PHIL 112: Introduction to Modern Philosophy

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Description:

The course is an introduction to philosophy and a survey of a few central aspects of modern European philosophy which has mostly evolved around epistemology and metaphysics from Descartes to the present. We will sample that evolution and its transformation from subjective consciousness and certainty (Descartes, Locke, Hume) to social practices and history in German Idealism (Kant, Hegel, Marx). The final third of the course will look at the nature of knowledge and understanding from a "post-modern" perspective visible in Nietzsche, Pragmatism, Arendt, and Heidegger.

The "Flammarion Engraving"

The readings are Eurocentric and selective; much is left out. Nevertheless, this is an introductory course, so students will be provided an introduction to several themes and topics: epistemology and skepticism, rationalism and empiricism, society and history, genealogy and deconstruction -- in short, it is a philosophical course about Modernity.

Evaluation:

As a survey course, the grade will be based on the following components. Test dates are subject to change; the exam date will be assigned later by the university.

- Class attendance and participation - 5%
- Weekly reading quizzes on Mondays (on the Nietzsche text) - 10%
- A test over Part I - 15% (see course outline below)
- A test over Part I & II - 25%
- A test-exam over Parts I-III in the exam period - 45%

For further information about grades, evaluations, test dates, and policies, see the document "Guidelines for Students."

Readings:

Part I: Descartes to Kant: Securing Knowledge.

- René Descartes, *Discourse on Method*, Parts I-IV.
- John Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding,* Book II, 1-9, 20.
- John Locke, *Second Treatise on Government*, Chapters 2, 7-9 (excerpts).
- David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, sections 2 -5, part I.
- Immanuel Kant, *What is Enlightenment?*and *The Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals.*

Part II: Social Knowledge. The Individual and Society.

- Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, "Introduction" to *The Phenomenology of Spirit*", a summary account of Aleksander Kojève on the Master/Servant Dialectic" from the same work, and a contemporary account of that "struggle for recognition" in Axel Honneth.
- Karl Marx, "Bourgeois and Proletarians." from *The Communist Manifesto*.
- John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*, Chapters 2-3.

Part III: The Perplexities of Enlightenment: Modernity and Post-Modernity

- Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation* (selections).
- Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Joyful Science* (selections).
- Martin Heidegger, *The Question of Technology.*
- Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (a one page abridgement!)
- Hannah Arendt, *Vita Activa, The Public and the Private Realm.*
- Hannah Arendt, *Thinking and Moral Considerations*.
- Terry Pinkard, normative philosophy (selection from his *German Philosophy*).