

Universidad Carlos III de Madrid
Bachelor in Cultural Studies
PHILOSOPHY IN HISTORY AND CULTURE
Spring 2023

Instructor: Antonio Gómez Ramos
Office: 17.2.9.
Email: agramos@hum.uc3m.es
Office Hours: Monday, 12:30-14:30 and by appointment

COURSE PRESENTATION

Philosophy has always been modulated by culture and has modulated it. Despite their abstraction, philosophical ideas are, above all, a reflection on time, and as such they intertwine with social issues, politics, literature, and art in general, contributing to the creation and understanding of the historical experience of each moment and place. The course focuses on seven moments and cities where Western culture has been especially significant -when it has not only flourished but has also experienced crucial transformations affecting social and economic life as much as the creativity of human spirit. Notice that for each city and year, we'll be studying authors and philosophers who do not strictly belong to that place –Not every rationalist lived in Amsterdam, Kant was never in Jena, Heidegger was not in Berlin, Marx was, for a while, but not in the 1920s. And the places we study do not follow a chronological order. For reasons we'll have to explain, Athens and Ancient Greece are dealt with after Romanticism and the 19th century. This is not strictly a history of philosophy. The aim is to study some relevant cultural contexts in connection with the philosophical ideas that have been created by them and have influenced them. Such cultural contexts correspond to concrete cities in a concrete historical time; they are significant in themselves, but also have been decisive for understanding modernity and for understanding ourselves today.

CLASS STRUCTURE

The course combines lectures and class discussions. In the first class of each theme (usually on Thursday), the teacher introduces the main topics to be considered. In the second class (usually Monday) a text is presented voluntarily by some students, and we discuss it. All students are to read the text prior to the class.

Lecture classes are marked in italics in the outline below. The texts to be presented will be assigned at the beginning of the course.

All texts and further material for the class will be posted on the virtual campus. You are encouraged to search and read additional secondary material on the topics discussed.

ASSESSMENT

15% taking part and offering critical insights on the material discussed by presenting and leading the discussions in class

45% Two essays (up to 1500 words) exposing a philosophical analysis of two cultural productions (a film, a work of art and literature) selected by the student. Each essay must deal with a cultural production from one of the seven cultural contexts considered. That is, you choose which context and which production are you going to write about. The essay must be delivered within ten days after finishing the theme.

40% Final exam.

COURSE OUTLINE

1. AMSTERDAM 1650

Early Modernity. Descartes, the New Science, and the New Philosophy. The Cogito and the modern subjectivity.

Reading: Russell Shorto, *Descartes' Bones*. Preface and First Chapter

Consequences of Cartesianism. What the World looks like after Descartes.

Reading: Russell Shorto, *Descartes' Bones*. Chapters 2 and 3.

2. PARIS, 1750

European 18th century. Light and shade of the Enlightenment.

Reading: Rousseau, *Letter to M. D'Alembert on Spectacles*

Not only reason, but also sentiment and subjectivity.

Reading:

Taylor, Charles, *Sources of the Self*, Chapter 17, "The Culture of Modernity"

3. JENA 1800

The late Kant. How Reason and Enlightenment paved the way to Romanticism

Reading: Burke, *A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origins of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful*, parts I and II.

Romanticism. Dreams, nightmares, and monsters.

Reading: Schiller, *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man*. Parts I-III.

4. ATHENS, 400 B.C.E– Modern Europe

Tragedy ancient and modern. Why Greece matters.

Reading: Sophocles, *Antigona*.

5. VIENNA 1900

Where our (still) modern culture begins. Vienna at the turn of the century

Reading: Janik & Toulmin *Wittgenstein's Vienna*, chapter 4.

Nietzsche, Freud, Wittgenstein. How to understand the 20th century

Reading: Freud, *Civilizations and its discontents*, chapters 1-3.

6. BERLIN 1930

Marxism and the revolutionary perspective.

Reading: Peter Gay, *Weimar Culture*, Chapter 4, “The Hunger for Wholeness”

Heidegger. The question for Being and the other side of culture

Reading: Heidegger, *Time and Being* §§ 25-27.

Benjamin and Critical Theory

Reading: Walter Benjamin, *Experience and Poverty*

7. NEW YORK 1970

From critical theory to Postmodernism

Reading: Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, and the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*