

CONTEMPORARY POLITICAL THEORY

Political Science 4096
C. L. Eubanks

MWF 10:30 AM
Spring – 2015

THE FACES OF MODERNITY: DIFFERENT WAYS OF THINKING

“But what then am I? A thing which thinks. What is a thing which thinks? It is a thing which doubts, understands, conceives, affirms, denies, wills, refuses, which also imagines and feels.”

René Descartes

“The rational awareness of an objective principle which constrains will is a *command of reason*; and the expression of this command is called an *imperative*.”

I. Kant

The fate of our times is characterized by rationalization and intellectualization and, above all, by the 'disenchantment of the world.' Precisely the ultimate and most sublime values have retreated from public life either into the transcendental realm of mystic life or into the brotherliness of direct and personal human relations.

Max Weber

Required Readings:

René Descartes, Selections from *Meditations on First Philosophy*
<http://webspace.ship.edu/cgboer/descartesmeditations.html>

Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals* (Especially the Preface)
<http://www.justiceharvard.org/resources/immanuel-kant-groundwork-for-the-metaphysics-of-morals-1785/>

Immanuel Kant, “Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch”
<https://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/kant/kant1.htm>

Max Weber, “Science as a Vocation” (E-Reserve)

MISGIVINGS WITHIN MODERNITY

“Universal freedom, therefore, can produce neither a positive work nor a deed; there is left for it only *negative* action; it is merely the *fury* of destruction.”

G. W. F. Hegel

“Alienated labour turns the species-life of man, and also nature as mental species-property, into an alien being and into a means for his individual existence. It alienates from man his own body, external nature, his mental life and his human life. A direct consequence of the alienation of a man from the produce of his labour, from his life activity and from his species-life, is that man is alienated from other men.”

K. Marx & F. Engels

civ - i - li - za - tion, n. 1. an advanced state of human society in which a high level of art, science, religion, and government has been reached. 2. that which is largely responsible for our misery.

American College Dictionary & Sigmund Freud

Required Readings:

G. W. Hegel, Excerpts from *The Phenomenology of the Spirit*
(A. Consciousness & B. Self-Consciousness)
<http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/hegel/phindex.htm>

C. L. Eubanks, "Subject and Substance: Hegel on Modernity," *Loyola Journal of Public Interest Law*. Vol. 6, Fall 2005, pp. 101-125. (E-Reserve)

K. Marx & F. Engels, *Communist Manifesto*, "Bourgeois and Proletarians"
<http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1848/communist-manifesto/ch01.htm>

K. Marx & F. Engels, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, "Estranged Labour"
<http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1844/manuscripts/labour.htm>

S. Freud, from *Civilization and its Discontents*, Excerpt
<http://faculty.georgetown.edu/irvinem/theory/Freud-CivDis.html>

*****FIRST EXAMINATION*****

NIETZSCHE'S CHALLENGE TO MODERNITY

"We need a *critique* of moral values – *the value of these values themselves must first be called into question* – and for that there is needed a knowledge of the conditions and circumstances in which they grew, under which they evolved and changed . . . a knowledge of a kind that has never yet existed or even been desired. One has taken the *value* of these "values" as given, as factual, as beyond all question."

F. Nietzsche

"My point is not that everything is bad, but that everything is 'dangerous,' which is not exactly the same as bad. If everything is dangerous, then we always have something to do. So my position leads not to apathy but to a hyper- and pessimistic activism."

M. Foucault

Required Readings:

F. Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*,
Especially "The Problem of Socrates" and "'Reason' in Philosophy"
<http://www.handprint.com/SC/NIE/GotDamer.html>

F. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*

Truth, Power, Self: An Interview with Michel Foucault
<http://www.naturalthinker.net/trl/texts/Foucault,Michel/Foucault,%20Michel%20-%20Truth,%20Power,%20Self.pdf>

Foucault, An Interview: Polemics, Politics, and Problematizations
<http://foucault.info/foucault/interview.html>

*****SECOND EXAMINATION – OPTIONAL*****

A BRIEF HUSSERLIAN INTERLUDE ON THE RECOVERY OF NAIIVETÉ

“It will gradually become clearer, and finally be completely clear, that the proper return to the naïveté of life – but in a reflection which raises above this naïveté – is the only possible way to overcome the philosophical naïveté which lies in the [supposedly] ‘scientific’ character of traditional objectivistic philosophy.”

E. Husserl

MARTIN HEIDEGGER AND THE REMEMBRANCE OF BEING

“But now we must note something of the highest importance that occurred even as early as Galileo: the surreptitious substitution of the mathematically substructured world of idealities for the only real world, the one that is actually given through perception, that is ever experienced and experienceable – our everyday life-world.”

E. Husserl

“This thinking is neither theoretical nor practical. It takes place before this differentiation. This thinking, insofar as it is, is the remembrance of Being and nothing else. . . . Such thinking has no result. It has no effect. It satisfies its nature simply by being. It lets Being be.”

M. Heidegger

Required Reading:

J. P. Sartre, “Existentialism is a Humanism”

<http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/sartre/works/exist/sartre.htm>

M. Heidegger, *Basic Writings* (Especially: Being and Time: Introduction; What is Metaphysics; On the Essence of Truth; Letter on Humanism; Building Dwelling Thinking; What Calls for Thinking?; and The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking)

FOUNDATIONS WITHOUT FOUNDATIONALISM?

“Do not we Westerners . . . nourished on the Bible at least as much as on the Presocratics, do we not feel a strangeness in the world which owes nothing to the certitude of the Cartesian cogito and which the end of metaphysics does not succeed in overcoming?”

E. Levinas

“Don’t you believe that we are all responsible for the absence of values? And that if all of us who come from Nietzscheism, from nihilism, or from historical realism said in public that we were wrong and that there are moral values and that in the future we shall do the necessary to establish [preserve] and illustrate them, don’t you believe this would be the beginning of a hope?”

A. Camus

Required Reading:

E. Levinas, “God and Philosophy” (E-Reserve)

A. Camus, *The Plague*

*******FINAL EXAMINATION DUE: SATURDAY, MAY 9 AT 9:30 AM*******

COURSE OBJECTIVES AND REQUIREMENTS

The study of political theory or philosophy is the study of meaning: the meaning of time, of being, of history, of individual and communal existence. It is not possible to divorce that study from value or experience. Consequently, the content of this course will be rather broad and varied. We will draw upon psychology, theology, philosophy, literature, politics, and experience in order to realize the objectives of this course, which are: To achieve an understanding of the major political philosophies of the 19th & 20th centuries within the context of the modern/postmodern debate and to analyze abstract ideas with precision and critical imagination.

The course requirements consist of take-home mid-term (worth 30%), a take-home final examination (worth 30%), and an analytical essay (worth 40%). **Your final examination will be due on May 9, no later than 9:30 AM, submitted electronically to the Moodle Site.** All of the course examinations will be essay in nature. Graduate students will be expected to do additional work. Please consult with me on this matter.

The analytical essay will consist of an 8-10 page exegetical and critical analysis. A list of suggested topics, as well as a detailed description of the nature of this assignment, will be provided for you. If you depart from the suggested list, you must have your topic approved. The essays are due on **Monday, April 20, 2015**. Late submissions will be penalized one letter grade. Important dates for the essay:

Topic Approved by: Wednesday, March 16 (Electronic Submission on Moodle)

Abstract Approved by: Wednesday, March 30 (Electronic Submission on Moodle)

Final Submission: Monday, April 20 (Electronic Submission on Moodle)

For those of you who wish to take it, a second, optional examination will be given during the second half of the semester. It may be substituted for your first examination grade.

There are three books required for the course: Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*; Martin Heidegger, *Basic Writings*; and Albert Camus, *The Plague*. There are additional assigned readings – available on the Internet or in E-Reserve on the Moodle Site. All of the books are available at the LSU and area bookstores.

A final note: This is a class that is highly dependent on attendance. The material is sequential; we build on a base. We engage difficult material; understanding that material is based on class lectures and class discussion. Thus, it is virtually impossible for anyone to receive a satisfactory grade without regular attendance. My attendance policy is as follows: An excess of three unexcused absences will result in a one letter grade course reduction. (See Moodle for a full description of this policy.)

My office hours are as follows: MWF 9:00 to 10:30 AM and 12:00 to 1:00 PM, or, by appointment at your convenience. My office is Room 237 Stubbs Hall. Phone 578-1944. E-Mail Address: poeubk@lsu.edu

