholarly career. I am extraordinarily grateful to the NEH for everything the grant has made possible for these students, this institution, and me.

## CORE 269: Why Work?

SYLLABUS  
Spring 2012

Instructor: Dr. Jonathan Malesic, Associate Professor of Theology

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We are conflicted about work. We see work as a necessary evil but expect to find fulfillment in it. All workers, at all levels of education, can give an answer to the question why to work, though most can also give good reasons *not* to work. Because we're so conflicted, we need to figure out what work is for, and how it fits into a meaningful life.

So we have questions about work. Is the purpose of work primarily to acquire goods for oneself, or to contribute to one's community? Does each person have a kind of job for which they are naturally suited? What counts as work? Is all work done for pay? Does religion contribute to or thwart the expansion of work into people's lives? How are work and play related? Is working for someone else always alienating? Or is a job just a job, and fulfillment something to seek elsewhere?

Answers to these questions are not only economic and practical, but theological, too, touching on the highest human and religious ideals about the purpose of our lives. In this course, we will try to answer these questions by discussing classic religious, philosophical, literary, and economic texts.

In addition to gaining significant knowledge about the various and sometimes conflicting outlooks on work in religion and culture, the course will help you to develop a number of skills. For one thing, you will develop your ability to think theologically and morally, which requires integrating textual, historical, and philosophical material critically and creatively. In addition the reading and quizzes will help you to sharpen interpretation skills; the papers will help improve interviewing, writing, editing, and information literacy skills; and analyzing the films and art works will hone your visual and cultural literacy. Finally, the course should help you to develop your own religious and moral outlook.

### REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

Required reading will be drawn from eight books, available in the bookstore:

Benedict of Nursia, *Rule of St Benedict* (Liturgical, 1982) \$2.95 9780814612729

Gordon Harvey, *Writing with Sources: A Guide for Students* (Hackett, 2e, 2008), \$6.95  
9780872209442

Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Sabbath* (FSG, 2005) \$13 9780374529758

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (Penguin Classics, 2002) \$8  
9780140447576

Plato, *The Republic* (Hackett, 1992) \$10.95 9780872201361

Henry David Thoreau, *Walden and Civil Disobedience* (Penguin Classics, 1983) \$12 9780140390445

Booker T. Washington, *Up from Slavery* (Norton, 2e, 1995) \$15 9780393967258

Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the "Spirit" of Capitalism* (Penguin Classics, 2002) \$17  
9780140439212

Some additional reading assignments will also be found online.

There is probably more reading in this course than in most of your other classes. If you haven't learned the valuable skill of reading and comprehending quickly with a goal in mind, you will learn that here. I will provide reading guides and other exercises to help with this. Always read with a pencil in hand and a

dictionary nearby. We will devote most of the class time to close study of the reading, so you must bring the reading material to class every day. If you do not, your participation grade will suffer.

<i>Grade breakdown</i>		<i>Thresholds for final grades (points in parentheses)</i>		
Quizzes	40 pts (13%)		A: 93% (279)	A-: 90% (270)
Interview paper	50 pts (17%)	B+: 88% (264)	B: 83% (249)	B-: 80% (240)
Visual culture notes	30 pts (10%)	C+: 78% (234)	C: 73% (219)	C-: 70% (210)
Work & visual paper	60 pts (20%)		D: 60% (180)	
(Early) midterm exam	40 pts (13%)		F: < 60% (< 180)	
Final exam	50 pts (17%)			
Participation	30 pts (10%)			
<u>Total points</u>	300			

There will be about 24 **quizzes** during the semester, each worth 3 points. Students may take as many quizzes as they like, though they can earn up to 40 quiz points overall and up to 24 points in each half of the course (before and after the midterm). If you take at least one quiz per week, you should have no trouble getting full credit for the quizzes.

You will complete most quizzes through Moodle. Beginning January 22, there will be a quiz available from 3:30 pm two days before each class, up until 1:00 pm on the day of class. You can answer the question (in a paragraph of 150-250 words) right in a space on the Web page. Base your answer on the reading assignment due for the day that the quiz is due. Questions are (mostly) taken from the reading guides posted on the Web site. Base your answer on the reading assignment due for the day that the quiz is due.

Late submissions to the quiz assignments will not be accepted. You must complete the quiz in one sitting. Be sure you submit (not start) your answer before 1:00 on the day of class. I'll take a quick look at answers before class and may use those answers in class discussion. Don't be surprised if I ask you to talk about your answer in class.

Quiz answers must be in your own words. You may quote from the reading, but if you do, cite it properly, using a parenthetical page reference. You may not rely on other sources unless specifically asked to use one on a question. Students can check their progress on quiz grades via the Moodle grade book. The cumulative total of points (not the percentage) is what will count for your final grade.

The two **exams** will include questions requiring paragraph-long answers and essays. Essay questions will ask you to synthesize, not just restate, material. Reading, paying attention and taking notes in class, and thinking about the material will yield good exam grades. In general, exam questions will be provided in advance. The final will be based on material from the entire course.

The **interview paper** is an opportunity to connect the course readings to the lives of working people. The paper will be based on two interviews that you will conduct, write up, and turn in before beginning the analytical part of the paper. You will interview a family member about his or her work and a person who does work you would like to do one day. The finished paper should be 1200-1500 words (4-5 pp.).

For the paper on **work and visual culture**, you will analyze films and artworks in light of one or more of the course readings. This paper will be 1600-2000 words (5-8 pp.). It may require some additional research in written sources beyond those listed on the syllabus.

About three students (volunteers, though a selection process may be necessary if too many or too few students volunteer) will do something a little different for the second paper. These students will perform meta-analysis of the interviews and visual culture notes the class produced during the semester, drawing bigger-picture conclusions about work in American culture both historically and today. These students will do somewhat less formal writing for the assignment but will give a brief presentation at the end of the semester in a small symposium that will feature an invited speaker from another university. These students will also win lasting admiration from their professor. More details on the assignment will be forthcoming.

Each paper must have a title, a thesis, supporting evidence in the form of textual references, and a conclusion. Papers should be free from grammatical, spelling, and punctuation errors. I will give you guidelines for the papers at least two weeks before they are due.

Your **participation** grade is determined by your preparation, promptness, attentiveness, and the quality of your questions and comments in class. Doing work for other classes, text messaging, or sleeping in class means you are not participating in class. Indeed, I may ask you to leave. If you tend not to speak much in class, you can demonstrate active participation by handing in an index card at the end of class with a thoughtful question about the material written on it. I will notify the Office of Student Affairs if you are excessively absent from class.

Each student must view at least one of three **films** that will be shown throughout the semester, outside of class time. Each film viewing will be followed by a 20-30 minute discussion. Attendance and participation at one of the sessions is required. (Dates and times for film screenings are TBA.) Each student will also write a brief (1-2 paragraph) entry in a **visual culture notebook**, which may take the form of a virtual notebook visible to other members of the class.

The course includes a **field trip** to the Philadelphia Museum of Art on Friday, April 13. On this trip, you will take a guided tour of selected works in the museum's collection, concentrating on artworks related to course themes. As with the films, viewing the artworks will help you develop your skills in interpreting visual cultural productions. There is no cost for the trip. Details of the trip will be announced soon. The trip will also provide the basis for the other section of the visual culture notebook, which will in turn be part of the basis for your second paper.

The course will conclude with a short **symposium** on the value of work, following the last class on May 1 (which is, incidentally, observed as Labor Day or International Workers' Day in many countries). At this symposium, a few students will present work representing everything we have done during the semester, and an outside expert will respond to our presentation and offer his or her own thoughts on the value of work.

The films, field trip, and symposium are part of the class, just as much required as any reading or assignment.

There will be one opportunity for **extra credit** during the semester. Details will be forthcoming. Students will be able to earn up to about eight additional points via extra credit. (In other words, extra credit can help your grade a bit, but it will not save your grade if you have not kept up on the work throughout the semester.)

### ADDITIONAL POLICIES

Assume that the syllabus has not changed if class is cancelled because of a weather-related college closing. The next time class meets, you should read all the material assigned up to and including the material for that day, including the material for the missed day.

If you ever have a question about the course content or assignments, or if you simply find all of this very interesting and want to talk in more depth about the issues in the class, please come to office hours, or call or email me.

Exams may not be rescheduled for any reason without documentation from the Office of Student Affairs. The final exam will be held during exam week at a time determined by the Registrar. The Registrar (Mr. Dan Cebrick) will be the first person to make this information known to you. Exception: if you have three final exams on the same day, you may take your exam on a different day, with another of my classes. In that case, show me your course schedule.

If I need to email you about anything in the course, I will write to your kings.edu address. Failure to check this account will not excuse you from responsibility for anything I email you.

If you have a documented learning need, please notify me, and I will gladly accommodate it.

Because a major course goal is to train you in the habits of professional scholars (or of professionals in any field, for that matter), you will be bound by rules of academic honesty that forbid cheating of any kind, including plagiarism: presenting someone else's work as your own. If you are having enough trouble with an assignment that you are tempted to plagiarize, see me for advice on how to get going on the assignment. Ignorance of what counts as plagiarism is no excuse for it. (See Harvey, *Writing with Sources*, ch. 3 for more information.) **All cases of academic dishonesty will be penalized, up to and including failure of the course.** All cases will be referred to the Academic Integrity Officer, Dr. Brian Williams.

### SCHEDULE OF TOPICS AND READINGS

Complete reading assignments by the date indicated on the schedule. We will analyze and discuss them in class on that day.

Selections marked with "OL" will be available online. Also online will be reading guides for most reading assignments. Access both via the course's Moodle site. Start from <http://departments.kings.edu/moodle/>, and then log in.

#### Perspectives on work from ancient Mediterranean cultures

T	Jan. 17	Genesis 1-4 (selections, handout)
Th	Jan. 19	Genesis 1-4 (continued); The Economist, "The Plough and the Now" (handout)
T	Jan. 24	Ecclesiastes (OL) [Moodle quizzes begin]
Th	Jan. 26	Matthew (OL)
F	Jan. 27	<b>"Why work?" assignment due, 5:00 pm</b> (counts as 3 point quiz grade)
T	Jan. 31	Plato, <i>The Republic</i> , 1-31 (book I)
Th	Feb. 2	Plato, 32-59 (book II)
T	Feb. 7	Plato, 60-93 (book III)
Th	Feb. 9	Plato, 94-121 (book IV), 251-53, 123-31
F	Feb. 10	<b>First interview due, 5:00 pm</b> (counts for 5 points toward interview paper grade)

Work and the Christian view of cosmic order in medieval and early modern Europe

- T Feb. 14 *Rule of St. Benedict*  
Th Feb. 16 *Rule of St. Benedict*  
T Feb. 21 John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, selections (handout)  
Th Feb. 23 **Midterm exam**

The Enlightenment and industrial capitalism

- T Feb. 28 John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, ch. 5 (OL)  
Th Mar. 1 Benjamin Franklin, "The Way to Wealth" (OL); Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the "Spirit" of Capitalism*, 1-36  
F Mar. 2 **Second interview due, 5:00 pm** (counts for 5 points toward interview paper grade)  
Mar. 6-8 **No class, spring break**  
T Mar. 13 Weber, 67-105; Gordon Harvey, *Writing with Sources*, ch. 1  
Th Mar. 15 Weber, 105-22; Harvey, ch. 2  
T Mar. 20 Booker T. Washington, *Up from Slavery*, 7-45 (ch. I-V); Harvey, ch. 3  
Th Mar. 22 Washington, 45-81 (ch. VI-XI)  
F Mar. 23 **Interview paper due, 5:00 pm**  
T Mar. 27 Washington, 81-121 (ch. XII-XV)  
Th Mar. 29 Washington, 121-47 (ch. XVI-XVII); W.E.B. Du Bois, "Of Mr. Booker T. Washington and Others," in *Washington*, 175-85.

Post-Enlightenment suspicion of industrial capitalism

- T Apr. 3 William Blake, selected poems and engravings (OL); selections from Henry Mayhew, *London Labour and the London Poor* (OL)  
Th Apr. 5 **No class, Holy Thursday**  
T Apr. 10 Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, 218-58  
Th Apr. 12 Henry David Thoreau, *Walden*, 43-124 (read as much as you can)  
F Apr. 13 **Field trip** to Philadelphia Museum of Art, meet outside Holy Cross Hall at 8:00 am; we'll return by 6:00 pm.  
T Apr. 17 Thoreau, finish 43-124 and then read 125-143.  
W Apr. 18 **Final version of visual culture notebook due, 5:00 pm**  
Th Apr. 19 Thoreau, 144-284 (responsibility will be divided among students), all read 368-82.  
T Apr. 24 Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Sabbath*, 1-48  
Th Apr. 26 Heschel, 49-101

Conclusion: Working on your soul in the post-industrial economy

- M Apr. 30 **Work and visual culture paper due, 11:59 pm**  
T May 1 Matthew B. Crawford, "The Case for Working with Your Hands" (OL) [no Moodle quiz]  
**Symposium on the value of work, 3:30-4:45 pm**  
May 4-11 **Final exam**



This course has been made possible in part by the National Endowment for the Humanities: Because democracy demands wisdom. Any views, findings, conclusions, or recommendations in this course do not necessarily reflect those of the National Endowment for the Humanities.