

**The University of North Carolina at Greensboro**  
**His 397: Modern European Thought: The Power of Ideas**

Fall Semester 2011

TTH 2:00–3:15 MHRA 2211

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# Modern European Thought

## *The Power of Ideas*

Over a hundred years ago, the German poet Heine warned the French not to underestimate the power of ideas; philosophical concepts nurtured in the stillness of a professor's study could destroy a civilization.

Isaiah Berlin, *Two Concepts of Liberty* (1958)

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

What is the relationship between the individual and her community? Is it natural for human beings to live together in a just and peaceful collective? Must they suppress their individual desires and creative expression to do so? And what are the intellectual models—science, economics, and history—that justify these choices? From the eighteenth-century Enlightenment down to twentieth-century post-modernism, renowned thinkers have asked such big questions about human nature, economic injustice, and the meaning of history. Many of these questions were not answered and in fact opened the door to new questions for the next generation. With hindsight we can survey what one historian has called a “Great Chain of Being” that traces one big idea to another over time.

The study of ideas is not an obscure activity, but deeply relevant to our lives. According to the twentieth-century historian Isaiah Berlin, ideas have the power to move history, sometimes in positive, and in other times destructive, ways. Ideas can be both records of a historical period, as well as occasionally catalysts that forge new paradigms for social and political thought. This course surveys movements of the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries, including the Enlightenment, Romanticism, Darwinism, Marxism, psychoanalysis, modernism, existentialism, and postmodernism. In

our discussion of these movements, we will pay special attention to such recurring themes as the idea of human nature, confidence and skepticism towards reason, and varying philosophies of history. The readings focus on those thinkers, including Rousseau, Kant, Hegel, Darwin, Marx, whose masterful efforts to assess their contemporary circumstances propelled their societies in new directions and whose sophisticated commentary on these perennial problems is still relevant today.

This advanced course will equip you with some of the tools of an intellectual historian. We will read varying interpretations of these intellectual figures alongside the primary texts. Over the course of the semester, you will have the chance to judge different approaches for the study of ideas, including biography, human relationships, economic analysis, and political theory.

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Familiarize yourself with major intellectual movements of the eighteenth through twentieth centuries
- Identify key terms and concepts associated with major intellectual figures
- Do close readings of challenging texts
- Make thematic connections between texts from different time periods
- Write analytic assessment of texts with cogent argument

### REQUIRED READINGS

Many of the readings are available online through Ereserve or on Blackboard, designated by\* (You will need to activate your computing account in order to gain access to Blackboard and disable pop-up blocks to permit readings to open in a separate window.) ***You must print these readings and bring them to class on the days when they will be discussed.***

The following books are **required** and available for purchase at the bookstore. Should you choose to purchase these books elsewhere (many are available used or through amazon.com), ***you must make sure that you purchase the correct edition of the book*** (i.e. check publisher and year) so that we are all working with the same translation and pagination. If you don't have the correct edition you will have to acquire one for the purpose of providing accurate citations in your papers.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Basic Political Writings* (Hackett, 1987)

Immanuel Kant, *Perpetual Peace and Other Essays*, trans. T. Humphrey (Hackett, 1983)

G.W.F. Hegel, *Introduction to the Philosophy of History* (Hackett, 1988)

Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality* (Hackett, 1998)

Sigmund Freud *Civilization and Its Discontents* (Norton, 2010)

Virginia Woolf, *To the Lighthouse* (Harvest Books, 1989)

## COURSE ORGANIZATION AND EXPECTATIONS

This course follows three major thematic and chronological sections: 1) The Eighteenth-Century Enlightenment and Romanticism; 2) The Long Nineteenth Century; and 3) Gender, Memory, and War in the Twentieth Century. To get the most out of History 397, students should have some general familiarity with the course of European history during this period (for example, through History 223 or its equivalent). Students unacquainted with modern European history may have to do extra reading on their own. Although there will be some lectures, the emphasis will be on discussing, in small and large groups, the texts and their interpretations.

This course has a lot of reading, much of it difficult, and it must be read carefully and often twice. To help your reading you will receive periodic intellectual history chronologies and key ideas handouts, which you are encouraged to compile together with the readings and to take notes on.

You will also receive reading questions prior to the week when the reading is due. You are asked to post your responses to these questions on Blackboard to share with each other and the instructor. Your responses will be graded on a scale of 1-5 and will be counted as part of your participation grade.

As class time will be allotted for the collective analysis of the day's assigned text, **it is imperative that you come to class prepared to discuss the sources on the days designated in the syllabus.** Lack of preparation will result in a zero for participation on that day.

## ELECTRONIC COMPETENCE

Many of the reading/viewing/listening assignments are presented as Online Readings on Blackboard. **It is your responsibility to access these sources, print them (if they are print sources), and to bring them to the classes during the weeks in which they are discussed.** The most up-to-date course materials and announcement swill always be posted on Blackboard.

If you have questions about accessing material on Blackboard, please see 6Tech online [https://6-tech.uncg.edu/ra/login\\_raremedy.jsp?lang=en](https://6-tech.uncg.edu/ra/login_raremedy.jsp?lang=en) or call 336-256-TECH (8324).

## SYLLABUS

## **Week 1: Where do Ideas come from?**

T, 8/23: Introduction: Plato and Aristotle, Two Ancient Worldviews fit for  
Modernity

**In class, viewing:** Raphael, “The School of Athens” (1510–1511).

Th, 8/25: Intellectual History: From Above and Below

### **Reading**

Peter Gay, “The Little Flock of Philosophes,” *The Enlightenment: The Rise of  
Modern Paganism* (Norton, 1966).\*

Robert Darnton, “The Case for the Enlightenment: George Washington’s False  
Teeth,” *George Washington’s False Teeth* (Norton, 2003).\*

## **I. Enlightenment and Romanticism**

### **Week 2: The Eighteenth-Century Enlightenment**

T, 8/30: Nature and Culture

#### **Reading:**

Peter Gay, “Introduction,” in *Jean-Jacques Rousseau: Basic Political Writings*,  
vii–xvii.

Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origin and Basis of Inequality Among Men* (1754),  
Preface (pp. 33–37); Part 1 (pp. 37–60).

Th, 9/1: The Invention of Society

#### **Reading:**

Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origin and Basis of Inequality Among Men* (1754),  
Part II, (pp. 60–80).

### **Week 3: The Advantages and Disadvantages of Reason and Progress**

T, 9/6: The French Revolution: Its Proponents and Critics

#### **Reading:**

Rousseau, *The Social Contract* (1762); Book 1, chapter 1–7.

David Edmonds and John Eidinow, Chapter 11, *Rousseau’s Dog: Two Great  
Thinkers at War in the Age of the Enlightenment* (Harper Collins,  
2006).\*

Th, 9/8: Rousseau, Hume, and the Enlightenment Variations

**Reading:**

Rousseau, *The Social Contract* (1762); Book 2, chapters 1, 3–4, 15; Book 4, chapter 8.

**Week 4: Germany's Special Path**

T, 9/13: Under the Iron Rule: Think what you will but obey!

**Reading:**

Immanuel Kant, "What is Enlightenment," (1784).  
\_\_\_\_\_, "Idea for a Universal History from a Cosmopolitan Point of View," (1784).

Th, 9/15: Counter Enlightenment: Ideas Against the Grain

**Reading:**

Kant, "Perpetual Peace" (1795).  
Isaiah Berlin, "The Counter-Enlightenment," in Henry Hardy (ed.), *Against the Current* (Princeton University Press, 1997).\*

**Week 5: Romanticism: The Turn Inward**

T, 9/20: Hegel's Big Idea

**Reading:**

G.W.F. Hegel, *Introduction to the Philosophy of History* (1840), Chapters 1–3 (pp. 3–56).

Th, 9/22: The World Spirit and Romanticism

**Reading:**

G.W.F. Hegel, *Introduction to the Philosophy of History* (1840), Chapters 4–6 (pp. 57–98).

Wordsworth, select poems \*

**Week 6: An Operatic Interlude**

T, 9/27: The Magic Flute: An Enlightenment Opera?

**Reading:**

Mozart, excerpt, *The Magic Flute*\*

**In class, viewing:**

*The Magic Flute*

**Tuesday September 27: First Paper due on the Enlightenment and Romanticism, at the beginning of class.**

**Th, 9/29: NO CLASS**

**II. The Long Nineteenth Century: Darwin, Marx, and Freud**

**Week 7: A Dangerous Idea**

T, 10/4: 19<sup>th</sup> Century Britain

**Reading:**

Adrian Desmond and James Moore, excerpts from *Darwin's Sacred Cause: How a Hatred of Slavery Shaped Darwin's Views on Human Evolution* (Houghton Mifflin, 2009).\*

Charles Darwin, Introduction, Chapter 1, and Chapter 3, from *The Origin of the Species* (1859).\*

T, 10/6: Darwin and Darwinism

**Reading:**

Adrian Desmond and James Moore, excerpts from *Darwin's Sacred Cause*.\*

Charles Darwin, Chapter 14, from *The Origin of the Species* (1859).\*

**Week 8: Revolutionary History**

**T, 10/ 11: NO CLASS—UNCG HOLIDAY**

Th, 10/13: Turning Hegel on his head

**Reading:**

Karl Marx, “Discovering Hegel (Marx to his father)” (1837); pp. 7–8, *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Robert C. Tucker (Norton, 1978).

\_\_\_\_\_. “Contribution to the Critique of Hegel’s *Philosophy of Right* (c. 1843); pp. 53–65, *The Marx-Engels Reader*.

**Week 9: Civilization and Its Discontents**

T, 10/18: Marx and Historical Materialism

**Reading:**

Marx and Engels, “The German Ideology,” (1845–1846); pp. 146–155, *The Marx-Engels Reader*.

\_\_\_\_\_. “Manifesto of the Communist Party” (1848); pp. 469–483, *The Marx-*

*Engels Reader.*

Th, 10/20: Marxism as a Secular Religion

**Reading:**

Marx and Engels, “Manifesto of the Communist Party” (1848); pp. 483–500,  
*The Marx-Engels Reader.*

**Week 10: Genealogy and Counter History**

T, 10/25: Friedrich Nietzsche and Nineteenth-Century German Nationalism

**Reading:**

Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality*, Preface and the First Treatise, (pp. 1–33).

Robert Wistrich, Introduction, in *Nietzsche, Godfather of Fascism: On the Uses and Abuses of a Philosophy*, ed Golomb and Wistrich (Princeton, 2002).\*

T, 10/27: The Politics of Ideas

**Reading:**

Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality*, Second and Third Treatises (pp35–118).

**Week 11: Civilization and Its Discontents**

T, 11/1: Vienna 1900

**Viewings**

Klimt et al

**Readings**

**Book:** Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1929), Sections 1–4.  
Peter Gay, Afterward, “Freud: A Brief Life,” in *Civilization and Its Discontents*.

Th, 11/3: Freud and Psychoanalysis

**Readings**

**Book:** Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1929), Sections 5–8.

**III. Gender, Memory, and War**

**Week 12: Time, *Duration*, and “Perspectivism”**

T, 11/8: Interwar Dramas: Woolf and Bloomsbury

### **Readings**

**Book:** Virginia Woolf, *To the Lighthouse* (1927), Chapters 1–6.

Th, 11/10: Memory and Duration in Literature and Art

**Book:** Virginia Woolf, *To the Lighthouse* (1927), Chapters 7–13.

### **Viewing**

Works of Cubism from Picasso et al

**Thursday, November 10: Second Paper due on The Nineteenth Century, at the beginning of class.**

### **Week 13: Philosophy between the Wars**

T, 11/15: Martin Heidegger: The Magician from Messkirch

### **Readings**

Simone de Beauvoir, Introduction; Chapter One, Biology, from *The Second Sex* (1949); On the publication of *The Second Sex* (1963).\*

Th, 11/17: French Existentialism

### **Readings**

de Beauvoir, Chapter Two, Psychology and Chapter 3, History, *The Second Sex* (1949).\*

### **Week 14: The French Left and Postwar Politics**

T, 11/22: Friends and Affairs: Camus, Sartre, and de Beauvoir

### **Readings:**

de Beauvoir: from Part II, on the Master Slave Relation, *The Second Sex* (1949); *The Second Sex*, 25 years on, 1976 interview.\*

### **Th, 11/24: THANKSGIVING – NO CLASS**

### **Week 15: Historical Fragments**

T, 11/29: Men in Dark Times and After

### **Readings:**

Paul Celan, *Deathfugue* (1948).\*

Hannah Arendt, Preface, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951).\*



Arendt, Begin “Tradition and the Modern Age,” *Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought* (Penguin, 2006; first ed.1961).\*

Th, 12/1: The End of History?

**Readings:**

Finish Arendt, “Tradition and the Modern Age” if necessary.\*

**Thursday, December 1: Third Paper due on Gender, Memory, and War, at the beginning of class.**

**December 10: Final Exam , 3:30–6:30, MHRA 2211**

### ASSIGNMENTS

To meet the goals of the course, students will write weekly responses to the readings that demonstrate that they have both read and thought about the texts for that week. Students are also required to write two papers (**Due Tuesday, September 27, and Thursday, November 10, at the beginning of class!**) that will demand that they have mastered the key concepts of several bodies of thought and are capable of relating these bodies of thought to one another.

The two required papers will fall within the first two thematic categories: 1) Enlightenment and Romanticism; and 2) The Long Nineteenth Century. Questions will be given the week beforehand. *No later papers will be accepted.*

All students have the option of writing a third paper in the final category, “Gender, Memory, and War.” *Students taking the course for honors will be required to submit one.* (Once the deadline for the third paper has passed, you will have committed to one of the two models for the grading scheme—see below.)

All students will be required to take a final exam, which will also draw heavily on the third thematic section.

### RULES AND PROCEDURES

#### **Late Work**

**No late work is accepted.** All students are required to complete all assignments for the course on the due date specified.

#### **Attendance**

**Attendance at lecture and in sections is mandatory.** You may miss up to three classes throughout the semester without penalty. After you miss three classes, you lose a point for every class missed from your participation grade (see below). **I reserve the right to withdraw you from the course if you miss six or more classes.**

In accordance with new statewide regulations, students are permitted a minimum of two excused absences due to religious observance. If you plan to be absent due to religious observance, please notify me in advance by email.

### **Punctuality**

It is imperative that you come to class on time. The lecture starts at the beginning of the hour and ends ten minutes before the hour on the dot. If you arrive late, you miss vital information about assignments given at the beginning of class. Similarly, it is also appreciated if you do not pack up your things until after the lecture is complete. **In an effort to encourage punctuality, three late arrivals will constitute one absence, and therefore, the removal of one participation point, as described above.**

### **Cell phones & Laptops**

**There are no laptops permitted in this classroom.** Students are encouraged to take notes on paper and transfer your notes to laptops during your exam preparation.

Your cell phone must be turned off before class begins and remain out of view. **If your phone is viewable or goes off in the classroom, you will receive a failing grade for participation/attendance on that day and you will be asked to leave.**

**Students who abuse technology in the classroom risk earning a failing grade for participation/attendance and being removed from the course.**

### **Name Cards**

You will receive a name card on the first day of class. It is your responsibility to keep the name card and bring it to class. You must keep the name card in front of you at all times and should expect to be “cold called” for discussion in lectures and section.

### **Academic Integrity**

All students are expected to abide by the UNCG Honor Code. Please visit the following link: Academic Integrity Policy: <http://academicintegrity.uncg.edu/complete/>. Depending on the severity of the offense, students risk receiving a final grade of F for the course or being expelled from the university.

### **Adverse Weather Conditions**

If you think that the university might be closed due to weather, either call the UNCG Adverse Weather Line at (336) 334-4400 or check the university’s website ([www.uncg.edu](http://www.uncg.edu)). If the university is open, I will hold class.

## **PARTICIPATION AND GRADING**

Attendance and participation is an essential part of this class. Class time will be divided between the instructor’s lectures, which will provide crucial historical context and

thematic overview, and discussions of the texts (reading, viewing, listening) assigned for that week.

**Students will receive guiding questions for the readings and are expected to come to class (both lecture and section) prepared to answer and discuss the guiding questions.** The class goals are to engage one another in friendly debate, to express opinions, and to learn from one another.

**Participation will be noted on a daily basis in accordance with these expectations.**

## OFFICE HOURS

Office hours will be held on Tuesdays from 3:30–5pm. They are an open time when you are welcome to come visit the instructor with questions about the readings and class discussion. You are encouraged to see the instructor, in particular, if you are having difficulty with the readings or speaking in class, or in anticipation of an upcoming paper. If you cannot make the regularly scheduled office hours, please feel free to make another appointment.

**Grading will be weighed according to the following formula:**

### **I. Model one: without third paper**

Attendance (including punctuality)	5%
Participation	10%
Blackboard Posts:	10%
First Paper:	15%
Second Paper:	25%
Final Exam:	35%

### **II. Model two: with third paper**

Attendance (including punctuality)	5%
Participation	10%
Blackboard Posts:	10%
First Paper:	15%
Second Paper:	15%
Third Paper:	20%
Final Exam:	25%

**Have a great semester!**