Program History

Freedom and Authority, the longest standing interdisciplinary course at Colorado College, began with the aim of helping students develop an intellectual framework for understanding what it means to be an individual and a member of larger groups – social, cultural, and political – in contemporary liberal societies. The earliest versions of Freedom and Authority were inspired by the problems of the 1950s:

- the ease with which people could be manipulated in an age of mass organization and mass media;
- the difficulty of finding meaning and direction in cultures both growing in affluence and diversity and losing touch with traditions; and
- the relative insignificance and passivity of modern individuals in the face of powerful state authorities.

In opposition to the brutal totalitarianisms of Soviet communism and European fascism, as well as to the “softer” totalitarianism of McCarthyite politics and market manipulation in the United States, Freedom and Authority courses sought to help students develop historical and philosophical perspectives on the challenges and opportunities of contemporary life. These courses encouraged students to engage the world on their own terms, rather than on terms imposed upon them.

Today, the specters of communism and fascism have receded; however, contemporary late- or post-modern life in what are now globalizing market orders continues to make being an autonomous individual and an active and responsible citizen deeply problematic. This course seeks to provide students with critical historical, social, and cultural tools that may help them to understand and engage with such challenges.

Course Description

The course will use texts of various genres to investigate problems of and conflicts between freedom and authority in a number of contexts, including personal, social, political, religious, and scientific-technical ones. These problems and conflicts will be examined thematically, with a significant emphasis on the history of the modern Western world and its predecessor cultures. The course consequently will fulfill the “Critical Perspectives: West in Time” requirement; however, it will neither approach Western traditions uncritically nor ignore non-Western ones entirely.

Block 1 will begin with a brief consideration of differing contemporary perspectives on freedom and authority and then turn to a study of ancient Greek beliefs and practices, with a focus on how the Athenian attempt to balance freedom and authority by means of democratic action may offer a useful critical perspective on modern society and government. The course then will examine the question of whether modern peoples, lacking the traditions of earlier eras, can in fact develop moral perspectives that could frame or inspire meaningful and autonomous lives. Here the focus will be on the cultural and religious forces that offer individuals direction and meaning in their lives. Next, the course will turn to the modern social and economic structures that both promote a sense of individuality and limit actual autonomy.

Block 2 will begin with a critical examination of enlightened rationality, scientific progress, and technological society. Finally, the course will seek to unpack some dilemmas of governing for freedom, particularly as large-scale quasi-democratic orders become absorbed in global orders. Here we will concentrate on developments that corrode critical engagement with others and the broader civil order, and on the ambiguities of power. Our question will be, how can democratic freedom be made substantive in an age of manipulative political marketing, inhumane struggles for power, and elusive global structures?
Course Goals

The primary aim of the course will be to help students understand some key cultural, social, and political dilemmas of the present, in part by tracing this era’s development from the past, and in part by examining closely competing evaluations of these problems. At the same time, the course will seek to identify intellectual and moral resources that make continuing criticism of thoughtless conformism possible and necessary. In addition, the course will introduce students to a variety of influential texts and arguments that, one hopes, students may find interesting on their own terms – whether as works of literature, treatises in philosophy, or studies in the social sciences.

Freedom and Authority will also seek to develop students’ abilities to read, interpret, and respond to such complex texts. Refining and developing interpretations of the texts we read will be emphasized through a number of very short writing assignments, combined with discussion and presentations in class. Two 4-5 page papers and a group oral midterm during Block 1 will aim to give students chances to develop and defend their own judgments about the problems the course will investigate. A longer research paper and a final group oral examination in Block 2 will encourage students to explore their judgments in more depth. As part of that research project, students will also work collaboratively on an annotated bibliography of readings relevant to their research. (Each student will write a part of the bibliography and be graded individually for their contributions.)

Course Requirements

Reading. This course will have a heavy yet quite rewarding reading list. Students will be expected to keep up with the reading throughout the block. Plan to spend a fair amount of time reading before attending class and, at times, re-reading after class. In general, texts are to be brought to our meetings so that they may be referred to in our discussions. Students may bring computers to class so long as they do not prove distracting.

Course Meetings and Discussion. Most course meetings will consist largely of discussion. Individual students may be assigned to lead discussions or to take part in debates on particular topics periodically. Students should expect to attend class meetings consistently and punctually, and to discuss the subjects and texts under investigation in a civil manner. Performance in discussions will strongly influence the participation grade.

Writing. Students will write twelve two-page reaction papers, two somewhat longer essays (4-5 pages each), and a significant research paper (7-10 pages). In addition, students will contribute to a collaboratively produced annotated bibliography. The essays and the research paper are to be typed (i.e., word-processed), double-spaced, and annotated in accordance with accepted norms of scholarship (that is, with citations and notes). Detailed requirements for the reaction papers appear at the end of this syllabus. Unexcused late papers will be downgraded one step per hour tardy.

Examinations. At the end of each block, students will be given oral examinations in small groups, based on questions that they will be given ahead of time. It is possible that unannounced quizzes may be given on the readings from time to time if it appears some students need prompting to keep up.

Required Texts

BLOCK ONE

Chinua Achebe, Things Fall Apart (Doubleday, 1958, 1994)
Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Basic Political Writings (Hackett, 1987)
Isabelle de Charrière, Letters of Mistress Henley Published by Her Friend (MLA, 1993)
BLOCK TWO

Voltaire (Francois Marie Arouet), *Candide, or Optimism* (Penguin Classics, 1972)

Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago, 1966)


Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago, 1996)


*Note: This last book has not been ordered by the Colorado College Bookstore because it will be much less expensive if students order it on their own. I will provide full information about the edition.

**Additional PROWL Digital Reserve Readings**

**BLOCK ONE**

George Orwell, “Shooting an Elephant” (1936), reprinted in *Shooting an Elephant and Other Essays* (Harcourt Brace, 1950). Now available at:

<http://whitewolf.newcastle.edu.au/words/authors/O/OrwellGeorge/essay/shootingelephant.html>


<http://www.mala.bc.ca/~johnstoi/sophocles/antigone.htm>


<http://www.wsu.edu:8080/~dee/GREECE/PERICLES.HTM>


<http://www.mala.bc.ca/~johnstoi/euripides/medea.htm>


Iris Marion Young, “City Life and Difference,” in *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton, 1990)


John Locke, “Of Slavery,” “Of Property,” “Of Political or Civil Society,” and excerpts from “Of the Beginning of Political Societies,” in *Two Treatises of Government*, Book II (1689, 1764), now available at:

<http://oll.libertyfund.org/EBooks/Locke_0057.pdf>


**BLOCK TWO**


These digital readings, indicated by asterisks below on the calendar, may be accessed directly by going to:

https://prowl.coloradocollege.edu/course/view.php?id=1001

**Grading and Attendance Policies**

Grades will be assigned on an 100-point scale and weighted in the following manner:

1. First paper draft  
   Mon., 7 Sept.  
   1%
2. First paper (4-5 pages)  
   Thurs., 10 Sept.  
   10%
3. Second Paper (4-5 pages)  
   Fri., 18 Sept.  
   10%
4. Group Oral Midterm Examination  
   5%
5. Project Proposal Presentation  
   Th-F, 1-2 Oct.  
   1%
6. Annotated Bibliography  
   Fri., 9 Oct.  
   3%
7. Research paper draft  
   Wed., 14 Oct  
   1%
8. Research paper (7-10 pages)  
   Mon., 19 Oct.  
   18%
9. Twelve reaction papers (2 pages each)  
   Various dates  
   24%
10. Final Group Oral Examination  
    7%
11. Participation  
    Throughout  
    20%

**TOTAL:**  
100%

The reaction papers will be graded minimally: check, minus, zero. For more detail on this requirement, see the last page of this syllabus.

Regular, timely attendance and active participation in discussion are essential parts of the course – worth 20% of your final grade. Unexcused absences and regular tardiness will be noted and will affect grades negatively. If you have a good reason to be absent or late, notify me as soon as possible. Be sure to write a note (so that I remember!), as well as to speak to me.

The schedule of assignments appears above and below. You will be expected to meet all of these deadlines. Exceptions will be made only in extreme and unavoidable circumstances. If you expect to submit a paper late, contact me immediately. Either see me in my office, or give me a note or an e-mail message explaining your circumstances. If religious observances or other serious obligations conflict with the course schedule, let me know as soon as possible, and we can work out an alternate schedule for you.

Plan to attend class for the whole period, focusing on coursework throughout. If you have a good reason for arriving late or leaving early, please notify me in advance. **As a courtesy to all, please turn off all electronic devices while in class, and if you use a notebook computer, please do not surf the web in class and do try to make eye contact with the rest of the class!**

**Honor Code**

Students will be expected to abide by the Honor Code. Among other things, the Honor Code specifies that you will be responsible for producing all of your own work and that you will always cite the works or ideas of others used in your work. However, discussing your ideas and your writing with others is not a violation of the Honor Code. In fact, it is a good idea to compare your ideas and writings with those of others and to ask others for criticisms of your work. Using other people’s ideas can also be a good idea – if their ideas are good and you credit the authors for developing the ideas.
**Disability Accommodations**

If you believe you are eligible for learning accommodations as the result of a qualified disability, please contact me privately. If you believe you may have a disability that impacts learning, and you have not self-identified to the College’s Disabilities Services Office, please do so immediately. You will find their office in the Colket Student Learning Center at 152 Tutt Library. You may also contact the College’s learning consultant, Jan Edwards, at the Learning Center or directly at 227-8285. I will make appropriate learning accommodations in accordance with the Disabilities Service Office’s instructions.

**Office Hours/Communication**

I will hold office hours on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 1:30-3 p.m. I am also generally in my office (124 Armstrong) in the afternoon. The easiest way to meet with me would be to make an appointment after class, or contact me via e-mail (dmcennerney@coloradocollege.edu). I can also be reached at my office phone (extension 6564).

**Student FYE Mentor**

Elliot Goldman will serve as FYE Student Mentor for this class. He will be available to meet individually and in groups to assist with questions or problems students might have. He can be contacted at:

Address: 1111 North Wahsatch  
Worner Box 2171  
Cell: 908-642-0407  
Email: Elliot.Goldman@ColoradoCollege.edu

*Note that this entire syllabus is subject to change at the discretion of the instructor.*
**SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS, TOPICS, AND ASSIGNMENTS**

Note: All assignments are to be completed before class.
Class will meet from 9:20 a.m. to 11:45 a.m., with a 15-minute break, unless otherwise noted
* Indicates PROWL electronic reserve reading

### PRELIMINARY ORIENTATION ACTIVITIES

**Monday, 24 August**
FYE Mentor Meeting  
- Class meeting with the course FYE Mentor, Elliot Goldman

**Tuesday, 25 August**
NSO Speaker and Small Group Discussion  
- NSO Capstone Lecture by Barbara Eherenreich, author of *Nickel and Dimed* (1:30 PM, Armstrong Auditorium)  
- Class meeting and discussion of Eherenreich’s book, *Nickel and Dimed* (2:30-4 PM, 321 Cornerstone Arts)  
  **ORWELL READING FOR 31 AUG. DISTRIBUTED.**  
- Meetings with Faculty Advisors (4-6 PM).

### BLOCK 1: 31 AUGUST - 23 SEPTEMBER

#### I. Some Problems of Freedom and Authority

**Monday, 31 August**
Convocation and Introductions  
*Morning: Convocation (9-10:20 AM, Shove Chapel).  
Class Meeting (10:30-12:15):  
a. Introductions and Review of Syllabus;  
*Afternoon: All-Campus Picnic (12:30-2 PM, Worner Quad).*

**Tuesday, 1 September**
Conservative & Radical Perspectives on Contemporary Values  
**FIRST PAPER TOPICS DISTRIBUTED IN CLASS**  
*Afternoon: Library tour with Jessy Randall, Curator and Archivist of Special Collections, (1:30) followed by intro. to the Learning Commons, with Writing Center Director, Tracy Santa (1:45). Meet in library lobby, 1:15.*

#### II. Balancing Freedom and Authority – Ancient Greek Perspectives

**Wednesday, 2 September**
Conflicts of Tradition & the Promise of Athenian Democracy  
b. Woodruff, First Democracy, pp. 3-79.

**Thursday, 3 September**
Free Thinking and the Demands of Democratic Order  
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading/Reference</th>
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| Monday, 7 September   | Freedom, Authority, and Others: A Possible Marriage?                | **Class in Manitou Springs**  
  - Leave campus at 9:30 AM  
  - Return around 4 PM  
  FIRST PAPER DRAFTS DUE – BRING 3 COPIES  
  Afternoon: Small group paper workshops (1:15-3:30 PM). |
| Tuesday, 8 September  | Reading and Writing Day                                              | a. Individual meetings to discuss drafts (all day).  
  b. Read Boethius. |
|                       | III. Cultural and Religious Authority: Can We Develop Meaningful Values to Balance Life? |
  Afternoon: Individual meetings to discuss paper drafts. |
  REVISED FIRST PAPERS DUE AT 6 PM |
| Friday, 11 September  | Moral Bonds: Literate Individuals or Committed Communities?         | **Class meets 1-3:30 PM**  
  SECOND PAPER TOPICS DISTRIBUTED |
  b. *Young, “City Life and Difference,”* pp. 226-256. |
| Wednesday, 16 September| Religion and Morality in Modernity: What Is an Open Mind?          | a. *Micklethwait & Wooldrige, God Is Back*, pp. 31-43; and  
  and *Human, All-too-Human*, pp. 1-11.  
IV. Modern Society: Basis for Freedom or Its Loss?

Thursday, 17 September

How to Be Autonomous: Classical and Early Modern Contrasts
b. *John Locke, Second Treatise, chaps. 4-5, 7-8 (to sect. 102), pp. 52-57, 63-68.

**BLOCK 1 MIDTERM QUESTIONS DISTRIBUTED**
Afternoon: Constitution Day Lecture – Robert W.T. Martin, "Constituting Democratic Culture: Dissent in the Great Debate over the Constitution," Bemis Great Hall, 3:30 PM (Optional summary and reaction paper, 1% extra credit)

Friday, 18 September (Rosh Hashanah begins)

Writing Day
a. No class meeting.
b. Optional individual meetings.

SECOND PAPER DUE AT 6 PM

Monday, 21 September

**Meet in Cornerstone Arts**
**Screening Room**

The Critique of Modern Society

**BLOCK 2 RESEARCH PAPER TOPIC DISTRIBUTED**

Tuesday, 22 September

The Promises of Modern Man and Women / Review
b. Isabelle de Charrière, Letters of Mistress Henley, pp. 3-42.
Afternoon: optional review discussion.

Wednesday, 23 September

GROUP ORAL MIDTERM EXAMINATIONS
One-hour group oral examinations.

B L O C K  2 :  2 9  S E P T E M B E R - 2 2  O C T O B E R

V. Reason, Science, and Society

Monday, 28 September (Yom Kippur)

**Class Meets 1-3:30 PM**

Enlightenment: Rationalizing Authority and Realizing Freedom?
a. Voltaire, Candide, or Optimism, pp. 19-144.
Afternoons: Pre-Registration meetings with your faculty advisor and your FYE Mentor (Elliot Goldman) begin today, and all should be completed by 8 October.
Tuesday, 29 September  
**Meet at the Library**

Reading and Research Day  
a. Introduction to Library Research with Jessy Randall, 9:30-11:30 AM.  
b. Appointments to discuss research project interests.  
   Afternoon: read Kuhn; write project proposal and rough outline of the paper you propose to research; and begin reading Huxley.

Wednesday, 30 September  

What Is Scientific Authority?  

Thursday, 1 October  

**Class meets 1-3:30 PM**

Project Presentation and Reading Day  
a. First 8 students present their project proposals.  
b. Continue reading Huxley for Friday.

Friday, 2 October  

**Class meets at 9:20 AM**  

Making Humans Productive/Why Miss Freedom?  
b. Second 8 students present their project proposals (afternoon).  
   The weekend: Read works for your paper.

Monday, 5 October  

Making Humans Productive/Why Miss Privacy?  
   Afternoon: Group appointments at the Library to discuss bibliographies, and consult with Jessy Randall, as needed.

**VI. The Humanity and Science of Modern Politics**

Tuesday, 6 October  

**Class meets 1-3:15 PM**

A “Science” of Modern Politics – Liberating or Imprisoning?  

Wednesday, 7 October  

The Technology of What Is Called Modern Democracy  

Thursday, 8 October  

U.S.A. Today: The Lonely Viewers or Happy Consumers?  

Friday, 9 October  

Research and Writing Day  
a. Consult with Jessy Randall as needed to finish your research.  
b. Meet with your group to complete editing your bibliographies, and begin writing your paper.  
c. Read Brooks for Monday.

GROUP BIBLIOGRAPHIES DUE AT 6 PM
Monday, 12 October  
U.S.A. Today: Meritocratic Utopia or Narcissistic Sleepwalkers?  

Tuesday, 13 October  
Television: The End of Free Thinking, or Sour Grapes?  
*Suggested reading:* *Reviews of the Assault on Reason* by Michiko Kakutani, David Brooks, and Robert Parry.

Wednesday, 14 October  
**Class Meets 12:30 – 3:30 PM**  
Paper Workshops and Meetings  
a. No reading. Meet in small groups to read your paper drafts.  
b. Begin reading McNeil and Swofford.  
**RESEARCH PAPER DRAFTS DUE – BRING 5 COPIES**  
*Morning and late afternoon: Individual meetings to discuss your paper drafts.*

VII. Power and Problems in the Struggle to Be Free

Thursday, 15 October  
**Meet in Cornerstone Arts**  
**Screening Room**  
War, from the Top  
*Afternoon: Individual meetings to discuss your paper drafts.*

Friday, 16 October  
War, from the Trenches  
b. Fick, pp. 190-369.  
*Afternoon: Individual meetings to discuss your paper drafts.*

Monday, 19 October  
War, from a Feminist Perspective  
*Note: Students will need to order this book on their own.*  
**RESEARCH PAPERS DUE AT 3 PM**

Tuesday, 20 October  
Paradoxes of Freedom & Authority and the Hope of Love  

Wednesday, 21 October  
GROUP FINAL ORAL EXAMINATIONS  
One-hour group oral examinations.
Two-Page Summary and Reaction Papers

Over the course of the two blocks, students will write at least twelve short, informal summary-and-reaction papers. These pieces should be divided into two parts:

a) Summary: stating what strikes you as the most significant or interesting point (or two points) made in the assigned text or texts (½ - 1 page); and

b) Reaction: explaining what that aspect of the reading leads you to think about (1 – 1 ½ pages).

These statements should be the equivalent of 1½ - 2 word-processed, double-spaced pages – so about 375-525 words long. The format is informal: your statement should list your name, the date, the assignment (the authors, titles, and chapters/pages discussed), and your own title at the top. You should divide the statement into two parts (“Summary” and “Reaction”), one summarizing the reading's most important point or points and the other giving your reaction to the reading. You need neither quote nor cite the text, though you can, if you think it important to do so. The statements should be written in clear, Standard English prose. The style may be informal.

As you write, don’t try to summarize all the points made in the reading. Focus on one or two points that seem highly significant to you. This point or these points ought to have led you to think about something that seems important, significant, or meaningful. This point or these points need not be central to the reading, although in most cases I expect they will be. You may well write about some minor aside that an author makes, if that aside has led you to begin thinking. Just be sure to explain clearly and accurately what the authors say when you claim the authors argue something. Also, explain your reaction, your interest, your thought process. When I say, “explain,” I don’t mean saying that something is “interesting” or it has “made you think.” Instead, identify what in particular strikes you as interesting, or what specific problems or ideas the reading raised for you, and then give the reader some sense of why any of these ideas seem important or significant to you. What has led you to react in the way you have?

This assignment is meant to focus both on the reading and on your thoughts insofar as they relate to the readings. For the second half of the papers, you may explain why the authors’ claims seem to you wrong-headed, or really cogent; why they excite or repel you; why they have made you think of something in a new way, or why they seem to point to a dead end. You may explain why the piece seems really bad or really good to you. This assignment lets you think aloud, as it were. However, the first part of the paper should accurately summarize what the author says.

The assignment also, I hope, will further four other aims. First, it will give you a chance to work on mastering the readings, as well as to demonstrate to me that you have done the reading. If there are parts of the readings that you don’t understand, then write about the problems you have in seeing the author’s points. I’ll try to address those problems, either directly, by commenting on your paper, or indirectly, in class. Second, these assignments are designed to give you some easy practice in writing clearly and coherently. The more you learn to clarify your thoughts on paper, the better off you will be as a writer and student. Third, your comments may provide material for class discussions, as well as for you when you prepare to write more formal essays.

These papers will be graded minimally: check, check/minus, minus, zero. I may add no or only a few comments.

• Check: a) the paper clearly and coherently develops an idea; b) it also accurately and fully summarizes what the readings say; and c) it convincingly and clearly shows why this point or line of thought is significant to you.

• Check/minus: the paper demonstrates some effort, but it is incomplete or unbalanced.

• Minus: the paper is just thrown together, it lacks careful thought, or it is not notably inaccurate about the reading.

Checks will earn full credit (2%), check/minuses partial credit (1.5%) and minuses (1%) minimal credit. A check is the equivalent of an “A+” already for 2% of your final grade.

There are 38 authors assigned in this course. You must write reaction papers on twelve of them, but you may write on additional authors -- in which case only the twelve best grades will be counted for the final grade. **No late papers will be accepted.** Finally, all papers will be e-mailed to me AND posted on PROWL for the entire class to view.

Note: Reaction papers must come from across the term. There must be at least two from each of the six lists following:

1. Bloom, Marcuse, Sophocles, Woodruff, Thucydides, Plato, Old Oligarch, Euripides, Friedman.
2. Boethius, Goethe, Hunt, Etzioni, Achebe, Sartre, Young.
4. Voltaire, Kant, Kuhn, Huxley, Ableson/Leeden/Harris.