

POSC 255-00*Post-Modern Political Thought***Fall 2017**

Class Hours: 10:10-11:55

Classroom: Weitz 132

Professor: Mihaela Czobor-Lupp

Office: Willis 418**Office Hours: Tuesday: 3:10-5:00 and Wednesday: 4:30-5:30, or by appointment****Course description**

In this course we will explore some of the main themes of post-modern political thought: (i) the criticism of the Enlightenment and of the modern idea of universal and totalizing reason; (ii) the attempt to critically rethink modern humanism (the idea that human beings and their happiness are central to the world); (iii) the critique of technology and the re-conceptualization of its place and role in human life; (iv) the project of revealing the relationship between power and reason/knowledge, that is, the project to denounce the claim to scientific and objective truth as being just an attempt to dominate other human beings; and (v) the post-modern project to critically rethink the relationship between thinking and language, that is, the ways in which it is still possible to reinvent Western culture today, starting again from within its Greek, Judaic, and Christian ‘origins.’ The course will conclude with an attempt to apply Derrida’s idea of deconstruction to identity politics and to the relationships that the West and Islam could develop with each other.

Course Objectives

- To critically discuss and understand the controversial meaning of the term “post-modern,” as this appears, not only in the context of political thought, but also in philosophy and culture in general;
- To understand how post-modern discourse came into being through the criticism of modernity, modern culture and philosophy, and, consequently, to understand the main differences between modern and post-modern political thought;
- To explore and understand specific post-modern themes, such as the attack on grand narratives, the pluralization and decentralization of power, the attack on universal and totalizing reason, the critique of technology, but also the re-conceptualization of technology’s place and role in human life;
- To explore new and constructive ways in which post-modern culture can provide us with a new philosophical language and vocabulary, thus increasing our capacity to understand the most recent developments of the contemporary world, such as the need to build and protect peaceful coexistence in a world of increased plurality and differentiation.

Achieving the Course Objectives:

We will learn about the political role of memory and history, by carefully and closely reading (from) the following books:

1. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, Barnes and Noble, 2006, ISBN: 9780760780862
2. Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Vintage Books, 1967, ISBN: 9780679724629
3. Michel Foucault, *The Politics of Truth*, Semiotext(e), 2007, ISBN: 9781584350392
4. Martin Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, Harper, San Francisco, 1993, ISBN: 9780060637637
5. Jacques Derrida, *The Monolingualism of the Other or the Prosthesis of Origin*, Stanford University Press, 1998, ISBN: 9780804732895
6. Mustapha Chérif, *Islam and the West: A Conversation with Derrida*, University of Chicago Press, 2008, ISBN: 97890226102863.

Course requirements

1. **One three-page paper on Nietzsche (due on October 9, e-mail the paper no later than 4 PM)** (25%)

On one of the following topics:

- (i) In the *Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche ‘argues’ (rather declares) that art, in the guise of tragedy, is essential to life. He also criticizes the Socratic, theoretical man, and modern science. What conception of reason (if at all) do you think can be constructed from Nietzsche’s conception of art and his criticism of science? Do you agree with this conception of reason and, in general, with Nietzsche’s criticism of modern culture? Do you think it still applies to the world we live in today?
- (ii) Explain the meaning of Nietzsche’s idea of genealogy and then choose one topic from *On the Genealogy of Morals* and show how the method works. At the end, explain in which ways Nietzsche’s idea of genealogy affects the meaning of morality, particularly of Christian morality. Do you agree with Nietzsche’s criticism of morality? Do you think he is fair to Christianity? Justify all your answers.

2. **One three page paper on Heidegger (due on November 4, no later than 4 PM)** (25%)

On one of the following topics:

- (i) Present the main lines of Heidegger’s argument about the essence of (modern) technology? Provide one reason for which you agree with Heidegger’s argument and one reason for which you think Heidegger is wrong.
- (ii) Reconstruct Heidegger’s criticism of humanism and explain how the German philosopher recommends that this should be corrected (re-conceptualized). Do you agree with

Heidegger's criticism of humanism? Do you see any dangers in it? Do you see any positive consequences, moral or political, or both?

3. **Active and informed class participation** (10%) This includes: (i) attending classes; (ii) doing the readings for the day; and (iii) in class assignments that will test your degree of familiarization with and understanding of the reading that you were requested to prepare for the current day
4. **Final take-home exam** (40%) **will be posted on Moodle on Saturday, November 18 at 10 AM (Central Time) will be due on Monday, November 20 by NOON (e-mail a copy to mlupp@carleton.edu). **Please do not forget to write your name on your exam and number your pages!****

What is expected from the students?

Students will be expected to read, think, form arguments and counter-arguments, understand the fundamental concepts, and participate (in a critical and creative manner) in class discussion. This means that students must keep up with their reading assignments, watching the movies, and attending class regularly. Students must be fully prepared *at all times* to discuss the arguments and concepts from the previous readings. The best students will be knowledgeable, critical, but balanced in their critical assessments, and will develop coherent and sound arguments that they can defend in their quizzes, in their exams, and in class discussion.

Academic dishonesty:

"All assignments, quizzes, and exams must be done on your own. Note that academic dishonesty includes not only cheating, fabrication, and plagiarism, but also includes helping other students commit acts of academic dishonesty by allowing them to obtain copies of your work. You are allowed to use the Web for reference purposes, but you may not copy material from any website or any other source without proper citations. In short, all submitted work must be your own.

Cases of academic dishonesty will be dealt with strictly. Each such case will be referred to the Academic Standing Committee via the Associate Dean of Students or the Associate Dean of the College. A formal finding of responsibility can result in disciplinary sanctions ranging from a censure and a warning to permanent dismissal in the case of repeated and serious offenses.

The academic penalty for a finding of responsibility can range from a grade of zero in the specific assignment to an F in this course." (Office of the Dean

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES AND READINGS:

September 12: *Introduction: What is post-modern political thought?*

Nietzsche: The Apollonian and the Dionysian

Reading: Friedrich Nietzsche, The Birth of Tragedy, 1-23

September 14: *The Greek tragedy*

Reading: Friedrich Nietzsche, The Birth of Tragedy, 23-52

September 19: *Nietzsche's criticism of the Socratic man and of modern culture*

Reading: Friedrich Nietzsche, The Birth of Tragedy, 52-107

September 21: *The meaning of genealogy for Nietzsche*

Reading: Friedrich Nietzsche, On the Genealogy of Morals, 15-56

September 26: *The origins of 'good and bad' and 'good and evil,' of conscience, guilt, and philosophy*

Reading: Friedrich Nietzsche, On the Genealogy of Morals, 56-129

September 28: *The moral and political role of the ascetic priest*

Reading: Friedrich Nietzsche, On the Genealogy of Morals, 129-163

October 3: *Foucault on genealogy: rethinking the meaning of 'origin'*

Reading: Michel Foucault, Nietzsche, Genealogy, History, 76-97

October 5: *Rethinking Enlightenment: power and resistance*

Reading: Michel Foucault, The Subject and Power, 326-348

Michel Foucault, What is Enlightenment? 97-119

October 10: *Rethinking the essence of modern technology*

Reading: Martin Heidegger, The Question Concerning Technology, 311-327

October 12: *Heidegger's criticism of modern reason*

Reading: Martin Heidegger, The Question Concerning Technology, 328-341

October 17: *Rethinking the meaning of humanism: Da-sein*

Reading: Martin Heidegger, Letter on Humanism, 217-235

October 19: NO CLASS

October 24: *Being and thinking*

Reading: Martin Heidegger, *Letter on Humanism*, 236-251

October 26: *Language, poetry, and thinking*

Reading: Martin Heidegger, *Letter on Humanism*, 252-261

October 31: *Derrida: deconstruction and language*

Reading: Jacques Derrida, *Monolingualism of the Other or the Prosthesis of Origin*, 1-43

November 2: *What is to have a culture? How does one belong to a community?*

Reading: Jacques Derrida, *The Monolingualism of the Other or the Prosthesis of Origin*, 44-73

November 7: *Friendship, above all: East and West*

Reading: Mustapha Chérif, *A Conversation with Jacques Derrida*, 1-54

November 9: *The different other is indispensable to our lives*

Reading: Mustapha Chérif, *A Conversation with Jacques Derrida*, 55-103

November 14: *Final Review*