COURSE DESCRIPTION

Social Foundations II: From Faith to Doubt will expose students to different debates on the rise of skepticism, the relationship between faith and philosophy and the different philosophical and political battles against forms of delusion and social chaos. Attention will be paid to the rise and expansion of Islam, the history of Muslim philosophy, the birth of empiricism in Western Europe, the encounter between the West and the Indigenous communities of Mexico and the Caribbean in the sixteenth century and the evolution of pre-modern notions of citizenship and constitutional rights. Social Foundations II will operate as a forum of intellectual exchange where students share their grasp of the texts and deepen their understanding of foundational narratives explored throughout the semester. Weekly discussions will emphasize the pertinence of each work in contemporary social debates, establishing insightful connections between philosophical writers and ongoing public issues. The course will inspire students to reflect on the power and the limits of human reason. We will analyze the evolution of the theory of social contract and the rise of political rights discourse from Thomas Aquinas to Thomas Hobbes. We will debate on the construction of polemical myths concerning civilization, the savage life, orientalism and development. By the end of the semester students should recognize the uses of self-critical reflection as a method to evaluate the diverse representations of reality based on a spirit of moderate skepticism and methodical thinking.

Liberal Studies Learning Goals and Objectives
Study and rigorous analysis of the assigned texts and material will result in
1. The acquisition of interpretive literacy from an interdisciplinary angle
2. Successful and clear communication in the central debates of Social Foundations
3. Development of independent methods of inquiry
4. A broad understanding of political, social theories and ethics across different cultures
5. The establishment of ongoing connections between past thinkers and current affairs

TEXTS
The Rule of St Benedict (Penguin Classics)
Machiavelli, The Prince, David Wootton, trans. (Hackett)
Thomas More, Utopia (Penguin Classics)
Michel de Montaigne, Essays (Penguin Classics)
The Four Voyages of Christopher Columbus (Penguin Classics)
Bartolomé de las Casas, A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies (Penguin Classics)
Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, Poems, Protest and a Dream (Penguin Classics)
René Descartes, Discourse on Method and Meditations on First Philosophy (Hackett)
Thomas Hobbes, Leviathan (Oxford World’s Classics)
John Locke, Second Treatise of Civil Government (Hackett)
**REQUIREMENTS**

**Course Readings & Computer Use**
You must purchase all texts at the beginning of the semester. Texts marked with * will be posted on our course website. Other texts are available at the NYU Bookstore. Make sure you have your material ready for use before coming to class. Always bring the assigned texts to class discussion.

Use of the computer is reserved strictly for class readings. No chatting, emailing or web-surfing allowed during class.

**Absence Policy**
You may be excused in case of illness or personal emergency. If you are absent you must submit a short response (1 single spaced-page) to one of the assigned documents for the session you missed. Four unexcused absences will result in automatic failure of the course. No exceptions. If you are going through an extraordinary situation such as physical or emotional illness you must communicate with me. There are always solutions to problems, but you must be responsible and honest with me.

**Tardiness**
If you know you will be late, let me know beforehand. Recurrent tardiness will affect your final grade. It interrupts teaching and class discussion. The success of our course depends on your cooperation to create a stimulating and constructive environment. Show that you care about our class.

**Paper Extensions and Make-Ups**
I will only grant extensions under exceptional circumstances (illness or personal emergency). Even if you have a valid reason to request an extension, you will be penalized with a deduction of a letter grade (ex. If the original final grade was a B+ but you submitted late, the final grade will be a B). Assignments will be announced well ahead of the established deadline. There is no need for all-nighters the day before paper submissions. Be consistent and enjoy your creative work.

**NYU Liberal Studies on Plagiarism**
“Plagiarism is the submission of material authored by another person but represented as the student’s own work, whether that material is copied in verbatim or near-verbatim form or paraphrased. Plagiarism is a matter of fact, not intent; whether or not there was intent to deceive, the undocumented use of sources (that is, of any work authored by another person) constitutes plagiarism.

The submission of material authored by another person constitutes plagiarism even if it is subjected to editorial revision (to cover up the dishonesty) that results in substantive changes in content or major alteration of writing style. Improperly acknowledging or failing to acknowledge sources from the Internet, as well as from textual essays, papers, or presentations constitutes plagiarism. Submitting the same paper for two different classes, either in the same semester or in a different semester, without the express consent of both instructors is also considered plagiarism.”

**Plagiarized work will result in automatic failure of the course.**
The Moses Center for Students with Disabilities and The Writing Center at NYU

The Moses Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD) is to facilitate equal access to programs and services for students with disabilities throughout the schools and divisions of New York University (NYU) and to foster independent decision-making skills necessary for personal and academic success. More information at: [http://www.nyu.edu/life/safety-health-wellness/students-with-disabilities.html](http://www.nyu.edu/life/safety-health-wellness/students-with-disabilities.html)

The Writing Center at NYU offers assistance in the writing process. Explore their resources and plan a visit to improve your writing skills. Visit their website to find out specific information about their services: [http://www.nyu.edu/cas/ewp/html/writing_center.html](http://www.nyu.edu/cas/ewp/html/writing_center.html)

**GRADE BREAKDOWN**

30% Class Participation (Active Oral Discussion & Weekly Responses in Forum)
20% Mid-Term and Final Exams
25% Essay I
25% Essay II

Essay topics and evaluation guidelines will be posted one month before the due date. I do not accept late papers. Failure to submit work by the established deadline automatically receives an F. Four or more absences will also put you at the risk of failure.

**READING PROGRAM**

*Session 1 Introduction/ The Birth of Islam*
*Session 2 Selections from the Qur'an* (Surah 1-4, 12, 17, 26, 114)
*Session 3 Islamic Philosophy and Mysticism I: Al-Ghazali*
*Session 4 Islamic Philosophy and Mysticism II: Averroes*
*Session 5 Islamic Philosophy and Mysticism: III: Ibn Tufail*
*Session 6 Religion and Community Life: Benedict of Nursia, The Rule*
*Session 7 Theology, Philosophy and Law: Aquinas, The Summa Against the Gentiles*
*Session 8 Theology and Political Power: Aquinas, On Kingship*
*Session 9 Politics and Power: Machiavelli, The Prince (1-14)*
*Session 10 Politics and Power: Machiavelli, The Prince (15-26)*
*Session 11 Machiavelli & TV Culture: House of Cards*
*Session 12 Thomas More: Utopia*
*Session 13 Mid-Term Project*
*Session 14 Michel de Montaigne: On Cannibals/ De la Boetie: Discourse on Voluntary Servitude*
*Session 15 Christopher Columbus: Four Voyages*
*Session 16 Bartolome de las Casas: Short Account on the Destruction of the Indies*
*Session 17 Legacies of Columbus & Bartolomé: Class Debate*
Session 18 Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz: Poems, Protest and a Dream
Session 19 Film: I the Worst of All
Session 20 First Dream; Waking Life
Session 21 Galileo, Letter to Duchess Christina
Session 22 Descartes, Discourse on Method (I-III)
Session 23 Descartes, Discourse on Method (IV-VI)
Session 24 Descartes, Meditations
Session 25 Hobbes, Leviathan (I, VI, XI, XIII-XV; XVII-XXII, XXVI, XXXII-XXXIII)
Session 26 Locke, Second Treatise of Civil Government
Session 27 Early Modern Thought & Current Affairs Politics (I)
Session 28 Early Modern Thought & Current Affairs Politics (II)