

PH 306: 19th Century Philosophy

State, Science, Subjects



*

Skidmore College
Spring Semester, 2012
M/W 2:30-4:30 PM
Tisch 208

Professor William Lewis
e-mail: wlewis@skidmore.edu
office: Ladd 216, phone x5402
Office Hours: Tues/Thurs XXXX

Seminar Introduction

In this course, we will look at how 19th century philosophy continued with the problems and methods set for it in the modern period and why and how these methods and problems were subject to change, variation, and philosophical development given the historical context in which they were deployed. We will also look at the way in which 19th Century philosophical ideas went on to influence the way we think in the 20th and 21st centuries.

*"The Wealth of Nations: an attempt to remove every copy from every Glasgow library", 2010 by Katie McCain.

Given that the 19th Century in Europe, England, and the United States was very fertile and diverse philosophically and witnessed the professionalization of the discipline as well as the wide dissemination of philosophical journals, lectures, and ideas, there is much material from which this seminar might choose. In order to narrow this material down and to look at the way in which the historical context changed philosophy (and how philosophy changed the historical context), we will look at the area where historical changes most inscribed themselves; that is, on philosophers' ideas about the human subject, on technology and science, and about the way in which this knowledge might be used to regulate society in the best way.

Seminar Goals

In this class, you will work to understand the ideas and arguments of some of the major figures in 19th Century Philosophy and to develop your own ideas about the topics and problems the seminar discusses. Along the way, we will improve our ability to read original philosophical texts, to develop an informed opinion about them, to engage in a philosophical discussion with our peers, and to communicate these opinions in writing. You will also to develop an original research project that takes into account relevant primary and secondary sources and that accurately applies philosophical methods to answering the seminar's animating questions.

Required Texts

Course Packet

Class Format and Expectations

An advanced seminar, this course demands much participation and independent initiative and research. It is imperative that you be prepared each day to discuss the assigned readings and supplemental research. As these are very difficult texts, sufficient preparation entails going over the texts multiple times.

The class will consist of discussions that aim at: (a) gaining an understanding of the text(s) at hand; and (b) relating the texts to other philosophical works/philosophies with which you are acquainted or with other parts of your experience.

For each class meeting, it is expected that you will arrive having formulated an informal response to the reading(s) to be discussed that day. These responses should contain a brief summary of the author(s) points (noting key passages, concepts, moments, etc.) and should then extend to the formulation of original questions or comments. These can be questions regarding your own understanding of the text. Alternately, these comments can be critical of the text, supportive of its argument, or (best) can link various texts together and/or apply their insights. You should also work to compare the arguments, concepts, and methodology of that day's texts to other philosophical works with which you are familiar or with other parts of your experience. In addition to this basic preparation, I will often direct you to reflect more deeply upon a specific aspect of a text or to compare texts for what each says about a specific idea or problem. This directed reflection should also appear in your comments.

For select classes, each of us will be called on to relate their response to the class and to get discussion going. More specific instructions will be given in class.

Many of the ideas and texts that we are dealing with in this class are hard to understand on our own. Because of this and because this class includes discussion and discussions need participants, attendance is mandatory and you are expected to take part in all class discussions. This aspect of your performance will be reflected in a portion of your grade that reflects its overall importance to the class and that includes the informal presentation of your "responses" to each text. This grade is based upon both the quality and quantity of your participation.

Assignments and Value

5% Research Assignment: "Whose 19th Century"

10% In-Class Presentation

20% Class Participation (see above for expectations)

45% Paper #1

25% Paper #2

To pass the class, all assignments must be completed in the order assigned. No late assignments will be accepted without express permission of the instructor obtained at least 24 hours before the assignment's due date. Violations of the Skidmore College Honor Code will result in an "F" for a class grade as well as all penalties imposed by the Honor's Council.

Note

I strongly encourage you to see me if, at any time, you are having problems with the readings, with understanding the class discussions, or if you just wish to further discuss issues raised in the class. I am willing to spend time with you in person to help you get as much out of the course as you desire.

Schedule*

(*schedule is subject to change based on class needs and interests)

Week 1, January 22-28

Introduction

Tuesday

Introduction: "Whose 19th Century?"

••Short Research Paper Assigned••

Thursday

Research assignment discussion

••Short Research Assignment Due••

Week 2, January 29-February 4

Kant, Critique, and Cosmopolis

Tuesday

•Kant, "An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?"

Thursday

•Kant, "Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Intent"

→Discussion leader: Lewis.

Week 3, February 5-11

The French Revolution, Freedom, and Reason
--

Tuesday

•Declaration of the Rights of Man, 3 versions

•de Gouges, Declaration of the Rights of Woman

•Optional: Short History of the French Revolution:

<http://chnm.gmu.edu/revolution/chap1a.html>)

Thursday

- Robespierre, "Terror Is the Order of the Day"
 - Robespierre, "On Political Morality"
 - Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*
- Discussion leader: _____

Week 4, February 12-18

German Idealism

Tuesday

- Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, “The Enlightenment”
 - Optional: Pinkard, “Notes on the Translation”
http://web.mac.com/titpaul/Site/Phenomenology_of_Spirit_page.html
- Discussion leader: _____

Thursday

- Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, “Absolute Freedom and Terror.”
- Optional: Comay. “Dead Right: Hegel and the Terror”

Week 5, February 19-25

Tuesday

Required:

- Hegel: *Philosophy of Right*, ¶1-2, 4, 31-70

Thursday

- Hegel: *Philosophy of Right*, (selections) [1821], ¶231-259, 341-360

→Discussion leader: _____

•••Paper #1 Assigned•••

- How to write a philosophy paper•

Week 6, February 26-March 3

French Utopianism and Positivism

Tuesday

- Saint-Simon, *Letters from an Inhabitant of Geneva to His Contemporaries*

^aBerlin. "Saint-Simon"

Thursday

- Fourier, "Accusation of the Uncertain Sciences"
- Fourier, "Politics and Poverty"
- Fourier, "On Economic Liberalism"
- Fourier, "Rise of Commerce and the Birth of Political Economy"
- Fourier, "Indices and Methods which led to the Discovery"
- Fourier, "The Phalanstery"
- Fourier "Administrative Institutions and Practices"

→Discussion leader: _____

Week 7, March 4-10

Tuesday

- Comte, *A General View of Positivism*, Chapter 1

→Discussion leader: _____

Thursday

- Bourdeau, Michel, "Auguste Comte"

Week 8, March 11-17

Tuesday

Spring Break

Thursday

Spring Break

Week 9, March 18-24

Utilitarianism, Science, and Ethical Progress

Tuesday

- Mill, "On the Definition of Political Economy"

Thursday

- Mill, *On Liberty*, Chapter 1

→Discussion leader: _____

Week 10, March 25-31

Tuesday

- Mill, *On Liberty*, Chapters 2 & 3

→Discussion leader: _____

Thursday

Mill, On Liberty, Chapters 4 & 5

•••Paper #1 Due•••

Week 11, April 1-7

Marx, Engels and Political Economy

Tuesday

- Smith, "Wealth of Nations," selections [1776]
- Ricardo, "On the Principles of Political Economy and Taxation" [1821]

Thursday

- Marx, Letter to Anenkov [1846]
 - Marx, *Poverty of Philosophy*, selections
- Discussion leader: _____

Week 12, April 8-14

Tuesday

- Engels, *Socialism: Utopian & Scientific*, parts 1 & 2 [1880]
- Discussion leader: _____

Thursday

- Engels, *Socialism: Utopian & Scientific*, part 3 [1880]
- Paper #2 Assigned•••

Week 13, April 15-21

Darwin in America

Tuesday

- Sumner, *What the Social Classes Owe to Each Other*, Introduction and Chapters 1, 2, 5, 8, 11
- Discussion leader: _____

Thursday

- Ward, *Applied Sociology*, Preface and Chapters 1-5

→Discussion leader: _____

Week 14, April 22-28

Tuesday

- Ward, *Applied Sociology*, Chapters 6 (page 50 only), 7

→Discussion leader: _____

Thursday

- Ward, *Applied Sociology*, Chapter 10 (pages 224-261, 274-276)

Week 15, April 29-May 5

Tuesday

- Ward, *Applied Sociology*, Chapter 12

Thursday

- Study Day

Week 16, May 6-12

- Paper #2 due, date TBD•••