

Carleton University

2008-2009

The College of the Humanities

HUMS4000: Politics, Modernity and the Common Goods

Prof. W. R. Newell

Prof. Farhang Rajaei

Office: Loeb B657

Office: Paterson 300

Phone: 520-2600 X 6614

Phone: 520 2600 X 8143

Lectures: Monday 8:30-10:00 and Wednesday 8:30-10:00 (Paterson 303)

Tutorials: G-2, Wednesday 10:00-11:30; G-1, Friday 11:30-1:00 (Paterson 302)

Course 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. Year four looks at humanity as *zoon politikon*. Each year also roughly follows a historical period. The first year covers the mythological era to ancient Greece, the second covers the ancient and medieval periods, the third extends from the early Renaissance to the eve of the French Revolution, and the fourth year follows from there to deal with the age of Modernity and Globalization. As we will see in this course, beginning with the French Revolution, the human condition has become the era of autonomous free agents. How did this novel condition emerge 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 and Aristotle's definition of man as a political animal. The fourth year seminar, therefore, brings the whole adventure of the College curriculum to a conclusion and returns us to the world of the 21st century.

In the first term, we take a philosophical journey into the story of modernity. We will consider some major theme in European philosophy and political thought. The Philosophy of Freedom, also known as German Idealism, attempts 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. 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 turn to Rousseau, 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. 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." 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 College 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 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 consciousnesses. But while the first term concentrated mostly on German Idealism, the second term focuses on the North American and the French philosophical traditions on the unfolding of modernity in the twentieth century. The modern condition of autonomy, independent, and freedom not only 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. What are the nuances of this transformation? What did it entail? We shall begin with the unfolding of modernity process through the works of one of the giants of our time, our own Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor, who considers the modern condition of secularity as the great dis-embedding, where the self is left on his/her own reason and how this idea has led to the emergence of an all-pervasive order. Then, the classic work of political philosopher Hannah Arendt on the human condition is examined. 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 how do we order our life together. Through her work, the meaning of being human in the modern condition is evaluated. Our special attention would be given to whether the modern material condition enhances or hinders the “autonomous-self” or the “actor,” in Arendt’s concept. Then, the latter part of the term turns to thinkers who are harsher critics of modernity. They argue that that in practice power and politics and not freedom and autonomy dominated the fate of the public domain in the coming industrial European and American worlds and more so it extended to the non-Western world as well. Three powerful trends of post-colonial, religious, and post-modern treatment of modernity will be discussed by focusing on the works of Edward Said, Ali Shariati, and 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:

- (a) Class participation* (30%)
- (b) Two papers** (one for each term, 40%)
- (c) Two take-home exams*** (one in each term, 30%)

* This includes regular class and discussion attendance, participation (asking questions and offering comments) and discussion presentation(s).

** Due date would be agreed upon in class and late papers will be finned by a fraction of a grade (i.e., A to A-) for each day.

*** Specifics of the take home exam and the deadline will be decided in class. Similarly late exams would be finned by a fraction of a letter grade for each day.

Fall Term Texts:

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

----- *Phenomenology of Spirit*. (selections)

Martin Heidegger, *Basic Writings*. Harper and Row (Selections)

----- *An Introduction to Metaphysics*.

Immanuel Kant. *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*. Hackett (selections)

Walter Kauffman, Ed. *The Portable Nietzsche*. Viking

Friedrich Nietzsche. *Beyond Good and Evil*. Vintage (selections)

----- *The Birth of Tragedy* (selections)

----- ***The Use and Abuse of History*. Also entitled: *On the Advantages and Disadvantages of History for Life***

Plato. *The Symposium*. Hackett

Jean-Jacques Rousseau. *Basic Political Writings* Hackett. (selections)

Friedrich Schiller. *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man* (selections)

Robert C. Tucker, Ed. *The Marx-Engels Reader*. Norton. (selections)

Winter Term Texts:

Hannah Arendt. *The Human Condition*

Michel Foucault, *Discipline & Punish*

Edward W. Said. *Orientalism*

Ali Shariati. *Marxism and Other Western Fallacies*

Charles Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries*

Course Calendar

Fall Term: Approximate Schedule of Themes and Readings (Detailed outline will be handed separately).

Weeks 1-2: Nature versus Freedom; The Origins of German Idealism

Plato, *The Symposium*. (selections).

Rousseau, "First and Second Discourses."

Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*. (selections).

Schiller, *Letters*. (selections).

Weeks 3-5: Hegelian Absolute Idealism and the Science of Spirit.

Hegel, *Introduction to the Philosophy of History* (selections).

Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit* (selections).

Week 6: The First Assault on Hegelian Idealism: Marx and Marxism.

Marx, "On the Jewish Question," "For a Ruthless Critique of Everything Existing," and "The Communist Manifesto."

Weeks 7-9: The Second Assault on Hegelian Idealism: Nietzsche and Will to Power
Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy* (selections).
Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil* (selections).
Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (selections).

Weeks 10-12: The Third Assault on Hegelian Idealism: Heidegger, Existentialism and Post-modernism
Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*.
Heidegger, "The Origin of the Artwork," "Letter on Humanism," and "An Essay Concerning Technology."

Winter Term: Approximate Schedule of Themes and Readings (Detailed outline will be handed separately);

Weeks 1-3 **Modernity and the Dis-embedded Individual**
Charles Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries*

Weeks 4-6 **The Modern Condition and the Vita Activa**
Hannah Arendt. *The Human Condition*

Weeks 7-8 Post-Colonial Perspective
Edward W. Said. *Orientalism*

Week 9-10 Religious Critique of Modernity
Ali Shariati. *Marxism and Other Western Fallacies*

Week 11-12 The post-Modern Deconstruction of Modernity
Michel 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 “to use and pass off as one’s own idea or product the work of another without expressly giving credit to another.” This can include:

- Copying from another person's work without indicating this through appropriate use of quotation marks and footnote citations.
- Lengthy and close paraphrasing of another person's work (i.e. extensive copying interspersed with a few phrases or sentences of your own).
- Submitting written work produced by someone else as if it were your own work (e.g. another student's term paper, a paper purchased from a term paper "factory", materials or term papers downloaded from the Internet, etc.).
- Handing in "substantially the same piece of work to two or more courses without the prior written permission of the instructors...involved." (University Senate)

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 range from a mark of zero for the plagiarized work to a final grade of "F" for the course, and even suspension from all studies or expulsion from the University.

GRADING SYSTEM

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

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

F	Failure. No academic credit
WDN	Withdrawn from the course
ABS	Absent from the final examination
DEF	Official deferral (see "Petitions to Defer")
FND	"Failed, no Deferral" – assigned when the student is absent from the final exam and has failed the course on the basis of inadequate term work as specified in the course outline.

WITHDRAWAL WITHOUT ACADEMIC PENALTY

The last date to withdraw from Fall term courses is November 7th, 2008. Last day to withdraw from Fall/Winter (full year) and Winter term courses is March 6th, 2009.

REQUESTS FOR ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION

For Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities requiring academic accommodations in this course must contact a coordinator at the Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities to complete the necessary *Letters of Accommodation*. After registering with the PMC, make an appointment to meet and discuss your needs with me in order to make the necessary arrangements as early in the term as possible. Please note the deadline for submitting completed forms to the Paul Menton Centre is November 7th, 2008 (for fall/winter term courses) / March 6th 2009 (for winter term courses).

For Religious Obligations:

Students requesting academic accommodation on the basis of religious obligation should make a formal, written request to their instructors for alternate dates and/or means of satisfying academic requirements. Such requests should be made during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist, but no later than two weeks before the compulsory event. Accommodation is to be worked out directly and on an individual basis between the student and the instructor(s) involved. Instructors will make accommodations in a way that avoids academic disadvantage to the student.

Students or instructors who have questions or want to confirm accommodation eligibility of a religious event or practice may refer to the Equity Services website for a list of holy days and Carleton's Academic Accommodation policies, or may contact an Equity Services Advisor in the Equity Services Department for assistance. (613-520-5622)

For Pregnancy:

Pregnant students requiring academic accommodations are encouraged to contact an Equity Advisor in Equity Services to complete a *letter of accommodation*. The student must then make an appointment to discuss her needs with the instructor at least two weeks prior to the first academic event in which it is anticipated the accommodation will be required.

PETITIONS TO DEFER

Students unable to complete a **final** term paper or write a **final** examination because of illness or other circumstances beyond their control or whose performance on an examination has been impaired by such circumstances may apply in writing within five working days to the Registrar's Office for permission to extend a term paper deadline or to write a deferred examination. The request must be fully and specifically supported by a medical certificate or other relevant documentation. Only deferral petitions submitted to the Registrar's Office will be considered.

ADDRESSES

College of the Humanities 520-2809	300 Paterson
Classics and 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	500 Unicentre
Writing Tutorial Service 520-6632	4 th floor Library