

OXFORD COLLEGE  
PHILOSOPHY 251: HISTORY OF WESTERN THOUGHT II

Dr. Ken Anderson  
Spring 2001  
Office: Language Hall 118  
x4-8384

**DESCRIPTION:** This course will examine the Modern tradition in Western thought with an emphasis on the changing view of human subjectivity and its relation to the emergence of the natural and human sciences, the development of historical consciousness, and the social and political context. The course will cover the period of the early seventeenth-century through the late nineteenth-century. We will begin by examining the rationalism of the seventeenth-century French philosopher Descartes, the “father” of modern philosophy, whose system responds to both the ferment in the Church and the new scientific vision of the world. Hume, an eighteenth-century Scottish empiricist, and his German contemporary, the transcendental philosopher Kant, exemplify the Enlightenment project of holding reason as the guide to progress in human affairs. The early nineteenth-century German philosopher Hegel, further develops this view by taking into consideration how reason appears in the unfolding of human history and is marked in its progress by such events as the French Revolution and leaders such as Napoleon. Kierkegaard, a mid-nineteenth-century Danish philosopher and religious thinker, and Nietzsche, a late nineteenth-century German philosopher and atheist, signal the collapse of the Enlightenment faith in progress and a reassessment of the place of reason in human existence.

**TEXTS:** Descartes, Meditations on First Philosophy  
Hume, An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding  
Kant, Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics  
Hegel, Introduction to the Philosophy of History  
Kierkegaard, A Kierkegaard Anthology  
Nietzsche, Twilight of the Idols

**REQUIREMENTS:**

1. Reading. Do all assigned readings. There will be at least six short quizzes on readings. Quizzes will be announced at least one class in advance. Quizzes will count for approximately 25% of your final grade. Missed quizzes cannot be made up.
2. Examinations. There will be three examinations of equal value. You will have the option of replacing the exams with papers (5-7 pages) the topics of which will be decided in consultation with me.  
Dates:           Exam One – 2/19  
                    Exam Two – 4/2  
                    Exam Three – 5/4 9am-noon
3. Class. Active participation in class is encouraged and will be taken into account in the final grade. Attendance is mandatory. More than **three** absences will negatively affect your grade. See reverse for details.
4. I use the +/- grading system. The Honor Code is in effect at all times and for all examinations or papers. Specifics will be discussed in class.

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