

## The Challenge of Postmodernism--- Spring 2019

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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.)

- *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 asked to submit 5 short written reaction papers to the reading material. Students may choose the reading material about which they write papers. These assignments will account for 50% of the course grade. An additional portion of the grade (40%) 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. The remaining 10% will be based on consistent and effective contribution to the communal learning process both through participation in live class discussion and postings to the Discussion

Board before or after each class based on questions about or reactions to the assigned reading material and/or to class presentations by the instructor as well as class discussion.

### Guidelines for Reaction Papers

1. Each student will be required to submit reaction statements to five of the primary assigned readings of his or her choice. All statements should be submitted via hard copy at the beginning of the class session for which the selected text is assigned. The reaction papers will constitute 50% of the final grade. Each reaction should be approximately 1200 - 1500 words in length.
2. Reaction papers should address the primary reading material for that 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. 10      Introduction; Prior to first class meeting, read *Read Barrett I & II*; also *Ambrosio, Philosophy, Religion and the Meaning of Life* [PRML], Lectures 1- 17. Come to class having actively digested the readings and prepared to discuss them critically.
- Jan. 17      Bernstein, Part One; PRML 18-19. Also, "Measuring the Horizon," Ambrosio\Lanzilao
- Jan. 24      Nietzsche, selections, and Barrett on Nietzsche; PRML, 20, 21.
- Jan. 31      *The Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche (Essays One and Two) PRML, 22.
- Feb. 7      *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Kuhn; PRML, 23.
- Feb. 14      Bernstein, Part Two; PRML, 26 and 28.
- Feb. 21      *The Denial of Death*, Becker (required: chapters 1-5, 7-8, 11); PRML, 27 and 29, 34.

- Feb. 28**      **Husserl and Phenomenology; read Bernstein, Part Three, PRML, 33.**
- March 7**      **No Class; Spring Break**
- March 14**     **Simone Weil and Politics (handout); also read Bernstein, Part Four. PRML, 30-31.**
- March 21**     **French Existentialism; read selections for Sartre, pp. 310 - 323, and Barrett on Sartre; De Beauvoir, 343-356; Camus, 357-369. PRML, 24-25..**
- March 28**     ***The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, J.F. Lyotard. PRML, 35-36.**
- April 12**      **excerpts from *Homo Deus*, Yuval Harari**
- April 19**      **excerpts from *Enlightenment Now*, Steven Pinker**

## **University Policies**

### **Disabilities**

If you are a student with a documented disability who requires accommodations or if you think you may have a disability and want to inquire about accommodations, please contact the Academic Resource Center at 202-687-8354 or [arc@georgetown.edu](mailto:arc@georgetown.edu).

### **Turnitin.com**

Students acknowledge that by taking this course all required papers can be submitted for a Textual Similarity Review to Turnitin.com for the detection of plagiarism. Use of the Turnitin.com service is subject to the terms of use agreement posted on the Turnitin.com site.

### **Extreme weather, Emergencies, and Instructional Continuity**

During inclement weather or other emergencies on a day when we are scheduled to meet face-to-face, check the university's Web site or call (202) 687-7669 for information on whether the university is open. If the university is open, this class will meet. If the university is closed, this class will meet through distance means such as online videoconferencing; check your e-mail for a message from me on how we will proceed in that situation. Due dates for written assignments submitted through Blackboard will not be changed due to campus closings.

The university recently has acquired the capability to send text messages and recorded messages about emergencies to cell phones and other mobile devices. Sign up on MyAccess.

## **Georgetown Honor System**

All students are expected to follow Georgetown's honor code unconditionally. We assume you have read the honor code material located at <http://scs.georgetown.edu/academic-affairs/honor-code>, and in particular have read the following documents: Honor Council Pamphlet, What is Plagiarism, Sanctioning Guidelines, and Expedited Sanctioning Process. Papers in this course will all be submitted to [turnitin.com](http://turnitin.com) for checking.

Submitting material in fulfillment of the requirements of this course means that you have abided by the Georgetown honor pledge:

*In the pursuit of the high ideals and rigorous standards of academic life, I commit myself to respect and uphold the Georgetown 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.*

### **Plagiarism**

In accord with university policy, all incidents of suspected plagiarism or other Honor Code violations will be reported to the Honor Council without fail.

If the Honor Council finds that a student has plagiarized or has violated the Honor Code in any other way, the student may receive a grade of F for the course.

### **Policy Accommodating Students' Religious Observances**

The following is university policy:

Georgetown University promotes respect for all religions. Any student who is unable to attend classes or to participate in any examination, presentation, or assignment on a given day because of the observance of a major religious holiday or related travel shall be excused and provided with the opportunity to make up, without unreasonable burden, any work that has been missed for this reason and shall not in any other way be penalized for the absence or rescheduled work. Students will remain responsible for all assigned work. Students should notify professors in writing at the beginning of the semester of religious observances that conflict with their classes.