

DWC 201: The West in the World**Lectures:** MF 1:30-2:20 pm**Seminar:** W 8:30-10:20 OR 1:30-3:20 pm

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Office Hrs: M&F 11-12:15pm;

W, 11am – 1pm

And by appointment

Course Description and Guiding Questions

Our course charts the connections between the West and the world from the nineteenth century to our present moment, with a particular focus on scientific and technological revolutions, evolving notions of religion and the divine, the emergence of large-scale social systems, and on instances of encounter and dialogue between cultures and peoples. We will consider several fundamental questions, including:

- What is the basis of political authority?
- What are our moral obligations to others?
- What, if anything, do we know about the world?
- How do emerging technologies shape our understanding of the divine?
- What does it take to be an authentic person?

Required Texts:

Rousseau, *The Basic Political Writings of Rousseau*, tr. Cress (Hackett) (ISBN-13: 978-0872201507)

Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Beauchamp (Oxford) (ISBN-13: 978-0198752486)

Shelley, *Frankenstein: or The Modern Prometheus* (Oxford) (ISBN-13: 978-0199537167)

Dostoevsky, *Notes from Underground*; Pevear trans. (Vintage) (ISBN-13: 978-0679734529)

Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morality*, tr. Clark and Swenson (Oxford) (ISBN-13: 978-0872202832)

Melville, *Billy Budd, Bartleby, and Other Stories* (Penguin Classics) (ISBN-13: 978-0143107606)

Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* (Norton Critical Edition) (ISBN-13: 978-0712354851)

Lewis, *The Great Divorce* (HarperOne) (ISBN-13: 978-0060652951)

Hendrix, *The Mythmakers: The Remarkable Fellowship of C.S. Lewis & J.R.R. Tolkien* (Abrams) (978-1419746345)

Orwell, *1984* (Berkeley - 75th Anniversary Edition) (ISBN-13: 978-0452284234)

Kuhn, *Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 50th Anniversary Edition (Chicago) (ISBN: 978-0226458120)

Robinson, *Gilead* (Picador) (ISBN-13: 978-1250784018)

Baldwin, *Collected Essays* (Library of America) (ISBN-13: 978-1883011529)

Rosa, *The Uncontrollability of the World*, tr. Wagner (Polity) (ISBN: 978-1509543168)

List of Assignments and Grading Calculation:

Reading Journal - 10%

This semester you will curate a handwritten reading journal using our seminar readings.

Requirements: Before each seminar meeting (unless otherwise noted in the course schedule), you should transcribe, **by hand**, at least 2-3 passages from our readings for that day. **We also require that you write 2-3 questions** based on the readings that you hope to ask during seminar discussion. Make sure to bring your reading journal to seminar **every week – no exceptions**. We will collect hard copies periodically at the end of seminar, returning them to you on Friday before lecture, and we will collect digital copies of the journals at the end of the semester (through Canvas) and will check your entries and deduct points for missing passages, questions, and dates.

Keeping a reading journal allows you to fully immerse yourself in our literature. You will better develop your abilities as a note-taker and as a reader. As you decide what passages to write down and remark upon, think about what really resonated with you in a meaningful way.

Quizzes - 10%

There will be short weekly quizzes on the text assigned for the week before seminar. The quizzes will be administered through Canvas.

Attendance & Participation - 20%

Attendance for seminars and lectures are required. You will be expected to actively participate in seminar discussions, regularly making substantive comments, and engaging with your peers. Guidelines will be provided by your seminar professor to help you better understand these expectations.

Writing Assignment - 20%

Students will be required to write a reflective and comparative essay that is staged. This assignment will total 1,500 - 2,000 words. We will distribute assignment prompts on October 3. An introductory paragraph and paper outline will be due on October 24. Comments and feedback will be provided and a rough draft will be due November 21. Additional comments will be provided and a final draft will be due December 12. If you need extensions at any stage of this assignment, please contact your seminar professor prior to the deadlines.

Cultural Adventure Essay - 10%

Students will be required to experience, analyze, and critically engage with a piece of art or music *beyond the Providence College campus*. For instance, students could visit the RISD Museum, the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, the Rhode Island Symphony, the Boston Symphony Orchestra, etc, and then write a reflective essay (500-1000 words) putting that piece of art or music in conversation with at least one of our seminar texts. *A selfie of you in front of the piece of art or in your seat at the concert hall is required*. More details to follow. The Cultural Adventure Essay will be due to Canvas by Sunday, November 16, 2025 at 11:59pm. If you need an extension, please contact your seminar professor prior to the deadline.

Examinations - 30%

There will be two in-class examinations: a midterm (Friday, October 10, 2025) and a final (Monday, December 15, 2025). More details to follow.

Grading Scale

A = 93-100	A- = 90-92
B+ = 87-89	B = 83-86 B- = 80-82
C+ = 77-79	C = 73-76 C- = 70-72
D+ = 67-69	D = 63-66 D- = 60-62
F = 59 and under	

Week	Monday	Wednesday (seminar)	Friday
Sep. 1 - 5	LABOR DAY – <i>No class</i>	Kant, “What is Enlightenment?” (PDF)	“Introduction to Third Semester CIV and Course Expectations” SS/SL/SM
Sep. 8 - 12	“Rousseau: When he wasn’t busy fathering illegitimate children he had some pretty cool things to say about property and rights and morality” SM	Rousseau, <i>Discourse on the Origin of Inequality</i>	“Metaphysics <i>before</i> everything went off the rails” SM
Sep. 15 - 19	“Le bon David, or the Great Infidel” SM	Hume, <i>Enquiry</i> §§1 – 5, 7, 10	“Metaphysics <i>after</i> everything went off the rails” SM
Sep. 22 - 26	“For everything, we are out of tune”: Romanticism as response to “disenchantment” SL	Shelley, <i>Frankenstein</i>	“The highest subjectivity of man abstracted from himself”: Modernity’s long farewell to God (Feuerbach) SL
Sep. 29 - Oct. 3	Wickedness and an aching liver: Dostoevsky diagnoses a modern soul SL	Dostoevsky, <i>Notes from Underground</i>	“Following the facts: The age of the Earth controversy” SM
Oct. 6 - 10	“The burgeoning science of morality” SM	Nietzsche, <i>Genealogy of Morals</i>	MIDTERM EXAM
Oct. 13 - 17	“The Market Revolution and the Transformation of Nineteenth-Century America” SS - 10/14 session	Melville, <i>Bartleby</i>	Commies and Catholics in the marketplace: Marx and Leo XIII SL

	COLUMBUS DAY		
Oct. 20 – 24	“The Age of Western Imperialism” SS	Conrad, <i>Heart of Darkness</i>	“Don't the great tales never end?” - Fiction as truthful “subcreation” (Tolkien and Lewis) SL
Oct. 27 – Oct. 31	You become what you love: a bus ride with C.S. Lewis SL	Lewis/Tolkien/ <i>Mythmakers</i>	“The Rise of Authoritarianism” SS
Nov. 3 – 7	“The Cold War Dystopia of George Orwell’s <i>1984</i> ” SS	Orwell, <i>1984</i>	“The Chemical Revolution and the Discovery of Oxygen” SM
Nov. 10 – 14	“Science: It’s all relative...?” SM	Kuhn, <i>Structure of Scientific Revolutions</i>	An underground life set free: D. Day SL
Nov. 17 – 21	“That little incandescence you see in people”: Karl Barth meets Marilynne Robinson SL	Robinson, <i>Gilead</i>	Lecture on James Baldwin’s “The Harlem Ghetto” SS
Nov. 24 – 28	Lecture on James Baldwin’s “Notes of a Native Son” SS	THANKSGIVING	
Dec. 1 – 5	Lecture on James Baldwin’s “The American Dream and the American Negro” SS	Baldwin, <i>Essays</i> and <i>I am not your negro</i>	“Empiricism and realism” SM
Dec. 8 – 12	The world as “point of aggression” – or as gift: Hartmut Rosa and a Pope respond to the modern SL	Rosa, <i>The Uncontrollability of the World</i> (plus an excerpt from a Benedict XVI encyclical)	SS/SL/SM