

## 2006-2007 Executive Precepts Program

(Dallas and Palm Beach)

Sponsored by the James Madison Program in American Ideals and  
Institutions  
Princeton University

### Human Nature: Skepticism and Dogmatism

This year's topic is **Human Nature: Skepticism and Dogmatism**. Our seminars will examine the nature of belief. We will ask some big questions.

Is it possible to doubt infinitely or are some assumptions intrinsic to the human condition? On what grounds do we have for moving from belief to disbelief and vice versa? Are scientific beliefs better grounded than others? Are religious beliefs more dubious than others? What beliefs are reasonable? Is it reasonable to be skeptical about reason? What is worth believing in? Is human life possible without assumptions? Are all illusions to be avoided? How do we know when an assumption is justified?

Please don't be alarmed or concerned with the reading list; the recommended readings for each monthly session are generally no more than 20-30 pages. This is meant to be fun and not terribly time consuming.

#### Meeting Location, Dates and Reading List

**Location:** Home of Harlan and Kathy Crow, 4700 Preston Road, Dallas

**Schedule:**

*September 22, 2006:* Michel de Montaigne, *Essays* (selections)

*October 27, 2006:* Miguel de Cervantes, *Don Quixote* (selections)

*November 17, 2006:* Molière, *Tartuffe*

*December 15, 2006:* Blaise Pascal, *Pensees* (selections)

W. H. Auden, The Massacre of the Innocents (from *Collected Poems, Part VII: For the time Being: A Christmas Oratorio*)

*January 19, 2007:* David Hume, Of Miracles (from *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*)

The Sceptic (from *Essays: Moral, Political, and Literary*)

*February 16, 2007:* Soren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling* (selections)

*Either/Or (Part I)* (selections)

March 16, 2007: Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality* (selections)  
*The Gay Science* (selections)

April 20, 2007: Anthony Burgess, *A Clockwork Orange*

June 2007: **Precept with Robert P. George**

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, "Harvard Address," from *The Solzhenitsyn*

*Reader: New and Essential Writings, 1947-2005*

Karl Marx and Fredrick Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*  
(Selections)