

The College of the Humanities Humanities Program

HUMS4000: Politics, Modernity and the Common Good

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Office Hours: Thurs 11:30-1:30

Lectures: Monday 1:05 pm - 2:25 pm and Wednesday 1:05pm - 2:25 pm (Paterson 303)

Tutorials: G-1 Tuesday 10:05 am - 11:25 am and G-2 Tuesday 1:05 pm -2:25 pm (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

The winter term begins with an attempted response to the infamous claim made by an Auschwitz prison guard to Primo Levi "There is no why here." In one way or another all the philosophers considered in the winter term will ask: What is possible after Auschwitz? What can be built anew, what remains, what can be restored, what may only be lamented.

With these critical political, cultural and moral central questions in mind the course begins with Primo Levi's *Survival in Auschwitz* and Albert Camus' *The Myth of Sisyphus*, two seminal midcentury attempts to understand the crisis of coherence brought on by and expressed in the twinned catastrophes of Communism and Fascism. Moving forward from these texts we explore the essential tripartite tension in post war politics thought between progress, return and retreat. We will move between those who understand the crisis of meaning as an occasion for mourning, an opportunity for innovation or a call to recovery, albeit on new ground, of the best principles of the West. With that in mind we will consider new ways of thinking about politics, including the feminism of Simone De Beauvoir, the quasi-Kantianism of John Rawls, the liberal-communitarianism of Charles Taylor and the radical relativism of Richard Rorty. We will also consider those critical attempts at reinvigoration and rediscovery, conducted in very different ways and with different objects, in the work of Amartya Sen, Leo Strauss and Eric Voegelin. Finally, we will consider George Grant and Alasdair MacIntyre, ending the term with these philosophic and cultural eulogists, with their attempts at a full accounting of all that has been lost and their contention that a recovery is at best a slim and distant prospect.

Course Requirements for the Fall semester:

Attendance and participation* (30%)

A paper** (40%)

An in-class final exam (30%)

* Attendance of lectures and discussion groups is obligatory, not optional. Students will be asked to make presentations in the discussion groups, on an equally rotating basis, on the readings for that week.

** 10 pages double-spaced typed. To be submitted Friday December 9. 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.

Winter Term Requirements

1. Term Paper, 2500 words.30%
2. Take Home Exam 30%
3. Seminar and Lecture participation 15%
4. Seminar Presentation 25%

1. **The Term Paper:** The term paper will involve original research on a topic of the student's choosing directly connected to one of the texts studied in the course. The Term paper is due in lecture on April 5th.
2. **Take Home Exam:** The take home exam will be handed out in class at the end of the final winter term lecture on **Friday April 9th** . The exam must be handed in, in hard copy by **1pm, Wednesday April 12th**. **Papers received after 1pm or submitted electronically will receive a grade of zero.**
3. **Seminar presentation:** Students will sign up and present once in the term on a text treated in the course. This presentation should seek to make an original argument about an important aspect of the text in question. The presentation should last approximately 20 minutes and involve both careful and critical exegesis loosely based on an academic conference paper format.
4. **Seminar and Lecture participation:** Students are expect to attend all lectures and seminars. Students should come to lectures and seminars having read the material and prepared to discuss it in both lecture and seminar.

Grading

A+ Extraordinary work that greatly exceeds the requirements of a third year paper. This grade is rarely awarded.

A Excellent work: very insightful analysis; clear and persuasive thesis that goes beyond the ideas presented in lecture; free of any typographical or grammatical errors;

A-/ B+ Very strong work: insightful and clear, but in need of a bit of clarification, revision, or proofreading.

B/B- Good work. Demonstrates a solid understanding of the text and lectures, but requires more significant revision, clarification, or proofreading

C+ /C/C- Average to poor work. Lacks a clear or insightful thesis and requires extensive revision, clarification, or proofreading

F Unacceptable or non-existent work.

Plagiarism:

Plagiarism is a serious instructional offence. The statement on Instructional Offences in the Undergraduate Calendar explains that plagiarism is “to use and pass off as one’s own idea or product work of another without expressly giving credit to another” (48). This includes material found on the Internet. All cases of plagiarism will be forwarded to the Dean’s Office.

Duplicate assignments:

It is not permitted to submit the same assignment to two or more courses.

Course requirements:

Students must fulfill *all* course requirements in order to achieve a passing grade

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.

Winter Term Texts

Albert Camus *The Myth of Sisyphus* (Vintage)
Leo Strauss & Alexandre Kojeve, *On Tyranny* (University of Chicago Press)
Primo Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz* (Touchstone)
Eric Voegelin, *The New Science of Politics* (University of Chicago Press)
Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (Vintage)
Charles Taylor, *Multiculturalism and the Politics of Recognition* (Princeton University Press)
George Grant, *Philosophy in a Mass Age* (University of Toronto Press)
Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue* (University of Notre Dame Press)
Amartya Sen, *Identity and Violence* (Norton)
John Rawls, *Essays on CULearn*
Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity* (Cambridge University Press)

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 Lecture Schedule

January 9
Introductory lecture

January 11
Primo Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz*

January 16
Primo Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz*

January 18th
Albert Camus, *Myth of Sisyphus*

January 23rd
Albert Camus, *Myth of Sisyphus*

January 25th
Eric Voegelin, *The New Science of Politics*

January 30th
Eric Voegelin, *The New Science of Politics*

February 1st
Leo Strauss, *On Tyranny*

February 6
Leo Strauss, *On Tyranny*

February 8
Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*

February 13th
Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*

February 15th
John Rawls, *Essays* (CULearn)

February 27th
John Rawls, *Essays*, (CULearn)

March 1st
Charles Taylor, *Multiculturalism*

March 6th
Charles Taylor, *Multiculturalism*

March 8th
Amartya Sen, *Identity and Violence*
March 13th
Amartya Sen, *Identity and Violence*

March 15th
Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity*

March 20th
Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity*

March 22nd
George Grant, *Philosophy In A Mass Age*

March 27th
George Grant, *Philosophy In A Mass Age*

March 29th
Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*

April 3rd
Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*

April 5th
Concluding Lecture

April 9th
Make up lecture if necessary.

Term Papers Due, Take Home Exam Distributed.

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. 9, 2016**. The last day to withdraw from **FALL/WINTER (Full Term)** and **WINTER** term courses is **APRIL 7, 2017**.

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. 11, 2016** for the Fall term and **March 10, 2017** 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 & Career Development Services 520-7850	302 Tory
Paul Menton Centre 520-6608/TTY 520-3937	501 Uni-Centre
Writing Tutorial Service 520-6632	4 th Floor Library
Learning Support Service 520-2600 Ext 1125	4 th Floor Library