GE Cluster 21A

Fall 2017

The History of Modern Thought

Early Modernity: From Renaissance to Enlightenment

Class instructors: Sarah Tindal Kareem (English) and Joshua Foa Dienstag (Poli Sci)
Class meetings: Mondays and Wednesdays, 11am-12.15pm
Teaching Staff: Kye Barker (TF), Joanna Chen Cham (Librarian Liaison), Seth Erickson (TF), Bethany Johnsen (TF), Sean Messarra (TF), Twyla Ruby (TF), Erin Severson (Inquiry Specialist).
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Course description

This first quarter of the Modern Thought course introduces undergraduates to some of the principal themes in the history of early modern Europe from the Italian Renaissance to the Enlightenment and its legacy. We will focus on some of the period’s classic texts (sometimes called ‘great books’) by a series of brilliant writers and thinkers - Machiavelli, Shakespeare, Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Defoe, Hume, Wollstonecraft, Kant, and Shelley. We will also look at the broad intellectual and ideological contexts from which their work emerged. We will build up a picture of those contexts, trying to make sense of their work in its relevant historical setting – which means knowing something about the Renaissance, early modern European civil wars, the Scientific Revolution and the Enlightenment.

In some of these works, we see the emergence of key philosophical and political concepts - ideas about the state, the relationship between self and other, rights, sovereignty, liberty, private property, representation, revolution, the republic, the constitution, and so on. In others, we can chart changing ideas about what constitutes ‘the literary’ and ‘the aesthetic,’ witness the rise of the novel, watch writers battle over competing models of the self, or debate the role of women in modern life.

This course is designed to challenge your perceptions of what constitutes ‘literature’ and what constitutes ‘philosophy’. Nowadays, we tend to separate out ‘fictional’ or ‘literary’ works from philosophical treatises and think of them as having different interests and aims. We want to show you how that distinction is a recent one - and sometimes a very unhelpful one - when thinking about the history of ideas. Some of
the deepest sources of political and social reflection in early modernity are to be found in imaginative narratives laid out in plays and novels (think of Shakespeare or Defoe); conversely, some of the most profound philosophical investigations are conducted by brilliant prose stylists: Hobbes and Hume are fine examples. All of this writing is literature; all of it is concerned with people and their beliefs; and all of it has come to define the way we think about politics and society in the modern world.

Course aims

We have two fundamental aims:

a) to think about the extent to which our modern understanding of certain key concepts in our daily lives – liberty, literature and rights, and even our own identity – has been shaped by the thinkers, texts and traditions we are studying.

b) to pay close attention to the literary qualities of all of the texts we are reading, remaining sensitive to questions of rhetoric, genre, media, personality and role-playing when thinking about the relationship between politics and literature.

Course reading

The readings focus your attention exclusively on primary sources (texts and artifacts which date from the period we are studying). The aim is to engage directly with the evidence we are studying for the history of this period. All texts will be studied in English. In some classes, there will be some emphasis on historical context: it often helps to know what is going on in the political, social, economic, religious and intellectual worlds which produce this literature in order to grasp the arguments we will be reading.

Most of the weekly readings are taken from one of the course books (see below); some are posted as individual PDF files on the class website. IT IS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT THAT YOU CONSULT THE SYLLABUS EACH WEEK TO ENSURE THAT YOU ARE DOING ALL THE READING. In most cases, you will not be asked to read more than about 120 pages for any one week; and in some, you will often have to read fewer. It is therefore crucial that you complete this task each time. If you do not manage to finish all of the readings by Monday’s class, then make sure you have completed all the reading by the time you have your section meeting that week. Make notes. You will also need to print out the online readings and bring them to the relevant classes, where you will be regularly asked to refer to them.

These NINE course books are required. They are on order from the UCLA bookshop. They are not expensive. It is essential that you have these editions:

Course requirements

60% of your final grade is calculated on the basis of two assignments: one in the first half of the quarter, the other in the second half. For these assignments, you will have a choice of questions on topics which we will have studied, and you will be asked to answer only one, in the form of an essay of 5-6 pages long. In both cases, you will be tested on your ability to demonstrate the knowledge you have acquired about the ideas and theories of the course in the shape of a reasoned argument that draws upon the evidence of the texts themselves. We will do some work on how to write these essays in class and section.

The remaining 40% of your grade comes from your work in class, in section and in your commonplace book.

In addition there will be several required Library Instruction Sessions as well as some optional informal activities (movie nights!) and at least one potential field trip to the Clark Library.

Commonplace Books

On the first day of class we will provide every student with a notebook to be used as a commonplace book. A commonplace book was a feature of eighteenth-century reading practices. Commonplace books included excerpts from published texts that were hand copied by their readers in order to enhance the memory, serving as a record of reading experiences and inspiring the owners of commonplace books to reflect on what they were reading. Professor Crystal Lake of Wright State University (who inspired this assignment) has prepared examples (on Pinterest) of commonplace books both old and new here. In fact, Pinterest and Tumblr are themselves examples of commonplace booking, adapted to electronic media.
This class adopts the commonplace book both in order to inhabit the reading practices of the period we’re studying as well as to develop our own, new ideas. In order to prepare for each class, you should record/transcribe important passages from the reading into your commonplace book and write out notes and questions for class discussion. This is the bare minimum required for the commonplace book.

Commonplace books are at their most exciting when they contain additional elements: drawings, charts, daily logs, cut-and-pasted items, etc. We encourage you to develop a close relationship with your commonplace book, keeping it with you all the time, using it as you read assigned texts, decorating and developing it as way of creating a memento of your reading experiences as well as a record of your intellectual development in the class.

Your TFs will collect your commonplace books several times during the semester for grading. In order to receive a C, you’ll need to ensure that there is one substantial entry (at least 1 stuffed page) for every week of the semester, beginning with week 2 and ending with week 10. It is useful for grading for you to ensure that all of your entries are dated and titled. From there, your grade can only go up; commonplace books that receive a grade of A are creative works of art and thinking that show concerted and consistent ongoing effort.

Course attendance & guidelines

Attendance at all classes and section meetings is obviously crucial to your success in this course; failure to turn up will severely damage your final grade. Please let your TF know by email at least 24 hours before class if you are unable to make any class or section meeting.

We do NOT permit the use of laptops, tablets or any electronic devices during class. Studies have repeatedly shown that students who take notes on paper retain more, integrate knowledge better, perform better on tests and have final higher grades than those who use computers. We want all of you to have this advantage.

Schedule of classes: a week-by-week summary

| Week 1 | Renaissance thought: Humanism and Machiavelli |
| Week 2 | Statecraft and Judgment |
| Week 3 | Shakespeare & Science |
| Week 4 | Hobbes’ *Leviathan* |
| Week 5 | Nature, property and the novel: Locke and Defoe |
| Week 6 | The emergence of Enlightenment |
| Week 7 | Enlightenment philosophy: Hume and Rousseau |
| Week 8 | The Enlightenment and sympathy: Hume, Smith, and Rousseau |
| Week 9 | Reason and History: Kant and Hegel |
| Week 10 | A Manifesto, A Monster and Modernity |
Detailed Schedule of Classes & Assignments

Week 1  Renaissance thought: Humanism and Machiavelli

Readings:

Aquinas, On Politics and Ethics, ed. Paul Sigmund (selections) ON WEBSITE

Pico de Mirandola, On the Dignity of Man (selections) ON WEBSITE

Machiavelli. The Discourses, Bk 1: preface and chapters 1-6 (pp. 97-124), 9 (131-4), 11-14 (139-50), 16-18 (153-164); Bk 2: preface and chapters 1-2 (265-281) ON WEBSITE.

Monday: Introductory session: syllabus and course requirements;
The Medieval Mind and Humanism (all)

Wednesday: Renaissance thought and Machiavelli (JD)

Week 2  Statecraft and Judgment

Readings:

Shakespeare, Macbeth: 3-30; 48-56; 61-69; 73-79; 83-85; 92-8.

Machiavelli. The Prince, Chapters 1-3; 6-9; 14-19, and 24-26 (pp. 3-14, 19-37, 51-72; 83-91).

Monday: Machiavelli’s Prince (JD)

Wednesday: Shakespeare’s Prince (SK)

Week 3  Shakespeare & Science

Readings: Shakespeare, The Tempest: 3-49, 60 [starting at beginning of Act 4, Scene 1] -84.

Descartes’, Discourse on Method; Meditations I & II ON WEBSITE

Monday: The Tempest (SK)

Wednesday: Descartes’ Doubts (SK)
Week 4  Hobbes’ *Leviathan*

Readings:  Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Introduction (pp. 9-11); Bks 1 and 2, chapters 13-21 (86-154)

Monday:  Science, politics and the young Hobbes (JD)

Wednesday:  Hobbes on the state (JD)

Week 5  Nature, property and the novel: Locke and Defoe


Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*, look at title page and preface on two unnumbered pages following “note on the text” before main text starts. In addition read 5-6, 30-65, 90-121

Monday:  Locke defense of property and limited government (JD)

Wednesday:  *Crusoe* and the rise of the novel (SK)

Week 6  The emergence of Enlightenment


Immanuel Kant, ‘What is Enlightenment?’ in Kant, *Perpetual Peace and Other Writings*, trans. Ted Humphreys, 41-46. ON WEBSITE

Monday:  *Crusoe*, ownership, and imperialism (SK)

Wednesday:  Introducing the Enlightenment (SK)
**Week 7**  
*Enlightenment philosophy: Hume and Rousseau*

**Readings:**  
Rousseau, *Letter to D’Alembert*, pp. 15-27, 60-75. ON WEBSITE

Monday: Rousseau’s critique of modern culture (JD)  
Wednesday: Hume’s skepticism (SK)

**Week 8**  
*The Enlightenment and sympathy: Hume, Smith, and Rousseau*

**Readings:**  

Monday: Rousseau on the best state (JD)  
Wednesday: Happy Thanksgiving!! (No lecture.)

**Week 9**  
*Reason and History: Kant & Hegel*

**Readings:**  
Smith, *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*, Lecture 6 (pp. 25-32). ON WEBSITE  
Kant, “Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose”. ON WEBSITE  
G.W.F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right* (Knox translation), pp. 155-65. ON WEBSITE (skip the smallest print material on 158-60)

Monday: Hume and Smith on sympathy and imagination (SK)  
Wednesday: Kant & Hegel on Reason, Politics & History (JD)
Week 10  A Manifesto, A Monster and Modernity

Readings  Mary Wollstonecraft, *Vindication of the Rights of Women*, ed. Sylvana Tomaselli, Chapters 1-3, pp. 79-125. ON WEBSITE


Monday:  Wollstonecraft on virtue and sexism (JD)

Wednesday:  Mary Shelley on monsters and modernity (SK)