ATTENDANCE POLICY
Students should register before the course begins.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:
This course is intended to address some of the more persistent and sometimes daunting difficulties that attend the effort to read classic texts of the Western cultural tradition.

We will begin from the recommendations of Adler and Van Doren in their now-classical work, How to Read a Book, and move toward what we consider more immediately relevant and useful approaches to reading classic texts, both expository and literary, as developed out of our own experience as both readers and teachers of these works, with a view toward the kind of preparation that most readily lends itself to productive class discussion.

Each session will be divided into two parts. In the first we will consider the reading of classic expository texts—philosophical, social scientific, political, etc.—and especially how to read for a thesis and supporting argument (based on evidence and grounds). In the second, we will consider literary and poetic texts—what it means to interpret, understand, and comprehend them, with particular attention to how form (diction, structure, genre, etc.) and content (image, narrative, theme, etc.) work together to achieve specifically literary and poetic effects.

We will introduce short (1-2 page) writing exercises that we have found useful in the effort to appreciate and understand these various kinds of texts, which students will be encouraged—but not required—to bring to class and share with other students. Readings will be selected largely from the four-year Basic Program list, with the idea that not only will this be an opportunity to learn techniques for good reading, but also an occasion for reading and discussing—again—selections from some truly great works of the Western tradition (e.g., Aristotle, Kant, Freud, Homer, Dante, Shakespeare, Conrad). Students are asked to come to the first session with at least a general familiarity with Adler and Van Doren, How to Read a Book, in addition to the assigned readings from Aristotle and Homer.

We mean this to be challenging and productive, but also fun. Agonizing as it sometimes can be, few things are more conducive to humor than the attempt to become clear.
RECOMMENDED TEXT:

REQUIRED TEXTS:
(For the rest of the assigned readings, any version will work, with the editions listed in the Basic Program curriculum preferred. If you have trouble finding readings, please contact the instructors.)


### WEEKLY READING SCHEDULE

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<tr>
<th>WEEK</th>
<th>AUTHOR</th>
<th>TEXT/READING ASSIGNMENT</th>
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| Week 1 | Aristotle, Homer | *Ethics*, Book I  
*Odyssey* 11 |
| Date: 7/11 | | |
| Week 2 | Plato, Dostoyevsky | *Republic*, Book VII  
*Crime and Punishment*, Part One, Chaps 1-5 |
| Date: 7/18 | | |
| Week 3 | Rousseau, Shakespeare | *Second Discourse*, Part I  
*The Tempest*, Act V, scene I and Epilogue |
| Date: 7/25 | | |
| Week 4 | Kant, O’Connor | *Grounding for a Metaphysics of Morals*, Preface  
“A Good Man is Hard to Find” |
| Date: 8/1 | | |
| Week 5 | Nietzsche, Stevens, Frost | *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Second Essay  
“The Snow Man”  
“After Apple Picking” |
| Date: 8/8 | | |

This syllabus is a *summary of course objectives and content*, not a contract. All information in this syllabus is subject to change, with sufficient advance notice provided by the instructor.

CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE
As we may be addressing controversial topics in our class discussions, we expect students to be respectful and considerate of others.

DISABILITY INFORMATION
The Student Disability Services (SDS) works to provide resources, support and accommodations for all students with disabilities and works to remove physical and attitudinal barriers, which may prevent their full participation in the University community. Students that would like to request accommodations should contact SDS in advance of the first class meeting at 773.702.6000 or disabilities@uchicago.edu.