

**NARRATIVE AUTHORITY & UNRELIABLE NARRATORS**  
**COL 243 – EARLY MODERN COLLOQUIUM – FALL 2022**



M/W 1:20-2:40  
BOGH 115

**Prof. Ponce**

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Office hours:

TU 1:30-3pm and by appointment

**Description:**

The junior early modern colloquium is the third in a series of five that together constitute the core of the COL program. Our study focuses on the theme of “narrative authority and unreliable narrators” in the early modern world and will involve the interpretation of literary, historical, philosophical, and interdisciplinary texts from the 15th-17th centuries which span Europe, North Africa, and Mexico. This period marks one of the richest phases of cultural, political, and intellectual innovation in human history but with innovation comes instability and, at times, uncertainty. With the advent of the printing press during the second half of the sixteenth-century, the broad dissemination of texts lit a quiet revolution in the type of texts available and the ease of access to them. This changed what knowledge was, how it was constituted, its temporality, and its relationship to power. Our texts and authors navigate and respond to major shifts in thought and practice related to the rise of Humanism, the Renaissance, the Reformation, the early days of the Scientific Revolution, and the Baroque. While these periods have been problematized in post-structural thought, we will examine them critically as useful constructions for understanding various sedimentations of thought and practice in the early modern. What gives a text or person authority? What allows them to maintain it? What role and stake do the narratives we are told and the voices that narrate have in maintaining this social and epistemological web of power and meaning? What might this say about the stories we hear, the ones we doubt or believe, and those that we ourselves tell? Which are the stories we do not think to question?

## Textbooks and Materials

The books below are required and most of them are available at the Wesleyan RJ Julia Bookstore. Many of these works can be bought in good second-hand condition online for an inexpensive price, but you are required to purchase the same translations and editions so that we are all on the same page for class discussion. **Please use the ISBN #s as a guide to the correct translation and edition.** We will NOT be using any electronic copies this semester. **Please bring all texts as a paper copy to class.** You are expected to **read the paper texts** so that they contain your notes when you bring them to class.

### *\*Please Note\**

*The College of Letters is happy to provide micro-grant scholarships for these texts. If you do not have the budget to get all or some of the required texts, please simply email us.*

### Required texts:

1. *Course Packet* \*All readings marked “[CP]” on the ‘Reading Schedule’ are to be found in the course packet. All other readings are required texts for purchase. All [CP] readings can also be found on the Moodle in case of emergency. However, you are required to print them prior to reading and attending class.
2. Valla, Lorenzo. *On the Donation of Constantine*. Harvard. 978-0674030893
3. Shakespeare, William. *Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*. Cambridge. 978-0521532525
4. Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*. Cambridge. 978-1107665736
5. Hobbes, Thomas. *Leviathan*. Hackett. 978-0872201774
6. Milton, John. *Paradise Lost*. Hackett. 978-0872207332
7. Cavendish, Margaret. *The Blazing World*. Broadview. 978-1554812424
8. De la Cruz, Juana Inés. *The Answer/La Respuesta*. Feminist Press at CUNY. 978-1558615984

## Papers and Grading

\*Only papers uploaded to Moodle (for mock comps you will have a separate Moodle), as **WORD documents** in the following format will be accepted: “**243-yourlastname-1**”, “**243-yourlastname-2**” for the second paper, “**243-yourlastname-3**” for the last paper.

Except in the case of emergencies, **unaccounted for late papers will not be evaluated.** If you need additional time to work through a passage, idea, analysis, or reflection please **make the necessary arrangements with me in advance** of the deadline. I am happy to grant extensions.

**PAPER 1: MOCK COMPS:** You will be required to complete a mock comprehensive written examination of **1800 words** on **Saturday, October 1<sup>st</sup>** in lieu of your first paper. You will be given **7.5 hours** to complete this essay. This is one half of a normal exam day in which you write 2 1800-word essays in 15 hours. Please reserve this Saturday for the mock comp in advance. Following the written exam, you will also be required to complete a **20-minute mock oral examination** with me on **Friday, October 14<sup>th</sup>, 11am-4pm**. This is an abbreviated version of the full oral examination that you will have in December. **If you have any potential conflicts with Mock Comps, these should be coordinated with me within the first two weeks of classes.**

**PAPER 2:** Due **Friday, October 28<sup>th</sup> by 11:59pm**. You will be required to write an **1800-word essay** of your own design for your second paper. Your discussion should be focused on (a) specific passage(s) and tightly argued. Generally, it is best to treat one passage or two passages in a paper of this length; it is not recommended to attempt to treat more than three passages, or to choose passages greater than one paragraph in length. You are encouraged to **meet with me to discuss paper topics** in advance.

**PAPER 3:** Your third paper will be due on the final day of class, **Wednesday, December 7<sup>th</sup>**. This shorter paper (**1000 words**) is an opportunity for you to focus on the passage that you would most like to take away with you from the semester. Please use this passage as a way of drawing out a theme, concept, or leitmotif that you were able to observe throughout the semester. You are not required to connect this observation to every single text but please make as many connections as you can (**min. 6 allusions/connections**). As such, this close reading should provide you with an opportunity to focus and synthesize your thoughts from the term.

**MOODLE POSTS:** Each week you will be required to submit a brief Moodle post of a **short passage (2-3 sentences)** accompanied by your remarks of no more than **250 words by 11:59pm on Saturdays**. Please take the time to read over the posts of your classmates **on Sundays** so that you can incorporate the Moodle forum into class discussion **on Mondays**. This is an opportunity for you to gather the perspectives of your peers and to more fully consider key moments in the text. These posts should also be a resource to you in your preparation for comprehensive exams—a repository of miniature ‘close-readings’ ripe with potential for further analysis and reflection.

**COMPREHENSIVE EXAMS:** Your comprehensive exams do not factor into your evaluations in the Early Modern Colloquium. However, they do play a role in your department evaluation at graduation. It is necessary to pass your comprehensive exams in order to continue in the major. **The Written Comps are November 18<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> and the Oral Comps are December 12<sup>th</sup> & 13<sup>th</sup>. If you have any potential conflicts with Comps, these should be coordinated with the Director, Professor Irani, within the first two weeks of classes.**

There is no final examination for this class. The absence of letter grades should invite you to take risks in your reading and writing, to explore ideas that take you out of your comfort zone, and to become comfortable working in a place of uncertainty. Please make good use of this freedom to chart, explore, discover an intellectual path of development for yourself. Thorough written evaluations are more comprehensive and record in greater specificity the particularities of your performance than a letter grade. If you have questions about how to navigate your own development, don't hesitate to come to office hours. Your continuation in the COL major depends on your performance in these evaluations.

### Reading & Discussion Practices

In order to maintain an environment conducive to study and discussion, I ask that you cultivate your classroom **attention** by refraining from the use of electronic devices in class. **Please turn off all phones, laptops, and other devices before the class meeting time.** We will undertake discussion by referring only to our texts, our notes, and one another. You are strongly encouraged to keep a **notebook** specifically dedicated to colloquium. Think this as a kind of intellectual journal. **Please bring that notebook and all texts as hard copies to class.** Both reading and discussion elicit **different forms of attention** in an analog format. They also require **different cognitive faculties** than those which are predominant in a digital format. I realize that you likely have very few opportunities to experience individual and collective intellectual pursuits in an analog format and that this change **may require some adaptation.** I encourage you to take the opportunity to experience your learning in this way. It will be up to you if you incorporate elements of this learning process into other areas of study during this or in future semesters. Don't hesitate to ask if you have questions about how to begin.

**Successful discussion depends on our ability to listen and to hear one another.** It is vital to colloquium that you be able to connect your own observations to those of your peers in a collaborative effort to build towards an observation, interpretation, or critique. As you practice listening, ask yourself if you would be able to paraphrase the comment that your classmate is making. If you can **conceptualize what is being said, rearticulate it in good faith, and then connect it to your own insight, question, observation, or reflection,** then you will be well prepared for seminar. Listening isn't just about agreeing or disagreeing; it's about adding texture, nuance, complication, alternative perspective or reflection, or support for what is already on the table for discussion. Ultimately, we are trying to help one another **to see as fully, as richly, and as clearly as possible. This is a collective project.**

Each of your required texts include a lengthy critical apparatus (introduction, notes, bibliography, &, in some cases, additional essays). As noted in the syllabus, you should plan to **read the introductory study in your edition in addition to the assigned text.** Where (primary) texts occur in the course packet without such critical apparatus, I have supplemented the assigned reading with a book chapter or article (secondary texts) to provide some context. **All primary texts are given with a black bullet point on the reading schedule. All secondary texts are given as a white bullet point on the schedule.** I

would like to remind you that the historical background given in the secondary texts should not be taken as definitive or exhaustive or without bias. **Please read the secondary material as critically as you would read any text**, use it to formulate your own questions about the historical context, and **supplement the information with any additional resources that you might seek out on your own**. I do suggest that you **give primacy to close reading the primary text** before moving on to the secondary literature. Unless explicitly flagged as 'Optional', **all texts (primary and secondary) on the reading schedule are required**. Again, you are expected to read the paper copy so that **your notes will be in the correct place with reference to the correct page numbers**. Retention tends to be greater for reading done on a paper copy so this will aid you in preparation for comps as well.

Consider each text on its own terms.

Read the material critically but with an open mind.

Read and reread thoughtfully.

Come prepared to listen, reflect, and dialogue with your peers.

We are working towards a conversation that is both stimulating and pleasurable for all.

### **Disability Resources**

Wesleyan is committed to ensuring that all qualified students with disabilities are afforded an equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from its programs and services. To receive accommodations, a student must have a documented disability as defined by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the ADA Amendments Act of 2008, and provide documentation of the disability. Since accommodations may require early planning and are typically not provided retroactively, please contact Dean Patey at your earliest convenience in Disability Resources (located in North College, Room 218) or call 860-685-5581 for an appointment to discuss your needs and the process for requesting accommodations. **All accommodations should be arranged within the first two weeks of classes**. Further information on registering with Disabilities Services can be found online at:

<http://www.wesleyan.edu/studentaffairs/disabilities/index.html>

For assistance with disabilities in a remote format, see:

<https://www.wesleyan.edu/studentaffairs/disabilities/distance-learning.html>

### **Religious Observances**

Faculty make every effort to deal reasonably and fairly with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments, or required assignments and attendance. If this applies to you, **please arrange for accommodations within the first two weeks classes**.

## Discrimination and Harassment

Wesleyan University is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working, and living environment. Wesleyan will not tolerate acts of discrimination or harassment based upon Protected Classes or related retaliation against or by any employee or student. For purposes of this Wesleyan policy, "**Protected Classes**" refers to race, color, national origin, sex, pregnancy, age, disability, creed, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, veteran status, political affiliation or political philosophy. Individuals who believe they have been discriminated against should contact the Office for Equity and Inclusion at 860-685-4771. The responsibility of the University Members has more information. **If at any point in the semester you are made to feel uncomfortable in colloquium, please find a time to meet with me. It is important that we create a space which is conducive to the learning of all members of the group.**

## Covid-19 Code of Conduct

To protect your health and safety, the health and safety of instructors and staff, and the health and safety of your peers, all students must understand and adhere to the University's Covid-19 Code of Conduct:

<https://www.wesleyan.edu/academics/reactivating/campus-life/code-of-conduct.html>

**This semester we will continue to use masks in the classroom unless voted unanimously otherwise.**

## Reading Schedule

Week 1: *Moodle response due Saturday night 03/09. Read your classmates on Sunday 04/09.*

M 05/09:

- Dante, *Inferno*, Cantos 1 & 26 w/ Durling's "Introduction" to the text [CP] 1320
- Primo Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz*, "The Canto of Ulysses" [CP] 1947
- Robert Durling, "The Figure of the Poet: Introduction" [CP]

W 07/09:

- Petrarch, *Letters on Familiar Matters (Rerum Familiarium Libri)*, "IV.1" and "13.7" [CP] 1330s-1360s
- *Pre-Petrarchan Poets, Petrarch, and the Petrarchists* Packet [CP] 12<sup>th</sup> c. – 17<sup>th</sup> c.

Week 2: ***Moodle response due Saturday night 10/09. Read your classmates on Sunday 11/09.***

M 12/09:

- Valla, *On the Donation of Constantine* 1440
  - “Introduction” (in text)

W 14/09:

- Valla, *On the Donation of Constantine* 1440
  - “Introduction” (in text)

Week 3: ***Moodle response due Saturday night, 17/09. Read your classmates on Sunday 18/09.***

M 19/09

- Erasmus, *On the Freedom of the Will* 1524
- Cornelis Augustijn, “The Dispute on the Freedom of the Will” in *Erasmus: His Life, Works, and Influence* [CP]

W 21/09

- Erasmus, *On the Freedom of the Will* 1524
- Cornelis Augustijn, “The Dispute on the Freedom of the Will” in *Erasmus: His Life, Works, and Influence* [CP]

Week 4: ***Moodle response due Saturday night, 24/09. Read your classmates on Sunday 25/09.***

M 26/09:

- Abravanel *Dialogues of Love* (selections from the 3rd dialogue), pp.164-248 [CP] 1535
- Copenhaver, “Forward” [CP]
- Pescatori, “Introduction” [CP]

W 28/09:

- Abravanel *Dialogues of Love* (selections from the 3rd dialogue), pp.248-318 [CP] 1535
- Celenza, “The Revival of Platonic Philosophy” [CP]

**Paper #1 as Written Mock Comps on MOODLE: Saturday, October 1<sup>st</sup>**

Week 5: ***Moodle response due Saturday night, 1/10. Read your classmates on Sunday 2/10.***

M 03/10:

- Miguel Ángel Vázquez, “Un poema aljamiado en coplas sobre la peregrinación musulmana a la Meca” (\*article is in English with English translations of the poem) [CP] early 16<sup>th</sup> century

W 05/10:

- Juan Latino, *Austrias Carmen* (all) [CP] 1573
- Baltasar Fra-Molinero, “Juan Latino and his racial difference” [CP]

**Colloquium with Professor Kleinberg**

Week 6: ***Moodle response due Saturday night, 8/10. Read your classmates on Sunday 9/10.***

M 10/10:

- Shakespeare, *Hamlet* (acts 1-3) 1599-1601
- “Introduction” (in text)

**TUESDAY, OCTOBER 11<sup>TH</sup>, 4:30-6:30PM, HALLIE LECTURE: ROLAND GREENE**

W 12/10:

- Shakespeare, *Hamlet* (acts 4 & 5) 1599-1601
- “Introduction” (in text)

**F 14/10: Oral Mock Comps, Round 2: Friday, October 14<sup>th</sup>, 11am – 4pm**

Week 7: ***Moodle response due Saturday night, 15/10. Read your classmates on Sunday 16/10.***

M 17/10:

- Cervantes, *Don Quijote I & II: Narrative Distance* 1605 & 1615
- Cascardi, “*DQ* and the Invention of the Novel” [CP]

W 19/10:

- Cervantes, *Don Quijote I & II: Cervantes & the Moriscos* 1605 & 1615
- Ife, “The Historical & Social Context” [CP]



Week 8: ***Moodle response due Saturday night, 22/10. Read your classmates on Sunday 23/10.***

M 24/10: FALL BREAK

W 26/10:

- Galileo, *The Starry Messenger* [CP] 1610
- Barzun, “The Invisible College” [CP]

**Paper #2, Friday, October 28<sup>th</sup>, 11:59pm**

Week 9: ***Moodle response due Saturday night, 29/10. Read your classmates on Sunday 30/10.***

M 31/10:

- Descartes, *Meditations 1-3* 1641
- “Introduction” (in text)

W 02/11:

- Descartes, *Meditations 4- 6* 1641
- “Introduction” (in text)

Week 10: ***Moodle response due Saturday night, 5/11. Read your classmates on Sunday 6/11.***

M 07/11

- Hobbes, *Leviathan* (selections) 1651
- “Introduction” (in text)
- Barzun, “The Monarch’s Revolution” [CP]

W 09/11

- Hobbes, *Leviathan* (selections) 1651
- Barzun, “Puritans as Democrats” [CP]

Week 11: ***Moodle response due Saturday night, 12/11. Read your classmates on Sunday 13/11.***

M 14/11:

- Milton, *Paradise Lost* (Books 1-8) 1667
- “Introduction” (in text)

W 16/11:

- Milton, *Paradise Lost* (Books 9-12) 1667
- “Introduction” (in text)

**JUNIOR WRITTEN COMPREHENSIVE EXAMS November 18-20**

Week 12:

M 21/11: NO CLASS COMPS RECOVERY  
M 23/ 11: THANKSGIVING BREAK

Week 13: ***Moodle response due Saturday night, 26/11. Read your classmates on Sunday 27/11.***

M 28/11:

- Margaret Cavendish, *The Blazing World* 1666
- “Introduction” (in text)

W 30/11:

- Margaret Cavendish, *The Blazing World* 1666
- “Introduction” (in text)

Week 14: ***Moodle response due Saturday night, 03/12. Read your classmates on Sunday 04/12.***

M 05/12:

- Spinoza, *Ethics 1* 1677
- Klever, “Spinoza’s Life and Works” [CP]
- Steenbakkens, “The Geometrical Order in the Ethics” [CP]

**Colloquium with Professor Kleinberg**

***Moodle response to Ethics due Sunday night before class***

W 07/12:

- Juana Inés de la Cruz, TBA *La Respuesta* & selected sonnets (TBA) 1690
- “Introduction” (in text)

**Final Paper (2-3pages): Wednesday, December 7<sup>th</sup> in class**

Week 15: **DECEMBER 12<sup>th</sup> & 13<sup>th</sup> JUNIOR ORAL EXAMS**