2014

290-BL Theory of Knowledge: European History II

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Welcome to European History II/Theory of Knowledge Block. In this course, we shall explore the revolutionary trends in modern philosophy concerning human knowledge together with the historical circumstances within which they arose, and over which they exerted influence. Intellectual historians locate the beginning of modern culture in the period of time surrounding the sixteenth century. The European voyages of discovery, the invention of the printing press, the Protestant Reformation, and the rise of capitalism were all symptomatic of a dramatically changing world. Chief among these new trends is the Scientific Revolution. Growth and changes in modern science beginning with Galileo, developed by Newton, and reaching to Darwin in the nineteenth century reshaped the Western world inherited from classical culture of the Greeks, Romans and Renaissance. Traditional ideas concerning religion, Nature, political power and human nature were dramatically recast. Older forms were not displaced without struggle. No longer content to contemplate God’s handiwork in Nature, the new science aimed to control the natural forces of their world, and the technology it created has made the world we inhabit today.

A major element of this process is the emergence of the “public sphere”, so this course will also serve as a detailed introduction into the central concepts of the Philosophy, Politics & the Public honors program. Contemporary theorists of the “the public”; most notably, Jürgen Habermas have argued that this same period of time was crucial for the formation of our notion of “the public sphere”. The Enlightenment and the French Revolution are singled out as especially significant in the development of a new social “space” that is independent of the ruling elites and at the same time greater than the individual’s private experience in the intimacy of the household. As such, this public sphere provides a domain of shared thought and action that can stand in opposition to political regimes. We shall examine the historical emergence of this central domain of modern life, as well as its conceptual structure by weaving Habermas’ thought into our study of these key modern thinkers.

Within the context of the problems of knowledge, our discussions will begin with a focus upon the question of the possibility of scientific knowledge and then proceed to the application of the model of scientific inquiry to the social, political and historical world in the Enlightenment. What is more, we shall examine the attempt to extend scientific modes of inquiry and explanation into the human world with Comte’s positivist sociology and Freud’s rethinking of science in psychoanalysis. This approach will highlight the manner in which developments in the area of human knowledge have influenced the structure of the public sphere. These questions cannot possibly be engaged without sufficient historical content, hence the need for the block format combining history with philosophy. The history aspect of this block course is of crucial importance to what we will be undertaking in philosophy. As a result, we shall be able to better comprehend the current technological world in which we live by understanding the circumstances, concerns, and problems out of which it originated. Our discussions this semester will serve as the backdrop for your further study of the public sphere in the PPP program next year and beyond.
BOOKS & READINGS -- The following readings are required for the course. The articles are available through Blackboard under COURSE DOCUMENTS and are the books are available in the Bookstore in the Gallagher Center.

Books

René Descartes, *The Discourse on Method*
Immanuel Kant, *Perpetual Peace & Other Essays*
G.W.F. Hegel, *Introduction to the Philosophy of History*
Auguste Comte, *Introduction to Positive Philosophy*
Sigmund Freud, *Five Lectures on Psychoanalysis*
Luke Goode, *Jürgen Habermas: Democracy & the Public Sphere*

There are several articles that we will be discussing on the Tutorial Friday classes available on Blackboard under COURSE CONTENT as well.

REQUIREMENTS – Your final grade in this course will be determined by a number of factors, including the quality of your oral work at the Tutorial Friday Sessions, your four Summary Essays, your Oral Final Exam, and on the quality and frequency of your contributions to class discussion in both the history and philosophy parts of Block. These assignments are described in detail as follows:

(1) TUTORIAL FRIDAYS

At Oxford these classes are called “tutorials”, at Cambridge, they are referred to as “supervisions”. The Tutorial has been a standard feature of British university education for many years. First of all, the name “tutorial” does not signify anything remedial or corrective of academic deficiency as it does in the United States. Far from it! In the UK system, it designates an intensively collaborative educational framework characterized by low student-to-teacher ratios (usually ranging from 1:1 to 4:1). The specific structure of the tutorial may vary widely. The standard model involved weekly or biweekly meetings between the faculty member and the students. Students are typically required to prepare a short essay on a specific theme that is either chosen or assigned. Students generally read aloud or summarize their work, after which the tutor and/or fellow students offer comment and critique. The Oxford tutorial is a highly respected educational model that has been praised for the degree of student initiative involved. Skills at critical analysis, oral presentation and creative thinking are fostered in situations where professors and students work in close collaboration. A video sample of an Oxford tutorial session in philosophy appears on Blackboard under COURSE CONTENT.

We will modify this basic model for our course. Our Tutorials will occur during our class meeting on Friday of each week. In groups of three, you will prepare a one-page essay that addresses a specific topic generated from that week’s reading and class discussion. Your Tutorial will take the following format:

1. It will last from 20-30 minutes, during which time your group will sit at the front of the class with me. The remainder of the class will take notes on what is said, and after the 20-30 period will be required to enter the conversation.

2. You will read your essay aloud to the group, after which there will be a discussion initiated by the professor, or by you.

3. The preparation of four summary essays based upon the tutorial discussion in class. These are described below.
TUTORIAL FRIDAY - DATES & TOPICS

Jan. 24: Jürgen Habermas, “The Public Sphere: Encyclopedia Article” (On Blackboard)

Jan. 31: Luke Goode, Jürgen Habermas: Democracy & the Public Sphere, Chapter One – Excavations: The History of a Concept


Feb. 14: British Empiricism: Locke’s Attack on Innate Ideas (On Blackboard)

Feb. 21: British Empiricism: Realist Vs. Phenomenalist Theories of Perception (On Blackboard)

Feb. 28: British Empiricism: Hume’s Theory of Causality (On Blackboard)

Mar. 7: SPRING BREAK

Mar. 14: Locke and Civil Society (On Blackboard)

Mar. 21: The Enlightenment Comes to America: Thomas Jefferson on Public & Private Happiness (On Blackboard)

Mar. 28: Luke Goode, Chapter Three – Reconfigurations: The Public Sphere since Structural Transformation

Apr. 4: Luke Goode, Chapter Four – Mediations: From the Coffeehouse to the Internet Café


Apr. 18: EASTER BREAK

Apr. 25: Nancy Fraser, “Transnationalizing the Public Sphere” (On Blackboard)

May 2: Final Discussion

TUTORIAL FRIDAY - GROUPS & DATES

Ambrus/Dillinger/Herman – Jan 24 and Mar 14
Brown/Henderson/Hogan – Jan 31 and Mar 21
Klusmeier/Leesman/McKinley – Feb 7 and Mar 28
Lang/Liggins/Mills – Feb 14 and Apr 4
Minbiole/Mulcrone – Feb 21 and Apr 11
Moore/Pennebaker/Trianfo – Feb 28 and Apr 25

(2) THE FOUR SUMMARY ESSAYS

Each student is required to write FOUR short essays on Tutorial Friday topics of the student’s choosing (excluding their own presentation topics) during the course of the semester. You may choose any four topics you wish from the entire semester’s list. The papers are due a week after the selected topic appears on the syllabus. The papers are meant to be no more than three to five pages (double spaced) in length and should aim at a critical discussion of the material covered in the Friday Tutorials you choose to write
about. I have included the following guidelines for preparing these papers. Please read through them so as to avoid some of the most common pitfalls that occur in writing.

**PHILOSOPHY DEPARTMENT GRADING STANDARDS:** The standards for grading in the Department of Philosophy are articulated below. You would do well to consult them prior to writing your papers.

A = Exceptional  
B = Good  
C = Satisfactory  
D = Minimum Passing  
F = Failure

"The Philosophy Department further agrees that these letter grades signify the following level of accomplishment by students when given for discursive, written work:

A = work that not merely fully and accurately reproduces class discussion, the main thread in an argument or the main philosophical significance of a text under discussion, but which, having considered arguments and counter-arguments, goes beyond these and indicates a contribution of the student herself or himself, giving evidence of an individual and hence deeper understanding of the material in question.

B = work that shows a more or less complete and exact understanding of the issues, texts, and/or arguments as explained in class, clearly and logically formulated without going beyond such explanations.

C = work that shows basic understanding of the material but with errors, omissions and confusions of either a formal or material nature.

D = work that shows a minimal acquaintance with the material or serious logical and conceptual flaws in formulating responses to the question raised, the argument at issue, or to the philosophical text under discussion.

F = work that shows inadequate acquaintance with texts, issues, or ideas with little or no valid logical argumentation; or, the work is a plagiarism. Cases of plagiarism, which involve the use of published or others' written work without giving credit, must be given F.

Using a paper that is substantially identical to one used by the student in another class is considered academic dishonesty and penalties for submitting such a paper will be the same as those for plagiarism. The department does not mandate grade distributions or curves. The final goal of all of our grading must be fairness to all students and the encouragement of the highest level of achievement possible in each student."

Approved: April 15, 2002; Revised: March 20, 2006

(2) **THE FINAL ORAL EXAM** – There will be a final group oral examination scheduled during exam week. Details of the group composition, and the precise nature of this project will be distributed in April. Oral exam dates & times are as follows:

Wednesday May 7 and Friday May 9; 10:00-11:50am

(4) **CLASS PARTICIPATION** – This is an honors class and thus it requires active participation from everyone on a daily basis. It is not enough to be an engaged auditor in the daily discussions. Rather, you are expected to be prepared for class with regard to the reading and to be willing to become an active participant in the discussion. In order to earn the highest grade in this class, you must be a regular and active contributor to class discussion.

**Attendance & Academic Honesty** --Repeated absence without legitimate excuse communicated to the
professor, or any transgression of academic integrity constitutes ground for failure in the course. On the latter point, the official university policy is in effect:

The pursuit of truth demands high standards of personal honesty. Academic and professional life requires a trust based upon integrity of the written and spoken word. Accordingly, violations of certain standards of ethical behavior will not be tolerated at Xavier University. These include theft, cheating, plagiarism, unauthorized assistance in assignments and tests, unauthorized copying of computer software, the falsification of results and material submitted in reports or admission and registration documents, and the falsification of any academic record including letters of recommendation. All work submitted for academic evaluation must be the student’s own. Certainly, the activities of other scholars will influence all students. However, the direct and unattributed use of another’s efforts is prohibited as is the use of any work untruthfully submitted as one’s own. Penalties for violations of this policy may include one or more of the following: a zero for that assignment or test, an “F” in the course, and expulsion from the University. The dean of the college in which the student is enrolled is to be informed in writing of all such incidents, though the teacher has full authority to assign the grade for the assignment, test, or course. If disputes of interpretation arise, the student, faculty member, and chair should attempt to resolve the difficulty. If this is unsatisfactory, the dean will rule in the matter. As a final appeal, the academic vice president will call a committee of tenured faculty for the purpose of making a final determination.

Office -- My office is located on the second floor of Hinkle Hall, room 210. You can reach me there by phone or you can leave a voice mail message for me at 745-3629. My home telephone number, should you need to contact me, is 841-1912.

Official office hours are:
Tuesday & Thursday 8:30am – 1:00pm
and by appointment
colella@xavier.edu

Schedule of Topics & Readings

Week of January 13th:
Dr. Korros will take the first two meetings to show a film in class, The Return of Martin Guerre. On Friday, we shall begin our study of Descartes. NOTE – please read Part Six of the Discourse first!

Reading: Descartes, Discourse on Method, Part Six

NO CLASS ON MONDAY, JANUARY 20th IN HONOR OF DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.’S BIRTHDAY

In this introduction to the two strands of the course: we shall open with the revolution in theory of knowledge and the definition of the emerging public sphere. We will start with an examination of Descartes’ stated goals in his philosophy. The decay of the Aristotelian – Ptolemaic world-view in science will be discussed together with its overthrow by Galileo. We will make an effort to identify the main features that characterize Modernity and we shall contrast it with the features that were essential to the Classical Mind. We shall begin reading Descartes, paying close attention to his announcement of scientific modernity and his rejection of classical intellectual culture.

Reading: Descartes, Discourse on Method, Parts One – Six

Weeks of January 20th / 27th / February 3rd and 10th

We shall devote these classes to a careful study of Descartes’ Discourse on Method. Emphasis will fall upon his philosophical foundation for science and whether or not the metaphysical positions that he advances are truly necessary for grounding that science.

Reading: Descartes, Discourse on Method, Parts One – Six
Week of February 17th / 24th
This week, we shall examine some of the criticisms of the Cartesian model of knowledge. We will give a general overview of classical British empiricism through key ideas from the works of Francis Bacon, John Locke and David Hume. Topics include the inductive method, the attack against innate ideas, phenomenalism and skepticism. We shall also examine the influence of these ideas on the development of modern political theory.

Reading: TBA on Classical British Empiricism

WEEK OF MARCH 3RD -- SPRING BREAK -- NO CLASSES

Week of March 10th
After examining British Empiricism, we shall examine other developments during eighteenth century philosophy with emphasis upon pre-Revolutionary French ideas, such as is found in the Philosophes and in Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Once this is done, we will be making the transition out of the enlightenment by tracing the development in late eighteenth and early nineteenth century German philosophy. We shall discuss the main ideas of Kant, Hegel and Schopenhauer as our preparation for the study of the nineteenth century.

Reading: Immanuel Kant, *Perpetual Peace & Other Essays*

Weeks of March 17th / 24th
This week marks a thematic shift in the course, as we turn from the knowledge of nature to the knowledge of history. We will focus our attention on Kant’s critical philosophy as it applies to issues dealing with politics and history. Hegel’s philosophical system represents the completion of tendencies that dominated the Enlightenment through the historicizing of the mind and of knowledge. History becomes the creation of Reason as well as the scene in which Absolute Spirit expresses itself as it moves towards ever more rational embodiments.

Reading: Immanuel Kant, *Perpetual Peace & Other Essays*
GWF Hegel, *Introduction to the Philosophy of History*

Week of March 31st
We will spend this week continuing with Hegel and then investigate the legacy of Hegel in the thought of Karl Marx. In particular, we shall examine the manner in which Marx locates the mind and human knowledge within the historical process driven by economic concerns and divided by class struggle. His theory of ideology and of revolutionary ideas will be examined and evaluated as well.

Reading: GWF Hegel, *Introduction to the Philosophy of History*

Week of April 7th
Auguste Comte’s formulation of positive philosophy provides the impetus for a movement that was quite influential in the last decades of the nineteenth century. Herbert Spencer, the great English positivist and evolutionist developed the doctrine in the English-speaking world and was one of the most important thinkers of the day. This attempt to reconstruct all human knowledge on the basis of a scientific model did much to generate the modern social sciences as we know them today. Indeed, at the same time that positivism was so dominant, we find the emergence of psychology, sociology and political science as independent bodies of knowledge.

Reading: Comte, *Introduction to Positive Philosophy*

NO CLASSES APRIL 18 – APRIL 21 – EASTER HOLIDAY
Week of April 14th
Comte’s positive philosophy becomes extraordinarily influential in the late 19th century, especially after the appearance of Darwin’s *Origin of Species* in 1859. Herbert Spencer cast a great shadow over the waning century and stimulated diverse thinkers into a reaction against the growing “scientism” that positivism represented.

Reading: Comte, *Introduction to Positive Philosophy*

Week of April 21st
The course concludes with Sigmund Freud’s intellectual revolution that begins in psychology in the 1890’s and becomes a comprehensive world view in the early twentieth century. Freud has been described as “the last philosophe” and we shall examine his claim to have provided knowledge of human psychology in its social and political implications for what occurs in the public sphere.

Reading: Freud, *Five Lectures on Psychoanalysis*

Week of April 28
Sigmund Freud has been described as “The Last Philosophe” and his thought is viewed as the culmination and ultimate destruction of the premises of The Enlightenment.

Reading: Freud, *Five Lectures on Psychoanalysis*

Week of May – FINAL EXAMINATIONS

APPENDIX: General Suggestions for Writing Papers in Phil 290:

**WHAT TO AVOID IN YOUR WRITING:**

1. Do not summarize what was said in the books!!!! This is the most important thing for you to avoid. Do not tell me that Descartes said this, and then he said that in the book. You can assume that I know what is going on in the text.

2. Do not weaken your claims by using phrases like “It may be my opinion, but I think ...”, or “I am not sure but...”. Neither should your conclusions be weakened by “I think” or “In my opinion”. Conclusions in papers are meant to state something that you believe the evidence supports as having a universal validity. So rather than writing “In conclusion, it is my opinion that Descartes fails to make the case that…”, use the stronger “In conclusion, Descartes fails to make the case that ...”. Be assertive!

3. Avoid using weak verbs such as “Socrates feels that justice is the most important thing in human experience”, or “Descartes feels that the traditional sciences were filled with uncertainty”. FEELS is about as weak as it gets in terms of intellectual convictions. Remember that Socrates was executed for his beliefs, and Descartes spent much of his adult life worried that the Church authorities who put Galileo on trial for holding controversial ideas about the nature of the universe would come after him (Descartes’ philosophy was condemned at the University of Utrecht in 1643, and twenty years later, the Pope had placed Descartes’ works on the Index of Prohibited Books). Locke, Hume and Marx all lived in exile as a result of their ideas, while Freud was widely vilified by the public for his ideas on the place of sexuality in human psychology. People are not willing to face persecution or to risk death because they “feel” that something is the truth. They know it is true, or they argue that it is true. Good strong verb alternatives to use are: Descartes asserts, or maintains, or argues, or believes. NEVER USE THE VERB “FEELS” TO DESCRIBE WHAT DESCARTES OR ANY OTHER PHILOSOPHICAL WRITER BELIEVES!!!!

4. Remember that even short papers are exercises in formal writing. You must always adhere to the standards of formal language and expression. Consequently, do not use slang or conversational language.
Do not abbreviate words in a colloquial manner (such as writing “math” when you mean to write “mathematics”). This is formal writing, it is not supposed to sound like a casual conversation between people.

WHAT TO INCLUDE IN YOUR WRITING:

1. BUILD AN ARGUMENT! BUILD AN ARGUMENT!! BUILD AN ARGUMENT!!! Take a critical position on the issue. This means you should agree or disagree with what Descartes (or any other speaker) is saying and you need to give your reasons for why you agree or disagree. Giving the reasons is the most important part. Oh yes, remember, build an argument!

2. Have a strong first paragraph. The opening paragraph will state a thesis, it will introduce the reader of your essay to what you are going to do. Here is an example from PHIL 100 of recent and fond memory:

   In the Republic, Socrates argues with several others concerning the nature of justice. In Socrates’ mind, their definitions are either too weak or too narrow. He proposes a more complex definition, stating that justice has to do with a harmony in the soul. In this essay, we shall explore Socrates’ definition of justice as harmony in the soul, and we shall offer the reasons why his view is far superior to any other given in Books I and II. We shall show that Socrates’ arguments are well constructed and that his definition of justice offers much more clarity concerning the nature of the moral life.

3. Have a strong concluding paragraph as a close to the essay. Summarize the problem you discussed and the manner in which you discussed it. Re-emphasize your conclusion.

4. Book titles, such as The Discourse on Method, must be either underlined or in italic type. All foreign language words must be in italic type.

5. PROOFREAD! PROOFREAD!! PROOFREAD!!! It is not enough just to run the Spell Check. Make sure that your expression is clear and effective.