

SLS 303 - 17633
Humanities III: Modern Culture
Fall 2014

6:30pm until 9:50
Friday, Building 1S, room 105

Professor Michael Winetsky
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Office Hours by appt.: 2N-220
Monday & Friday 10pm until 10:30pm

Modern Culture: Concepts of the Human

Since the 18th Century, Western society has moved towards greater democracy, pluralism and secularity. This movement was founded on presumed natural laws that, divinely written, engender human freedom. Yet, as it unfolded, modernity came to question these foundations. What had seemed natural showed itself to be relative. What was thought human became harder to distinguish from the animal or the inanimate. The promise of freedom, while being redefined more widely in the face of newly exposed oppressions, also became suffused more and more with the allure of material wealth. Ideas of a deity, especially as law-giver, seemed increasingly antiquated, and yet difficult to discard or replace. The role of religion in public life became increasingly contested, with distinct visions of secular society competing with each other and, increasingly, with movements that reject modernity. We will learn the history of these ideas, and how these ideas have been manifested in culture. Our range of study will include Western art, architecture, literature, and philosophy as long ago as the mid- 18th Century and as contemporary as the present. At the center will be the epistemological crises of the 20th Century, the period roughly between the First and Second World Wars.

TEXTS FOR PURCHASE:

Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin. Dover. 9780486290737 \$ 2.25
William Blake "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell." Oxford UP 9780192811677. \$16
Gustave Flaubert, *Madame Bovary*. Norton Critical Edition. 0393979172 \$16.88
Jean Rhys, *Wide Saragasso Sea*. Norton. 9780393308808 \$13.95
David Ives. *All in the Timing*. Knopf. **9780679759287 \$16.95**

There are additional required and recommended readings and objects of study accessible by other means. (See below.)

STUDENT WORK & GRADES:

Each of the following categories represents an equal part of a student's semester grade:

Engagement. To be curious is the student's most important work this semester. Students should not seek easy answers, but should experiment with different answers and ask difficult questions. Students should plan to attend all seminar meetings, and should arrive with questions, observations, issues, or passages worth the attention of the group. Students are expected to speak thoughtfully and to listen generously. Students are expected to work together to foster a learning environment in the classroom and in online forums. Students should aim not only to complete homework assignments, but also to investigate avenues suggested to them by the assignments. This includes everything from exploring additional applications of ideas, to keeping a list of new words and practicing key skills. Holistic letter grades are evaluated in cooperation with each student periodically throughout the semester, and are designated in the following categories:

Curiosity: Is the student motivated by a desire to learn?

Critical Thinking: How does the student interrogate concepts?

Listening: How attentive is the student in seminar?

Contributing: What is the student's contribution to the group?

Studiousness: How does the student work to develop understanding?

Commentary (a.k.a., Short Assignments). Each student must submit written commentary throughout the semester. A kind of notebook-assignment, each submission should be roughly one page in length, and should draw attention to a passage in an assigned or recommended text. Students can use commentary to discuss the significance of the passage in relation to the work and/or ideas discussed in seminar, or to pose probing questions for discussion. Honesty and struggle are at a premium on these assignments, while polish is viewed as extra. Commentary on reading assignments is either written in class posted on a weekly basis or posted in online forums. Also, some in-class writings, such as thought-pieces and quizzes, will be counted among commentary papers. Commentary papers are not always graded, but rather are usually marked with a \surd signaling full credit. On rare occasions a $\surd+$ (1.1 or 1.2) or $\surd-$ (.8) or a grade on a 10 point scale may be given. There may be as few as 8 or as many 15 total.

Presentations Students will work in pairs to give presentations of roughly 15-20 minutes in length. The purpose of these presentations for the student to teach the other students in the class about a given subject, person, or artifact. Grading holistically by letter, students must turn in a self-evaluation within 48 hours of having given their presentation.

Term Paper Students will be asked to revise and expand on in-class writings for a term paper of 6-10 pages in length. One of these will be revised as a term paper.

Course Review Students are required to complete practices and course reviews. In-class practices will ask short-answer and essay questions, as well as names of authors and texts. PASS/
FAIL

COURSE SCHEDULE:

MEETING 1. AUGUST 29 - INTRODUCTIONS

In-Class: Introduction. Syllabus Review. Create Timeline. What/when is modern?

Video: debate between Michel Foucault and Noam Chomsky

Introduce key ideas and terms.

Tuesday SEPTEMBER 3 - no meeting

Due: email with presentation choices

MEETING 2. SEPTEMBER 5 - RATIONALISM AND ITS BOUNDARIES

Reading due: *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin*

In-class: Voltaire & Leibniz, Voltaire, "Epistle to the Author of Three Imposters."

Revolutions in the United States, France, and South America; *Federalist* #51

Presentations: Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. (1792);

MEETING 3. SEPTEMBER 12 - ROMANTICISM

Reading due: Blake, *Marriage of Heaven and Hell*

In-class: Wordsworth, "Introduction to Lyrical Ballads" Natural Supernaturalism; Keats, "Ode on a Grecian Urn;" Hegel, the long shadow of Romanticism. Shelley, "Ozymandias"

Presentation: Francisco Goya; Jane Austin, *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) ; Goethe ; Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*; Ludwig Van Beethoven

MEETING 4. SEPTEMBER 19 - "1848"

Reading due: Flaubert, *Madame Bovary*, through Part II, Chapter 8

In-class: The Concord Circle; Durand's "Kindred Spirits;"

Presentation: Comte's "religion of humanity;" and/or Marx and Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*; Seneca Falls Convention; Student Revolutions

MEETING 5. **TUESDAY SEPTEMBER 23** - THE RISE OF THE BOURGEOISIE (CUNY FRIDAY)

Reading due: Flaubert, *Madame Bovary*, finish novel

In-class: Commodity Fetishism. The novel. One of the Roughs

Presentation: Stendhal *The Red and the Black*; Evolutionary Theory; Wilhelm Richard Wagner

September 26

} Fall Break. No class meetings.

~~October 3-~~ Due: Engagement Self-Eval

MEETING 6. OCTOBER 10 - NEW EPISTEMOLOGIES

Reading due: Nietzsche, "Truth and Lies in the Extramoral Sense"

In-Class: Darwinisms;

Presentation: Impressionist Painting; Dostoevsky's *Notes from Underground*
Antonín Dvořák; Rudyard Kipling & "The White Man's Burden.";

MEETING 7. OCTOBER 17 - THE MODERN MOMENT I

Reading due: Susan Glaspell, *Inheritors* (1921)

In-class: John Dewey, Democracy and Education; Modern Drama; Theories of Theater;
James Joyce, *Dubliners*, "Eveline."; the heroic neoclassical; Naturalism as literary and
theatrical technique

Presentation: The architecture of McKim, Mead, and White; De Stijl;

MEETING 8. OCTOBER 24 -- THE MODERN MOMENT II

Reading due: Glaspell, *The Verge* (1921)

In-class: Stylistic contrast between the plays; James Joyce, excerpts from major novels,
and Marcel Proust excerpts

Presentation: Cubist painting. Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* (1927); Freud, *Civilization and
Its Discontents*, ch. 2-4 ; Frank Lloyd Wright ;

MEETING 9. OCTOBER 31 -- CATCH UP AND REVIEW

Early due date for essays.

In-Class: FIRST COURSE REVIEW

Presentation:; Berenice Abbott; the Mexican Muralists; International Style Architecture

MEETING 10. NOVEMBER 7 - THE WEIGHT OF HISTORY

Reading due: Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea*

In-Class: Faulkner's Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech; *8 1/2* (1963) Fellini, dir.

Presentations: Abstract Expressionism; *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*;
Buckley *God and Man at Yale*;

MEETING 11. NOVEMBER 14 - POSTMODERNISMS

Reading Due: Ives, *All in the Timing*

In-Class: Post-modern Irony. Foucault and After.

Presentations: Pop Art ; Postmodern Architecture; Conceptual Art ; Phillip Glass

Due: term papers

~~NOVEMBER 28~~ Thanksgiving holiday. No class meeting

MEETING 12. DECEMBER 5 - CONTEMPORARY THOUGHT

Reading Due: Midgley, "The End of Anthropocentrism?"

In-Class: Gender Politics since 1960s; the Stonewall Rebellion

Presentations: Collins, *When Everything Changed*;

MEETING 13. DECEMBER 12 - CATCH UP & COURSE REVIEW

REQUIRED SUPPLEMENTARY TEXTS:

primary:

Mary Wollstonecraft, *Vindication of the Rights of Women*. Essay. Etext.
Shelley, "Defense of Poetry," essay & "Ozymandias," poem. Etext.
Keats, "To One Who Has Been Long in City Pent." poem. Etext.
Engels, *Condition of the Working Class*. Descriptive Essay. Excerpt handout.
Walt Whitman, "Song of Myself." poem. Etext.
Emerson. "The Transcendentalist." essay. handout.
Frederick Law Olmstead, "Public Parks and the Enlargement of Towns." Essay. Handout.
Joyce, *Dubliners*, *Ulysses* (& *Finnegans Wake*). Fiction. Excerpts handout.
Proust, "Overture" *In Search of Lost Time*. Fiction. Excerpt handout.
Susan Glaspell, *Inheritors* and *The Verge*. Drama. Etext.
Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*.
Jose Ortega y Gasset, *Revolt of the Masses*. Essay. Excerpt Handout
Francis Fukuyama. *The End of History*. Essay. Excerpt Handout.
Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution." Essay. handout.
Mary Midgley, "The End of Anthropocentrism." Essay. Handout.

secondary:

Matei Calinescu. *The Five Faces of Modernity*. Excerpt handouts.
Michael North. *Reading 1922*. Excerpt handouts.

OTHER MISCELLANEOUS POLICIES:

- All students are required to attend class meetings, actively take part in discussions, and submit all written work on time; late work will not be accepted.
- "Incompletes" for the course will only be given by prior arrangement and with proper documentation.
- No student with more than two absences will receive credit for the course.
- Finally, plagiarism and other forms of intellectual dishonesty will not be tolerated and will result in a failing grade for the assignment and/or course. For information about CUNY policies on academic dishonesty, see <http://www.cuny.edu/about/info/policies/academic-integrity.pdf>

- “Qualified students with disabilities will be provided reasonable academic accommodations if determined eligible by the [Office for Disability Services]. Prior to granting disability accommodations in this course, the instructor must receive written verification of student’s eligibility from the Office of Disability Services, which is located in 1P-101. It is the student’s responsibility to initiate contact with the Office for Disability Services staff and to follow the established procedures for having the accommodation notice sent to the instructor.”