

## **HIST 3922-401: European Thought and Culture in the Age of Revolution**

**FALL 2023**

**Claire Fagin Hall room 110**

**Monday/Wednesday 12:00-1:30**

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The nineteenth century was a period of social and political upheaval and the intellectual history of the period reflects the sense of both crisis and exhilarating possibilities that characterized these decades of profound change. The century witnessed the birth of many of the ideas and ideologies that shape our current world – socialism, liberalism, conservatism, feminism, nationalism – as well as ideas about human nature, history, religion, and art that remain as provocative and inspiring as they were then. This course will examine selected intellectual and artistic movements and figures against the broader social and political context of nineteenth-century Europe. Relying mainly on primary readings as well as a limited number of scholarly works, we will chart the debates and innovative ideas that mark the emergence of our own modernity.

**This course is open to all students. There are no prerequisites.**

### **Structure of the Course:**

This course will meet in person and have no regular virtual component. Occasionally, I may post brief recorded elements to complement our regular classroom sessions.

We will use Canvas to facilitate class communication, post assignment prompts and supplementary course readings, and collect student responses.

Please use **Course Action Notices** to officially document absences.

Keeping on top of the reading material and engaging actively in your learning are essential to your success in the course. The same goes for attendance and participation in our sessions.

Needless to say, in this and every course, you should view your professor as a resource in both good and bad times. I'm committed to helping you have as successful and rich a semester as possible! I welcome the opportunity to speak with you outside of class time.

## Course Requirements:

Dialogue	15%
Mid-Term Exam	30%
Final Exam	40%
Participation	15%

**PLEASE SUBMIT ALL ASSIGNMENTS TO CANVAS AND  
EMAIL ME A COPY IN WORD.DOC FORM**

### **Mid-Term Exam**

You will choose one from several questions and write a 5-page paper on it. These are really more prompts than questions. There is no single right answer, but rather numerous possible directions. Typically, such questions will ask you to consider a certain problem or theme from the perspective of two of the figures (or movements) we have discussed. Be sure to touch on all aspects of the question. The mid-term will be distributed on Oct 11. **It is due on Oct 11, no later than 11:59 pm.**

### **Dialogue**

Since at least Plato, one of the most important genres of writing philosophy is the dialogue. Such dialogues are usually fictionalized. They may stage a pedagogical encounter between a teacher and a student (think Socrates) or they may imagine an encounter between different schools of thought (think David Hume's *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*). Because such dialogues are almost always the product of a single author, they are rarely a true encounter; rather, they tend in one direction or another, depending on the author's preferences. In your dialogues, I want you to do some role-playing. Two of you (or three, if our numbers are odd) will pair off and each of you will channel a figure from our readings. Imagine Nietzsche drinking tea with Emile Zola; Sigmund Freud encountering Nietzsche; Lenin and Bernstein at the tavern together; Zola and Huysmans at the Philomathean Society. You get the idea. Unlike the mid-term and final exams, the writing can be informal, echoing the cadences and forms of real speech. The dialogue should be around 5 pages double-spaced (8 pages if there are three participants). Alternatively, you could deliver a **recording**. (NOTE: Script your ideas: 40-45 words fill 20 seconds of presentation (which translates into 120-135 words per minute.) **The Dialogue is due on Dec 8, no later than 11:59 pm**

### **Final Exam**

The final exam will have two parts. In the first part, you will choose one from several questions and write a **5-page** paper on it. The format is the same as with the mid-term. The second part will involve somewhat more focused questions, from which you will choose one. The questions will ask you to compare and contrast two figures. This paper should be 3 pages. The final will be distributed on **Tuesday Dec 12 at 10 am. It is due on Thursday Dec 14, no later than 11:59 pm.**

### **Participation**

Physical attendance at each lecture is mandatory. There will be no hybrid format. If you cannot attend a *specific* session, please notify me with a reasonable explanation **in**

**advance** of the class and submit to **Course Action Notices**. Participation includes regular, active contributions to discussion. Good participation can include responding to questions I pose, asking questions yourself, and weighing in on discussions. Needless to say, a key to strong performance is staying on top of the reading. Try to engage the reading critically, making note of questions and, just as importantly, your insights into themes and connections.

### **Appropriate Use of Recordings and Other Online Content:**

If and when necessary, I will record the occasional class presentation. Recordings will be available to all members of the class on Canvas. **Your use of these recordings is limited to this class**, meaning you should not share these recordings with anyone outside the class or otherwise reproduce their content. This policy exists to ensure the confidentiality of our classroom discussion and thereby facilitate the free exchange of ideas. It also honors the creativity and labor that I invested in creating course content.

For the same reasons, I ask that you not copy or distribute the content of any discussion threads on Canvas.

### **Course Materials:**

The following books may be purchased at the **Penn Book Store**, 3601 Walnut Street (ph. # 215-898-7595) and are also available at **Rosengarten Reserve**:

Kant, *Basic Writings of Kant*, Allen Wood, ed.

Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*. J.G.A. Pocock, ed.

*European Romanticism: A Brief History with Documents*, Warren Breckman, ed.

Hegel, *Introduction to The Philosophy of History*, Leo Rauch, trans.

Arthur Schopenhauer, *Essays and Aphorisms*, R.J. Hollingdale, trans.

John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*, E. Rapaport, ed.

*Marx-Engels Reader*, 2nd. ed. Robert C. Tucker, ed.

Friedrich Nietzsche, *Birth of Tragedy and Genealogy of Morals*, Francis Golffing, ed.

**Readings drawn from my edited volume *The Cambridge History of Modern European Thought* are available in e-Book form:** <https://www-cambridge-org.proxy.library.upenn.edu/core/books/cambridge-history-of-modern-european-thought/BA66987D51FE2C4868D3553BAF329FBA>

**Other readings will be posted in Canvas in the relevant weekly module.** If possible, print these out and read them in hard copy. Have them readily available for use during our meetings. My experience, for what it's worth, is that students get more out of a text when they have it "in hand" and can annotate it.

### **Reading Assignments:**

#### **Aug 30 Introduction**

#### **Sept 6 Enlightenment in France: A Social and Intellectual Project for a new Age**

The eighteenth-century Enlightenment fundamentally transformed culture and politics. One of the key documents of the age was the *Encyclopédie*, edited by Diderot and

D'Alembert. Though the Enlightenment ultimately contained many different currents and even national differences, the preliminary discourse that D'Alembert contributed to the monumental *Encyclopédie* project may be taken as a consummate expression of the era, some of its core assumptions, and its aspirations. What is the source of knowledge in D'Alembert's view? What is D'Alembert's social vision? How does he view his own epoch in relation to earlier periods? What place do God and organized religion hold for him?

D'Alembert, "Preliminary Discourse to the *Encyclopedia*," in *The Encyclopedia: Selections*, S. Gendzier, ed., 1-33

Breckman and Gordon, "The Nineteenth Century: Introduction," *Cambridge History of Modern European Thought*, vol. I, 1-16.

Available as E-book: <https://www-cambridge-org.proxy.library.upenn.edu/core/books/cambridge-history-of-modern-european-thought/BA66987D51FE2C4868D3553BAF329FBA>

### **Sept 11 French Enlightenment, contd.**

### **Sept 13 Kant and the German Enlightenment**

Immanuel Kant was one of the greatest philosophers in the western tradition. He described his thought as a "Copernican Revolution" in philosophy, and indeed, writing and teaching in his native city Königsberg on the far flung eastern margin of Prussia, he permanently transformed western thought. As you read these selections, please consider the following questions. In "What is Enlightenment", Kant defines enlightenment as man's liberation from self-incurred tutelage. Is that an individual act of liberation or a social process? How does Kant distinguish between 'private' and 'public' uses of reason? How might that distinction have made sense in Kant's world, and does it make sense in ours? Are there limits to Enlightenment? In "Idea for a Universal History with Cosmopolitan Intent," Kant shares with D'Alembert a belief in the progressive nature of human history, but do Kant and D'Alembert differ on the nature of that progress, its process, and its driving engine? In the introduction to the *Critique of Pure Reason*, what is Kant's relationship to empiricism? Where does knowledge come from? What is the distinction between 'analytic *a priori*' and 'synthetic *a priori*', and why is the 'synthetic *a priori*' so important to Kant. Why does Kant define his philosophy as a 'critique' of reason?

Roland N. Stromberg, "Immanuel Kant and the Revolution in Philosophy," in Stromberg, *European Intellectual History Since 1789*, 21-28; Kant, "What is Enlightenment?" in *Basic Writings of Kant*, 133-141; "Idea for a Universal History with Cosmopolitan Intent," in *Basic Writings of Kant*, 117-132

### **Sept 18 Kant, contd**

Kant, "Introduction," *Critique of Pure Reason*, in *Basic Writings of Kant*, 24-38

### **Sept 20 Kant, contd**

Kant, "Metaphysical Foundations of Morals" (in *Basic Writings of Kant*, pp. 145-163)

### **Sept 25 Political Conservatism and the Origins of Romanticism**

The French Revolution, which broke out in 1789, marked a profound break in the political, social, and intellectual world of Europe and to a great extent, the world. One of the earliest and most influential reactions to the Revolution came early in its history from the pen of Edmund Burke. Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* was not only a full-throated protest against the upheaval across the English Channel; it was also a more general defense of political conservatism based on a philosophical articulation of a certain conception of social reality and political power. As such, the book is often heralded as the founding text of modern conservatism. What is Burke's conception of society and power? Why does he view the revolutionaries as usurpers who are bound to produce suffering and failure? Would you say there is a difference between Burkean conservatism and reactionary politics? Is Burke a member of the 'Enlightenment' or a member of the so-called 'counter-Enlightenment'? Are there blindspots in Burke's vision of British and/or French history?

Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, 4-23; 29-38; 43-46; 51-55; 59-87; 96-102

Optional: Jerry Z. Muller, "Conservatism: The Utility of History and the Case against Rationalist Radicalism," in *The Cambridge History of Modern European Thought*, vol. I, 232-254.

### **Sept 27 Edmund Burke, contd**

### **Oct 2 Romanticism: Aesthetics and Cultural Renewal**

Although Romanticism's roots go deeper into the eighteenth century, it was the French Revolution that catalyzed this important movement, which emerged in the 1790s and held sway in parts of Europe right up to the Revolutions of 1848. Romanticism is first and foremost remembered for its fundamental contributions to literature, art, and music. Yet, Romanticism also articulated a vision of nature, God, society, and the individual that resonates to this day. For some guiding questions in your reading, please consult the headnotes I wrote for the excerpts assigned in these sessions, all of which are available in my edited volume *European Romanticism*.

Breckman, "Introduction," *European Romanticism: A Brief History with Documents*; A.W. von Schlegel, "Lectures on Dramatic Art and Letters"; William Wordsworth, "Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*"; Percy Bysshe Shelley, "A Defence of Poetry"

### **Oct 4 Varieties of Romantic Religiosity**

William Wordsworth, "Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey," in *European Romanticism*, 71-75; Wilhelm Heinrich Wackenroder, "Of Two Wonderful Languages and their Mysterious Power," in *European Romanticism*, 43-47; François-René de Chateaubriand, *The Genius of Christianity*, in *European Romanticism*, 84-94; Novalis, "Christendom or Europe," in *European Romanticism*, 47-61

### **Oct 9 Review, catch up and distribute take-home mid-term**

### **Oct 11 No Class: Mid-Term is due on Oct 11 by 11:59 pm**

### **Oct 16 Hegel: God, Reason and History**

If the contest is to decide the most influential philosopher of the modern era, Hegel gives Kant a good run for his money. At its heart, Hegel's is a profoundly historical philosophy, oriented toward understanding human development in time; and in that task, he was truly encyclopedic and all-encompassing. Through the logical structure of dialectic, Hegel sought to unify all phenomena into one great 'narrative' of God, or Reason, operating in nature and history. The text I asked you to read is the introduction to Hegel's lecture course on the philosophy of history – it is the product of student notes, cobbled together after Hegel's death. The questions stemming from this text are possibly endless, but a few to consider: what does Hegel mean when he speaks of 'Reason'? And if Reason is somehow synonymous with God, then what kind of 'God' is it? (Another way to ask this question: what does this have to do with an orthodox Judeo-Christian idea of God? Yet another way to ask it is: what is the relationship between philosophy and theology in Hegel?) Hegel is often accused of bulldozing individual freedom and dignity in the name of a transhistorical process, wherein the end justifies the means. (The revolutionary might say, to make an omelette, you need to break a few eggs.) This seems to be the outcome of Hegel's discussion of the 'cunning of reason'; but does Hegel provide arguments that might mitigate such charges? Is Hegel indifferent to the individual's fate and needs? If this question applies to his general view of history, then how does it apply to his more specific view of politics and especially of the state? His detractors have accused him of illiberalism and even of proto-totalitarianism. Do such charges seem fair? Ultimately, how does Hegel understand the modern world as the pinnacle of the historical process he describes?

Roland Stromberg, "Hegel," in *European Intellectual History Since 1789*, 64-77;

Hegel, *Introduction to The Philosophy of History*, 3-18

Optional: Terry Pinkard, "German Idealism: The Thought of Modernity," in *The Cambridge History of Modern Europe*, vol. I, 17-39. Available as E-Book:

<https://www-cambridge-org.proxy.library.upenn.edu/core/books/cambridge-history-of-modern-european-history/BA66987D51FE2C4868D3553BAF329FBA>

### **Oct 18 Hegel, contd**

Hegel, *Introduction to the Philosophy of History*, 19-83

### **Oct 23 Hegel, contd**

### **Oct 25 Rebellion Against Hegel I: Schopenhauer and the Metaphysics of Will**

Schopenhauer is one of the greatest pessimists in the European philosophical canon. And he is an anomaly in his epoch. His masterpiece, *The World as Will and Representation*, was published in 1819 and was more or less ignored until the failed revolutions of 1848 produced a shift in mood that opened many minds to Schopenhauer's bleak message. A strange cobbling together of Kant, Plato and Indian philosophy, Schopenhauer's thought was destined to have a profound impact on late nineteenth-century thinkers like Friedrich Nietzsche. (And despite the pessimism, it's kind of fun to read!) As you read the essays from Schopenhauer, consider how he defines 'will' and why this idea leads him to such pessimistic conclusions. Are there any ways out of the impasse that Schopenhauer believes characterizes human existence? Our readings are drawn from a collection of Schopenhauer's essays that neatly summarize the main themes of his work.

Schopenhauer, *Essays and Aphorisms* (“On the Antithesis of Thing in Itself and Appearance”; “On the Vanity of Existence”; “On the Suffering of the World”; “On Affirmation and Denial of the Will to Live”; “On Ethics”)

### **Oct 30 Rebellion Against Hegel II: Feuerbach and the Young Hegelians**

Not long after Hegel’s death in 1831, the Hegelian school splintered into factions that came to be known as ‘left’, ‘right’ and ‘center’ Hegelianism. The Left, also known as the Young Hegelians, pushed ambiguities in Hegel’s thought toward a radical critique of religion. The most influential of the Young Hegelians was Ludwig Feuerbach. His 1841 book *Essence of Christianity* advanced the provocative thesis that anthropology is the secret of religion. That is, in worshipping a divine being, we are in fact worshipping humanity and its capacities; but we do so in a way that mistakes those attributes, wrongly associates them with a non-human being, and thereby devalues humanity. To destroy the illusion of religion and return those attributes to human beings is the core of Feuerbach’s radical project and it seized the imagination of young left-wing intellectuals. “We were all Feuerbachians,” recalled Karl Marx’s comrade Friedrich Engels many years later. Marx and Engels would soon turn on Feuerbach for remaining stalled at the level of the critique of religion, when the real point was to revolutionize society; but Feuerbach’s thought provided them with crucial frameworks, including a theory of alienation that readily transferred over to Marx’s critique of capitalism.

Feuerbach, *Essence of Christianity* (“Preface to the Second Edition,” pp. xxxiii-xliv; “Introduction,” pp. 1-32); Warren Breckman, “The Young Hegelians: Philosophy as Critical Praxis,” in *The Cambridge History of Modern European Thought*, vol. I, 88-110

### **Nov 1 Socialism and Feminism**

The French Revolution was the great template for all emancipatory struggles in the nineteenth century. Yet the Revolution was also a foil against which the need for new and further struggles became clear. This was true of feminism. Already in the early years of the Revolution, Mary Wollstonecraft strove to extend the revolutionary campaign to the question of women’s status. Her book is a classic and pioneering text in the history of feminist thought. The second of our readings, by Claire Demar, was written roughly forty years later and was, by contrast to Wollstonecraft, unknown until quite recently. Demar was a member of the early socialist group known as the Saint-Simonians, and she mobilizes Saint-Simonian arguments to mount a plea for women’s emancipation that is far more radical than Wollstonecraft’s. Though Demar is undoubtedly far more utopian than Wollstonecraft, Demar’s vision anticipates important currents in feminist thought and even some real-world developments that have profoundly altered the relations of the sexes and the gendered division of labor.

Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*; The Saint Simonians, “Exposition of the Doctrine of Saint-Simon”; Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*; Claire Demar, “My Law of the Future”; Naomi Andrews, “The Woman Question: Liberal and Socialist Critiques of the Status of Women,” in *The Cambridge History of Modern European Thought*, vol. I, 255-278

### **Nov 6 English Utilitarianism and its Crisis**

Meanwhile, back in London.... John Stuart Mill was the greatest of the Victorian intellectuals and author of perhaps the most famous book in the liberal tradition, *On Liberty*. Raised in the uncompromisingly rationalistic utilitarianism of the philosopher Jeremy Bentham, Mill suffered a paralyzing nervous breakdown in his early twenties. The political and social philosophy that emerged in the wake of that personal calamity was tempered by Mill's newfound awareness of the limits of rationalism, the power of emotion and aesthetics, and the complexities of human motives. If he still adhered to the utilitarian pursuit of the 'greatest happiness for the greatest number', his understanding of happiness became significantly more nuanced than that of Bentham or his father James Mill, who had worked as the chief popularizer of Benthamite utilitarianism. *On Liberty* is the consummate expression of John Stuart Mill's mature thought and a resounding plea for individual freedom in the pursuit of the good life. Yet, if the book is an enduring classic in the liberal tradition, does Mill in fact elevate the individual above all collective concerns? Does individual freedom equal economic freedom? How does Mill remain loyal to utilitarianism while addressing its shortcomings?

J.S. Mill, *On Liberty* (you may skip the final chapter "Applications")

Optional: Philip Schofield, "Utilitarianism, God, and Moral Obligation from Locke to Sidgwick," in *The Cambridge History of Modern Europe*, vol. I, 111-130.

## **Nov 8 Utilitarianism, contd**

## **Nov 13 Karl Marx: Socialism and Radical Philosophy**

Karl Marx is perhaps the most important social thinker in the modern world. His impact on intellectual history and global politics has been inestimable. Far beyond those who would claim to be 'Marxists', his thought continues to shape the language and concepts of our intellectual life. Yet he did not emerge from a vacuum. His path to radicalism was paved in the first instance by the radical successors to Hegel, the so-called 'Young Hegelians'; further, as Marx turned to socialism, he encountered an already elaborate world of thinkers and activists centered mainly in Paris but also in England, which was the heartland of the Industrial Revolution. I have opted to concentrate our reading on the 'young' Marx of the 1840s. This was a formative and remarkably creative time in Marx's life. Though he would greatly expand and in some cases alter his ideas in the decades before his death in 1883, many of his fundamental ideas were in place by the time he and Friedrich Engels composed "The Communist Manifesto" in 1848. In the brief text posthumously titled "Marx on the History of his Opinions," Marx speaks of settling accounts with his 'erstwhile philosophical conscience'. What does he mean? Who does he have in mind? And how does he settle accounts in texts like "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*" and "The German Ideology"? In the preface to the second edition of volume one of *Das Kapital*, Marx spoke of turning Hegel 'right side up' (in Tucker's anthology, see p. 302). What does this mean and how does Marx think he is doing it? Marx is often called the father of 'dialectical materialism', but he in fact would have spoken of 'historical materialism'. What does historical materialism entail in "The German Ideology"? What is the dialectic that "The Communist Manifesto" describes and why does Marx believe the history of capitalism leads to revolution? Why might Marx believe that the communist revolution will be the final revolution? Is communism the end of history or its beginning? How would you situate/locate Marx in relation to the broad currents we have encountered –

enlightenment, romanticism, the idealism of Kant and Hegel, and the utilitarianism of Mill? Does Marx get a bum rap when he is blamed for the crimes of the Soviet and Chinese communist regimes? Is he accurately or falsely represented in the contentious politics of the present?

“Marx on the History of His Opinions,” in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, 3-6;  
“Contribution to the Critique of Hegel’s *Philosophy of Right*: Introduction,” 53-65; Gareth Stedman Jones, “European Socialism from the 1790s to the 1890s,” in *The Cambridge History of Modern European Thought*, vol. I, 196-231.

**Nov 15 Karl Marx, contd**

“The German Ideology,” in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, 147-200;

**Nov 20 Karl Marx, contd**

“The Communist Manifesto,” in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, 473-500

**Nov 22 No Class**

**Nov 23 Thanksgiving**

**Nov 27 The Revolt Against Modernity: Nietzsche, Aestheticism, and Cultural Redemption**

Friedrich Nietzsche attacked almost all the sacred cows of nineteenth-century thought. His thought brings us to something like the end of an intellectual era and the opening of a new one. *The Birth of Tragedy* was the first of his major published works, and though it differs in ways from his more mature works, it nonetheless opens many of the themes that would dominate Nietzsche’s brief but remarkable career. Ostensibly an account of the origins of ancient Athenian tragic drama from the ‘spirit’ of music, *The Birth of Tragedy* in fact articulates a general philosophy of history and a scathing critique of modern culture as it has developed since the Enlightenment. And, above all, the book tries to discover what Nietzsche would later call “strong pessimism,” a clear-sighted perception of the meaninglessness of existence that would nonetheless not give into the nihilism posed by the modern collapse of belief. Two great intellectual progenitors stand behind Nietzsche, the composer Richard Wagner and the philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer. Schopenhauer considered himself a follower of Kant, but he violated Kant’s refusal to ‘name’ the thing in itself; for Schopenhauer, beyond the appearance of a world ordered by time and space was ‘will’, a blind, ceaseless force of creation and destruction. From his account of reality, Schopenhauer drew deeply pessimistic lessons for human existence. It was Schopenhauer’s philosophy that shaped Nietzsche’s world view and Schopenhauer’s pessimism that set the bar for Nietzsche’s struggle to overcome nihilism. Wagner, by contrast, seemed to the young Nietzsche to offer a glimpse of a new world, a new tragic age. How does Nietzsche map Schopenhauer’s account onto the history of ancient Greece? What does it mean to claim that tragic drama was born from the ‘spirit’ of music? What are the ‘Dionysian’ and the ‘Apollonian’? How does tragedy unite these two and why does this unification offer some sort of consolation in the face of existential meaninglessness? How does Nietzsche’s account of ancient tragedy and its demise interweave with a critique of modernity? What kind of future world is imagined in this book?

Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, 3-69

Optional: Christian J. Emden, “Nihilism, Pessimism, and the Conditions of Modernity,” in *The Cambridge History of Modern European Thought*, vol. I, 372-397.

**Nov 29 Nietzsche, contd**

Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, 69-96

**Dec 4 Nietzsche, contd**

Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, 96-121; 136-146

**Dec 6 Catch Up**

**Dec 8 Assignment: Dialogue is due on Dec 8 by 11:59 pm**

**Dec 11 Catch Up, Review, Conclusion**

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**TAKE-HOME FINAL will be available on Tuesday Dec 12 after 10:00 am.  
FINAL EXAM is due on Thursday Dec 14 no later than 11:59 pm. Please submit your exam to Canvas and as a Word.doc directly to me via email.**

If you are interested in exploring scholarly literature on any figure or theme in this course, I'm happy to make recommendations.