

Carleton University

F/W Terms 2010-2011

The College of the Humanities Humanities Program

HUMS4000: Politics, Modernity and the Common Good

Prof. W. R. Newell

Prof. Farhang Rajaei

Office: Loeb B657

Office: Paterson 300

Phone: 520-2600 X 6614

Phone: 520 2600 X 8143

Lectures: Tuesday 8:30-10:00 and Thursday 8:30-10:00 (Paterson 303)

Tutorials: G-2, Tuesday 10:00-11:30; G-1, Thursday 10:00-11:30 (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. 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 therefore, brings the whole adventure of the College Curriculum to a conclusion.

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 conscience as well as its consciousness. The modern condition of autonomy, independent, and freedom as qualities for agency, the *modus operandi*, and the social structures, 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, 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 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 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 Economic Historian, Karl Polanyi, who provides an insightful portrait of the spatial structures and organizations that shape 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 fate of 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 Voegelin and Nasr, 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 following:

- (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 dates will be agreed upon in class and late papers will be fined 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 fined 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* (Selections)

Rene Guenon. *The Crisis of the Modern World*

Karl Polanyi. *The Great Transformation*

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

Charles Taylor. *Modern Social Imaginaries*

Eric Voegelin. *The New Order and the Last Orientation* (Selections)

Course Calendar

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

I. The Civilization of Modernity

Weeks 1-3 Modern Human
Hannah Arendt. *The Human Condition*

Weeks 4-5 Modern Modus Operandi
Charles Taylor. *Modern Social Imaginaries*

Weeks 6-7 Structure of the Modern Civilization
Karl Polanyi. *The Great Transformation*

Week 8 Winter Break

II. The Critics of the Civilization of Modernity

Week 9 Literally Approach
Salman Rushdie, *Midnight's Children*

Weeks 10 Philosophic/Political Approach
Eric Voegelin, *The New order and Last Orientation*

Week 11 Religious Approach
Rene Guenon. *The Crisis of the Modern World*

Week 12 The Post-Modern Approach
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 “*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. 6, 2010**. The last day to withdraw from **FALL/WINTER (Full Term)** and **WINTER** term courses is **APRIL 5, 2011**.

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 the last official day to withdraw from classes in each term. For more details visit the PMC website: carleton.ca/pmc/accommodations/

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 assignments 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