

## COLT 101: MASTERPIECES AND MASTERMINDS

Literature and Thought of the West, Antiquity – 1800

Professor Adam Spanos

This course focuses on the concept of mastery. We will read classic works of fiction, philosophy, religion, and science and explore the evolving understanding of the value of mastery in various relationships: mastery of the craft of writing, above all, but also mastery of one's self, of the natural world, of other human beings, and of populations.

We will study figures that embody mastery, including the self-disciplined individual, the explorer, the conqueror, the despot, and the artistic genius. A central goal of the course is to show how the drive for mastery—or what Nietzsche called “the will to power”—has been foundational to the formation of the West. We will also explore what it means to be the target of someone else's project of mastery, as well as the experience of being undone by another.

Readings may include Sappho, Plato, Aristotle, Sophocles, Seneca, Lucretius, the book of Job, the Gospels, the letters of Paul, Dante, Shakespeare, Galileo, Montaigne, Cervantes, Rousseau, Montesquieu, Kant, Wollstonecraft, Equiano, Gouges

