

# **Foundation Course: The Western Canon as Reflected in Literature, the Arts, and by Historians and the “Players”**

15-Week Course  
(60 Classroom Hours: 4 Hours Per Week)

## **SUGGESTED THEMES**

- Each age seeks to protect its existence: Fights inroads:  
Example: Church versus State: Socialism versus Capitalism.
- Each age has in it aspects of the past and future development.
- Each age has in it the seeds of its own destruction as it seeks to expand its power and authority:  
Example: slavery, colonialism, French Revolution.
- Each age seeks to interpret the past as consistent with the current age:  
Example: MAGA.
- Each age often disappears, sometimes for long periods, only to reappear decades or centuries later:  
Example: Greece (800 B.C. – 500 B.C.; Italy A.D. 500 – A.D. 1000).

Class 1: The Greek Experience: Community and Government:  
Proposed Readings: Socrates, Aristotle, Homer, The Myths. I.F. Stone: “The Trial of Socrates.”

Class 2: The Roman Experience: Expansion and Conquest:  
Proposed Readings: Plutarch, Ovid, Caesar.

Class 3: Christianity and Judaism: Guilt, Love, Forgiveness:  
Proposed Readings: Bible, St. Thomas Aquinas, Augustine, David  
Nirenberg, *“Anti-Judaism: The Western Tradition.”*

Class 4: The Renaissance: Art, Beauty, Sensualism:  
Proposed Readings: DaVinci, Vasari, Shakespeare, Montaigne,  
“Essays,” Art book, “Art that Changed the World,” published by  
“D.K.”

Class 5: After the Renaissance: The Writers: Austen, Eliot, the  
Brontes, Shelly, Byron, Spenser, Scott, Kipling, The Moderns.

Class 6: After the Renaissance: The Composers: Mozart, Bach,  
Beethoven, Verdi, Wagner, Ravel, Cage.

Class 7: Concentration of Power: Kings, Emperors, Church:  
Proposed Readings: Machiavelli, Divine Right of Kings, Writings of  
Fernand Braudel.

Class 8: The Age of Reason and Enlightenment: Rational Thinking,  
Science, The Scientific Method, Empiricism:  
Proposed Readings: John Stuart Mill, Darwin, Decartes, The  
Classifiers, Bertrand Russell, J.M. Keynes, F.S.C. Northrup: “The  
Meeting of East and West,” A.N. Whitehead.

Class 9: Democracy and Individual Rights:  
Proposed Readings: Thomas Payne, Jefferson, Rousseau, Locke.

Class 10: The Age of Invention, Industry and Capitalism:  
Competition and Consensus:

Proposed Readings: David Gordon, *"The Rise and Fall of American Growth"* Adam Smith, Edison, Carnegie, Writings of Fernand Braudel.

Class 11: A Social Rebalancing:

Proposed Readings: Karl Marx, Anti-Trust Laws, Tax Policy, MacMillan "1919."

Class 12: Colonialism, Control, Slavery:

Proposed Readings: Monroe, British Navy, The Exploiters/Explorers of Africa, Asia, Latin America, De Tocqueville.

Class 13: World Wars, The Atomic Bomb, The Holocaust, doomsday weapons:

Proposed Readings: *"Hitler's Willing Executioners," "The Pity of it All," "All Quiet on the Western Front,"* Shirer's *"The Rise and Fall of The Third Reich,"* Johnson: *"Modern Times,"* Gilbert: *"World War I,"* Mein Kanpf.

Class 14: High Tech and Globalization: The Integration and Movement of People, Ideas, Goods and Services:

Proposed Readings: Martin Wolf, *"Why Globalization Works,"* *The London Economist,* Ricardo's *"Law of Comparative Advantage,"* Peter Drucker.

Class 15: Contemporary Social Rebalancing; Revisited:

Proposed Readings: Frederick Douglass, Martin Luther King, James Baldwin, Tony Morrisson, Maya Angelou, Langston Hughes, Mary Wollstonecraft, Simone Beauvoir.

## **SUGGESTED TOPICS FOR CLASS DISCUSSION**

Class 1: Why did Socrates remain silent and refuse to plead not guilty because of the make-up of his jury?

Class 2: What were the driving forces behind Roman rule and expansion outside Italy?

Class 3: Was the basic premise of Jesus – love and forgiveness – already substantially in Jewish literature, or was Christianity predicated on new concepts minimally referenced in Jewish literature at the time?

Class 4: Would the painters and sculptors of the Renaissance have developed (or not) without support from the Church?

Class 5: Did the writings of the time reflect the demographic structure of society as it then existed or was it based on a narrow slice of society – and did that change over the centuries?

Class 6: Who was the audience and which sectors of society supported the composers. Was the music political?

Class 7: What were the relationships between the Church, Islam, the Emperors, Feudalism, and the rising private sector? How did it play out? Who had leverage?

Class 8: Did the Church fight or support the development of science in the 18<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> centuries? How?

Class 9: Were the ideas expressed by the leaders of the democracy movement accepted or rejected by various demographic groups in society?

Class 10: Why did the concepts of competition and capitalism develop primarily in the United States and Western Europe rather than Asia or Africa?

Class 11: Which demographic groups in different parts of the world led or resisted efforts to seek equality, diversity, and social justice?

Class 12: Was the premise of colonialism, slavery and control based on narrow proprietary self-interest or a Messianic/missionary attempt to make believers of the so-called “natives?”

Class 13: Why were the wars of the early 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, particularly World War I, fought?

Class 14: Are such movements irreversible and who has the leverage to facilitate or block globalization? How?

Class 15: Which political, economic, and social changes over the centuries were most influential in facilitating the current focus on equality, diversity and social justice?

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## **PROPOSED DISCUSSIONS/FINAL EXAM**

Answer either question A or question B.

Question A:

How would you prove or disprove the \_\_\_\_\_ (Insert one of the following words: efficacy, folly, validity, viability, wisdom, existence, or any word of your choosing) of “the Divine Right of Kings?”

OR

Question B:

How would you prove or disprove the \_\_\_\_\_ (Insert one of the following words: efficacy, folly, validity, viability, wisdom, existence, or any word of your choosing) of Jefferson's view that ". . .All men are created equal . . .endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness?"

Proposed Reading: S.I. Hayakawa, "*Language in Thought and Action.*"

