

## The Challenge of Postmodernism--- Spring 2016

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**Course Objective:** In this course, students may assess the multi-faceted objections raised to the Enlightenment paradigm. Challenges will include those raised by historicists, existentialists, proponents of the sociology of knowledge, and others who hold that claims and the criteria by which they are justified are not derived from objective, universal reason but, rather from distinctive psycho-socio-historical perspectives. Authors to be considered may include Nietzsche, Freud, Gadamer, Wittgenstein, representative feminist thinkers, Husserl, Nietzsche, Foucault, Derrida, and others. In conjunction with *The Rise of the Modern Spirit*, this course will enable students to appreciate the methodological complexity of the cultural world in which they wish to pursue their studies.

**Reading List:** (where a specific translator, publisher or edition is given, please obtain that one.)

- *The Routledge Companion to Postmodernism*; ed. Stuart Sim. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.
- *Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche; trans. M. Clark; Hackett
- *The Denial of Death*, Ernest Becker
- *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, J.F. Lyotard
- *Irrational Man*, William Barrett
- *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, T. Kuhn
- *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism: Science, Hermeneutics and Praxis*, R.J. Bernstein
- *Philosophy, Religion and the Meaning of Life* [PRML], Ambrosio, available in electronic format on Canvas, in the Files section of this course.

**N.B. Be sure to take note of reading assignment for the first class meeting.**

### **Requirements:**

All students are expected to attend class regularly, to read the assignments carefully and critically. Students will be assigned for each class meeting to post on Blackboard short written reaction papers to the reading material before the class meeting, and to the class discussion immediately following each session. Effective participation in these activities and other contributions to the communal learning process will constitute the basis for 40% of the course grade. The other portion will be based on a research project on a topic selected by the student in consultation with the instructor, culminating in a paper of 20- 25 pages. Students are expected to adhere to the Georgetown University Honor System in all course assignments.

## Guidelines for Reaction Postings

1. Each student will be required to post on Blackboard several reaction statements to assigned readings and to the class discussion of them during the semester. Normally one student will be assigned to do a reaction paper to the readings before each class, and one different student to post reactions after the class meeting. The reaction papers, together with other contributions to the class learning process, will constitute 40% of the final grade. Each reaction should be approximately 500 - 600 words in length. All class members should read all posting and come prepared to discuss the reaction papers critically.
2. Reaction papers should address the reading material for that class, or alternatively the discussion of the material in class, in a critical and reflective manner. They should not be primarily descriptive summaries of the content of the reading. Quotation from the text should be kept to a minimum. In addition, papers should address the relevance of the reading to the principal issues and themes of the course and should indicate what contribution the author of the reaction sees the reading as making to the developing understanding of postmodernism which the group is seeking to achieve.

### Tentative Schedule

Jan. 12	Introduction; <u>Prior to first class meeting, read <i>Read Barrett I &amp; II</i>; also <i>Ambrosio, Philosophy, Religion and the Meaning of Life</i> [PRML], Lectures 1- 17.</u>
Jan. 19	Bernstein, Part One; PRML 18-19
Jan. 26	Nietzsche, selections, and Barrett on Nietzsche; PRML, 20, 21; Sim, Chpt. 1;
Feb. 2	<i>The Genealogy of Morals</i> , Nietzsche (Essays One and Two) PRML, 22; Sim, # 7.
Feb. 9	<i>The Structure of Scientific Revolutions</i> , Kuhn; PRML, 23.
Feb. 16	Bernstein, Part Two. PRML, 26 and 28; Sim, 9;
Feb. 23	<i>The Denial of Death</i> , Becker (required: chapters 1-5, 7-8, 11); PRML, 27 and 29, 34; Sim, 6;
March 2	Husserl and Phenomenology; read Bernstein, Part Three, PRML, 33; Sim, 2.

- March 16** Simone Weil and Politics (handout); also read Bernstein, Part Four. PRML, 30-31; Sim 3.
- March 23** French Existentialism; read selections for Sartre, pp. 310 - 323, and Barrett on Sartre; De Beauvoir, 343-356; Camus, 357-369. PRML, 24-25.; Sim, 4.
- March 30** *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, J.F. Lyotard. PRML, 35; Sim, 6.
- April 6** Jameson, Late Capitalism; PRML, -36; Sim, 19.
- April 13** Conclusions
- April 20** Capstone discussion with Foundation Course Professors

**DLS students are responsible for upholding the Georgetown University Honor System and adhering to the academic standards included in the Honor Code Pledge stated below: *In the pursuit of the high ideals and rigorous standards of academic life, I commit myself to respect and uphold the Georgetown University Honor System: To be honest in any academic endeavor; and to conduct myself honorably, as a responsible member of the Georgetown community, as we live and work together.***

**Disability Notice: If you believe you have a disability, you should contact the Academic Resource Center—Suite 335, Leavey Center (arc@georgetown.edu) –for further information. This office is responsible for reviewing documentation provided by students with disabilities and for determining reasonable accommodations in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and University policies.**