

FOUNDATIONS OF CONTEMPORARY CONSCIOUSNESS

This course might have the alternate title, "Western Civilization for Grown-Ups": it provides a sophisticated introduction to the modern world, familiarizing the student with the basic structures of modernity in ways that he or she should find recurring useful in nearly all subsequent LIBA course-work, whether in literature, history, the social sciences, religion, or area studies.

Running from about 1650 to the present--that is, from Pascal to Foucault, from the Great Chain of Being to Post-Modernism--the course does not focus on the narrative of events, but instead examines the basic ideas, assumptions, and commonplaces shared by modern people. Virtually all such ideas--whether liberal-democratic values, the attitudes toward nature in modern science, our notions of privacy, self, emotions, love, and even what it means to work--differ vastly from those universally held during most of the history of the West. How did they arise, how did they become persuasive, and subsequently central to Western people? Why are we convinced that modern science asks the right questions and that earlier approaches to nature are either irrelevant or ridiculous? What convinces us that something called "love"--and admittedly irrational--should be the basis for forming enduring personal relationships? How, in a word, did we become who we are?

Required Texts:

- Marvin Perry et al., Western Civilization, 1660-Present, 8th edition (Houghton)
 Keith Baker, ed., The Old Regime and the French Revolution (Chicago)
 John Boyer and Jan Goldstein, eds., 20th Century Europe (Chicago)
 Voltaire, Philosophical Letters (Hornet Bookstore)
 Blaise Pascal, Pensées (Penguin)
 Jean Jacques Rousseau, The Social Contract (Hornet Bookstore)
 John Stuart Mill, Autobiography (Riverside)
 Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, Marx-Engels Reader (Norton)
 Friedrich Nietzsche, Use and Abuse of History (Bobbs)
 A.H. Williamson, Selected Readings (Hornet Bookstore)
 A.H. Williamson, Images of Blood: Ethnic Identity and the Destruction of the Left
 in Europe and America, 1972-92 (Hornet Bookstore)
 Tom Stoppard, Arcadia (Faber)

All required texts are available in the bookstore and are on reserve in the library (hopefully).

Course Requirements: There are two--one easy, the other absurdly easy. The latter comes first.

A) Three super-short (i.e. three page) papers. These will provide the basis of the seminar's discussion on their assigned days, **and therefore late papers cannot be accepted.**

1. Summarize the argument in Turgot's article "On Foundations" in the great French Encyclopedia (1757). DUE IN CLASS: **25 February.**

2. Summarize the argument in Byron's poem, "Prometheus" (1816). DUE IN CLASS: **24 March.**

3. Compare the argument in Nietzsche's Use and Abuse of History (1874) with Bentham's argument as developed in his Introduction to the Principles of Morals (1780) and Constitutional Code (1827): DUE IN CLASS: **28 April.**

B) One short (i.e. ten page) paper on any one of the following topics or on a topic of your own choosing (if you decide to invent your own topic, be sure to discuss it first with the instructor before starting out). DUE IN CLASS: **12 May.**

1. Romanticism, the Enlightenment, and Tom Stoppard: Write an essay discussing Stoppard's treatment of the interface or "dance" between Romanticism and the Enlightenment in Stoppard's Arcadia. If you're feeling strong, link your discussion with his comments on the cultural world of Newtonian mechanics in the early 18th century, thermodynamics in the early 19th century and chaos theory in the late 20th century. (Whew!)

2. The Romantic Hero and Dr. Victor Frankenstein: Write an essay analyzing Mary Shelley's Frankenstein as an expression of Romanticism. Feel free to compare Dr. V. with Byron's poem "Prometheus" or with the values expressed in Pope's Essay on Man or, if you wish, with 20th century interpretations (Boris Karloff etc.).

3. The Politics of the Theatre of the Absurd: It is pretty well agreed that the Theatre of the Absurd grows out of Modernism and that it can have both left-wing and right-wing manifestations. Write an essay exploring this contention. Your essay needs to consider Eugène Ionesco's The Bald Soprano and the Cold War context of the 1950s along with two other plays of your choosing. If you wish, feel free also to consider allied kinds of expression: popular music performance, symbolic political acts (e.g. levitating the Pentagon in Washington, placing a gigantic condom on the obelisk in Paris), and the like.

4. The Meaning of Left and Right in the 20th Century: write an essay comparing the attitude toward the state as proposed by V.I. Lenin in State and Revolution (1917) and by Benito Mussolini in The Doctrine of Fascism (1932). Feel free to consider any additional writings by these individuals (or others) which helps you to explain their drastically contrasting ideas and objectives.

Office Hours: Tuesdays, 12:00-3:00 and by appointment in 3061 Tahoe Hall (278-6914); williamsonah@csus.edu..

1st Week: 28 January

Man and Nature in the Pre-Modern World

Alexander Pope, Essay on Man, 1733 (Selected Readings, hereafter indicated as SR)
Perry, Western Civilization, Chapter 17, pp. 389-405.

2nd Week: 4 February

The Rise of Modern Science: Descartes, Newton, and the Concept of Cause

Voltaire, Philosophical Letters (1733), 52-74
Perry, Western Civilization, Chapter 18, pp. 407-27.

Further Reading (= optional, i.e. only if you wanna):

Thomas Kuhn, Structure of Scientific Revolutions

3rd Week: 11 February

Ancien Regime
The Enlightenment: Science and Society under the

Charles Loyseau, Traité des Ordres (Baker)
Denis Diderot, "Definition of an
Encyclopedia" (Baker)
Voltaire, Philosophical Letters, pp. 3-29, 39-40

4th Week: 18 February

Absolutism Can Be Fun

Anne-Robert-Marie Turgot, "On Foundations" (Baker)
Anne-Robert-Marie Turgot, "Memorandum on Local
Government and National Education" (Baker)
Perry, Western Civilization, Chapter 18, pp. 429-37.

Continuity and Contiguity: Blaise Pascal

Pascal, Pensées, #23, 24, 25, 26, 33, 44, 45, 60, 66, 83, 86,
114, 125, 131, 188, 200,228, 242, 520, 533, 750, 781

Further Reading:

Voltaire, Philosophical Letters, pp. 114-150

5th Week:

25 February

FIRST PAPER DUE IN CLASS

THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

a. The "Moderate" Revolution

J.J. Rousseau, The Social Contract, Bk. I, chs. 1-7 (pp. 5-18), Bk. II, chs. 3, 4, 7 (pp. 25-30, 35-39), Bk. IV, ch. 8 (pp.15-125)
Abbe Sieyès, What is the Third Estate? (Baker) 1789, pp. 154-165; remainder optional.
"Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen" (Baker)
Perry, Western Civilization,Chapter 19, pp. 441-54.

b. The Republic of Virtue

Documents of the Sans Culottes (Baker)
Maximilien Robespierre, "Letter to his Constituents" (SR)
"Draft Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen" (SR)
Perry, Western Civilization, Chapter 19, pp. 454-64, 460-1 (Profile), 472-3 (Profile).

6th Week:

3 March

Popular Culture: the Advent of Kitsch

No readings (!!!)

Reaction: Edmund Burke and the Marquis de Sade--the Problem of Nature and Self

(Baker) Edmund Burke, Reflections on the Revolution in France
Marquis de Sade, Philosophy in the Bedroom (on reserve)
Perry, Western Civilization, Chapter 22, pp. 516-21, 532-35.

7th Week: 10 March

The Romantic Impulse

George Gordon, Lord Byron, "Prometheus" (SR)
Byron, "On this Day I complete my Thirty-Sixth Year" (SR)
John Keats, "La Belle Dame Sans Merci" (SR)
Perry, Western Civilization, Chapter 22, pp. 506-15, 527-29.
Tom Stoppard, Arcadia (entire)

Further Reading:

Mary Shelley, Frankenstein

<<<<SPRING RECESS: 13-17 March>>>>

8th Week: 17 March

19th CENTURY LIBERALISM AND ITS CRITICS

**a. Auguste Comte and the Science of Reaction:
"Sociology"**

Auguste Comte, Early Essays (on reserve)
Perry, Western Civilization, Chapter 21, pp. 485-68; Chapter
22, pp 519-29; Chapter 24, pp. 562-68, 573-76.

b. The Individual and Society

Jeremy Bentham, An Introduction to the Principles of Morals,
1780 (SR)
Bentham, Constitutional Code for the Use of all Nations,

1827 (SR)
111-118.

John Stuart Mill, Autobiography, pp. 25-71, 84-86, 93-96,

9th Week:

24 March

SECOND PAPER DUE IN CLASS

Socialism and the Rise of Social Theory

Marx-Engels Reader, pp. 70-81, 473-500.

Perry, Western Civilization, Chapter 24, pp. 557-62, 568-73.

<<<<<<<31 March: **No Class – spring recess**>>>>>>>

10th Week:

7 April

Imperialism: the European Order at Its Zenith

Rudyard Kipling, "The White Man's Burden" (SR)

Marquis de Condorcet, "Sketch" (SR)

Perry, Western Civilization, Chapter 25, pp. 593-602.

The Critique of Time and Reason

Friedrich Nietzsche, Use and Abuse of History (entire)

Friedrich Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil (SR)

Perry, Western Civilization, Chapter 27, pp. 632-54, 656-67.

11th Week:

14 April

Modernism: the End of the Victorian World View?

"Futurist Manifestos", 1909 (Boyer)

Sigmund Freud, "Thoughts for the Times of War and Death,"

1915 (Boyer)

René Magritte, "Ceci n'est pas une pipe," 1928-9 (SR)

Perry, Western Civilization, Chapter 28, pp. 667-87.

12th Week:

21 April

The Russian Revolution: The Enlightenment Moves East

V.I. Lenin, State and Revolution (on reserve)

Joseph Stalin, The Foundations of Leninism, 1924 (Boyer)

Perry, Western Civilization, Chapter 29, pp. 691-725,
731-40.

13th Week:

28 April

THIRD PAPER DUE IN CLASS*

Fascism and the Right: Modernist and Anti-Modernist

T.S. Eliot, "The Hollow Men", 1925 (SR)

Eliot, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock", 1917 (SR)

Eliot, "The Boston Evening Transcript", 1917 (SR)

Adolf Hitler, Mein Kampf, 1925 (Boyer)

Benito Mussolini, The Doctrine of Fascism, 1932 (Boyer)

Perry, Western Civilization, Chapter 30, pp. 740-67 (review
Chapter 25, pp. 593-602).

14th Week:

5 May

THE POST-WAR ERA I

a. Existentialism

(Boyer)

Jean-Paul Sartre, "Existentialism is a Humanism", 1945

Perry, Chapter 31, pp. 748-91.

**b. The Cultures of the Cold War: McCarthy and
Zhdanov**

Perry, Western Civilization, Chapter 33, pp. 826-46.

15th Week:

12 May

FINAL PAPER DUE IN CLASS

THE POST-WAR ERA II
Structuralism, Deconstruction, and Post-Modernism

Michel Foucault, "The Subject and Power", 1982 (Boyer)
A.H. Williamson, Images of Blood
Stoppard, Arcadia (review)

Further Reading:

David Edgar, Pentecost
James Gleick, Chaos