**PHIL 275**: **From Modern to Postmodern: Philosophical Thought and Cultural Critique**

Winter Term 2016-17  
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Office hours: Wednesday 11:30-13:30  
Class Schedule: Monday and Wednesday 10:15-11:30 in H-407 SGW

*Calendar Description*

This course focuses on key developments in modern and postmodern philosophy and their cultural influences. The course provides an introduction to philosophers (such as Kant, Nietzsche, and Foucault) and philosophical movements (such as empiricism, existentialism, and post-structuralism) of the modern era. It also introduces students to the tremendous influence that philosophical theory has had on the arts, on social and political movements, and on virtually every field of study in the humanities and social sciences. (*NOTE: Students who have received credit for this topic under a PHIZ 298 number may not take this course for credit.*)

*Expanded Course Description*

In this course we study basic ideas of modernism and the critique of these ideas in postmodern thought, an intellectual and political movement that began in the second half of the 20th century in Europe. The specificity of postmodern critique reflects deep political changes in social understanding, such as the decline of patriarchy, colonialism, and authoritarianism. Postmodern thought is frequently associated with: rejection of the rigid divide between rational inquiry and political action; rejection of the unity of the human self; and rejection of a univocal meaning of the notion of truth in the sciences and art. Our study has two objectives: (1) to introduce the seminal ideas of the Enlightenment and the way they inform modernism; and (2) to examine how postmodern thinkers subject these ideas to strong criticisms. We will ask whether post-modernism really marks a “rupture” in Western thought, in light of the suggestion, in contemporary debate, that postmodernism may be already implicit in modernism itself. We will read excerpts or articles from (among others) Rousseau, Kant, Marx, Nietzsche, Freud, Weber, Horkheimer and Adorno, Foucault, Lyotard, Habermas, as well as interventions by contemporary feminist and post-racial thinkers on this topic, Spivak, Young, Butler, Bordo, and West.

*Required Texts* (*Available in the Concordia Bookstore and on reserve at the Concordia Library*):

1. Cahoone, L. (ed.), *From Modernism to Postmodernism: An Anthology*, expanded 2nd ed.Blackwell, 2003. (Please note that we will use this edition, not the first.)
2. Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. *Discourse on the Origins of Inequality*, tr. D. Cress. Hackett, 1992.
3. Nietzsche, Friedrich. *On the Genealogy of Morals*, tr. W. Kaufmann. Vintage, 1989.
4. Foucault, Michel. *The Foucault Reader*, ed. P. Rabinow. Vintage, 2010.

*Aims:*

By the end of this course a successful student should:

1. understand central ideas and themes of Enlightenment philosophy and the postmodern critique of these themes, in a way that provides background for subsequent study in philosophy
2. be familiar with the role of these ideas and themes in contemporary discussion of social, political and moral issues, including implications for race and gender
3. develop good philosophical writing and reading skills.

*Organization of Classroom Hours & Readings:*

The format of this course is TWO sessions per week. Each session is one hour and fifteen minutes long, mixed lecture and discussion. Each session incorporates both presentation of material by me and discussion. I expect you to be familiar with the assigned text for the week, and to bring your text to class. My lectures presume familiarity with the readings, and will be difficult to follow if you have not done them. Attending classes and carefully studying the text is crucial for success in this course. You can expect to spend at least three to five hours on readings (taking notes) each week and should schedule accordingly. Please also note that without good comprehension of the lectures and text, it is extremely difficult to write papers that adequately meet the grading criteria.

*Requirements & Grading Scheme:*

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| Short Quizzes | Three short ‘quizzes’—Jan. 30, Mar. 13, and Apr. 3. These are designed to give you feedback and get you working on writing and thinking philosophically—and to ensure you are doing the readings. The quizzes might ask you to answer a specific question, or give your general reflection on the week’s reading. For each quiz, you will get 2 points for attending the quiz, and marked quizzes will be assessed as follows: 2 points for writing; 6 points for showing good understanding; 2 points for philosophical insight—for a total of 10 marked points. The 15% of your final grade for pop quizzes will be based on the attendance and the average of the quizzes marked. | 15% |
| Structured group discussions | For this exercise, you will come to class having prepared a written one to two page (200 words) discussion of an assigned topic. You will divide into small groups (8 to 10 people) and discuss this topic for 20 minutes, based on your written preparation. The class will then convene as a whole for general discussion. A student will volunteer to chair discussion, endeavouring to have a first round that gives a member of each group a chance to report/ respond. There will be two such exercises, Feb. 8 (Rousseau) and Mar. 22 (Foucault, Spivak, Harding). Note: In each case students will upload their written discussion paper to Moodle *prior to class*. These will be marked, 10% each. | 20% |
| Exegetical and Critical Papers | Two papers, each 6-9 pages (double spaced) in length (1650-2000 words). Specification and topics will be given out in class. The first of the two papers, due Feb. 27, will be an exegesis that teases out the meaning of ideas from Nietzsche; the second, due Apr. 10, will have you critically engage with ideas concerning Foucault and the Question of Post-modernism. 32.5% each. | 65% |
| Attendance: I do not give a mark directly based on your attendance. However: 1) I am aware of your attendance patterns. 2) We are STUDYING VERY DIFFICULT MATERIAL and attending class and/or engaging in discussion is essential for your understanding—**STUDENTS WHO SKIP TEND TO FAIL OR GET D GRADES**. 3) **If you miss many classes and hand in a poor paper, I will not give extensive comments or corrections that I might otherwise have given, since the relevant material has already been covered in class.** 4) The more you attend class, the more you will be able to participate in discussion, follow the development of the course, or participate in the sort of interaction that will make the class exciting for you and your colleagues. 5) Attending classes and studying texts is a luxury that you may never have again, so why waste your opportunity? | | |

*Note: In the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the University’s control, the content and/or evaluation scheme in this course is subject to change.*

*Important Advice*

If a special condition or circumstance in your life may or will affect your performance, please let me know about it as soon as possible. *It will be treated with the strictest confidence.* Please do not wait until the condition or circumstance is impending or has already happened before telling me about its impact on you. If something unanticipated occurs, bring it to my attention and we will work out a way of dealing with it.

*Undergraduate General Assignment Policies*

To hand in a paper late, you must negotiate a new arrangement with me at least one week in advance, otherwise your paper will not be accepted (barring exceptional circumstances, which will require documentation). If you make arrangements to hand in your paper late, I may not be able to make comments on it.

**Ensure that you keep backup copies of your work in paper and/or electronic form**. This is good common sense. Don’t make the mistake of typing up an assignment in a hurry on a library computer without saving it to an online account at the university or elsewhere, to a memory key, etc. Consider purchasing a small USB key that you can carry with you at all times with your work on it, or finding an online resource such as DropBox or SugarSync where you can store files. Also, develop good backup practices: turn on the timed auto-recover function in your word processor, the save backup copy function, and get in the practice of saving versions of your work under a new name when you start making drastic revisions (or use version management functions of your word processor). Also note that according to the calendar (16.3.9.2) “Students are responsible for the preservation of any material, in its entire and original form, which has been returned to them.”

If you need help with reading and writing in philosophy, I recommend that you consult a short book especially written to give guidance in this matter, it is L. Vaughn’s *Writing Philosophy: A Student’s Guide to Writing Philosophy Essays*. Copies of this book will be put on reserve at the Concordia library. You can find in it very concrete explanations, illustrations, and suggestions about how to read and write philosophical essays.

You can find further guidance on how to read philosophy and write philosophical essays (analytical-critical essays), from Concordia’s Student Learning Services:

http://cdev.concordia.ca/our-services/learning-support/learning-and-writing-handouts/writing/

If you have no experience at all writing such essays, making an appointment with a Writing Assistant via Student Learning Services is a great place to start for initial feedback about your drafts:

http://cdev.concordia.ca/our-services/learning-support/writing-assistance/

Finally, if you would like extra one-on-one help in philosophy (i.e., with philosophical writing, understanding texts, review of key concepts), peer tutors can help you at the Students of Philosophy Association (SoPhiA) of Concordia University: visit their website at www.sophia.concordia.ca or contact vpacademic@sophia.concordia.ca for more information and to set up appointments with tutors.

*Gender Neutral Language & Human Diversity*

In addition to all the other reasons for using gender neutral language and language that attends to human diversity, there are philosophical reasons for this too. Philosophy demands that we think very carefully, clearly and rigorously about human life and ideas. To do this well, we have to attend to the diversity of human life. Otherwise we build in and reinforce prejudices that betray who we are as human beings. Using gender neutral language in your writing and speaking reminds us that human beings are diverse in gender, that not all of them are “he.” And this reminds us of further diversities of human being. There are different ways of approaching the task of keeping gender and other differences in mind, e.g., substituting “she” where “he” might have traditionally been expected, alternating systematically between the two, using “she/he,” and so on. No formal procedure is adequate to the task, for the task is improving your thinking and that of our culture and future generations, and the form of thinking adequate to this cannot be set in advance. For helpful discussion and guidelines, Google: Warren, Virginia L. “Guidelines for the Nonsexist Use of Language.”

*Academic Integrity*

Your academic Code of Conduct makes it very clear that plagiarism, as well as any other form of academic dishonesty, is entirely unacceptable. The Code defines plagiarism as “the presentation of the work of another person as one’s own or without proper acknowledgement” (CU Undergraduate Calendar; the Code goes on to state other offences). This could be material copied word for word from books, journals, internet sites, professor’s course notes, etc. It could be material that is paraphrased but closely resembles the original source. It could be the work of a fellow student, for example, an answer on a quiz, data for a lab report, a paper or assignment completed by another student. It might be a paper purchased through one of the many available sources. Plagiarism does not refer to words alone - it can also refer to copying images, graphs, tables, and ideas. “Presentation” is not limited to written work. It also includes oral presentations, computer assignments and artistic works. If you translate the work of another person into French or English and do not cite the source, this is also plagiarism. If you cite your own work without the correct citation, this too is plagiarism. **In Simple Words:** DO NOT COPY, PARAPHRASE OR TRANSLATE ANYTHING FROM ANYWHERE WITHOUT SAYING FROM WHERE YOU GOT IT! DON'T FORGET TO USE QUOTATION MARKS!

Plagiarism and academic dishonesty are highly disruptive of the learning that we should be doing here. Should I detect any form of academic dishonesty, including plagiarizing from the internet, from books, journals, other students, etc., I will report it directly to the Vice-Dean of Academic Affairs. The penalties for plagiarism tend to be rather severe, and in any case undermine your learning process. So avoid it. In case of doubt as to what counts at plagiarism, ask me. Cite your sources and inspirations; this enriches your ideas by showing their roots in the thoughts of other people, and does not detract from your exposition, articulation, and development of ideas.

*Undergraduate Grading Policy*

*Philosophy Department Statement Regarding Grades and Grade Distribution*

1) The Undergraduate Calendar 16.3 specifies that As, Bs, and Cs are for “outstanding,” “very good” and “satisfactory” work, respectively. The Philosophy Department interprets this to mean that: Cs are awarded for work that is adequate, yet in some way fails to completely meet all expectations and requirements; Bs are awarded for work that fully meets all expectations and requirements; As are reserved for outstanding work that exceeds expectations and requirements by, e.g., demonstrating outstanding rigour, clarity, or insight.

2) In 200 & 300 level courses with over 30 students, it is normally expected that: the grade average will be in the C+ to B- range; there will be no more than 25% As.

*Numerical Equivalents*

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| A- 80-84% 3.7 GP | A 85-89% 4.0 GP | A+ 90-100% 4.3 GP |
| B- 70-72% 2.7 GP | B  73-76% 3.0 GP | B+  77-79% 3.3 GP |
| C- 60-62% 1.7 GP | C  63-66% 2.0 GP | C+  67-69% 2.3 GP |
| D- 50-52% 0.7 GP | D  53-56% 1.0 GP | D+  57-59% 1.3 GP |

Please note that when I mark papers I give you a letter grade, and record a percentage equivalent. My final calculations of grades are thus based on percentage equivalents (not grade point equivalents).

*Interpretation of the Department and University Policy*

Below I give some more detail about the criteria I use in grading, first by expanding on the grading criteria in the Undergraduate Calendar and Philosophy Department Statement and then giving a general rubric that specifies the sorts of things that A, B, and C philosophy papers do. (This rubric is based on one from the UC Davis English Department Composition Program, and another rubric on philosophy writing.) A key point is that work that fully meets all expectations and requirements ***gets a grade in the B range*. Grades in the A range are awarded only for the work that exceeds expectations and requirements.**

* An “A” paper is *outstanding*. It meets all expectations and requirements, ***but exceeds them in significant ways***. For instance, a paper of this quality may do one or more of the following: be exceptionally well-composed, well-argued and rigorous; demonstrate exceptional rigour or an exceptional understanding of the wider questions and scholarly significance of the issues discussed; show sharp philosophical insight and ability, or independent thinking; promise to contribute a substantial insight or result to existing scholarship. Generally, a paper will not receive an “A” if it contains mistakes/flaws/errors in writing.
* A “B” paper is *very good*. It fully meets all the expectations and requirements with regard to deadlines, length, content, presentation, documenting references, argumentation, and so forth. It shows that the student has developed ***a very good understanding*** of the assigned readings, of the lectures, and of the specific task of the assignment.
* A “C” paper is *satisfactory*. It generally meets the expectations of the assignment and demonstrates adequate knowledge of the course material, but falls short in crucial respects. For example, ***the author does not demonstrate very good understanding of the material***; key concepts or aspects are not mentioned; an argument lacks coherence or logical structure; the paper just gathers points without showing their relation or putting them together in a cohesive form, or developing lines of argument, reasoning, or exposition; the work is not well written and/or displays too many grammar and spelling errors, and so on.
* A “D” paper is *marginal*. It does not meet the general expectations and requirements of the assignment. While it *endeavours* to meet the specific criteria, it shows flaws and gaps in knowledge of the course material that prevent it from being coherent or from taking into account relevant sources, ideas, and arguments.
* An “F” paper is *poor/failing*. Work that receives an “F” makes no serious attempt to meet the formal and substantial requirements, or was not handed in at all. The flaws and gaps in understanding are so grave that the reader cannot detect a concerted effort to appropriate and use the course material.

*Grading Rubric for Philosophy Papers:*

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | The A paper | The B paper | The C paper | The D paper | The F paper |
| Ideas/thesis | Excels in responding to assignment. Interesting, demonstrates sophistication of thought. Central idea/thesis is clearly communicated, worth developing; limited enough to be manageable, but sharp or deep enough to allow room for thinking. Paper recognizes some complexity of its thesis: may acknowledge its contradictions, qualifications, or limits and follow out their logical implications. Understands and critically evaluates its sources, appropriately limits and defines terms. | A solid paper, responding appropriately to assignment. Clearly states a thesis/central idea, but may have minor lapses in development. Begins to acknowledge the complexity of central idea and the possibility of other points of view. Shows careful reading of sources, and at least some ability to analyze and critically evaluate sources. Attempts to define terms, not always successfully. | Adequate but weaker and less effective, possibly responding less well to assignment. Presents central idea in general terms, often depending on platitudes or clichés, or repeating points without genuinely explaining them. Usually does not acknowledge other views. Shows basic comprehension of sources, but with lapses in or absence of understanding. If it defines terms, often depends on dictionaries, etc. | Does not have a clear central idea or does not respond appropriately to the assignment. Thesis may be too vague or obvious to be developed effectively. Paper may misunderstand sources. | Does not respond to the assignment, lacks a thesis or central idea, and may neglect to use sources where necessary. |
| Organization & coherence | Uses a logical structure appropriate to paper's subject, purpose, audience, thesis, and disciplinary field. Sophisticated transitional sentences often develop one idea from the previous one or identify their logical relations. It guides the reader through the chain of reasoning or progression of ideas. | Shows a logical progression of ideas and uses fairly sophisticated transitional devices; e.g., may move from least to more important idea. Some logical links may be faulty, but each paragraph clearly relates to paper's central idea. | May list ideas or arrange them randomly rather than using any evident logical structure. May use transitions, but they are likely to be sequential (first, second, third) rather than logic-based. While each paragraph may relate to central idea, logic is not always clear. Paragraphs have topic sentences but may be overly general, and arrangement of sentences within paragraphs may lack coherence. | May have random organization, lacking internal paragraph coherence and using few or inappropriate transitions. Paragraphs may lack topic sentences or main ideas, or may be too general or too specific to be effective. Paragraphs may not all relate to paper's thesis. | No appreciable organization; lacks transitions and coherence. |
| Interpret-ation & analysis | Interpretations and analyses of the philosophical positions are exceptionally clear, precise and reveal a rich and insightful understanding of the assumptions, strategies and aims of the text, and/or the relation between these and broader philosophical or intellectual issues. | Interpretations and analyses of the philosophical positions are clear, precise and reveal a robust understanding of the basic assumptions, strategies and aims of the text, and show independent ability to interpret and analyze the text/issues. | Interpretations and analyses of the philosophical positions are mostly correct on all basic points and fit within standard or interpretations; these show an awareness of the basic assumptions, issues, and aims of the text, but not a developed or independent understanding of them. | Interpretations and analyses of the philosophical positions reveal little or no awareness or understanding of the issues at stake in the text; or little or no interpretation/analysis. | There is an absence of interpretation and analysis and/or a failure to engage the text. |
| Style | Chooses words for their precise meaning and uses an appropriate level of specificity. Sentence style fits paper's audience and purpose. Sentences are varied, yet clearly structured and carefully focused, not long and rambling. | Generally uses words accurately and effectively, but may sometimes be too general. Sentences generally clear, well structured, and focused, though some may be awkward or ineffective. | Uses relatively vague and general words, may use some inappropriate language. Sentence structure generally correct, but sentences may be wordy, unfocused, repetitive, or confusing. | May be too vague and abstract, or very personal and specific. Usually contains several awkward or ungrammatical sentences; sentence structure is simple or monotonous. | Usually contains many awkward sentences, misuses words, employs inappropriate language. |
| Mechanics | Almost entirely free of spelling, punctuation, and grammatical errors. | May contain a few errors, which may annoy the reader but not impede understanding. | Usually contains several mechanical errors, which may temporarily confuse the reader but not impede the overall understanding. | Usually contains either many mechanical errors or a important errors that block the reader's understanding and ability to see connections between thoughts. | Usually contains so many mechanical errors it is impossible for the reader to follow the thinking from sentence to sentence. |

*Schedule: Readings & Assignments [May be subject to change]*

* Readings from the second, expanded edition of the anthology edited by L. Cahoone, *From Modernism to Postmodernism,* are indicated via abbreviation of this title: *FMTPM*
* I will make regular use of the course website to announce specific items (pointing you to selected pages and special emphasis on passages in the text) to help you focus for class. These will be distributed via Moodle, posted in a folder set up for this purpose, weekly, by Friday evening, if not earlier.

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| **Week** | **Assigned Readings** | **Notes** |
| 1  Jan. 9 & 11 | *I Introducing Modernism and Post-Modernism as a Distinction in Philosophical Thought.* No assigned reading. But in this first week, I will draw from two sources in Cahoone’s anthology. *FMTPM*: Descartes, “From *Meditations on First Philosophy*” pp. 19-27; and  Nietzsche, “On Truth and Lies in a Non-moral Sense,” “The Madman,” “How the ‘True World’ Finally Became a Fable,” and “The Dionysian World,” pp. 109-118 |  |
| 2  Jan. 16 & 18 | Introducing the course (cont’d)  Bristow, “Enlightenment” (http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/enlightenment);  Vaughn, *Writing Philosophy*, Ch. 1: How to Read Philosophy  & *FMTPM* : E. Burke, “From *Reflections on the Revolution in France*,” pp. 54-63; Marx and Engels, “Bourgeois and Proletarians,” pp. 75-83 |  |
| 3  Jan. 23 & 25 | *FMTPM*: Kant, “What is Enlightenment?,” pp. 45-49; and Kant, “From the Preface of *Critique of Pure Reason*,” pp. 49-54  & C. West, “A Genealogy of Modern Racism,” pp. 298-310 |  |
| 4  Jan. 30 & Feb.1 | J-J. Rousseau, “From *Discourse on the Sciences and the Arts*”  Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origins of Inequality*, Preface, Part I (first few pages on the life and outlook of natural man). | Quiz #1 |
| 5  Feb. 6 & 8 | **R** J-J.Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origins of Inequality*, Part I (continued)  **R** Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origins of Inequality*, Part II | First structured group discussion |
| 6  Feb. 13 & 15 | F. Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Preface and First Essay |  |
| Reading week | No classes |  |
| 7  Feb. 27 & Mar. 1 | Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Second Essay  Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Third Essay (may be only read as excerpts) | First Paper (assigned topic on Nietzsche) due at the beginning of class |
| 8  Mar. 6 & 8 | *FMTPM* : S. Freud, “From *Civilization and its Discontents*” pp. 144-149  & M. Weber, “From ‘Science as a Vocation’” pp. 127-132,  E. Husserl, “From *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*,” pp. 149-159 |  |
| 9  Mar. 13 & 15 | *The Foucault Reader*: “What is Enlightenment?” and “Nietzsche, Genealogy, and History,” pp. 32-101  *FMTPM* : Habermas, “An Alternative Way Out of the Philosophy of the Subject: Communicative versus Subject-Centered Reason,” pp. 575-592,  Iris M. Young, “From ‘The Scaling of Bodies and the Politics of Identity’,” pp. 370-383 | Quiz #2 |
| 10  Mar. 20 & 22 | *The Foucault Reader*: “Truth and Power” and “Disciplines and Sciences of the Individual,” pp. 169-205  *FMTPM* : G. Spivak, “From ‘Can the Subaltern Speak?’,” pp. 319-342  Harding, “From ‘From Feminist Empiricism to Feminist Standpoint Epistemologies’,” pp. 342-354 | Second structured group discussion |
| 11  Mar. 27 & 29 | *The Foucault Reader*: “Disciplines and Sciences of the Individual,” pp. 206-56; and “Bio-power,” pp. 257-90  *FMTPM* : S. Bordo, “The Cartesian Masculinization of Thought and the Seventeenth-Century Flight from the Feminine,” pp. 354-370 |  |
| 12  Apr. 3 & 5 | *FMTPM* : M. Horkheimer and Th. Adorno, “From *Dialectic of the Enlightenment*,” pp. 159-169 & F. Lyotard, “From *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*,” pp. 259-278;  *FMTPM* : Judith Butler, “Contingent Foundations: Feminism and the Question of ‘Postmodernism’,” pp. 390-402 | Quiz #3 |
| 13  Apr. 10 & 12 | Review session. | Second paper (assigned topic on Foucault & Postmodernism) due at the beginning of class. |