POSC 255-00
Post-Modern Political Thought
Winter 2017
Class Hours: MW 01:50PM- 03:00PM, F 2:20PM-3:20PM
Classroom: Willis 114
Professor: Mihaela Czobor-Lupp
Office: Willis 418
Office Hours: MW 3:00-5:00

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 meaning of being human and the place humans occupy in 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, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, Vintage Books, 1988, ISBN: 067972110X
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 January 27 by 5 PM**) (25%)

   On one of the following topics:

(i) Reconstruct Nietzsche's argument from the *Birth of Tragedy* about the role of art in human life, then provide two reasons for which you agree or disagree with Nietzsche's criticism of the Socratic man and of modern culture, in general.

(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 and provide two reasons for which you agree or disagree with Nietzsche's view of morality.

2. **One three page paper on Heidegger** (**due on March 2**) (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). Evaluate Heidegger's philosophical project by drawing one moral and one political consequence that you think could come out of it.

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%)

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:

January 4: *Introduction: what is post-modern political thought?*

January 6: *The Apollonian and the Dionysian*
Reading: Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, xvii-xxviii and 1-23

January 9: *The Greek tragedy*
Reading: Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, 23-52

January 11: *The Socratic man and the end of Greek tragedy*
Reading: Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, 52-88

January 13: *Nietzsche's criticism of the Socratic man and of modern culture*
Reading: Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, 88-107

January 16: *The meaning of genealogy for Nietzsche*
Reading: Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, 15-35

January 18: *The origins of 'good and bad' and 'good and evil'*
Reading: Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, 35-56

January 20: *The origin of conscience and guilt*
Reading: Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals* 57-96

January 23: *The origins of philosophy*
Reading: Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, 97-129

January 25: *The moral and political role of the ascetic priest*
Reading: Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, 129-163

January 27: *Foucault on genealogy: reason and unreason during the Renaissance*
Reading: Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*, 3-37

January 30: *The classical age and the beginning of the great confinement*
Reading: Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*, 38-116

February 1: *Faces of Madness in the 17th and the 18th centuries*
Reading: Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization, 117-198*

February 3: *The change of paradigm*
Reading: Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization, 199-220*

February 8: *Psychiatry and the birth of the asylum*
Reading: Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*, 221-278

February 10: *Enlightenment and the other of reason*
Reading: Michel Foucault, *Civilization and Madness, 279-291*

February 13: *Heidegger's method (phenomenology) and the criticism of modern reason*
Reading: Martin Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology*, 311-320

February 15: *What is modern technology?*
Reading: Martin Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology*, 321-328

February 17: Rethinking the essence of modern technology
Reading: Martin Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology*, 329-341

February 20: *Humanism and Da-sein*
Reading: Martin Heidegger, *Letter on Humanism*, 217-235

February 22: *Being and thinking*
Reading: Martin Heidegger, *Letter on Humanism*, 236-251

February 24: *Language, poetry, and thinking*
Reading: Martin Heidegger, *Letter on Humanism*, 252-261

February 27: *Derrida: deconstruction and language*
Reading: Jacques Derrida, *Monolingualism of the Other or the Prosthesis of Origin*, 1-18

March 1: *What is to have a language?*
Reading: Jacques Derrida, *The Monolingualism of the Other or the Prothesis of Origin*, 19-43

March 3: *What is to have a culture? How does one belong to a community?*
Reading: Jacques Derrida, *The Monolingualism of the Other or the Prothesis of Origin*, 44-73

March 6: *Friendship, above all: East and West*
Reading: Mustapha Chérif, *A Conversation with Jacques Derrida*, 1-54

March 8: *The different other is indispensable to our lives*
Reading: Mustapha Chérif, *A Conversation with Jacques Derrida*, 55-103

March 10: *Final Review*