The Purposes of College Education

**Course Description:**

College is a crucial institution in which our society works through its expectations for young people. This course will explore some of the purposes that have been ascribed to college, including development of personal character, participation in a community, conversation with others on intellectual matters, and preparation for citizenship. We will also touch on other purposes, including career preparation and pursuit of knowledge for its own sake. Readings from Plato, Aristotle, Confucius, Bhagavad-Gita, Virginia Woolf, Martin Luther King, Max Weber, and others.

**Pedagogical Goals**

If you take this class, you should expect the following:

- to learn about various influential ideas regarding education, especially liberal education, and the institution of college
- to gain experience in reading challenging primary texts
- to reflect personally on your aspirations for the next four years

**September**

**W 2** Introduction to the Course

**W 9** Character (1):

Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, excerpts from books 1 and 6

Confucius, *Analects*, excerpts from books 1 and 2

**W 16** Character (2):

Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One’s Own*, chapter 3
Martin Luther King, “I have a dream”
Martin Luther King, Autobiography, chapters 2 and 3

W  23   Weber, “Science as a Vocation”

W  30   Community (1)
   Plato, *Republic*, excerpts of books 3 and 7

October

W  7    Community (2)
   *Bhagavad-Gita*, excerpts

W  14   Conversation (1)
   John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*, chapter 1

W  21   Conversation (2)
   Materials on free speech in academia

W  28   Citizenship (1)
   John Dewey, “My Pedagogic Creed”

November

W  4    Weber, “Politics as a Vocation”
W 11  Citizenship (2)
Danielle Allen, *Education and Equality*, excerpts of chapters 1 and 2

W 18  Conclusion
   Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (brief excerpt)
   Michael Oakeshott, “Political Education”

December

Final discussion sections to be scheduled.

F 4  Short paper due

Plagiarism

Please consult the following website for information on how to avoid plagiarism:

(Links to an external site.)

We will discuss what plagiarism means before you hand in your first response papers. Yale College regulations require that I report all cases of plagiarism to the Yale College Executive Committee.

Course Accommodations
If you wish to have a learning accommodation made for you in this class, please contact your teaching fellow. Further information about course accommodations is also available at the Student Accessibility Services website: https://sas.yale.edu/

(Links to an external site.)

Library Resources

Every undergraduate is assigned to a Personal Librarian who can help you navigate library resources. You can get in touch with them with questions about using library materials at any point. More information about this service (including who your personal librarian is) can be found here: https://web.library.yale.edu/pl

(Links to an external site.)

For this class, you are not expected to undertake any research. You need only read the assigned readings.

Respect in the Classroom

The classroom should be a place for lively and open exchange of ideas free of intimidation or prejudice. Please treat each other with respect and operate on the principle of charity, assuming a charitable interpretation of the words of other students and teachers.