

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 Monday 2:25-3:55 and G-2 Wednesday 10:05-11:25 (Paterson 302)

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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 seminar, therefore, brings the whole adventure of the Bachelor of Humanities curriculum to a conclusion and returns us to the world of the 21st century.

In the first term, we undertake a philosophical exploration of the problems of modernity and freedom. We will pay particular attention to the emergence and unfolding of German Idealism, from Leibniz through Kant, Fichte, Schiller and Hegel, to the Hegelian School and Marx, as a critical response to problems in the Enlightenment materialist conception of the human being and its place in the natural order, and as an attempt to work out a more comprehensive and satisfactory account of human freedom and of self-governing ethical and political life. This philosophical movement seeks to redeem the emancipatory potential of the present against what it describes as the culture of diremption or alienation, the assertion of rigid and narrow private interests associated with Enlightenment materialism and its utilitarian conceptions of freedom and the state, prefigured in Hobbes. We will consider German idealism not merely as a refutation of the Enlightenment, but as an alternative and critical version of it. Central to this account are the concepts of spontaneity or self-causing, formative activity (the shaping of objectivity in light of subjective ends), and reflective self-awareness, which involves, *inter alia*, measuring the results of formative action against its intended ends. To what extent, and why, do our deeds confirm or distort our subjective sense of ourselves, and our sense of our place in the natural and social worlds?

We will examine briefly the Aristotelian and Stoic precursors of German Idealism on the good life, the self-determining will, and the classical ethics of perfection. We will then consider the Hobbesian version of freedom and Rousseau's influential critiques of it. We then turn to Leibniz, who initiates conceptions of spontaneous freedom and ethical perfection against which subsequent idealists, Kant in the vanguard, develop their own notions of moral and juridical selfhood. We will examine Kant's critiques and appropriations of Leibniz, which involve a shift away from perfectionism in ethics toward a more strictly deontological approach, stressing not the consequences of action, but the permissibility of its originating principle. Kant also reformulates the concept of spontaneity as a doctrine of negative freedom, or our capacity not to be determined by causes external to our will. Schiller and Fichte take up the critique of the culture of diremption as one way in which modern freedom can play out, and outline, with different degrees of concreteness, alternative versions of modern freedom which revive some elements of the ethically perfectionist programme. A post-Kantian perfectionism is the key to Hegel's conception of history as the history of freedom, to be achieved in the institutions and practices of modern ethical life. Radicalised and applied to the problems of economic, political, and religious life, this programme continues to dominate in the works of the Hegelian School up to the Revolutions of 1848, and forms the backdrop to the thought of Karl Marx. Deriving from many of the same sources, but with markedly different inflections, Romanticism and Nietzsche call into question the connection of spontaneous action with rational autonomy, and the idea of history as a progressive task of emancipation and the realisation of reason.

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. 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 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 International Relation Theorist, Hedley Bull, who provides an insightful portrait of the

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 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 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 **Thursday December 4th** in the Fall and April 2nd 2015 for Winter. You can choose any topic you prefer (subject to approval by the professor) or come to us and we will help you with the topic. 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 (**Paterson 2A47** 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:

Jean-Jacques Rousseau. *Basic Political Writings* Hackett.
Immanuel Kant. *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*. Broadview.
Friedrich Schiller. *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man*.
Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*
Friedrich Nietzsche. *Beyond Good and Evil*. Vintage
----- . *On the Advantages and Disadvantages of History for Life*.
Hackett.
Karl Marx. *Selected Writings*. Hackett.
And also a course pack

Approximate Schedule of Themes and Readings for the Fall Semester (detailed outline of the lectures will be in a different file):

1st Class: Introductory Remarks; Philosophy of Freedom

Week One:

Introduction: Enlightenment Freedom: Classical Sources, Hobbes and Rousseau

Week Two:

Leibniz: Spontaneity, Perfection, Natural Right

Weeks Three and Four: Kant**Week Five:** Schiller**Week Six:** Fichte**Week Seven:** Hegel**Week Eight:** Fall Break**Week Nine:** Hegel**Week Ten:** The Hegelian School**Week Eleven and Twelve:** Marx**Week Thirteen:** Romanticism and Nietzsche

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*

Approximate Schedule of Themes and Readings for the Fall Semester (detailed outline of the lectures will be in a different file):

I. Civilization

1st Class: Introductory Remarks; Civilization 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 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. 8, 2014**. The last day to withdraw from **FALL/WINTER (Full Term)** and **WINTER** term courses is **APRIL 8, 2015**.

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. 7, 2014** for the Fall term and **March 6, 2015** 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 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