COURSE INFORMATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COURSE TITLE</th>
<th>CODE &amp; SECTION</th>
<th>LENGTH OF COURSE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How to Read Classic Texts</td>
<td>BASC70059 Section 19A1</td>
<td>3 WEEKS, September 4, 11, and 18th</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

COURSE SCHEDULE
DAYS: Wednesday
TIMES: 9:30 a.m - 12:45 p.m.
CLASS LOCATION
Gleacher Center
450 N. Cityfront Plaza Drive
Chicago IL 60611

INSTRUCTORS: Amy and Charles Thomas Elder
PHONE: 773.550.9406
EMAIL: amythomas@uchicago.edu
celder@uchicago.edu

GRAHAM SCHOOL INFORMATION
PHONE: 773.702.1722
WEBSITE: https://grahamschool.uchicago.edu

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 optional 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, or for the first time—selections from some truly great works of the Western tradition. 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.

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 Shakespeare.
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. All of the texts for the literary portion are available on-line.

The O’Connor story is available on-line at: [https://www.boyd.k12.ky.us/userfiles/447/Classes/28660/A%20Good%20Man%20Is%20Hard%20To%20Find.pdf](https://www.boyd.k12.ky.us/userfiles/447/Classes/28660/A%20Good%20Man%20Is%20Hard%20To%20Find.pdf)


**Schedule**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Reading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **1.** September 4 | Aristotle, *Ethics*, Book I  
*Shakespeare, King Lear, Act I scene i* |
| **2.** September 11 | Montaigne, “To Philosophize is to Learn How to Die”  
*O’Connor, Flannery, “A Good Man is Hard to Find”* |
| **3.** September 18 | Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Second Essay  
*Stevens, “The Snow Man” and Rich, “Diving into the Wreck”* |

**DISABILITY INFORMATION**

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.

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.