

**SCLA 101: Transformative Texts**  
**Critical Thinking & Communication I: Antiquity to Modernity**  
**Theme: Wisdom, Virtue, and the Good Life**

**Professor**

Dr. Eric Sampson  
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Office hours: M,W 4:00 - 5:00pm, or by appt.

**Meeting Details**

Days: MWF  
Time: 1:30pm - 2:20pm  
Place: Helen B. Schleman Hall 226  
Course: SCLA 10100-187

**Course Description**

SCLA 101 is based on the fundamental premise that great texts inform and inspire students, encouraging their creative and imaginative capacities, helping them see the world from different perspectives, and broadening their worldviews. Students will examine a series of texts, seeking to understand their historical context as well as what these texts mean to us today. What do our readings tell us about the pain and pleasure of being human; the use and abuse of power; the existence and nature of God or gods; and the power and limits of human reason? What do they tell us about our relationship with nature and our communities? How do they advance our self-understanding? How do they increase our understanding of other people and their perspectives?

SCLA 101 fulfills the Written Communication and Information Literacy requirements in the University Core Curriculum and is dedicated to developing the ability of students to write clearly, advance their understanding of rhetorical situations and choices; analyze and construct arguments as well as find and evaluate sources.

SCLA 101 fulfills 3 credit hours of the 15-hour Cornerstone certificate program. Purdue's nationally recognized Cornerstone program shares the wisdom and vision of the Liberal Arts with all Purdue students, enhancing their foundational knowledge while deepening their ability to see unity across disciplines, appreciate ambiguity, and love learning. Cornerstone seeks to develop engaged Purdue graduates who can respond creatively and flexibly to the challenges of a diverse world.

**Texts**

*Required*

1. *The Odyssey*, by Homer, translator Emily Wilson
2. *The Bible*, NRSV translation
3. *The Trial and Death of Socrates*, dialogues by Plato, translator G.M.A. Grube
4. *The Nicomachean Ethics*, by Aristotle, translator Terence Irwin
5. *The Meditations*, by Marcus Aurelius, translator Martin Hammond
6. *Anthem*, by Ayn Rand

*Recommended*

7. *Style: The Basics of Clarity and Grace*, by Joseph Williams and Joseph Bizup

## Requirements

- Participation (15%)
- Weekly 1-page response papers and in-class writing (20%)
- Class Presentation (15%)
- 3-page paper (10%)
- 4-page paper (15%)
- 5-page research paper (25%)

## ChatBots

Submitting AI-generated writing or research as your own is academic dishonesty and carries the same penalties as plagiarism. If any portion of your assignment was generated by a chatbot, you are in violation of the academic integrity expectations for this course and the university. Your case will be reported to the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities for further review of your status at Purdue University.

## Participation

Participation begins by reading the assigned readings carefully *before class*. You'll then need to contribute to class discussion, at some point, by asking questions or making comments. Some people are shy. I get that. Shy people can either rack up their participation points on the back half of the semester once they become more comfortable with the class setting, or by coming to office hours, or by chatting with me about course material over email or after class. Making lots of comments in class is not the only (or even best) way to receive a good participation grade. Quality matters too. The best thing to do is strike a nice balance between quality and quantity. Sometimes you'll say stuff that doesn't quite make sense. That's fine. This stuff can be hard and you're allowed to struggle. Feel free to contribute even if you're not 100% clear about what's going on. There's no penalty for making a good-faith effort but not quite getting it right. That's how you learn literally anything—trying and failing a bunch until you get it.

## Attendance

Attendance at all class meetings is mandatory, but life happens. You can miss three (3) course meetings without any notice and without penalty. Each absence beyond those three will result in a 2-point deduction from your participation grade. (Obviously, if you get COVID or something, and can't make it to class for a long time because of illness, I'm not going to tank your grade.)

## Grading Scale

A: 94 – 100	A-: 90 – 93	B+: 87 – 89	B: 84 – 86	B-: 80 – 83	C+: 77 – 79
C: 74 – 76	C-: 70 – 73	D+: 67 – 69	D: 64 – 66	D-: 60 – 63	F: < 60

## Office Hours & Accessibility

I'm happy to meet with you at any time to discuss assignments, the topics of the class, or whatever. Come to my office hours, or if those times don't work, email me to set up an appointment. Zoom works too.

I'm committed to making class fully accessible regardless of disabilities. If I can do anything to help make the class more accessible to you, let me know, or (if you would prefer) have the Disability Resource Center contact me on your behalf.

## Course Schedule

### Homeric Wisdom and Virtue

*Genre: Epic Poem*

<b>Week 1</b>	Aug. 21	<i>Odyssey</i> (Books 1-4)
	Aug. 23	<i>Odyssey</i> (Books 5-8)
	Aug. 25	<i>Odyssey</i> (Books 9-12)
<b>Week 2</b>	Aug. 28	<i>Odyssey</i> (Books 13-16)
	Aug. 30	<i>Odyssey</i> (Books 17-20)
	Sep. 1	<i>Odyssey</i> (Books 21-24)

### Jewish Wisdom and Virtue

*Genre: Ancient Wisdom Literature*

<b>Week 3</b>	Sep. 4	Labor Day, no class
	Sep. 6	<i>Proverbs</i> (Chapters 1-15)
	Sep. 8	<i>Proverbs</i> (Chapters 16-31)
<b>Week 4</b>	Sep. 11	<i>Ecclesiastes</i>
	Sep. 13	<i>Job</i> (Chapters 1-9)
	Sep. 15	<i>Job</i> (Chapters 38-42)

### Socratic Wisdom and Virtue

*Genre: Dialogue*

<b>Week 5</b>	Sep. 18	<i>Euthyphro</i> , Plato
	Sep. 20	<i>Apology</i> , Plato
	Sep. 22	<i>Apology</i> , Plato
<b>Week 6</b>	Sep. 25	<i>Crito</i> , Plato
	Sep. 27	<i>Phaedo</i> (excerpts), Plato
	Sep. 29	<i>Republic</i> (excerpt), Plato “The Allegory of the Cave”

### Aristotelian Wisdom and Virtue

*Genre: Prose Treatise*

<b>Week 7</b>	Oct. 2	<i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , Aristotle (Book 1, skip chapter 6)
	Oct. 4	<i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , Aristotle (Book 2)
	Oct. 6	<i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , Aristotle (Book 3, chapters 6-12)
<b>Week 8</b>	Oct. 9	October Break, no class
	Oct. 11	<i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , Aristotle (Book 8)
	Oct. 13	<i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , Aristotle (Book 9)

## Christian Wisdom and Virtue

*Genre: Biography, Epistle*

<b>Week 9</b>	Oct. 16	<i>The Gospel of John</i> (Chapters 1-7)
	Oct. 18	<i>The Gospel of John</i> (Chapters 8-14)
	Oct. 20	<i>The Gospel of John</i> (Chapters 15-21)
<b>Week 10</b>	Oct. 23	<i>Matthew</i> (Chapters 4-7), Jesus's "Sermon on the Mount"
	Oct. 25	<i>Epistle to the Philippians</i> , St. Paul
	Oct. 27	<i>Epistle of James</i>

## Stoic Wisdom and Virtue

*Genre: Handbook, Philosophical Diary*

<b>Week 11</b>	Oct. 30	<i>Enchiridion</i> (excerpts), Epictetus
	Nov. 1	<i>Enchiridion</i> (excerpts), Epictetus
	Nov. 3	Professor Sampson away at conference, no class
<b>Week 12</b>	Nov. 6	<i>Meditations</i> , Marcus Aurelius (Books 1-4)
	Nov. 8	<i>Meditations</i> , Marcus Aurelius (Books 5-8)
	Nov. 10	<i>Meditations</i> , Marcus Aurelius (Books 9-12)

## Critics of Western Wisdom and Virtue

*Genre: Novella, Political Handbook, Treatise, Film*

<b>Week 13</b>	Nov. 12	<i>Anthem</i> , Ayn Rand
	Nov. 15	<i>Anthem</i> , Ayn Rand
	Nov. 17	<i>The Prince</i> (excerpts), Niccolò Machiavelli
<b>Week 14</b>	Nov. 20	<i>The Prince</i> (excerpts), Niccolò Machiavelli
	Nov. 22	Thanksgiving Vacation, no class
	Nov. 24	Thanksgiving Vacation, no class
<b>Week 15</b>	Nov. 27	<i>Beyond Good and Evil</i> (excerpts), Friedrich Nietzsche
	Nov. 29	<i>Beyond Good and Evil</i> (excerpts), Friedrich Nietzsche
	Dec. 1	<i>Existentialism is a Humanism</i> , Jean-Paul Sartre
<b>Week 16</b>	Dec. 4	<i>Existentialism is a Humanism</i> , Jean-Paul Sartre
	Dec. 6	<i>Wolf of Wallstreet</i>
	Dec. 8	Last day wrap-up