

COURSE SYLLABUS FORM

American University of Beirut
Faculty of Arts and Sciences
Department: Civilization Sequence Program

Course Number and Title: CVSP 204, Contemporary Studies

1. Course Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, the student can expect to have acquired:

a. KNOWLEDGE AND COMPREHENSION:

the ability to recognize, appreciate, and describe some of the most seminal influences that have shaped our contemporary world from the late 19th Century to the present time:

- Evolutionary theory (Darwin...)
- Radical social and intellectual critique (Nietzsche...)
- Depth Psychology (Freud...)
- Astro-Physics (Hawking): relativity theory, quantum mechanics, string theory...
- Science and pseudo-science (Popper)
- Revolution and the Absurd (Malraux)
- Existential thinking (Nietzsche, Malraux, de Beauvoir)
- Women's issues
- Postcolonial literature and criticism (Edward Said, Mahfouz, Tayyib Saleh)

b. SKILLS, COMPETENCIES AND ATTITUDES:

an improved ability:

- to **think critically** about the topics and ideas under study;
- to **analyze** complex original texts in English;
- to **construct** and **discern** valid and invalid arguments;
- to **apply** ideas and methodologies to our contemporary world situation;
- to **evaluate** both by comparison with different views from within the course, as well as with respect to the student's own ideas and perspective;
- to **discuss and debate** divergent views with their fellow students and the instructor, in an atmosphere of **mutual respect** and the **freedom** to pursue and express one's personal point of view;
- to **ground** one's views in the texts by developing scholarly methodology and responsibility;
- in writing skills in English.

2. Resources Available to Students

The emphasis in all CVSP core courses (201 – 208) is on developing the student's ability to deal with **primary texts** (written by the authors themselves: see schedule below). Thus no particular resources other than the works under study are a set part of the courses.

Individual instructors will help guide the student in the judicious use of secondary sources.

3. Grading Criteria

- a. Written work: **normally**, two ‘midterms’ and a Final Exam are graded on a basis of 20% for each of the midterms and 40% for the Final Exam.
- b. Oral presentations, drop quizzes, class attendance and participation **normally** are the basis for the remaining 20% of the Final Grade.
- c. Teacher discretion: individual instructors may choose to vary the above criteria. In every case, they must announce any diversion from the above clearly and in writing to the students at the outset of the semester.

4. Schedule (as attachment)

Note: the CVSP reserves the right to alter specific readings for any given semester. This is part of the dynamism of ongoing evaluation and improvement of course offerings. Such changes will always be in line with the general stated course objectives as described in # 1 above.

5. Course Policy

Academic integrity and honesty are central components of a student’s education. Ethical conduct maintained in an academic context will be taken eventually into a student’s professional career. Academic honesty is essential to a community of scholars searching for and learning to seek the truth. Anything less than total commitment to honesty undermines the efforts of the entire academic community. Both students and faculty are responsible for ensuring the academic integrity of the University. (*AUB Student Handbook*, p. 33)

For definitions of cheating and plagiarism as well as the consequences for such, see the AUB “Student Code of Conduct” as found in the *Student Handbook* (esp. pp. 85-86 and 88) and on the AUB website. <http://pnp.aub.edu.lb/general/conductcode/158010081.html>

At minimum, anyone caught in violation of academic integrity will receive, as per the “Student Code of Conduct,” a failing grade of forty points for the assignment in question. Should the violation deserve greater punishment, it will be referred to the Dean and the Dean’s Administrative Committee.

CIVILIZATION SEQUENCE PROGRAM CVSP 204: READING AND LECTURE SCHEDULE		
WEEK	LECTURE	ASSIGNMENT
1	<i>Darwin</i>	Darwin, <i>The Origin of Species</i> (Mentor). (xerox selections)
2	<i>Nietzsche</i>	Nietzsche, <i>Beyond Good and Evil</i> (Penguin), Preface, Part I, Sec. 1-6, 11, 13, 16-17, 19, 23; Part II, Sec. 29, 34-36, 41-44; Part V, Sec. 186-203; Part VII, Sec. 214-239; Part IX, Sec. 257-265.
3 & 4	<i>Freud</i>	Freud, <i>Civilization and its Discontents</i> (Norton).
5	<i>Hawking</i>	Stephen Hawking, <i>A Brief History of Time</i> (Bantam Books), Chapters 1, 2, 3, 8.
6	<i>Popper</i>	Karl Popper, Selections from <i>The Logic of Scientific Discovery</i> , <i>The Poverty of Historicism</i> and "Replies to My Critics" (xerox selections)
7 & 8	<i>Malraux</i>	Andre Malraux, <i>Man's Fate</i> (Vintage Books).
9	<i>Beckett</i>	Samuel Beckett, <i>Waiting For Godot</i> (Faber & Faber).
10	<i>de Beauvoir</i>	Simone de Beauvoir, <i>The Second Sex</i> . (xerox selections)
11	<i>E. Said</i>	Edward Said, <i>Orientalism</i> (Penguin), pp. 1-28, 31-49, 284-328, 329-354.
12	<i>Mahfouz</i>	Naguib Mahfouz, <i>Midaq Alley</i> (Doubleday).
13 & 14	<i>T. Salih</i>	Tayeb Salih, <i>Season of Migration to the North</i> (Heinemann).

Classes meet three times a week: one common lecture and two discussion sessions.