

## **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: BRNG 7127  
Office hours: T/TH (4:30 - 5:30pm, or by appt.)

### **Meeting Details**

Days: Tuesdays & Thursdays  
Time: 12:00 pm - 1:15 pm  
Place: Schleman Hall 303  
Course: SCLA 10100-227

### **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 and 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 students' ability to write clearly, advance their understanding of rhetorical situations and choices, analyze and construct arguments, and 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.

SCLA 101 and 102 are humanities courses offered through Cornerstone Integrated Liberal Arts, housed in the College of Liberal Arts. The current director is Professor Melinda Zook ([mzook@purdue.edu](mailto:mzook@purdue.edu)); if you have any questions or concerns, don't hesitate to contact her.

### **Texts**

#### *Required*

1. *The Odyssey*, by Homer
2. *The Bible*, NRSV
3. *The Trial and Death of Socrates*, by Plato
4. *The Nicomachean Ethics*, by Aristotle
5. *Anthem*, by Ayn Rand

#### *Recommended*

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

<b>Requirements</b>	<b>Weights</b>
• Participation	15%
• Weekly 1-page response papers and in-class writing	20%
• Class Presentation	15%
• 3-page paper (Due: Sun., Feb. 16 at 11:59pm EST)	10%
• 4-page paper (Due: Sun., Mar. 30 at 11:59pm EST)	15%
• 5-page research paper (Due: Sat., May 3 at 11:59pm EST)	25%

## **SCLA 101 Learning Outcomes**

### **Written Communication**

By the end of the semester, students should be able to:

1. Write with clarity, coherence, and concision in a variety of genres, 5,000-11,000 words of polished writing (or 12,000-18,000 words, including drafts).
2. Demonstrate an understanding of the importance of rhetorical situations and choices for a variety of audiences and contexts.
3. Demonstrate critical thinking about writing through reading, analysis, discussion, composing, and revising texts in a range of genres.
4. Apply a clear understanding of the writing process and successfully organize, present, and communicate meaning to fellow readers.
5. Identify, analyze, and evaluate the claims of a variety of sources.
6. Engage critically with transformative texts, drawing on multiple perspectives including the individual, the historical, and the contemporary.

### **Information Literacy**

By the end of the semester, students should be able to:

1. Conduct research, search strategies, and locate relevant sources.
2. Determine the quantity of information needed, including supplemental sources, in order to satisfy a well-designed research question.
3. Demonstrate the ability to summarize, synthesize, quote, and document sources, using an appropriate documentation style.
4. Critically evaluate the information for its quality, accuracy, bias, authority, and relevance.
5. Display an understanding of the historical, ethical, and cultural contexts of both a research question and the sources used to answer it.
6. Express a clear understanding of the issues of intellectual property (such as fair use, plagiarism, and copyright)

### **Attendance**

Attendance is required. You are, however, permitted to miss three (3) course meetings without notice and without penalty. (You don't need a doctor's note. You don't need to email me.) Each absence beyond those three will result in a 2-point deduction from your participation grade. These three absences are yours to use at your discretion. You will almost certainly need them. Use them wisely.

### **No Technology Policy**

SCLA 101 is a device-free zone. Phones, tablets, and laptops are not permitted. Any student seen using a device will be marked absent for the day.

### **Participation**

Participation begins by carefully reading the assigned readings *before* class. To engage fully, you'll need to contribute to our class discussions by asking questions or sharing your thoughts. Some people are shy. I get

that. If that's you, fear not. You can build your participation grade gradually over the semester once you feel more comfortable with the class environment. You also have other opportunities to demonstrate participation, such as attending office hours or discussing course material with me after class.

Participation isn't only about the *quantity* of your comments. Quality matters, too. Striking a nice balance between the two is ideal. Sometimes, your contributions might not land exactly as you intended. That's fine. Philosophy is hard, and you're allowed to struggle a bit. Feel free to share your thoughts, even if you're unsure you've got it right. There's no penalty for making a good-faith effort and falling short. That's how you learn literally anything—trying and failing until you get it.

### **Freedom of Expression Policy**

In this class, students are encouraged to exercise their right to free inquiry and expression. You are welcome to express any view on the subject matter introduced by the instructor or other class members within the course's structure. While you are responsible for learning course content, you're free to take a reasoned exception to the views presented and to reserve judgment about matters of conscience or controversy. When you encounter ideas that you find offensive, immoral, or unwise, you are encouraged to engage them with reasons, evidence, and arguments. Your course grade will be based on your academic performance, not the opinions you express. Our commitment to freedom of expression means no relevant ideas or positions are out of bounds. However, disruptive or disorderly behavior, threats, or harassment are prohibited and will be reported to the Office of the Dean of Students.

See the University's "Commitment to Freedom of Expression" and "Bill of Student Rights" in the University Policies and Statements module on Brightspace.

### **Chatbots: The Policy**

Submitting AI-generated writing or research as your own is academic dishonesty and carries the same penalties as [plagiarism](#). If a chatbot generated any portion of your assignment, you violate this course's (and this university's) academic integrity expectations. I will report your case to the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities for further review of your status at Purdue.

### **Chatbots: The Policy's Rationale**

Imagine a strength coach telling a client, "Do some deadlifts." The client says, "OK, but if you want me to move those heavy weights up and down, I should be allowed to use a forklift. In the real world, we have forklifts to move heavy stuff up and down." The strength coach should respond, "No, you don't get it. The point of lifting weights is not to move weights up and down. It's to improve your bodily strength—your capacity to move stuff around without technology. You build bodily strength by lifting weights yourself, not outsourcing the work to a machine. That's why no strength coach on the planet allows their client to use a forklift, no matter how accessible forklifts are in the real world."

I'm your academic coach. My job is to help you improve your thinking, writing, and speaking. The course assignments are your mental exercises—strength training for your mind. So, if you ask me, "Why can't we use AI to complete our assignments? In the real world, we have AI to generate text for us!" I'll respond, "No, you don't get it. The point of assigning a 5-page paper is not for you to have a 5-page paper on your hard drive. It's to improve your thinking, writing, and speaking—your capacity to do these things without technology. You build these capacities by writing your papers yourself, not outsourcing the work to a machine. That's why I won't let you use AI to complete your assignments, no matter how accessible AI is in the real world."

### **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 during my office hours to discuss course assignments, course material, etc. I've listed my office hours and location at the top of this syllabus's first page. If those times don't work, email me to schedule an alternative in-person or Zoom appointment.

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 prefer) have the Accessibility Office contact me for you.

## Course Reading Schedule

### Homeric Wisdom and Virtue

*Genre: Epic Poem*

<b>Week 1</b>	Jan. 14	What's Wisdom and Virtue? How will this class work? (no assigned reading)
	Jan. 16	<i>Odyssey</i> (Books 1 - 4)
<b>Week 2</b>	Jan. 21	<i>Odyssey</i> (Books 5 - 9)
	Jan. 23	<i>Odyssey</i> (Books 10 - 14)
<b>Week 3</b>	Jan. 28	<i>Odyssey</i> (Books 15 - 19)
	Jan. 30	<i>Odyssey</i> (Books 20 - 24)

### Jewish Wisdom and Virtue

*Genre: Ancient Wisdom Literature*

<b>Week 4</b>	Feb. 4	<i>Proverbs</i> (Chapters 1 - 15)
	Feb. 6	<i>Proverbs</i> (Chapters 16 - 31)
<b>Week 5</b>	Feb. 11	<i>Ecclesiastes</i>
	Feb. 13	<i>Job</i> (Chapters 1 - 9, 38 - 42)

### Socratic Wisdom and Virtue

*Genre: Dialogue*

<b>Week 6</b>	Feb. 18	<i>Republic</i> (excerpt, "The Allegory of the Cave"), Plato
	Feb. 20	<i>Euthyphro</i> , Plato
<b>Week 7</b>	Feb. 25	<i>Apology</i> , Plato
	Feb. 27	<i>Crito</i> , Plato

## **Aristotelian Wisdom and Virtue**

*Genre: Prose Treatise*

<b>Week 8</b>	Mar. 4	<i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , Aristotle (Book 1, skip chapter 6)	
	Mar. 6	<i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , Aristotle (Book 2)	
<b>Week 9</b>	Mar. 11	<i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , Aristotle (Book 3, chapters 6 - 12)	
	Mar. 13	<i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , Aristotle (Book 8)	
<b>Week 10</b>	Mar. 18	Spring Break (no class)	
	Mar. 20	Spring Break (no class)	

## **Christian Wisdom and Virtue**

*Genre: Ancient Biography, Epistle*

<b>Week 11</b>	Mar. 25	<i>The Gospel of John</i> (Chapters 1 - 10)	*Discuss Research Paper*
	Mar. 27	<i>The Gospel of John</i> (Chapters 11 - 21)	
<b>Week 12</b>	Apr. 1	<i>Epistle to the Philippians</i>	*Discuss Thesis with Partner*
	Apr. 3	<i>Epistle of James</i>	

## **Stoic Wisdom and Virtue**

*Genre: Handbook*

<b>Week 13</b>	Apr. 8	<i>Enchiridion</i> (excerpts), Epictetus	*Discuss Outline with Partner*
	Apr. 10	<i>Enchiridion</i> (excerpts), Epictetus	

## **Critics of Western Wisdom and Virtue**

*Genre: Novella, Political Handbook, Treatise*

<b>Week 14</b>	Apr. 15	<i>Anthem</i> , Ayn Rand	
	Apr. 17	<i>Anthem</i> , Ayn Rand	*Discuss Comments on 3pp Draft*
<b>Week 15</b>	Apr. 22	<i>The Prince</i> (excerpts), Niccolò Machiavelli	
	Apr. 24	<i>The Prince</i> (excerpts), Niccolò Machiavelli	
<b>Week 16</b>	Apr. 29	<i>Beyond Good and Evil</i> (excerpts), Nietzsche	*Discuss Comments on 5pp Draft*
	May 1	<i>Beyond Good and Evil</i> (excerpts), Nietzsche	

### SCLA 101 Final Research Paper Rubric

	Poor	Average	Good	Excellent
<b>Organization and Style</b>				
Clearly introduces the topic and its importance.	0-1	2-5	6-7	8
Introduction provides appropriate background and draws the reader into the argument	0-1	2-5	6-7	8
Thesis is clearly stated and makes a direct claim about the topic	0-1	2-5	6-7	8
Clear and logical organization throughout the paper, with smooth transitions between ideas, sentences, and paragraphs.	0-1	2-5	6-7	8
Correct grammar, consistent tenses, natural and clear language, active voice, formal language (no slang)	0-1	2-5	6-7	8
<b>Critical Thinking and Creativity</b>				
Demonstrates complexity of thought as well as creative approaches in both content and sources	0-1	2-5	6-7	8
Demonstrates a careful reading and analysis of the textual evidence in support of arguments	0-1	2-5	6-7	8
Recognizes and responds to one or more opposing views or counterarguments	0-1	2-5	6	7
<b>Evidence and Documentation</b>				
Uses credible supportive evidence, critically analyzed.	0-1	2-5	6-7	8
Demonstrates the ability to summarize, synthesize, quote, and document sources both throughout the text and bibliography/works cited page	0-1	2-5	6-7	8
Accurately determined quantity of information needed in order to satisfy a well-designed research question	0-1	2-5	6	7
Supportive evidence is integrated smoothly into ideas and text	0-1	2-5	6	7
<b>Conclusion</b>				
Summarizes evidence in support of the thesis without simply restating it.	0-1	2-5	6	7
<b>Additional criteria:</b>				