Rome Summer Program Approved

The University Study Abroad Advisory Council has approved an affiliation agreement between UT and the Rome Institute of Liberal Arts, a summer program for the study of great books and art in Rome, Italy. Run by tutors at St. John’s College in Annapolis, MD, the RILA program combines discussion of the classics with visits to see great works of art on the themes explored in the readings, as well as optional Italian lessons in the afternoons.

Last summer three Jefferson Center undergraduates, Richard Griffin, Ryan Pope, and Christopher Stephens, spent a month at RILA. They chose between a political theory course, “Public and Private,” and a course on works of religion and science, “Gods and Giants.” Senior Richard Griffin noted that the teaching approach, which was entirely discussion-based, was “a bit unorthodox” by UT standards, but that he enjoyed the open-ended discussions that were provoked by the instructors’ intriguing questions.

In summer 2011 the RILA program will expand to six weeks in length and UT students will be able to take one or both of the courses for UT credit. For information on the program, visit http://www.rilarts.org/ or come by the Jefferson Center office.

Student Lounge and Library Open

Thanks to the efforts of Jefferson Book Club members and our student worker, Brooks Eakin, our student lounge and library on the fourth floor of Waggener Hall are now furnished and open for use. Senior Government major Morgan Chapman volunteered to make a trip to the University Surplus warehouse in September and found a couch, chairs, bookcases, a coffee table, a small refrigerator, and even an antique card catalogue to furnish the two rooms. Brooks Eakin moved in our small library of classics in political and economic thought donated by the Liberty Fund, as well as an (almost) complete set of Jefferson’s writings donated by friends of the Center.

Jefferson Center students are welcome to come by the library in WAG 401 to read or study and may check out books from any of the post-doctoral fellows whose offices adjoin the library. They are also welcome to use the lounge in 403B for conversation, lunch, making coffee, and holding study groups.

Book Donations Welcome

If you have copies of classic works in any field that you would like to donate, we would be delighted to add them to our collection.
Public Lecture Series

All our lectures are available at our website to be listened to or to be downloaded. http://wwtest.utexas.edu/cola2/centers/coretexts/

Aristotle and the Foundations of American Liberalism
Friday, October 1, 2010
Erik Dempsey, Post-Doctoral Fellow, UT Austin

How would Aristotle have understood the principles of American democracy? Would he have seen them as an improvement upon his own political teaching, as a decline from it, or even as a political impossibility? This talk considered these questions by discussing the political importance of virtue for Aristotle, as well as for two thinkers who anticipated some of the principles of American government: Aristotle’s great interpreter, Marsilius of Padua, and his great critic, Thomas Hobbes. A return to Aristotle’s thought can help us to better understand how American society relies on classical as well as modern traditions; by being aware of that, we can cultivate better practical political judgment about our institutions in their potentials and their limits.

Why Future Scientists, Physicians, and Engineers Should Study the Great Books
Monday, October 18, 2010
Symposium

Three highly successful scientists explained how reading classic texts in philosophy and literature, and seminal works in the history of science, have made them more effective researchers and leaders in their fields. Dr. Richard Harper, a Houston neurosurgeon, recounted his experience studying the great books as an undergraduate in Plan II and observed that he had learned the most about critical thinking, even in science, from his philosophy courses. Dr. Hans Mark, Professor of Aerospace Engineering at UT Austin and former Secretary of the Air Force, described how he required a crash course in the great books to make the transition from technical expert to policy maker, and related many of the insights the great books had given him about politics. Dr. Bernhardt Trout, Professor of Chemical Engineering at MIT, spoke about the deliberate project of societal transformation
launched by the pioneers of modern science, including Francis Bacon, a project of which he said students would be an unwitting part until they explored early modernity’s philosophic and political disputes about science for themselves. All three distinguished the technical education that one can get in science and engineering courses from the broader understanding of human psychology, skills of leadership, and questions about the meaning of the scientific enterprise that students need in order to become effective leaders in their fields and in public life.

Adam Smith and Nationalism
Friday, October 29, 2010
Richard Boyd, Associate Professor of Government at Georgetown University.

The themes of sympathy, benevolence, and sociability play a major role in Adam Smith’s writings and his moral psychology. But not enough attention has been focused on how, in Smith’s view, these very same elements of sympathy, identification, and fellow-feeling can lead to conflict and dissension. The flip-side of a benign sympathy for friends, allies, and co-nationals, Smith wisely recognizes, may be antipathy toward strangers or aliens. Building upon Smith’s insights into the appeal of nationalism and moral partiality, Dr. Boyd argued for Smith’s illuminating relevance to contemporary discussions of nationalism, its promises and its perils.

UPCOMING LECTURES
A. Lincoln, Philosopher
Thursday, January 20, 4:30 PM – 6:00 PM
Dr. Allen C. Guelzo, Director of Civil War Era Studies and Professor of History at Gettysburg College in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania

Americans do not expect their politicians to be deep thinkers; least of all do they imagine Abraham Lincoln, the most famous of American politicians, to be a philosopher. Yet, despite his lack of formal schooling and the folksy, log-cabin image which surrounds him, Lincoln possessed a voracious intellectual curiosity, and delved far more deeply into 19th-century philosophy, theology, and science than all but his closest friends realized. Allen C. Guelzo’s lecture will explore the “intellectual geography” of Abraham Lincoln and open up the surprising aspect of Lincoln as a man of ideas.

“Shall Not the Judge of All the World Do Justice? On Genesis 18-19.”
Thursday, February 24, 2011, 4:30 PM – 6:00 PM
Clifford Orwin, Director of the Program in Political Philosophy and International Affairs, University of Toronto.
Meet Our Teaching Post-Doctoral Fellows

It is only with the invaluable help of our teaching post-doctoral fellows that we are able to offer on a regular basis our four required courses in the certificate program. The fellows teach sections of these courses and others of their own choosing. Each fellow has come to our program with proven credentials as a young teacher and after having completed a dissertation in one or more of the great books, and continues to produce scholarship on the great books while teaching in our undergraduate program.

Patrick Gardner specializes in late medieval philosophy and theology, especially the thought of St. Thomas Aquinas, but he is also an avid Dantist, and whenever possible studies medieval thought in relation to major themes in Dante’s work. He received his B.A. in History and Literature at Harvard University, and his M.M.S. and Ph.D. in Medieval Studies from the Medieval Institute at the University of Notre Dame, where he was advised by the late Ralph McInerny and wrote his dissertation on Dante’s contribution to the Patristic and Scholastic problem of the suffering of the separated soul. He is presently completing studies of Dante’s relationship to the Neoplatonic tradition, and of the doctrine of two ultimate ends in the Monarchia. If you have never read at least the Inferno, he will warmly recommend that you go to Hell.

Erik Dempsey is in his third year with our program, of which he has been a teaching mainstay. He is finishing a book that looks at the place of virtue and prudence in Aristotle’s thought. This is a project that targets the questions of what Aristotle takes virtue to be and what the importance of politics is in a well-lived human life. He also has a strong interest in the relationship between religion and politics in different religious traditions; his book examines the reception of Aristotle’s thought in the Middle Ages, among both the Thomist and Averroist schools. As an undergraduate, Erik attended St. John’s College in Annapolis, MD where he began to study the Great Books seriously. From June 2000 until August 2001, he worked for DynCorp in Chantilly, VA, doing mathematical modeling and providing other
support for the GETS program. From September 2007 - May 2008, he taught in the
Herbst Program for the Humanities at the University of Colorado at Boulder.

Aaron Thurow (PhD, University of Dallas) wrote a dissertation examining Shakespeare’s
much-debated Sonnets in an effort to understand Shakespeare’s conception of love’s
origin, nature, danger, and potential as defined or influenced by the philosophical, theological, and poetic
tradition. His most recent research involves exploring more fully the relationship between the ideas expressed
in Shakespeare’s Sonnets and those found in his plays, as well as further exploring the theological complexities
of Shakespeare’s examination of love and beauty. As an undergraduate Aaron attended Kenyon College in
Ohio where he majored in English and Drama while minoring in Classics. After college he joined the Army
Reserves and received training at the JFK Special Warfare College in North Carolina. His graduate studies
at the University of Dallas were interrupted shortly after September 11th when he deployed overseas with
the U.S. Army Special Operations Forces. Eventually returning to Dallas, he finished his PhD at the University
of Dallas where he also taught core literature classes on authors ranging from Homer to
Virgil, Dante, Milton, and Wordsworth.

The funds necessary to support these essential teaching and research post-doctoral
fellowships have been generously donated by the Clayton Fund, in Houston; the
Thomas W. Smith Foundation, in Greenwich, Connecticut; the Bill and Katie Weaver
Charitable Trust, in Dallas; The Gil and Dody Weaver Foundation, in Dallas; the Jack
Miller Center for Teaching America’s Founding Principles and History, in Philadelphia;
and the Veritas Fund, in Alexandria, Virginia.

Executive Seminars Continue in Three Cities

The Executive Seminars in the Great Books are monthly discussion groups for up to
20 participants, each guided by a young scholar associated with the Jefferson Center,
and devoted to discussion of readings from theoretical and literary works that have had
a major influence on human thought and history.

HOUSTON AND AUSTIN: Beginning in January, both groups will continue the
discussion of what natural rights are and what makes a legitimate political order, with
a focus on political philosophers’ economic thought. Specifically, the seminars will
look at the ways in which the revolution in politics that led to the American Founding
was accompanied and supported by a great change in economics - the expansion of
commerce and the emergence of capitalism. The groups will consider both defenses and
critiques of this movement, and will raise the basic question of whether commerce and capitalism have been good or bad for human character. Readings will include excerpts from John Locke, Montesquieu, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Adam Smith, and Karl Marx, and Plato.

DALLAS: In his address at Gettysburg, Abraham Lincoln envisioned the United States as “conceived in liberty” and the Civil War as aimed at a “new birth of freedom”; and he linked these to the idea of “government of the people, by the people, for the people.” What exactly do we mean by liberty and freedom, and why have they been argued to be worth such a terrible price? How can the military subjugation of a people ever be imagined to be the means to achieving liberty or freedom? What defines a free people? What defines slavery? This executive seminar is looking at these questions primarily through engagement with the political thought of Lincoln, himself—ending by briefly examining Lincoln’s favorite play, Macbeth, which he read, quoted, and memorized throughout his life.

Anyone interested is invited to join these and future executive seminars at the beginning of any semester, by sending a brief note of interest to our program coordinator Carly Chrisco at cchrisko@austin.utexas.edu.

Certificate Program Now Available to All Undergraduates

With the release this fall of the new 2010-12 undergraduate catalogue, all students now have the opportunity to enroll in the Certificate Program in Core Texts and Ideas. Students who satisfy the requirements will graduate with a Certificate stating that they have completed an integrated, six course program (two courses more than a minor) in the Great Books, acquainting them with the most influential ideas of the Western intellectual tradition.

Of the six courses, four are required: one on basic religious texts including the Bible, one on classical Greek philosophy and literature, one on the history of political philosophy, and one on the American Founding and the political tradition that has grown out of the Founding.

Two other elective courses are chosen from a carefully vetted list of courses in the great books taught by our affiliated faculty in departments including American Studies, Art History, Asian Studies, Classics, English, French and Italian, Government, History, Philosophy, Religious Studies, Russian and East European Studies, Sociology, and Spanish.

All students who complete the certificate will have studied in depth the Bible and Homer, Plato, Aristotle, the Greek tragedians, St. Thomas Aquinas, Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Madison, Hamilton, Jefferson, the Declaration of Independence, the American Constitution and leading constitutional cases, Marx, Tocqueville, and Nietzsche—as well as a selection of other great authors such as Dante, Boccaccio, Shakespeare, Kant, Hegel, Dubois, Martin Luther King, etc., whom they will encounter in their two elective courses.
Book Club Continues Lively Discussions

Our undergraduate book club, which brings together interested undergraduates, graduate students, post-doctoral fellows, and faculty, began the year with a screening and discussion of a classic movie about the temptations and virtues of American politics, Mr. Smith Goes to Washington. Members have held subsequent discussions this fall of the *Arabian Nights*, Adam Smith’s *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, Voltaire’s *Candide*, and Rousseau’s *Letter to D’Alembert on the Theater*. The term will end with another movie night, this time a screening and discussion of Bernardo Bertolucci’s *Il Conformista* on December 2. Contact Matthew Levinton at mlevinton@aol.com for more information.

Jefferson Scholars Program Established

Beginning in Spring 2011, the Jefferson Center will offer scholarships for honors students in all colleges who are enrolled in the Certificate Program in Core Texts and Ideas. Students who qualify will receive $250 each semester in free books to begin building a personal library of classic texts. They will also have access to CTI honors courses, lunches with faculty, and tickets to performances of classic plays and works of music. A Texas physician has made an initial grant to allow us to appoint the first 10 Jefferson Scholars this year.

Our Mission

The aim of our Center is to realize Jefferson’s vision of educating citizens and leaders to understand the meaning of liberty and to exercise it wisely. We share Jefferson’s conviction that one of the best ways to attain a liberal education—an education suited for a free individual in a free society—is through a serious study of the great books. In our courses, students engage in a direct, respectful, but probing and critical study of major creative and theoretical works that have shaped human thought and history. They enter into debates—about human nature, ethics, and humanity’s place in the cosmos—that have unfolded over centuries. They learn skills of critical reasoning, close reading, and clear, cogent writing. They join a community of scholars drawn from many departments and many schools of thought, united by a passion for fundamental questions, a spirit of friendly debate, and a willingness to engage in critical self-scrutiny.

Contact Us At:

The University of Texas at Austin
The Thomas Jefferson Center for the Study of Core Texts and Ideas
1 University Station, C4100
Austin, TX 78712

Phone: (512) 471.6648
E-mail: cti@austin.utexas.edu

Or visit us on the web at:
http://www.utexas.edu/cola/centers/coretexts
I warmly congratulate Co-Directors Lorraine and Tom Pangle, the Steering Committee members, and the staff of the Jefferson Center on the implementation of the new undergraduate certificate and major programs in core texts and ideas. Since my late adolescent years, I have considered study of the great books of the Western tradition to be an essential part of my own education. Building on the earlier Program in Western Civilization and American Institutions and with strong support of the College of Liberal Arts, the Center provides an important venue for the serious discussion of core texts and ideas by students, post-doctoral fellows, and faculty members. The Center will certainly be a model for other institutions to aspire to emulate.

With best wishes,

Randy L. Diehl
Dean, College of Liberal Arts
David Bruton, Jr. Regents Chair in Liberal Arts