



“At times the creative imagination seems to work in isolation, when an individual, impelled by some uninstructed spark of originality, glimpses relationships or possibilities never seen before, or devises forms of expression never heard before. But most often the creative imagination does not flare in isolation. Creative minds stimulate each other, interaction and competition have a generative effect, sparks fly from disagreement and rivalry, and entire groups become creative.” -Bernard Bailyn

This course will gather some of the most insightful writings on a generally neglected phenomenon of intellectual history: the creative -- sometimes destructive -- dynamics of inner circles, avant-gardes, and other exclusive, informal associations of innovative minds. In some cases these are acolytes or teams surrounding an individual leader; others are self-organizing collections of distinctive personalities. The aim is to assess the significance of such societies among other perceptions of how history works: the "great man" theory, *longue durée*, economic determinism, etc. There also are society-shaping intellectual circles across time, largely unrecognized by education today, but there for us to discover.

Each circle will be considered in the context of its distinctive architectural or other physical surroundings. Ultimately, the seminar itself will be assessed as "an intellectual circle."

One substantial book each week will be the focal point for assessing such groups from the politics of breakthroughs in the arts and sciences. At each historical turning point, the connections between a groups' format and style will be discussed in terms of its intellectual substance.

Each member of the seminar will write a 10-page term paper due on the last day of the exam period on a topic approved by the instructor. Each member also will sign up to "start" one of the sessions of the course and produce a 2-page paper on that introduction. There will be a midterm exam; no final exam.

Course Schedule**I: Archetypes**

- a. Mother Yale, Confucius, “The Last Supper,” “The School of Athens.”
- b. The Round Table, “The Death of Wolfe,” “Washington Crossing the Delaware”; Paradigms vs. Dialogues: Socrates and Freud

II: Philosophy and Eros

- a. Plato, *The Symposium*
- b. Plato, *The Symposium*

III: Revolution and Founding

- a. Ellis, *Founding Brothers*
- b. Ellis, *Founding Brothers*

IV: Diplomacy

- a. Nicolson, *The Congress of Vienna*
- b. Nicolson, *The Congress of Vienna*

V: Empire

- a. Zimmerman, *First Great Triumph: How Five Americans Made their Country a World Power*
- b. Zimmerman, *First Great Triumph: How Five Americans Made their Country a World Power*

VI: Psychology and Eros

- a. Grosskurth, *The Secret Ring: Freud's Inner Circle*
- b. Grosskurth, *The Secret Ring: Freud's Inner Circle*

VIII: Philosophy and Postmodern Politics

- a. Bakewell, *At the Existentialist Café*
- b. Kojève's lectures on Hegel

VIII: Communism

- a. Sebag Montefiore, *Stalin: The Court of the Red Tsar*
- b. Sebag Montefiore, *Stalin: The Court of the Red Tsar*

IX: Computer Science

- a. J.L. Casti, *The Cambridge Quintet: A Work of Scientific Speculation*
- b. J.L. Casti, *The Cambridge Quintet: A Work of Scientific Speculation*

X: Literary Circles: American to the World

- a. Henry David Thoreau and the Flowering of New England.
- b. Gertrude Stein and The Lost Generation.
- c. Langston Hughes and the Harlem Renaissance
- d. Jack Kerouac and The Beat Generation.

XI: The Cold War

- a. Herken, *The Georgetown Set*
- b. Herken, *The Georgetown Set*

XII: Theology and International Order

- a. Rice, *Reinhold Niebuhr and his Circle of Influence*
- b. Rice, *Reinhold Niebuhr and his Circle of Influence*

XIII: The Law

- a. Greenburg, *Supreme Conflict: The Struggle for Control of the U.S. Supreme Court*
- b. Greenburg, *Supreme Conflict: The Struggle for Control of the U.S. Supreme Court*

Surroundings

- The Seating Chart
- Mount Vernon
- *Hamilton* the musical
- Schonbrunn Place
- The State, War, and Navy Building
- The House on Lafayette Square
- Bergasse 19
- Café Les Deux Magots
- The Kremlin
- Christ's College, Cambridge
- Walden Pond
- 27 rue de Fleurus
- The Cotton Club
- *On the Road*
- P Street
- Union Theological Seminary
- In Chambers

Books to Buy: Make sure to purchase these precise editions!

- Joseph Ellis, *Founding Brothers: The Revolutionary Generation*. Vintage Books, 2000.
- Simon Sebag Montefiore, *Stalin: The Court of the Red Tsar*. Vintage Books, 2003.
- Steven Watson, *The Harlem Renaissance: Hub of African-American Culture 1920-1930*. Pantheon Books, 1996.
- J.L. Casti, *The Cambridge Quintet: A Work of Scientific Speculation*. Helix Books/Addison-Wesley, 1998.
- Gregg Herken, *The Georgetown Set: Friends and Rivals in Cold War Washington*. Knopf, 2014.
- Sarah Bakewell, *At the Existentialist Café: Freedom, Being, and Apricot Cocktails*. Other Press, 2016.
- Daniel F. Rice, *Reinhold Niebuhr and his Circle of Influence*. Cambridge University Press, 2013.

Course Reader: Available for Purchase at Tyco's - Selections taken from works below

- Herman L. Sinaiko: "Socrates and Freud: Talk and Truth" from *Reclaiming the Canon: Essays on Philosophy, Poetry, and History*
- Plato, *The Symposium*
- Sir Harold Nicolson, *The Congress of Vienna: A Study in Allied Unity, 1812-1822*
- Warren Zimmerman, *The First Great Triumph: How Five Americans Made their Country a World Power*.
- Phyllis Grosskurth, *The Secret Ring: Freud's Inner Circle and the Politics of Psychoanalysis*
- F. Scott Fitzgerald, "Those who came to Gatsby's house that summer" from *The Great Gatsby*
- Henry David Thoreau, *Walden*
- Ernest Hemingway, *A Moveable Feast*
- Zora Neale Hurston, *Characteristics of Negro Expression*
- Jack Kerouac, *The Dharma Bums*
- Jan Greenburg, *Supreme Conflict: The Inside Story of the Struggle for Control of the U.S. Supreme Court*