How did our universe come to be? How did human beings form ideas about themselves and the universe? What does it mean to be conscious beings, members of a species, alive in a vast universe? How do we know what we know? How do we form ideas? How do we determine what is true and real? How do we define meaning, freedom, reality, truth, good and evil? This course focuses on the big questions of philosophy, religion, science and everyday human life. As we discuss the concerns of the course we will begin to discover how to frame questions, how to think both critically and with originality, how to explore together questions which tie us to all of human history.

**Required Reading** (Please use the texts provided in the FIU Bookstore. We need to use the same versions and translations for easy page reference and citation.) (It is not necessary to read the editors’ and translators’ introductions.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>ISBN</th>
<th>Publisher</th>
<th>Edition</th>
<th>Copyright</th>
<th>Published</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Atwood</td>
<td>Oryx &amp; Crake</td>
<td>0385721676</td>
<td>Anchor</td>
<td>03-2004Pb</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>2004</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Class Schedule**
8/27   Introduction to the course and to each other; Read and discuss Origin Myths from Around the World (handout)
9/3  Read and discuss Gilgamesh
9/10 Cultural / Artistic Representations of Origins (Haydn’s Creation)
9/17  Read and discuss Oresteia
9/24  Film: “Oedipus Rex”; Paper #1 due
10/1  Read and discuss The Communist Manifesto, pp.49-76, 89-91
10/8  Film: “The Return of Martin Guerre”-How do we know a person? What is identity? How has our idea of knowing changed historically? How does it differ across cultures?
10/15 Read and discuss Origin of Species
10/22 Film: “Close Encounters of the Third Kind”-What kind of knowing?
10/29 Read and discuss Civilization and Its Discontents; Paper #2 Due
11/5 Film: “A Beautiful Mind”-What is reality? How do we know what is real?”
11/12 Film: Cosmos X “The Edge of Forever”-Back to the Beginning: How did it all get started or How can something come from nothing? From origin myths to science; Paper #3 Due
11/19 Biscayne Bay Campus as Text- How do we know a place? How can you relate your reading of Marx, Darwin, Freud to what you “know” of the campus?
11/26 Read and discuss Oryx and Crake; Paper #4 Due
12/3 Poetry Presentations
12/10 Course wrap up-Where have we been? Where do we go from here?

(Syllabus is subject to change as the semester progresses)

Class Philosophy
This class is very much a collective endeavor. We will discuss together what we read and each student is expected to come prepared and to participate in the discussion. Reading is due on the day assigned and is intended to form the basis of stimulating and thoughtful discussion. Students are responsible not only to themselves but also to all other students in the class. The class can only be successful to the extent that everyone prepares and participates. Different students may have very different reactions to, and interpretations of, what we read. These differences help us to think more clearly and comprehensively.

Honor in Honors
In The Honors College, the term “honor” refers both to academic accomplishment and character. Students in Honors should therefore adhere to, and be held to, the highest standards of personal academic accountability. Academic dishonesty in any form, including plagiarism, is antithetical to the very definition of being an Honors student at FIU. Academic misconduct is a violation of the University Code of Standards, the Code of Academic Integrity, the ethical relationship between the student and the academic community, and especially between the student and the instructor. It is your responsibility to familiarize yourself with the Honors College policy on plagiarism which may be found at http://honors.fiu.edu/current_policy_plagiarism.html.

Assignments – We will discuss these in more detail in class.

1. Reading Journal – 10% of your grade – You will keep a reading journal for each reading assignment. Each journal should be approximately 1 page (longer is OK if you are bursting with ideas) and should be the place where you reflect on what you have read, react to it, ask questions you would like to discuss further or questions about things you do not understand.
I will collect the journal entries before each class where a reading assignment is due and return them the following class. These will not be graded, only checked off (I will note, however, if they are shallow or give no evidence of having done the reading); they will form a basis for class discussion. It helps to get discussion going when you have written down your responses to the reading in advance.

2. First Paper – 20% of grade – 5 pages – Due 9/26 - Discussion of some unifying idea that ties together reading from Gilgamesh, The Oresteia, and handouts on creation stories. Start with an original thesis, demonstrate the likelihood and possibilities of your thesis with evidence from the assigned reading. Conclude. This is not a research paper. It is an analytical essay based on assigned reading. You do not need to consult any other sources. If you do, however, be sure to cite the source. When referring to or quoting from assigned texts it is sufficient to indicate the page number in parentheses, e.g. Gilgamesh (24).

3. Second Paper – 20% of grade – 5 pages - Discussion of some unifying idea that ties together The Communist Manifesto, Origin of Species, and Civilization and its Discontents. Start with an original thesis, demonstrate the likelihood and possibilities of your thesis with evidence from the assigned reading. Conclude. This is not a research paper. It is an analytical essay based on assigned reading. You do not need to consult any other sources. If you do, however, be sure to cite the source. When referring to or quoting from assigned texts it is sufficient to indicate the page number in parentheses, e.g. Gilgamesh (24).

4. Third Paper – 20% of grade – 5 pages - We have seen three films in class: “The Return of Martin Guerre”, “Close Encounters of the Third Kind”, and “A Beautiful Mind.” Choose one and write an analytical essay in which you discuss the way in which the film deals with the nature of reality and knowledge. Think about the way in which film may differ from written text in the way that it presents ideas. Remember that you are developing an original thesis in your paper.

5. Fourth Paper – 20% of grade – 5 pages – What happens after the final page of Oryx and Crake? Write a final chapter that takes the story to a conclusion. This is a creative assignment limited only by the story so far. Your final chapter should make sense given what has come before. You are completing Atwood’s novel; you are not starting from scratch. The difference between a good conclusion and a not so good one is the extent to which your conclusion seems integrated in style, plot, character, and conceptual concerns with Atwood’s novel. She left it open, asking her readers (I think deliberately) to supply an ending. There are many possibilities; yours should be a thoughtful one.

6. Poetry Presentation – 10% - 10 minute presentation to the class. Students will choose a poem to present to the class that addresses one of the themes of the course. You may read or recite from memory; in either case you should present it well and explain how it relates to the themes of the course. The poem could be chosen from the great body of world poetic literature or it could be an original work that you have written. Your poetic presentation could be supplemented with art or music. In any case it should connect to themes of the course.

In grading, I will also take into account your class participation which can raise or lower your grade by one notch, e.g. from B to B+ or B to B-.
Honors Fall Semester Events – Important Dates
Monday, October 13, Honors College Convocation, 1:00-4:00PM at UP GC Ballrooms

Monday, November 6, Fall Honors Lecture, 12:30 at MARC Pavilion, UP

Other Interesting Events
IDH1001 and 1002 meet the UCC requirement for the Arts category. FIU offers many opportunities to experience the arts through offerings of the Schools of Art and Art History, Theater and Dance, and Music. Check out their web sites and see what you find. Pay attention to the university e mail that lists events on campus. In addition FIU’s art museum on Miami Beach, The Wolfsonian-FIU is a fascinating museum of design whose 2008-2009 season features a special exhibit in four parts entitled “Celebrating America” (see details online at http://www.wolfsonian.fiu.edu.)

Miami is a vibrant international city filled with a very lively, stimulating cultural life. There are museums, art galleries, theaters, concerts, opera, ballet and dance performances. Student tickets at greatly reduced prices are available in WUC110 (check the bulletin board outside the door to see what is available). Student tickets are also available at www.cultureshockmiami.com. I have listed a few events below that have particular relevance to our course.

Shadows, Disappearances and Illusions-June 6-September 21. “This series of works, many of them light-based, deal with the ephemerality of visual experience.” Miami Art Museum, 101 W. Flagler Street, Miami.

Interama” Miami and the Pan-American Dream Exhibition-June 20-January 25. Never realized plans for a World’s Fair by the Bay at the site now occupied by FIU’s Biscayne Bay Campus. Historical Museum of Southern Florida, 101 W. Flagler Street.

Miami Book Fair International-November 9-16, Street Fair November 14-16. “Over eight days each November, downtown Miami becomes the center of the literary world when Miami Book Fair International welcomes hundreds of thousands of book lovers who attend readings and discussions featuring prize-winning, best-selling and emerging authors from the U.S. and around the world.” Miami Dade College Wolfson Campus, 300 N.E. 2nd Avenue.

Giuseppe Verdi’s La Traviata-November 15-December 6. “Violetta is the most desired and captivating courtesan in the seductive Parisian demi-monde. Beautiful, charming and discreet, she fulfills the secret fantasies of Paris’s finest gentlemen but keeps her heart to herself. When at last she meets Alfredo and gives in to her feelings, Violetta learns that society has no place for a courtesan in love.” Think Marx, think Freud. Adrienne Arsht Center for the Performing Arts, Zipf Opera House, 1300 Biscayne Boulevard, Miami.

Art Basel Miami Beach-December 4-7. “This international art show and American sister event … is recognized as the most important annual art show of its kind in America.” Miami Beach Convention Center, 1700 Convention Center Drive, Miami Beach. Look also for associated events at other locations in Miami and Miami Beach.