

PHIL 130: Philosophy and Persons

John Felice Rome Center

Fall 2019

Tuesdays & Thursdays | 3:45-5:00pm

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Office Hours: Tue./Thu., 1:30-2:30pm (by appointment)

Course Description

This introductory core course is designed not only to acquaint the student with some of the classical themes and topics in Western philosophy, but also to show how closely Western philosophy has been entwined with all other cultural expressions throughout history.

Thus this course has a historical trajectory, which is divided into two blocks. The concept of Enlightenment and the birth of the idea of a secular and ever-increasing Progress during the French Enlightenment mark the divide between the two. The first block has two sections. The first one is dedicated to the pre-modern age. Our primary goal here is to obtain a basic grasp of three paradigms on human nature that succeeded one another in the Western intellectual tradition: the primacy of contemplative life in ancient Greece, theocentrism during the Middle Ages, anthropocentrism and its primacy of active life during the Renaissance. We will then address the elements that gave birth to the modern age, focusing on Descartes' rebuttal of all previous pseudo-sciences in favor of a new mathematical method.

In the second block of the course we will first analyze the idea that a culture unchained from prejudice and authority can and will transform society for the better. We will pay special attention to Condorcet's paradigmatic philosophy of history before comparing it to Rousseau's critique of the positive role of culture for the development of humankind, as well as his ground-breaking analysis of the origin of inequality.

This will allow us to appreciate the different but equally fundamental theories of Kant and Marx on human nature, the meaning of history, and the possibility of positive progress for humankind.

In the final classes we will contrast his theory with Freud's pessimistic view, according to which, on the one hand, egoism is ineradicable, and, on the other hand, discontent is an unavoidable consequence of civilization as such.

Learning Outcomes

On completion of the course students should be able to demonstrate an understanding of the various approaches of the philosophical questions related to what it means to be human, with attention to the historical and conceptual development of these questions, and be able to articulate some of the major problems and responses central to this area of philosophy.

This course should also enable students to:

- (a) distinguish alternative paradigms on human nature;
- (b) look for and appreciate the reasons given in support of the different views, to assess the forcefulness of the challenge that each poses for the others, and to determine how they also challenge unexamined presuppositions in our own culture;
- (c) engage in dialogue with great philosophers, paying close attention to their meaning, their reasons, their concerns, their vision;
- (d) insert their own reflections into the dialogue;
- (e) differentiate among historical and contemporary perspectives about humanity with a view to fashioning a humane and just world;
- (f) recognize the premises for a given conclusion or viewpoint, identify unexamined presuppositions, appreciate astute insights, expose vulnerabilities in established positions.

Required Texts/Materials

Assigned readings posted on Sakai;

René Descartes, *Discourse on the Method* (available online);

Nicolas de Condorcet, *Sketch of a Historical Tableau of the Progress of the Human Kind* (available online);

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on the Sciences and Arts* and *Discourse on the Origin and Foundations of Inequality among Mankind* (available online);

Immanuel Kant, *Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose* and *Conjectural Beginning of Human History* (available online);

Karl Marx, *Selected Writings* (ed. by L.H. Simon), Hackett Publishing Company, 1994;

Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents* (available online).

Attendance Policy

In accordance with the JFRC mission to promote a higher level of academic rigor, all courses adhere to the following absence policy. Prompt attendance, preparation and active participation in course discussions are expected from every student.

- For all classes meeting once a week, students cannot incur more than one unexcused absence.
- For all classes meeting twice a week, students cannot incur more than two unexcused absences.
- For all classes meeting three times a week, students cannot incur more than two unexcused absences.

This course meets twice a week, thus a total of two unexcused absences will be permitted. Unexcused absences beyond these will result in 1% lowering of the final course grade, for every absence after the “approved limit”.

Assessment Components

- Midterm Exam (in-class test) 40 %
- Final Exam (take-home paper) 40 %
- Participation 20 %

Students will occasionally be required to write reflection/response papers on topics discussed in class.

Grading

94-100: A

90-93: A-

87-89: B+

84-86: B

80-83: B-

77-79: C+

74-76: C

70-73: C-

67-69: D+

60-66: D

59 or lower: F

Academic Honesty

Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty are unacceptable at the JFRC and will be dealt with in accordance with Loyola University Chicago’s guidelines. Please familiarize yourself with Loyola’s standards here: http://www.luc.edu/academics/catalog/undergrad/reg_academicintegrity.shtml.

You are responsible to comply with the LUC Student Handbook.

Late or Missed Assignments

Late or missed assignments will not be accepted for grading without the authorization of the instructor.

Accessibility Accommodations

Students registered with the Student Accessibility Center requiring academic accommodations should contact the Office of the Dean at the John Felice Rome Center, the first week of classes.

Course Schedule

Date	Topic(s)	Assignment
Tue. 09/03	Introduction to the course	
Thu. 09/05	The birth of philosophy and the primacy of contemplative life I	Plato, <i>Republic</i> and <i>Theaetetus</i> (excerpts)
Tue. 09/10	The birth of philosophy and the primacy of contemplative life II	Aristotle, <i>Metaphysics</i> and <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> and <i>Physics</i> (excerpts)
Thu. 09/12	Theocentrism and the linear conception of time I	Augustine, <i>To Simplicianus</i> and <i>The City of God</i> (excerpts)
Tue. 09/17	Theocentrism and the linear conception of time II; The dignity of Man I	Augustine, <i>The City of God</i> and <i>Confessions</i> (excerpts); Salutati, Manetti, Alberti (selections)
Thu. 09/19	The dignity of Man II; Introduction to the Modern Age	Pico, Ficino (selections); Galilei, Leopardi (selections)
Tue. 09/24	A new universal method	Descartes, <i>Discourse on the Method</i> (parts 1-2)
Thu. 09/26	Against prejudice and authority	Voltaire, <i>Philosophical Dictionary</i> ("Fanaticism" "Prejudice", "Toleration"); Kant, <i>Answer to the Question "What is Enlightenment?"</i> (excerpt); Condorcet, <i>Sketch of a Historical Tableau of the Progress of the Human Kind</i> (excerpt)
Tue. 10/01	An optimistic view on progress	Condorcet, <i>Sketch of a Historical Tableau of the Progress...</i> (excerpt)
Thu. 10/03	Rousseau	<i>Discourse on the Sciences and Arts</i> ; <i>Discourse on the Origin and Foundations of Inequality among Mankind</i> (Preface)
Tue. 10/08	Review class	



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Date	Topic (s)	Assignment
Thu. 10/10	Midterm exam	
Tue. 10/22	Rousseau	<i>Discourse on the Origin and Foundations of Inequality among Mankind (I part)</i>
Thu. 10/24	Rousseau	<i>Discourse on the Origin and Foundations of Inequality among Mankind (II part)</i>
Fri. 10/25	Kant	<i>Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose (I part)</i>
Tue. 10/29	Kant	<i>Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose (II part); Conjectural Beginning of Human History (I part)</i>
Thu. 10/31	Kant; Introduction to Marx	<i>Conjectural Beginning of Human History (II part)</i>
Tue. 11/05	Marx: Alienation	Manuscript on "Alienated Labor"
Thu. 11/07	Movie day	
Tue. 11/12	Marx: Critique of ideology	<i>On the Jewish Question</i> (excerpt: pp. 15-21); <i>German Ideology</i> (excerpts: pp. 111-113 and pp. 129-132)
Thu. 11/14	Marx: Philosophy of history	<i>German Ideology</i> (excerpts: pp. 103-104, 115-126, 132-142; 144-153); <i>Communist Manifesto</i> (part I)
<u>Fri. 11/15</u>	<u>"Jolly" class</u>	
Tue. 11/19	Freud's <i>Civilization and its Discontents</i>	§§ 1-2
Thu. 11/21	Freud's <i>Civilization and its Discontents</i>	§§ 3-5
Tue. 11/26	Freud's <i>Civilization and its Discontents</i>	§§ 6-7
Tue. 12/03	Class debates	
Thu. 12/05	Class debates	
Thu. 12/12 (to be confirmed)	Final exam	