

HUMS 4903A The Conservative Intellectual Tradition (Fall 2020)

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T.S. Eliot's *Little Gidding*, the final of his *Four Quartets*, meditates upon the movement of past, present, and future. He writes "*What we call the beginning is often the end/And to make an end is to make a beginning./The end is where we start from.*"

This seminar explores the modern efflorescence of this sense of ourselves in the conservative intellectual tradition. Beginning with Burke we will search out the ways in which conservatism, and especially but not exclusively English-speaking conservatism, represents more of a sensibility than a movement. In its embrace of human variety and locality, its reliance on the inherited wisdom of the past and its suspicion of rationalism and system, the conservative tradition constitutes an important counterweight and conversational partner to the main currents of modernity.

We will discuss three centuries of poets, politicians and philosophers who have sought out humanity's home in time, place, and history. In treating the conservative intellectual tradition, the seminar seeks only what Eliot promises on arriving at *Little Gidding*, that "*the end of all our exploring/ Will be to arrive where we started/ And know the place for the first time.*"