

TWENTIETH-CENTURY EUROPEAN THOUGHT

History 221/CLT 221
Fall 2017
MWF 10.25-11.15
Morey 501



Robert Westbrook
RR 440/X59349
Office Hrs.: WF 9-10
robert.westbrook@
rochester.edu

A study of the history of opinion is a necessary preliminary to the emancipation of the mind.

-John Maynard Keynes

This course is an introduction to the main currents of European thought in the twentieth century--a century historian Eric Hobsbawm has rightly termed the "Age of Extremes." Focusing on shifting and competing conceptions of selfhood and society, it will place modern European culture and the intellectuals who forged it within the context of the ordeals of two world wars; a host of revolutions (scientific, sexual, Bolshevik, fascist, and "velvet"); the Holocaust and Cold War; the collapse of European colonialism; and the expansion of American empire. We will center on French and German thought, but other regions of the modern European mind--British, Italian, Polish, Czech, émigré American--will also weigh in.

BOOKS

A.J. Ayer, Language, Truth, and Logic
Henri Bergson, Introduction to Metaphysics
Albert Camus, The Stranger
Joseph Conrad, Heart of Darkness
Michel Foucault, History of Sexuality
Peter Gay, ed., The Freud Reader
Martin Heidegger, Basic Writings
Michio Kaku, Einstein's Cosmos
John Maynard Keynes, The Economic Consequences of the Peace
Primo Levi, Survival in Auschwitz
Czeslaw Milosz, The Captive Mind
Friedrich Nietzsche, On the Genealogy of Morals
Jean-Paul Sartre, Existentialism Is a Humanism

Additional short readings on electronic reserve are marked with an asterisk (*). Richard Wolin, The Politics of Truth: The Political Thought of Martin Heidegger is out of print, but used copies are readily available via the internet if you wish to purchase one.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Weekly Comments: Each week, each student should come to one of the discussion sessions with a brief comment (no more than a page) on a significant issue that a passage in the reading assigned for that day has raised for him or her. These comments will be collected but not graded.

On a Desert Island: A brief (500 word) essay on the book that has had the greatest impact on your own thinking, indicating why it is that you believe it has had the influence on you that it has. This assignment will also be ungraded. Due 20 September. If you have taken an intellectual history course from me before and hence have already completed this assignment once, you need not do so again unless you wish.



Take-Home Examinations: Two take-home hour essay examinations (due 16 October and 6 November), and a take-home final essay examination (due 19 December).

Paper: One short (1500-2000 words) paper on Albert Camus's The Stranger Begin reading the novel as soon as you can. This paper comprises half the final examination and is due 19 December.

GRADING

Grading in the course will be weighted as follows: final examination (40%); each of the hour exams (20%); and discussion participation, including weekly comments (20%).

FILMS



I have indicated on the syllabus some films you might like to watch as the course moves along: Metropolis (1926); October (1927); Un Chien Andalou (1928); Grand Illusion (1937); Night and Fog (1955); Breathless (1960); Battle of Algiers (1965); Blow-up (1966); Aguirre: The Wrath of God (1972); Scenes from a Marriage (1974); Man of Marble (1977); Tin Drum (1979); and The Lives of Others (2006). You are not required to view these films, but they may enhance your experience of the course and you will have the opportunity to write about a film on the final examination if you wish. One documentary film, Derrida, is required viewing, and is available on reserve in the

Art Library and on various DVD and streaming services.

CLASS MEETINGS AND READINGS

I will ordinarily lecture once a week. The other two classes each week will ordinarily be devoted primarily to a discussion of the assigned readings. Students are expected to attend and participate actively in these discussions, which are the core of the course. The faculty of the Department of History believes that attending class is essential to mastering the content of its courses, a belief sustained by years of monitoring the consequences of poor attendance. Students who miss class should inform me of the reason for their absence, in advance if possible.

ACADEMIC HONESTY

All assignments and activities associated with this course must be performed in accordance with the University of Rochester's Academic Honesty Policy. More information is available at: www.rochester.edu/college/honesty.

SCHEDULE

The twentieth century is only the ever-renewed effort to understand it.

-Franco Venturi

30 August Introduction to the Course
Reading: Peter Gordon, "What Is Intellectual History"*

FIN DE-SIÈCLE I

The world now laughs, rent are the drapes of fright/The wedding is at hand of dark and light.

-Friedrich Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil

1 September Thus Spoke Zarathustra

4 September Labor Day. No Class.

6 September Reading: Friedrich Nietzsche, On the Genealogy of Morals.

8 September Reading: Joseph Conrad, Heart of Darkness.

Film: Aguirre: The Wrath of God.



CIVILIZATION AND ITS DISCONTENTS



Between the idea/And the reality/Between the motion/And the act/Falls the Shadow.

-T.S. Eliot, "The Hollow Men"

11 September Fragmented Selves/Iron Cages

13 September Reading: Sigmund Freud, "The Interpretation of Dreams," "On Dreams," in Peter Gay, ed., Freud Reader, 129-171.

15 September Reading: Sigmund Freud, "Civilization and Its Discontents" in Gay, Freud Reader, 722-771.

Georg Simmel, "The Metropolis and Mental Life"*

18 September Reading: Max Weber, "Politics as a Vocation"*
Max Weber, "Bureaucracy"*

Film: Metropolis.



MODERNITY AND MODERNISM

Drunk on gin the Paris nights/Blaze with electricity/The trolleys flashing greenish lights/Warble along the staves of tracks/The madness of machinery.

-Guillaume Apollinaire, "La chanson du mal-aimé"

20 September All that Is Solid Melts into Air

On a Desert Island Essay Due.

22 September Reading: Henri Bergson, Introduction to Metaphysics, pp. 21-62.

25 September Reading: Michio Kaku, Einstein's Cosmos.

27 September Reading: Franz Kafka, "The Metamorphosis"*

Film: Un Chien Andalou.



THE GREAT WAR



... But many there stood still/To face the stark, blank sky beyond the ridge,
Knowing their feet had come to the end of the world.

-Wilfred Owen, "Spring Offensive"

29 September Guns of August

2 October Reading: John Maynard Keynes, The Economic Consequences of the Peace, ix-xxxvii, 3-55, 226-298.

Film: Grand Illusion.

4 October. No Class. Fall Break

LANGUAGE AND BEING

Philosophy is a battle against the bewitchment of our intelligence by means of language.

-Ludwig Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations

6 October Vienna Circles

9 October Reading: Ludwig Wittgenstein, Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, 6.373-7*

A.J. Ayer, Language, Truth, and Logic, pp. 31-45, 102-120.

William Barrett, The Illusion of Technique, pp. 26-57.*

11 October A Master Out of Germany



13 October

Reading: Martin Heidegger, "What Is Metaphysics?" in Heidegger, Basic Writings, 89- Richard Wolin, The Politics of Being, ch. 2.



16 October No Class. First Exam Essay Due.

BARRICADES AND BARBED WIRE

Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;/Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,/The blood-dimmed tide is loosed,
and everywhere/The ceremony of innocence is drowned;/The best lack all convictions, while the worst/
Are full of passionate intensity.

-W.B. Yeats, "The Second Coming"

18 October Neo-Marxism East and West

20 October Reading: V.I. Lenin, What Is to Be Done? (excerpt)*
V.I. Lenin, State and Revolution (excerpt)*

Film: October.



23 October Reading: Theodore Adorno, "Perennial Fashion--Jazz"*

Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Technological Reproducibility"*

26 October Blood and Steel

25 October Reading: Benito Mussolini, "Fascism"*

Carl Schmitt, "On the Contradiction between Parliamentarism and Democracy"*

Carl Schmitt, "The Concept of the Political"*

Ernst Jünger, "Total Mobilization"*

30 October Reading: Martin Heidegger, "The Self-Assertion of the German University"*

Martin Heidegger, "Political Texts, 1933-1934"*

Richard Wolin, The Politics of Being, chs. 3-4.

Film: Tin Drum.



DEATH CAMPS AND GULAGS

He looses his hounds on us grants us a grave in the air/he plays with his vipers and daydreams der Tod ist ein Meister aus Deutschland.

-Paul Celan, "Deathfugue"

1 November Reading: Primo Levy, Survival in Auschwitz.

Film: Night and Fog.

3 November Reading: Czeslaw Milosz, The Captive Mind, vii-xiv, 3-81, 191-251.

Film: Man of Marble.

6 November No Class. Second Exam Essay Due.



FRENCH LESSONS

Consumer society must die a violent death. Alienated society must die a violent death. We want a new and original world. We reject a world where security against starvation is bought for the risk of death by boredom.

-Graffiti on the walls of Paris, May 1968



8 November Agents and Structures

10 November Reading: Jean-Paul Sartre, Existentialism Is a Humanism, 17-72.

Martin Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism" in Heidegger, Basic Writings, 213-265.

Richard Wolin, The Politics of Being, ch. 5.

Film: Breathless.

13 November Reading: Claude Levi-Strauss, "Structural Analysis in Linguistics and Anthropology"*

Claude Levi-Strauss, "The Structural Study of Myth"*

Gary Gutting, "The Structuralist Invasion"*

15 November The Spirit of '68

17 November Reading: Michel Foucault, History of Sexuality.

Garry Gutting, "Foucault"*



20 November Reading: Jacques Derrida, "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences"*

Derrida (film).

Gary Gutting, "Derrida"*

Film: Blow-Up.



22 November No Class. Thanksgiving

DIFFERENCE

Before the Other, the I is infinitely responsi-ble. The Other is the poor and destitute one, and nothing which concerns this Stranger can leave the I indifferent.

-Emmanuel Levinas, "Transcendence and Height"

27 November On the Margins



29 November Reading: Simone de Beauvoir, The Second Sex (excerpt)*
Hélène Cixous, "The Laugh of the Medusa"*

Film: Scenes from a Marriage.



1 December Reading: Frantz Fanon, The Wretched of the Earth (excerpt)*

Frantz Fanon, "The Fact of Blackness"*

Film: Battle of Algiers.

FIN DE-SIÈCLE II

When everything was fine/And the notion of sin had vanished/And
the earth was ready/In universal peace/To consume and re-
joice/Without creeds and utopias,/I, for unknown rea-
sons,/Surrounded by the books/Of prophets and theologians,/Of philosophers, po-
ets,/Searched for an answer,/Scowling, grimacing,/Waking up at night, muttering at dawn.
-Czeslaw Milosz, "A Poem for the End of the Century"

4 December The Spirit of '89



6 December Reading: Isaiah Berlin, "Two Concepts of Liber-
ty"*

Raymond Aron, "The Future of Secular Religions"*

8 December The Autumn of Nations

11 December Reading: Václav Havel, "The
Power of the Powerless"*

Jürgen Habermas, "1989 in the Shadow of
1945"*

Film: The Lives of Others.

13 December Catch-Up/Wrap-Up

19 December Final Examination Due.

