

HISTORY 207

Spring 2012

**Modern Intellectual History**

Instructor: T. A. Perry

Office Hours: by appointment after class

Daily from 7:30am to 8:20am in Room A-130

REQUIRED TEXTS:

J. Bronowski and B. Mazlish: The Western Intellectual Tradition, Harper Collins

Binkley: Realism and Nationalism

P. Watson: The Modern Mind

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

History 207 is an introductory survey of the major currents of "modern" western thought. We will aim to discover the reciprocity of culture and "ideas." Secondly, we will seek to examine the questions, presuppositions, and ideas of Western intellectual culture that have come to shape the horizons of contemporary life.

We will briefly delineate the origins of the western intellectual tradition. This will require a discussion of ancient Greek assumptions about reason, nature, and the good/evil dichotomy. We will then trace the continuation of this tradition in the unique synthesis of Greco/Roman culture and Christian theology during the Middle Ages, and observe the impact of this on Western culture through the Renaissance and Reformation.

We will then explore the intellectual revolution of the 17th century, and thence the enlightenment of the 18th century, dealing, successively, with its origins in the Scientific Revolution after 1500; with the French "philosophers" and their idea of progress, their faith in a new moral science, and its world view of mechanistic determinism; and with 18th century thinkers who then questioned and sought to transcend the categories of the Enlightenment.

Our next consideration will be the prominent trends in the 19th century intellectual culture: historicist, romantic, and idealist strains of German thought, which culminate in the ambitious creation of a modern cultural synthesis by Hegel; French and British intellectuals who wrestled with the political, social, and religious implications of the Enlightenment; and the dissolution of the Hegelian synthesis on the critiques of Marx, Kierkegaard and Nietzsche.

Lastly, we will focus on the cultural crisis of the 20th century represented by attacks on the idea of progress, by historical relativism, by irrationalism in art, literature, social thought, psychology, and political ideologies, and by loss of faith in the cognitive validity of science.

Our final consideration will delve into the attempt by Western thinkers to restore the foundation and meaning of Western intellectual culture, as reflected in developments in

physics, astronomy and astrophysics, phenomenology, and existentialism.

COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES:

- A. Develop critical/analytical thinking.
- B. Develop an historical awareness of cultural development.
- C. Develop an appreciation for the diversity of cultural values.
- D. Develop an understanding of the reciprocal role of culture and values as expressed in philosophy, theology, political ideology, and socioeconomic systems.
- E. Develop an appreciation for the human element within the trends of historical development.

These objectives will be accomplished by:

- A. Discerning historical bias.
- B. Differentiating between fact and fiction.
- C. Recognizing cogency of reasoning.
- D. Recognizing fallacious reasoning.
- E. Comparing and contrasting data.
- F. Assessing accuracy and thoroughness of data.
- G. Identifying cause and effect in history.
- H. Developing inferential abilities.
- I. Developing critical judgments about historical developments.

Students will then be able to apply these skills in the following areas:

- A. Comprehend the process of the history of ideas.
- B. Comprehend the various philosophies of history.
- C. Gain a knowledge of basic cultural attitudes and their expression as "great ideas" within that context.
- D. Gain a knowledge of the shifts in these paradigms over time.
- E. Recognize the role that ideas have played in shaping historical developments.
- F. Understand the role that human emotions/behaviors have played in these historical trends.
- G. Appreciate the role that cultural outlooks/attitudes have played in the formation of:
  - 1. Religion
  - 2. Political Systems
  - 3. Social Stratification
  - 4. Gender Relationships
  - 5. Economic Systems
  - 6. Military Considerations/Necessities
  - 7. Plastic and Literary Arts
  - 8. Resource Exploitation and Environmental Degradation
  - 9. Science and Technology
- H. Gain an understanding of the reciprocity of ideas, actions, and values.

### COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

There will be three exams. To receive credit for this class, a cumulative passing average must be attained on these tests. If any of the exams is NOT taken, you WILL NOT receive a passing grade.

EXAM I	Friday, May 04, 2012 This will be a take home essay exam. There will be a choice of questions to answer.	33%
EXAM II	Friday, May 25, 2012 Same as Exam I	33%
EXAM III	Due Friday, June 15, 2012 The final exam will offer NO choices of questions to answer.	33%

I assign the final letter grades on a straight forward percentage basis as follows:

A	(4.0)	98-100	C	(2.0)	79-82
A-	(3.7)	94-97	C-	(1.7)	76-78
B+	(3.3)	91-93	D+	(1.3)	73-75
B	(3.0)	88-90	D	(1.0)	70-72
B-	(2.7)	86-87	F	(0.0)	Below 70

I do not curve grades, but I do make allowances for extenuating circumstances, (we all have bad days) and, I tend to emphasize overall improvement in assigning a final grade.

If you decide that this course is not your “cup of tea”, please do yourself a favor and withdraw, rather than simply evaporate “into the mystic”. Please be aware of the college policy for dropping classes as detailed in the academic calendar located on page 5 of the Spring 2012 BCC Quarterly Schedule. If calamity or catastrophe befalls you, I can be persuaded to assign an Incomplete (I). BUT, you must submit a request in writing by Monday, June 08, 2012, and provide proof of claimed misfortune.

### ODDS & ENDS:

My basic approach is to use lecture and appropriate media materials to enhance your comprehension of the subject matter. There is simply too much material to engage in formal discussions, BUT, I do encourage questions. The only “stupid” question is the one which needs to be answered but is not asked.

### NO CLASS DAYS:

Monday, May 28, 2012 (Memorial Day)

**\*Reading assignment for Exam I: Bronowski & Mazlish**

COURSE OUTLINE:

- I. INTRODUCTION
  - A. Authority vs. Inquiry
  - B. Gods/Goddesses/Fate/Fortuna
  - C. Humanity/Certainty/Chaos/Convention
- II. THE GREEK REVOLUTION: CULTURAL MILIEU
  - A. Ionian Physicists
  - B. The Dawn of Humanism
    - 1. Socrates
    - 2. Plato
    - 3. Aristotle
  - C. Hellenistic Adjustments
    - 1. Cynics/Skeptics
    - 2. Hedonists
    - 3. Stoics
- III. ROME, CHRISTIANITY AND THE DARK AGES
- IV. RENAISSANCE AWAKENING
  - A. Islamic Contributions
  - B. Reconnaissance and Commerce/Marvels & Mysteries
- V. REFORMATION AND THE RENEWAL OF INQUIRY
- VI. THE SCIENTIFIC REVOLUTION - AUTHORITY UNDERMINED
  - A. Astronomy Unleashed
  - B. Philosophy
    - 1. Descartes
    - 2. Hobbes and Locke
    - 3. Political Implications
- VII. THE ENLIGHTENMENT - DISINTEGRATION OF THE OLD ORDER
  - A. France and the "Philosophers"
    - 1. Bayle
    - 2. Voltaire
    - 3. Montesquieu

- B. Philosophy Ascendent
    - 1. Hume
    - 2. Kant
  - C. Ideas and Revolution - Rousseau
    - 1. America
    - 2. France
  - D. The Doctrine of Capitalism
  - E. The Industrial Revolution
- VIII. ROMANTICISM: EMOTION AND REACTION
- A. The Excess of Democracy
  - B. Hegel and German Idealism
  - C. Art and Literature: The Arrival of Angst
- IX. POLITICAL ECONOMY
- A. Ideologies Defined
    - 1. Liberal
    - 2. Conservative
    - 3. Utilitarian
  - B. Economic Ills and Systematic Solutions
  - C. Socialism
    - 1. Utopians - Owen, et al
    - 2. Anarchists
    - 3. Marxists
- X. THE SECOND SCIENTIFIC REVOLUTION
- A. Positivism
  - B. Darwinism
  - C. Political Implications - Social Darwinism
- XI. FIN DE SIECLE: IRRATIONALISM TRIUMPHANT
- A. Nietzsche
  - B. Freud
  - C. Nationalism and Imperialism
  - D. W.W. I
  - E. Art and the Avant Garde"
- XII. MODERNITY
- A. Russia: Marx and Rousseau Run Amok
  - B. Fascism
  - C. Philosophy Hits the Wall/Logical Positivism
  - D. Relativity and Science
  - E. Failure of Capitalism

F. Hitler: Rousseau/Darwin/Marx/Nietzsche as the Ultimate Nightmare

XIII. WAR - UNLIKE ANY OTHER

- A. Relativity Unchained
- B. Philosophy's Last Gasp - Existentialism
- C. Theatre of the Absurd
- D. Art - Expressionism

XIV. POSTMODERN ONANISM

- A. Deconstruction
- B. Neo-Nihilism
- C. "Everybody wants to go to heaven, but nobody wants to die . . . "

-- E. McIlwaine

**Thought for the quarter:** "Beneath the rule of men entirely great, the pen is mightier than the sword." Buliver-Hytton