

Winter 2023 – Carleton University

Adorno and Horkheimer's *Dialectic of Enlightenment*

PHIL 4005: Seminar in Modern Philosophy / PHIL 5600: Topics in the History of Philosophy

Paterson Hall, floor 3A, room 36

Tuesdays, 11:35 am – 2:25 pm

Course Delivery: In-person

Instructor: Dr. Kyla Bruff

Email: kyla.bruff@carleton.ca

Office hours: Tuesdays, 3pm – 5pm in 3A56, Paterson Hall, or online by appointment

I. Description:

The *Dialectic of Enlightenment* is a seminal text of the Frankfurt School and critical theory tradition. It sets its own task to discover “why mankind, instead of entering into a truly human condition, is sinking into a new kind of barbarism.” It also includes the famous “Culture Industry” essay, in which Adorno and Horkheimer analyze the streamlined creation of needs fulfilled through standardized cultural products, serving to entertain consumers under late capitalism.

Through a close reading of the text, we will examine Adorno and Horkheimer’s critical assessments of reason, the Enlightenment project, positivism, liberalism, contemporary forms of domination and violence, administered societies, entertainment culture, and Kantian moral philosophy. We will also explore the relationship between reason and nature, reason and myth, the rational and the irrational.

Very short excerpts from relevant historical texts, such as Homer’s *Odyssey* to works by Kant, Marquis de Sade, and Nietzsche, accompany weekly readings when helpful.

II. Preclusions: Additional credit for the same course under either PHIL 4005 or PHIL 5600.

III. Prerequisite(s):

Undergraduate students must be enrolled as a Fourth Year Undergrad with a Major, Minor or Concentration in Philosophy or Phil. Ethics PubAff.

Graduate students must be enrolled in the Graduate Philosophy Program.

IV. Learning Outcomes:

- to understand the position and importance of the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* in the context of European philosophy

- to be able to critique various (mis)uses of reason and the relationship of the latter to violence, barbarism, and irrationality
- to be able to critically discuss the relevance of Adorno and Horkheimer's concept of the culture industry in reference to media and social and political behaviour today
- to discuss, and write a sustained work related to, the concept of the *dialectic* of Enlightenment

V. Course texts:

The required text for this course is:

Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*, translated by John Cumming, published by Verso Books, 1997.

This text can be purchased from the campus bookstore or online through Indigo or Amazon.

The following remaining required readings will be made available to you online and do not need to be purchased:

- Homer, *The Odyssey*, translated by Robert Fagles, published by Penguin, 1997.
- Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality*, edited by Keith Ansell Pearson, translated by Carol Diethe, published by Cambridge University Press, 2006.
- Immanuel Kant, *What is Enlightenment?* (any edition)
- Marquis de Sade, *Juliette*, translated by Austryn Wainhouse, published by Grove, 1968.

VI. Calendar descriptions:

PHIL 4005 – Seminar in Modern Philosophy: Detailed study of selected philosophers or issues in modern philosophy. Prerequisite(s): eligibility for fourth-year standing in a Philosophy Honours program or permission of the Department.

Also offered at the graduate level, with different requirements, as PHIL 5600, for which additional credit is precluded.

PHIL 5600 – Topics in the History of Philosophy: A detailed study within the history of philosophy: a period, an issue or the work of selected philosophers. Topics may vary from year to year. Also offered at the undergraduate level, with different requirements, as PHIL 4003, PHIL 4004, PHIL 4005, or PHIL 4006, for which additional credit is precluded when topics are the same.

VII. Course calendar, readings, and overview:

Date	Themes, Deadlines & Feedback	Readings
Jan. 10	Course Introduction: administered life and the barbarism of humanity	“Preface to the New Edition” and “Introduction,” pp. ix-xvii
Jan. 17	The outcomes and failures of the Enlightenment.	“The Concept of the Enlightenment,” pp. 3-18
Jan. 24	Myth, magic, and nature.	“The Concept of the Enlightenment,” pp. 18-42 Supplementary reading: Odysseus and the Sirens, pp. 271-279.
Jan 31	Odysseus’ use of reason and the “dialectic” of Enlightenment	“Excursus I: Odysseus or Myth and Enlightenment,” 43-60
Feb. 7	Odysseus’ disavowal of self and renunciation of desire in his subjectivity and the critique of homeland	“Excursus I: Odysseus or Myth and Enlightenment,” 61-80
Feb. 14	The critique of Kant and the Bourgeois subject.	“Excursus II: Juliette or Enlightenment and Morality,” 81-91 Recommended reading: Immanuel Kant, <i>What is Enlightenment?</i> Marquis de Sade, <i>Juliette</i> , pp. 963-975
Feb. 21	NO CLASSES – MIDTERM BREAK	
Feb. 28	De Sade, Nietzsche and morality, domination, and subjugation	“Excursus II: Juliette or Enlightenment and Morality,” 92-120 Supplementary reading: Nietzsche, <i>The Genealogy of Morals</i> , pp. 89-92
Mar. 7	Entertainment culture and the creation and standardization of needs and values.	“The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception,” pp. 120-142
Mar. 13	Critiques of capitalism, conformity, and exploitation.	“The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception,” 143-167
Mar. 21	Enlightenment and the rise of anti-Semitism.	“Elements of Anti-Semitism: Limits of Enlightenment,” 168-186
Mar. 28	The contemporary form of fascism	“Elements of Anti-Semitism: Limits of Enlightenment,” 187-208
Apr. 4	The individual in a “hardened,” capitalist society	“Notes and drafts,” 209-258

VIII. Evaluation

The evaluation for this course is composed of two tests and one take-home essay.

- Short expository essay (1500 words) 25%
Due on February 3, 11:59 pm (graded and returned Feb 17)
- Seminar presentation + handout
OR
1500 word summary of a weekly readings from the primary text 25%
- Term paper thesis statement/first paragraph 5%
Due on March 28, 11:59 pm
- Term paper (take-home exam) of 3000-3500 words 45%
(2000-2500 for undergraduates) 45%
Due on April 27, 11:59 pm

For the seminar presentation, you are required to produce a handout of 10-12 points of approximately two lines each (without quotations), summarizing the reading of the day for your classmates. You will present the reading and your handout in a presentation of approximately 20 minutes to the class. Your handout must be submitted by the Sunday before your presentation at 11:59 pm. I will approve the handout and make copies of it for the class. Presentation dates will be assigned on the first day of the course. Instead of a seminar presentation, you also have the option of writing a 1500 expository summary of one of our weekly readings.

For your final assignment, please make sure all sources are cited in line with Carleton's Academic Integrity guidelines, listed here:

<https://carleton.ca/registrar/academic-integrity/>.

The final take-home exam is due on the last day of the exam period, according to the University calendar.

Late assignments will be penalized at a rate of 2% per day for a maximum of 5 days or -10%.

IX. Department of Philosophy and Carleton University Policies (Fall/Winter 2022-23)

Assignments:

Please follow your professor's instructions on how assignments will be handled electronically. There will be NO hard copies placed in the essay box this coming year.

Evaluation:

Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor subject to the approval of the Faculty Dean. This means that grades submitted by the instructor may be subject to revision. No grades are final until they have been approved by the Dean.

Deferrals for Term Work:

If students are unable to complete term work because of illness or other circumstances beyond their control, they should contact their course instructor no later than *three working days* of the due date. Normally, any deferred term work will be completed by the last day of the term. Term work cannot be deferred by the Registrar.

Deferrals for Final Exams:

Students are expected to be available for the duration of a course including the examination period. Occasionally, students encounter circumstances beyond their control where they may not be able to write a final examination or submit a take-home examination. Examples of this would be a serious illness or the death of a family member. If you miss a final examination and/or fail to submit a take-home examination by the due date, you may apply for a deferral no later than *three working days* after the original due date (as per the University Regulations in [Section 4.3 of the Undergraduate Calendar](#)). Visit the [Registrar's Office](#) for further information.

Plagiarism:

It is the responsibility of each student to understand the meaning of 'plagiarism' as defined in the Undergraduate or Graduate Calendars, and to avoid both committing plagiarism and aiding or abetting plagiarism by other students. ([Section 10.1 of the Undergraduate Calendar Academic Regulations](#))

Academic Accommodation:

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term:

- *Pregnancy or religious obligation:* write to your professor 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. For more details visit the [EDC](#) website.
- *Academic accommodations for students with disabilities:* The [Paul Menton Centre](#) for Students with Disabilities (PMC) provides services to students with Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/mental health disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), chronic medical conditions, and impairments in mobility, hearing, and vision. If you have a disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact PMC at 613-520-6608 or pmc@carleton.ca for a formal evaluation. If you are already registered with the PMC, contact your PMC coordinator to send your Letter

of Accommodation at the beginning of the term, and no later than two weeks before the first in-class test or exam requiring accommodation. After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with your professor to ensure accommodation arrangements are made.

- *Survivors of Sexual Violence:* As a community, Carleton University is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working and living environment where sexual violence will not be tolerated, and where survivors are supported through academic accommodations as per [Carleton's Sexual Violence Policy](#).
- *Accommodation for [Student Activities](#):* Carleton University recognizes the substantial benefits, both to the individual student and for the university, that result from a student participating in activities beyond the classroom experience. Reasonable accommodation must be provided to students who compete or perform at the national or international level. Please contact your instructor 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.

Important Dates:

- Sept. 7 Classes start.
- Sept. 20 Last day for registration and course changes for fall term and fall/winter (two-term) courses.
- Sept. 30 Last day for entire fee adjustment when withdrawing from fall term or two-term courses. Withdrawals after this date will result in a permanent notation of WDN on the official transcript.
- Oct. 10 Statutory holiday. University closed.
- Oct. 24-28 Fall Break – no classes.
- Nov. 25 Last day for summative tests or examinations, or formative tests or examinations totaling more than 15% of the final grade, before the official examination period.
- Dec. 9 Last day of fall term classes. *Classes follow a Monday schedule.* Last day for academic withdrawal from fall term courses. Last day for handing in term work and the last day that can be specified by a course instructor as a due date for term work for a fall term course.
- Dec. 10-22 Final examinations for fall term courses and mid-term examinations in two-term courses. Examinations are normally held all seven days of the week.
- Dec. 22 All take-home examinations are due.
- Jan. 9 Classes begin.
- Jan. 20 Last day for registration and course changes in the winter term.
- Jan. 31 Last day for a full fee adjustment when withdrawing from winter term courses or from the winter portion of two-term courses. Withdrawals after this date will result in a permanent notation of WDN on the official transcript.
- Feb. 20 Statutory holiday. University closed.
- Feb. 20-24 Winter Break – no classes.
- Mar. 15 Last day for academic withdrawal from fall/winter and winter courses.

- Mar. 29 Last day for summative tests or examinations, or formative tests or examinations totaling more than 15% of the final grade, in winter term or fall/winter courses before the official examination period.
- Apr. 7 Statutory holiday. University closed.
- Apr. 12 Last day of two-term and winter term classes. *Classes follow a Friday schedule.* Last day for handing in term work and the last day that can be specified by a course instructor as a due date for two-term and for winter term courses.
- Apr. 13-14 No classes or examinations take place.
- Apr. 15-27 Final examinations for winter term and two-term courses. Examinations are normally held all seven days of the week.
- Apr. 27 All take-home examinations are due.

Addresses:

Department of Philosophy:
www.carleton.ca/philosophy
520-2110

Registrar's Office:
www.carleton.ca/registrar
520-3500

Academic Advising Centre:
www.carleton.ca/academicadvising
520-7850

Writing Services:
<http://www.carleton.ca/csas/writing-services/>
520-3822

MacOdrum Library
<http://www.library.carleton.ca/>
520-2735