

The College of the Humanities Humanities Program

HUMS4000: Politics, Modernity and the Common Good

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Lectures: Tuesday 10:05-11:25 and Thursday 10:05-11:25 (Paterson 303)

Tutorials: G-1 Tuesday 11:35-12:55 and G-2 Tuesday 16:05-17:25 (Paterson 302)

Description

The Bachelor of Humanities program focuses on the human condition and the civic virtues. Year one approached humanity as *homo dei*, year two centered on human reason, and year three considered humanity in its aesthetic dimensions. The fourth year core seminar explores how, beginning with the French Revolution, the most radical forces of modernity set out to emancipate humanity from all forms of traditional authority. How did this project unfold and what efforts were made either to restrain or intensify it? Although new and radical, these ideas emerged from a debate stretching all the way back to ancient Greece. The fourth year core seminar, therefore, brings the whole adventure of the Bachelor of Humanities curriculum to a conclusion and returns the conversation to the world of the 21st century.

In the first term, we undertake a philosophical exploration of the problems of modernity and freedom by considering some major themes in 19th and early 20th century European philosophy and political thought. We will pay particular attention to the emergence and unfolding of the Philosophy of Freedom, also known as German Idealism, and its attempt to return to a classical conception of human existence rooted in our communal connectedness with one another, a synthesis of the ancient Greek polis with the individual liberties of the modern age. This historicist philosophy tries to restore a full sense of cultural, aesthetic and civic satisfaction as against what was seen as the vulgarity, narrowness and philistinism of Enlightenment individualism and the concept of the state as nothing more than a heartless utilitarian contract among producers and consumers of commodities.

Thus, we will begin with Plato in order to consider the classical conception of the good life, which provided both a precedent and a foil for German Idealism, especially Hegel, whose *Phenomenology of Spirit* is a conscious re-enactment of the Platonic ascent to wisdom and happiness on historicist grounds. We will then examine Hobbes' *Leviathan* as the foundational text of modern liberal individualism at what the German thinkers considered its worst. We will then turn to Rousseau, severe critic of Hobbesian materialism and the first modern thinker to attempt to recover the classical vision of the polis on the basis of modern natural right, and whose struggle to reconcile freedom with happiness provides German Idealism with its central enigma. After considering Burke's critique of the French Revolution and its Terror as the culmination of Rousseau's political theory, we will examine how Kant and Schiller each take up one of the two poles inherited from Rousseau's thought, setting the stage for Hegel's grand synthesis of freedom and community, the "absolute Science of Spirit," designed to promote freedom and community while avoiding revolutionary violence. The rest of the course examines a

series of on-going assaults on Hegel's Absolute Idealism from the Left (Marx) and (in the European sense of the term) the Right (Nietzsche and Heidegger). Of special interest will be the internal debate among these thinkers as to whether history is rational and progressive (Hegel and Marx) or a cycle of existential experiences deeper than any rational account can penetrate, and with no teleological direction (Nietzsche and Heidegger). We will also re-encounter a number of themes that arose in previous B. Hum. seminars in light of their connection to Hegel, Nietzsche and Heidegger: e.g., poetry versus philosophy, reason and revelation, the meaning of tragedy, the Apollonian and Dionysian. From Schiller down to Heidegger, German Idealism was deeply concerned with the relationship of music, art and liberal education to human wholeness and this theme will also be considered throughout the course. With Heidegger, we reach the fragmentation of German Idealism into the 20th century schools of existentialism, neo-Marxism and post-modernism, and a growing despair over the benevolent progress of history as the 20th century is faced with the juggernaut of world war and global technology

In the second term, we continue with the presupposition that underlined the first semester, namely that a gigantic paradigm shift happened in human consciences as well as its consciousness. But while the first term took the conversation through a philosophical debate as to the nature of these new ideas, this part of the course will look at the unfolding of those ideas in the real world as the civilization of modernity. The "common good," however defined, requires a robust civilizational framework to help its materialization. The Athenian civilization proved the breeding ground for the ideas, notions, and concepts that form the foundation of the modern West. The new ideas, concepts and notions have led to the emergence of a civilization with autonomy, independent, and freedom as qualities for agency, the *modus operandi*, and the social structures, that not only have led to the emergence of the self as agent/actor, but also to the societal form of the sovereign state, and the anarchical society of states, and the global capitalist system. What are the nuances of this transformation? What did it entail? The First half of the term concentrates on the unfolding of modernity process into a civilization through the works of the giants of our time.

We begin the term with the classic work of the American/German philosopher, Hannah Arendt, on the human condition. Even though she has been described as one of "Heidegger's children," she has gone beyond the German tradition and provides a giant revival of the Aristotelian question of what does it mean to be human but within the context of the modern condition. Then through examining the works of our own Canadian philosopher, Charles Taylor, we explore the *modus operandi* of the modern civilization. For Taylor the modern condition of secularity means a great dis-embedding from the brink of tradition, where the self is left on his/her own reason and how this idea has led to the emergence of an all-pervasive order. We shall continue with the works of the International Relation Theorist, Hedley Bull, who provides an insightful portrait of spatial structures and organizations (or the international system) that shapes the public square in the modern civilization. In the second part of the course we turn to thinkers who are harsher about the modern civilization than the aforementioned thinkers. They argue that in practice power and politics and not freedom and autonomy dominate the public domain in the unfolding of the industrial European and American worlds and more so it extended to the non-Western world as well. We deal with the literary, philosophical,

religious, and post-modern treatments of the modernity-based civilization. Here, we begin with Salman Rushdie and continue with Edward Said and Gandhi, ending with Michael Foucault. These thinkers invite us to a radical reconsideration of the present condition of globalized and yet fragmented world. They provide insightful meditation on our present epistemology, the nature of our relation with the world and the divine and may help us comprehend the prevalence of the various forms of extremism, politics of identity, terrorism and 21st century tribalism.

Course Requirements: The final grade of this course is based on the followings:

Attendance and participation* (30%)

A paper** (40%, due date decided in class)

Take-home exam*** (30%, due date is the final day of university exam period)

* Attendance of lectures and discussion groups is obligatory, not optional. Grade is based on regular class and discussion attendance, participation (asking questions and offering comments) and discussion presentation(s). Students will be asked to make presentations in the discussion groups, on an equally rotating basis, on the readings for that week. The mechanics of this will take some time to work out. On average, we will aim to have two presentations at each discussion group. Occasionally, more may have to be scheduled to give everyone an opportunity to present. Every effort will be made to enable students to present on the readings of their choice, but some flexibility will be necessary to fit everyone in. Students are encouraged to review the readings and volunteer sooner rather than later if there is a particular text you would like to present on.

** 15 pages double-spaced typed. To be submitted Monday December 3 in the Fall and April 11. Topics will be provided. E-submissions are not acceptable. Late papers will be fined by a fraction of a grade (i.e., A to A-) for each day.

***In accordance with University regulations, the take-home exam will be handed out at the last lecture class. It will be due on the last day of the exam period, 12 noon at the respective Professor's office (Loeb D691 and Paterson 300). The questions will cover the entire semester of readings and themes, with some degree of choice. E-submissions are not acceptable.

Fall Term Texts:

Plato. *The Symposium*. Hackett

Thomas Hobbes. *The Leviathan*. Hackett.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau. *Basic Political Writings* Hackett.

Edmund Burke. *Reflections on the Revolution in France*. Oxford.

Immanuel Kant. *Foundation of the Metaphysics of Morals*. Hackett.

Friedrich Schiller. *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man*.

Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. *Introduction to the Philosophy of History*. Hackett.

----- *Phenomenology of Spirit*.

Friedrich Nietzsche. *Beyond Good and Evil*. Vintage
----- . *On the Advantages and Disadvantages of History for Life*.
Hackett.
Karl Marx. *Selected Writings*. Hackett.
Martin Heidegger. *An Introduction to Metaphysics*. Yale.
----- . *Basic Writings*. Harper.

Approximate Schedule of Themes and Readings for the Fall Semester:

Introductory Remarks.

Lecture 1: Classical holism. Modernity's break with classical holism. The Philosophy of Freedom/German Idealism as an attempt to restore classical holism on the basis of modern autonomy and liberty.

Nature versus Freedom: The Origins of German Idealism

Lecture 2: Plato, Symposium, first half (to speech of Socrates).
Lecture 3: Plato, Symposium, second half (from speech of Socrates to end).
Lecture 4: Hobbes, Epistle Dedicatory, chapters 1 – 14.
Lecture 5: Hobbes, chapters 15 to 24.
Lecture 6: Rousseau, First and Second Discourses.
Lecture 7: Rousseau, Social Contract Books 1 and 2.
Lecture 8: Burke, Reflections on the Revolution in France.
Lecture 9: Kant, Metaphysics of Morals, parts 1-2. Schiller, Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man, letters 1,2,13,20,21,22.

The Hegelian Absolute and the Science of Spirit

Lecture 10: Hegel, On Love; Introduction to the Philosophy of History.
Lecture 11: Hegel, Phenomenology of Spirit. Miller translation (Oxford).
Readings are by section number, not page number. Preface, 1-41; Introduction (entire); The Truth of Self-Certainty, 166-167.
Lecture 12: Phenomenology. Lordship and Bondage, 178-196; Stoicism, 197-201; Skepticism, 202-205; Unhappy Consciousness, 206-230; Spirit, 438-443.
Lecture 13: Phenomenology. Ethical World, 446-463; Ethical Action, 464-476; Right, 477-483; Self-estrangement, 484-486. Absolute Freedom and Terror, 582-596; Forgiveness, 670-671; Religion, 672-683.

The First Assault on Hegelian Idealism: Marx and Marxism

Lecture 13: Marx, On the Jewish Question.
Lecture 14: Marx, The Communist Manifesto.

The Second Assault on Hegelian Idealism: Nietzsche and the World as Will to Power

Lecture 15: Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy* (hand-out); The Advantages and Disadvantages of History for Life; The Three Metamorphoses (hand-out); Beyond Good and Evil, Preface, Parts 1-2.

Lecture 16: Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, parts 3, 5, 6-9.

Lecture 17: Nietzsche, concluding remarks.

The Third Assault on Hegelian Idealism: Heidegger, Existentialism and Post-modernism

Lecture 18: Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, part 1.

Lecture 19: Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, parts 2-4.

Lecture 20: Heidegger, *The Origin of the Artwork*; *Letter on Humanism*.

Lecture 21: Heidegger, *An Essay Concerning Technology*.

Lecture 22: Same themes continued.

Lecture 23. *The Aestheticization of Revolutionary Violence: Leni Riefenstahl's Triumph of the Will*.

Concluding Remarks:

Lecture 24: *The Fragmentation of German Idealism into Critical Theory, neo-Marxism and Post-modernism*.

Winter Term Texts:

Hannah Arendt. *The Human Condition*

Hedley Bull. *The Anarchical Society*

Michel Foucault, *Discipline & Punish*

M.K. Gandhi. *Hind Swaraj and Other Writings*

Salman Rushdie. *Midnight's Children: a Novel*

Edward Said. *Orientalism*

Charles Taylor. *Modern Social Imaginaries*

Themes and Readings for the Winter Semester: Approximate Schedule of Themes and Readings (Detailed outline will be handed out separately);

I. Civilization

1st Class: Introductory Remarks. Civilization and the Philosophy of Freedom

II. The Civilization of Modernity

Weeks 1-3 Proactive Human

Arendt. *The Human Condition*

Weeks 4-5 Modern Modus Operandi

Taylor. *Modern Social Imaginaries*

Weeks 6-7 Structure of the Modern Civilization

Bull. *The Anarchical Society*

Week 8 Winter Break

III. The Critics of the Civilization of Modernity

Week 9 Literally Portrait of the Contemporary Human Condition

Rushdie. *Midnight's Children*

Weeks 10 Reconstructed Human

Gandhi. *Hind Swaraj and Other Writings*

Week 11 Distorted Modus Operandi

Said. *Orientalism*

Week 12 Panopticon World

Foucault. *Discipline & Punish*

REGULATIONS COMMON TO ALL HUMANITIES COURSES

COPIES OF WRITTEN WORK SUBMITTED

Always retain for yourself a copy of all essays, term papers, written assignments or take-home tests submitted in your courses.

PLAGIARISM

The University Senate defines plagiarism as “*presenting, whether intentional or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others as one’s own.*” This can include:

- reproducing or paraphrasing portions of someone else’s published or unpublished material, regardless of the source, and presenting these as one’s own without proper citation or reference to the original source;
- submitting a take-home examination, essay, laboratory report or other assignment written, in whole or in part, by someone else;
- using ideas or direct, verbatim quotations, or paraphrased material, concepts, or ideas without appropriate acknowledgment in any academic assignment;
- using another’s data or research findings;
- failing to acknowledge sources through the use of proper citations when using another’s works and/or failing to use quotation marks;
- handing in “*substantially the same piece of work for academic credit more than once without prior written permission of the course instructor in which the submission occurs.*”

Plagiarism is a serious offence which cannot be resolved directly with the course’s instructor. The Associate Deans of the Faculty conduct a rigorous investigation, including an interview with the student, when an instructor suspects a piece of work has been plagiarized. Penalties are not trivial. They can include a final grade of “F” for the course

GRADING SYSTEM

Letter grades assigned in this course will have the following percentage equivalents:

A+ = 90-100 (12)	B = 73-76 (8)	C - = 60-62 (4)
A = 85-89 (11)	B- = 70-72 (7)	D+ = 57-59 (3)
A- = 80-84 (10)	C+ = 67-69 (6)	D = 53-56 (2)
B+ = 77-79 (9)	C = 63-66 (5)	D - = 50-52 (1)

F	Failure. Assigned 0.0 grade points
ABS	Absent from final examination, equivalent to F
DEF	Official deferral (see “Petitions to Defer”)
FND	Failure with no deferred exam allowed -- assigned only when the student has failed the course on the basis of inadequate term work as specified in the course outline.

Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor subject to the approval of the Faculty Dean.

WITHDRAWAL WITHOUT ACADEMIC PENALTY

The last date to withdraw from **FALL TERM** courses is **DEC. 7, 2015**. The last day to withdraw from **FALL/WINTER (Full Term)** and **WINTER** term courses is **APRIL 8, 2016**.

REQUESTS FOR ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term because of disability, pregnancy or religious obligations. Please review the course outline promptly and write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. You can visit the Equity Services website to view the policies and to obtain more detailed information on academic accommodation at: carleton.ca/equity/accommodation/

Students with disabilities requiring academic accommodations in this course must register with the Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) for a formal evaluation of disability-related needs. Documented disabilities could include but not limited to mobility/physical impairments, specific Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/psychological disabilities, sensory disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), and chronic medical conditions. Registered PMC students are required to contact the PMC, 613-520-6608, every term to ensure that your Instructor receives your Letter of Accommodation, no later than two weeks before the first assignment is due or the first in-class test/midterm requiring accommodations. If you only require accommodations for your formally scheduled exam(s) in this course, please submit your request for accommodations to PMC by **Nov. 6, 2015** for the Fall term and **March 6, 2016** for the Winter term. For more details visit the Equity Services website: carleton.ca/equity/accommodation/

PETITIONS TO DEFER

If you miss a final examination and/or fail to submit a **FINAL** assignment by the due date because of circumstances beyond your control, you may apply a deferral of examination/assignment. If you are applying for a deferral due to illness you will be required to see a physician in order to confirm illness and obtain a medical certificate dated no later than one working day after the examination or assignment deadline. This supporting documentation must specify the date of onset of the illness, the degree of incapacitation, and the expected date of recovery.

If you are applying for a deferral for reasons other than personal illness, please [contact](#) the Registrar’s Office directly for information on other forms of documentation that we accept.

Deferrals of a final assignment or take home, in courses without a final examination, must be supported by confirmation of the assignment due date, for example a copy of the course outline specifying the due date and any documented extensions from the course instructor.

Deferral applications for examination or assignments must be submitted within **5 working days** of the original final exam.

ADDRESSES: (Area Code 613)

College of the Humanities 520-2809	300 Paterson
Greek and Roman Studies Office 520-2809	300 Paterson
Religion Office 520-2100	2A39 Paterson
Registrar's Office 520-3500	300 Tory
Student Academic Success Centre 520-7850	302 Tory
Paul Menton Centre 520-6608/TTY 520-3937	501 Uni-Centre
Writing Tutorial Service 520-2600 Ext. 1125	4 th Floor Library
Learning Support Service 520-2600 Ext 1125	4 th Floor Library