History 4412a: European Intellectual History: 1600 to the Present

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This course is a survey of European intellectual history from 1600 to the present. Intellectual history refers to the history of ideas, intellectuals, and their contexts. Course themes will include, but are not limited to, the Scientific Revolution, the Enlightenment, Romanticism, social and political philosophies, modern science, the avant-garde, and postmodernism.

Intellectual historians typically ask questions like:

- How are ideas created? By whom are they created?
- Who counts as an “intellectual”?
- What is the job of an “intellectual”?
- How are ideas received by the public?
- How influential are ideas?
- How do ideas evolve?
- What is the relationship of ideas to the intellectuals who create them?
- What is the relationship of ideas and intellectuals to their historical contexts?

In this course we will ask and answer these questions by reading and writing about primary and secondary European historical sources from 1600 to the present. Please keep these questions in mind as you read each source.

You will have three one-hour exams that correspond to the three units of this course:

Unit 1: The Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries
Unit 2: The Nineteenth Century
Unit 3: The Twentieth Century

The exams are not cumulative. Each exam will be worth 1/3 of your final grade. Exams will contain both identifications and essay questions. An identification should be a concise and specific description of a term that addresses the term’s significance to European history (Why was it important? What difference did it make?). Identifications typically answer 5-7 basic questions: Who? What? When? Where? Why? How? And most importantly: Significance? Essays should be clearly written, logically organized, and thorough. It is imperative that you include specific supporting evidence to reinforce your general claims. Essay answers should demonstrate that you understand the material and that you can synthesize historical data. You
should be able to interpret and explain the relationships among ideas, intellectuals, and contexts in your answer.

The key terms and study questions that occur in each unit and section are intended to prepare you for the exams. Please review these terms and questions before you begin reading. Several questions will require a synthesis of the information from each section in order to answer. I strongly encourage you to familiarize yourself with all of the key terms and to answer all of the study questions for a unit before you take an exam.

Please contact me at SMLandry@email.arizona.edu if you have any questions about the content of the course or the exams.
Books available for purchase from the University of Arizona Bookstore:


Other selected readings available on E-Reserve


Simone de Beauvoir from *The Second Sex* translated by Cat Nilan (Paris: Gallimard, 1997).

The E-Reserves are password protected. The password is: europe

A University of Arizona CatCard is NOT required to access the E-Reserves. The E-Reserve site can be found at: [http://eres.library.arizona.edu/](http://eres.library.arizona.edu/)

I strongly encourage you to read outside of the assigned texts. You will not be penalized if you include information from outside readings in your exam answers. Needless to say, outside reading can help to fill in gaps in the course content or elucidate concepts that you don’t completely understand. A word of caution: while the internet can be a valuable historical resource, you must be cautious of open-source sites (such as Wikipedia) that anyone can edit. They sometimes contain factual errors, omissions, incomplete entries, and bias.
Unit 1: The Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries

The origins of modern science and philosophy may be located in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. During those centuries, European thinkers began to vigorously question man’s relationship to the natural, social, and political worlds and intellectuals developed new methods of inquiry to investigate these questions. The Englishman Francis Bacon advocated an inductive, rather than deductive, method of thinking which served to complement his emphasis on observation and experimentation in the production of knowledge. The French philosopher René Descartes encouraged systemic doubt as a method of inquiry, rejected knowledge received from the past, and expressed desire to understand the natural world in mathematical terms. Thinkers such as Bacon and Descartes perfected new methods for investigating the world that enabled subsequent scientists to make extraordinary discoveries. Enlightenment thinkers championed these early scientists and applied their methods to the study of man and society with an eye toward reforming both along rational principles. In turn, the French revolutionaries, inspired by Enlightenment ideas, radically restructured French society and politics to accord with Enlightenment ideas of human nature. As a result of the ideas and methods of early modern European thinkers, man became the measure of the natural world, society, and government.

Study Questions:

What were the causes and contexts of the Scientific Revolution?

What was the relationship of alchemy and magic to science during the Scientific Revolution?

What was the relationship of religion to science during the Scientific Revolution? How did religion both inspire and inhibit scientific investigation?

Describe the inductive and deductive methods of reasoning. Who were the proponents of both?

What were the social contexts of the Enlightenment?

What was the relationship of religion to the Enlightenment?

What was the relationship of women to the Enlightenment? How were concepts such as nature, virtue, and reason gendered during the Enlightenment?

What was the relationship of the Enlightenment to the French Revolution? How did the form and content of Enlightenment ideas influence the Revolution?

How did Rousseau’s ideas of a social contract, the general will, the sovereign, and a civil religion influence the French revolutionaries, especially Robespierre?
How did the Scientific Revolution, the Enlightenment, and the French Revolution enable intellectuals to reimagine and reform the natural world, society, and government?
The Scientific Revolution represented a changing view of how man understood his place in the natural world. Natural philosophers (what scientists were called at the time) discovered that nature could be rationally understood and controlled. They began to observe, measure, and experiment on the causes and effects of natural phenomena instead of appealing to ancient authorities such as Aristotle or Ptolemy for knowledge of the natural world. This new spirit of investigation and experimentation, along with Bacon and Descartes’ new methods of scientific inquiry, facilitated discoveries in astronomy, physics, chemistry, and human physiology. In the end, science became a new form of knowledge with its own language: mathematics.

Identifications:

*Dialogue on the Two Chief World Systems* (1632)
Empiricism
Galileo Galilei
Isaac Newton
Johannes Kepler
Mechanical Philosophy
Nicholas Copernicus
*Novum Organum* (1620)
*De Revolutionibus* (1543)
*Principia Mathematica* (1687)
René Descartes
Robert Boyle
Robert Hooke
Tycho Brahe
William Harvey
The Enlightenment was a loosely-unified cultural project that existed in multiple forms. These forms differed according to the diverse social and national contexts where the Enlightenment occurred. However, a handful of general Enlightenment principles may be observed among its particular manifestations. These included: a belief that every idea and social institution was open to scrutiny and criticism; programs of gradual and measured social, political, and cultural reform in lieu of revolutionary change; faith in the inevitability of social progress and the perfectibility of man; a belief in rationalism, including inductive logic and the empirical method, and the attendant belief that the application of reason to social problems was useful for their resolution; the belief that the process of rational communication and sociability was as important to realizing enlightenment as were enlightened principles; anti-clericalism, or opposition to the social influence of institutional churches—this included criticism of the religious fanaticism encouraged by some clergy members in order to maintain their influence over a superstitious laity. Anti-clericalism could also manifest itself as an antipathy to the clergy or in outright atheism.

The Enlightenment was primarily a movement of intellectual elites whose ideas did not at first penetrate all of society. However, during the late eighteenth century, popularizers of enlightened thought appeared and made enlightened ideas accessible to the increasingly literate masses. Although it was a movement of intellectual elites, in theory the Enlightenment was open to all educated individuals. This was not always the case in practice, as women, Jews, non-Westerners, and lower-class men were sometimes excluded from enlightened conversation.

Identifications:

Adam Smith
Cesare Beccaria
Charles-Louis de Secondat, Baron de Montesquieu
Deism
David Hume
Denis Diderot
Enlightened Despotism
Immanuel Kant
Jean-Jacques Rousseau
John Locke
Mary Wollstonecraft
The *Encyclopédie* (1745-1780)
The “Republic of Letters”
Voltaire
Unit 1: The Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries

Section 3: The French Revolution and the End of the Old Regime

Read: Stromberg *European Intellectual History since 1789* pgs. 1-30; Baumer *Main Currents of Western Thought* pgs. 490-495.

The French Revolution represented a radical break with the Europe of the Old Regime. During the Revolution noble privileges were abolished, the king was deposed and executed along with scores of nobleman, and Christianity was replaced with a Cult of Reason. One could not imagine a more revolutionary break with the past. European intellectuals were variously aghast, cautiously reserved, or overjoyed at the developments in France. Some saw the Revolution as a consequence of the critical spirit of the Enlightenment. One could not maintain social order if one perpetually criticized throne, altar, and society in the way that the philosophes had. Other thinkers celebrated the Revolution as a new and exciting age of European history that heralded a new era of emancipation. However, all parties agreed that the impact of the Revolution would be extraordinary and that the Old Regime, for better or for worse, had effectively passed away.

Identifications:

Declaration of the Rights of Man
Declaration of the Rights of Woman
Edmund Burke
Girondins
Jacobins
Maximilien Robespierre
*Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790)
Unit 2: The Nineteenth Century

The epicenter of the Enlightenment was in France. "Enlightened" French thought was imported to other European nations by the revolutionary armies who forced French ideas and culture onto the nations they conquered. After the revolution and the deposition of Napoleon, intellectuals from those conquered nations typically rejected the Enlightenment and French thought as French cultural imperialism. Romanticism, with its emphasis on intuition and feeling rather than the cold rationalism of the Enlightenment, gradually replaced Enlightenment thought.

The Revolution’s radical promises of liberty, equality, and fraternity went unfulfilled as the Revolution faltered and the French monarchy was restored in 1815. Nevertheless, there was no going back to the society of the Old Regime. The French Revolution and Napoleon had allowed intellectuals to rethink how Europeans related to society and to the state. Classes replaced orders as the primary categories of social organization. Citizens replaced subjects as the constituents of modern states. New forms of social and political relationships were imagined and passionately (and often violently) debated during the nineteenth century. The intellectuals active during this “age of ideologies” sought to understand man’s place in a completely novel industrializing and modernizing European society. New developments in science further complicated man’s understanding of his place in the natural world. By the end of the century, European thinkers began to doubt that progress was inexorable and a wave of cultural pessimism set in that would persist through the twentieth century.

Study Questions:

What were the causes and contexts of European Romanticism? How did Romantic intellectuals react to the Enlightenment and the French Revolution?

Compare and contrast Romanticism in France and England.

Describe and contextualize the ideologies and ideologues of nineteenth-century Conservatism, Liberalism, Socialism, and Nationalism.

What is utilitarianism? How did the utilitarians propose to order society and government?

Describe the idea of progress in the philosophies of Hegel, Comte, and Marx.

What were the intellectual origins of Marx’s philosophy?

Compare and contrast the sociologies of Emile Durkheim and Max Weber.

Describe and contextualize Darwin’s evolutionary biology.
What was the relationship of religion to Darwin’s evolutionary biology?

Was there any relationship between nineteenth-century nationalism and racism? Describe.

How were Darwin’s ideas appropriated by “social” Darwinists and “scientists” of race?

Compare and contrast realism and naturalism in art and literature.

Describe and contextualize Nietzsche’s thought.

Describe and contextualize Freud’s thought.

How can Freud’s thought be read to undermine the Enlightenment idea of the rational subject?

What were the causes for European optimism before the fin de siècle? Why did this confidence in inexorable progress give way to dissolving certainties and manic anxiety?
Unit 2: The Nineteenth Century

Section 1: Romanticism

Read: Stromberg *European Intellectual History since 1789* pgs. 30-43; Baumer *Main Currents of Western Thought* pgs. 463-490, 495-505.

Romanticism was the intellectual movement that followed the Enlightenment. The Romantics emphasized feeling and emotion over reason. They sought to move beyond the descriptive to the emotive. Instead of explaining and rationalizing life or nature, the Romantics sought to experience it deeply. They emphasized action and experience over thought and rational contemplation. Romanticism was also a reaction to the failure of the French Revolution. The Revolution was supposed to usher in a new utopian society but it did not deliver. The Romantics still longed for this new society, but a gap existed between their ideals and reality. This feeling of unfulfilled longing or unfulfilled expectations was a theme that recurred throughout Romanticism. The Romantics also stressed inwardness. They preferred to probe the human psyche rather than engage in social criticism. They wished to remake the world, but rather than reform society from the top down, the Romantics sought to reform the individual from the inside out. The individual could then heroically change the world. Accordingly, Romanticism was an intellectual and aesthetic program that represented a withdrawal from politics. The Romantics sought to make a revolution in human consciousness rather than in politics. Romanticism was not necessarily a complete rejection of Enlightenment reason; the Romantics wanted to make reason less dry and more poetic, to synthesize reason and emotion. Accordingly, it may be useful to think of Romanticism as the Enlightenment through an aesthetic filter.

Identifications:

Caspar David Friedrich
Friedrich Schiller
Germaine de Staël
Johann Gottfried von Herder
René de Chateaubriand
Samuel Taylor Coleridge
The Sublime
William Blake
William Wordsworth
Unit 2: The Nineteenth Century

Section 2: Nineteenth-Century Ideologies

Read: Stromberg *European Intellectual History since 1789* pgs. 44-102, 159-187; Baumer *Main Currents of Western Thought* pgs. 505-562; Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels *Manifesto of the Communist Party*.

Rousseau quipped that because society was man-made, it was appropriate for man to remake society as he saw fit. The French Revolution was the first significant realization of this principle. The radical break with the past that the French Revolution symbolized allowed intellectuals to completely rethink how society should now be ordered. This accounts for the proliferation of new social and political philosophies during the nineteenth century. Nineteenth-century European intellectuals debated such questions as: what is the best way for people to get along with each other in a modern society? How best to organize a state? What were the forms of society and government appropriate to the nature of humanity? How best to understand man’s place in modern society? They also debated and criticized the consequences of the rapid industrialization of European society. While some intellectuals criticized the social upheavals caused by industrialization others saw industrialization as an unmistakable sign of progress.

The Revolutions of 1848 served to focus the concentration of nineteenth-century social and political thinkers. During the 1848 revolutions the increasingly powerful middle class agitated for liberal reforms and expansion of the franchise. The keywords of liberty, equality, and fraternity were still fresh in the minds of the 1848 generation. This generation of revolutionaries hoped to realize what the French Revolution had promised. However, middle class revolutionaries faced opposition not only from the European nobility but also from a new and growing social class born from the industrial revolution: the proletariat.

Identifications:

Auguste Comte
Charles Fourier
Comte de Bonald
*Condition of the Working Class in England* (1845)
Emile Durkheim
Fabian Socialism
Friedrich Engels
Georges Sorel
Giuseppe Mazzini
Henri de Saint-Simon
Jeremy Bentham
John Stuart Mill
Joseph de Maistre
Karl Marx
Max Weber
Mikhail Bakunin
Pierre-Joseph Proudhon
Positivism
Robert Owen
Theodor Herzl
*The Communist Manifesto* (1848)
The Young Hegelians
Utilitarianism
Utopian Socialism
Unit 2: The Nineteenth Century

Section 3: Nineteenth-Century Science

Read: Stromberg *European Intellectual History since 1789* pgs. 103-131; Baumer *Main Currents of Western Thought* pgs. 563-610.

The inquisitive spirit of the Enlightenment survived in nineteenth-century science. Most nineteenth-century Europeans considered scientific and technological innovation as signs of inexorable progress. The embodiment of this progressive spirit was the 1851 Crystal Palace Exhibition in London. This exhibition showcased the most advanced European science and technology of the day. However, the dizzying pace of scientific and industrial innovation during the nineteenth-century produced both excitement and anxiety. Science could be a herald of progress but it was also cynically invoked to justify the oppression of social minorities. Nineteenth-century discoveries and their implications for society and religion were also hotly debated. Did science, and especially Darwin’s theory of evolution, preclude the existence of God? Or point to signs of a benevolent creator? Did it contradict scripture or were science and religion compatible? These were just a few of the questions debated by nineteenth-century intellectuals on the relationship of science to society, religion, and man’s place in the world.

Identifications:

Alfred Russel Wallace
Charles Darwin
Charles Lyell
Eugenics
Francis Galton
Herbert Spencer
HMS *Beagle*
Houston Stewart Chamberlain
James Clerk Maxwell
Jean Lamarck
Natural Selection
Social Darwinism
*The Descent of Man* (1871)
*The Origin of Species* (1859)
Thomas Henry Huxley
Thomas Malthus
Unit 2: The Nineteenth Century

Section 4: The Fin de Siècle

Read: Stromberg *European Intellectual History since 1789* pgs. 132-158; Baumer *Main Currents of Western Thought* pgs. 610-641.

The late nineteenth century, or fin de siècle (French: “end of the century”), was an era of contradiction. Europeans maintained both a naïve faith in science—it was thought that science could answer any and all questions put to it, and indeed that it was on the verge of doing so—and a deep pessimism about the direction of European society and culture, widely believed to be in a state of decay. The era was one of great opulence and wealth. Standards of living rose and a leisure class emerged. But this era was also one of the crowd, of mass society, overpopulation, and urban poverty. Artists and authors chronicled the lives of the ordinary and the poor who inhabited this new mass society. Some European thinkers simply diagnosed the decadence of late nineteenth-century European society and culture. Others proposed radical reconstructions of society to alleviate the poor conditions caused by living in mass society. Some even celebrated the decline of European culture and the opportunity to create new cultural forms. During the fin de siècle the human self became a legitimate object of social and scientific analysis. The social sciences were organized and professionalized. Europeans examined themselves and their “Others” through art, literature, philosophy, and psychology and discovered fragmented selves. And all the while the continent moved perilously closer to the catastrophic twentieth century.

Identifications:

*Art pour l’art*
- Charles Baudelaire
- Emile Zola
- Friedrich Nietzsche
- George Bernard Shaw
- Gustave Flaubert
- Gustave LeBon
- Henri Bergson
- Henrik Ibsen
- Leo Tolstoy
- Max Nordau
- Modernism
- Naturalism
- Nihilism
- Realism
- Relativism
Sigmund Freud
Symbolism
Wilhelm Dilthey
Unit 3: The Twentieth Century

For the first decade of the twentieth century, the arts and sciences flourished, standards of living rose, and European politics remained relatively stable. The French called these years the Belle Époque, or beautiful era. But this cultural flourish did not last. Innovation and progress gave way to self-destructive impulses that ended in two world wars and genocide. Forms of social and political organization inspired by the French Revolution—liberal democracy and social democracy—were rejected as effete by twentieth-century ideologues who replaced them with authoritarian state-worship and brutal totalitarianism. Postwar intellectuals were then left with the impossible task of coming to terms with two world wars and the attempted extermination of an entire race of people. Many expressed an understandable aversion to ideology and politics and retreated into other endeavors. Toward the end of the century postmodernist intellectuals began to interrogate the foundations of the two most prominent modern metanarratives: science and progress. Many wondered how we could maintain credulity toward these metanarratives in the face of the war and genocide of the twentieth century. Science and technology had facilitated the carnage caused by the wars. And almost no one would claim that the two world wars and the Holocaust represented progress. Postmodernism has left many thinkers running for their first principles as the last four hundred years of Western intellectual life is called into question.

Study Questions:

Describe and contextualize the innovations in art, literature, and science during the early twentieth century.

What were the intellectual origins of the First World War?

Describe the intellectual reactions to the First World War and its aftermath.

What was the relationship of religion to the twentieth-century “age of anxiety”?

In what ways can Freud’s The Future of an Illusion be read as a psychoanalysis of modern religion?

In what ways can Freud’s Civilization and Its Discontents be read as a psychoanalysis of modern society?

Describe and contextualize fascism in Italy and Germany.

Describe and contextualize Einstein’s thought.

How did the special and general theories of relativity undermine Newtonian cosmology?
What were the political responsibilities of twentieth-century intellectuals according to Benda, Koestler, Sartre, and Camus? Did twentieth-century intellectuals live up to those responsibilities?

Why did interwar and postwar intellectuals become disillusioned by Communism?

Describe the intellectual reactions to the Second World War and its aftermath.

Describe and contextualize existentialism.

Describe and contextualize postmodernism.
Unit 3: The Twentieth Century

Section 1: The Avant-Garde in Art, Science, and Politics

Read: Stromberg European Intellectual History since 1789 pgs. 188-248; Baumer Main Currents of Western Thought pgs. 647-677, 684-793.

Avant-Garde artists and intellectuals rejected traditional aesthetic principles for new forms of expression that were increasingly abstract. Some rejected the distinction between art and non-art altogether. Indeed, life itself could be aestheticized. Oscar Wilde admonished his fellow Europeans to “either be a work of art, or wear a work of art”. The influence of non-Western culture on art and literature grew. New forms of mass media emerged to reach inhabitants of a mass society. Political propaganda was one form of mass media that reflected the aestheticization of politics, the tendency to conduct politics as if it was a form of art. Alienation from society and self as a result of living in mass society became a recurring theme in early twentieth-century European thought. Individual and social life became increasingly fragmented as new forms of art were created to reflect this social fragmentation. Revolutionary new discoveries in science turned the Newtonian universe upside down. The undermining of traditional scientific assumptions complemented the rejection of traditional aesthetic principles.

European culture flourished during the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century but anxiety over what the future held for European culture still remained. Cultural pessimism ruled the day. Some argued that war was the only cure for such pessimism. War could heroically revive a decadent Western culture. A kind of naïve enthusiasm accompanied the outbreak of the First World War. This enthusiasm was notably absent from the Second World War. It was replaced by a war and world-weariness that expressed itself in postwar thought.

Identifications:

Albert Einstein
Carl Jung
Death of God Theology
Ernest Rutherford
Frankfurt School
Franz Kafka
Friedrich von Hayek
Futurism
James Joyce
Karl Barth
Julien Benda
Leon Trotsky
Ludwig von Mises
Ludwig Wittgenstein
Marcel Proust
Martin Heidegger
Max Planck
Mein Kampf (1924)
V.I. Lenin
Werner Heisenberg
Unit 3: The Twentieth Century

Section 2: Postwar Thought

Read: Stromberg *European Intellectual History since 1789* pgs. 249-305; Baumer *Main Currents of Western Thought* pgs. 677-683; Simone de Beauvoir *The Second Sex*.

Postwar intellectuals sought to come to terms with the difficult questions posed by the Second World War. Many who were not busily engaged with trying to answer the question “what went wrong?” had descended into a postwar depression and proclaimed the absurdity, hopelessness, and ultimate meaningless of all of life. This postwar depression was accompanied by an increasing skepticism of ideology and politics on the part of the intellectual left. The failure of the 1968 Revolutions pushed the intellectual left further from politics as they took the so-called “cultural turn”. Social critique and cultural subversion replaced political activism as the primary endeavor of the intellectual left. Finally, the increased accessibility of higher education and culture during the postwar period blurred the lines between high and popular culture. Accordingly, art and literature were increasingly produced for popular consumption.

Identifications:

Existentialism
Jean-Paul Sartre
Second-Wave Feminism
Simone de Beauvoir
The Green Revolution
*The Second Sex* (1949)
T.S. Eliot
Unit 3: The Twentieth Century

Section 3: Postmodernism

Read: Stromberg *European Intellectual History since 1789* pgs. 306-340.

Postmodernism is a set of ideas that spans many disciplines and represents a reaction to modernism. Modernism involved a probing beneath the surface to find truer and more authentic meaning. Postmodernism is a celebration of superficiality, lack of depth, and style over substance. Forms of expressions in postmodern art include pastiche, kitsch, self-reference, and the dissolution of the boundary between high and low culture. Postmodern architecture borrows from different styles and represents a turn away from modernist functionality. Postmodern philosophy espouses anti-foundationalism and anti-essentialism, relativism, and recognizes the social construction of knowledge. Postmodernism has been understood by some thinkers to be an expression of a dangerous new cynicism, a turn towards uncritical inwardness, or an acceptance of the shallow consumer society cultured Europeans had long identified with America. Other critics darkly warned against post-modernism’s nihilistic and anti-humanist implications.

Identifications:

Claude Lévi-Strauss
Deconstruction
Jacques Derrida
Jean Francois Lyotard
Michel Foucault
Structuralism
The New Left
The New Right