

Eugene Lang College 1461  
New School for Social Research  
Fall 1996

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First-Year Seminar 6023:

**CLASSICS OF MODERN CRITICAL THOUGHT: MARX, NIETZSCHE, FREUD**

Mondays and Wednesdays 2:10-3:50 pm

Course Description

This seminar will introduce students to the notion of critical thinking through an examination of selected works of Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud. The course will begin with an exploration of the general philosophical and historical background of these thinkers' intellectual projects. Then we will examine each project in depth: the social praxis of Marx; the cultural critique of Nietzsche; and the psychological analysis of Freud. Finally, we will assess the continuing value and influence of such forms of critical thought through a very brief consideration of contemporary discussions of "modernity" and "postmodernity." The course will seek to give students a thorough understanding of Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud; a basic familiarity with aspects of modern social, cultural, and psychological thought; and some experience thinking and writing in an historically-informed, critical manner.

Course meetings will consist largely of discussion, supplemented by occasional short lectures introducing the readings. Students who enroll in this course should plan to read carefully, to attend class consistently and punctually, and to participate in the discussions regularly. Most readings are seminal and provocative, some are long and difficult, and all will require work to ferret out their deeper meanings. Students will be expected to read the assignments before class, in preparation for a civil discussion at the seminar meeting. The readings should be brought to class for use in the discussions. From time to time, students may be assigned a role in preparing or leading class discussion. Attendance will be noted, and participation graded. More than three absences, without a valid medical or other excuse, will result in a grade penalty. Please also note: this entire syllabus is subject to revision at the instructor's discretion.

Written Requirements

Course requirements include the following, in addition to the above. Students should plan to write two short papers, an in-class midterm, and a final take-home examination/project. There may also be a number of short, in-class writing assignments. Papers and the final are to be typewritten, double-spaced, and annotated in accordance with accepted norms of scholarship. Plagiarism will not be tolerated. Find out what plagiarism is and avoid it. Late work will be downgraded one step per day tardy. No papers will be accepted, without prior approval, if submitted more than one week late. For more information on the assignments, grading policy, and office hours, see the last page of this syllabus.

Required Readings

The readings will be primary works almost exclusively. The following books contain most of the required readings, and are available for purchase at Posman Books, 1 University Place. Please use the assigned edition; in the case of the Marx collection, the assigned edition is virtually necessary.

- Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*, trans. Watts (Penguin Classics, 1969)
- François-Marie de Voltaire, *Candide or Optimism*, trans. Butt (Penguin Classics, 1947)
- J. W. von Goethe, *The Sorrows of Young Werther and Selected Writings*, trans. Hutter (Signet Classic, 1962)
- Karl Marx, *Selected Writings*, ed. Simon (Hackett, 1994)
- Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, trans. Hollingdale (Penguin Classics, 1990)
- André Gide, *The Immoralist*, trans. Howard (Vintage, 1996)
- Sigmund Freud, *New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-analysis*, trans. Strachey (Norton, 1989)
- \_\_\_\_\_, *An Outline of Psycho-Analysis*, trans. Strachey (Norton, 1989)
- \_\_\_\_\_, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, trans. Strachey (Norton, 1989)

Posman Books is also stocking the following brief biographical introductions as recommended reading: Peter Singer, *Marx* (Oxford, 1980); Michael Tanner, *Nietzsche* (Oxford, 1994); Anthony Starr, *Freud* (Oxford, 1989). One copy of each book above has been placed on reserve at Fogelman Library. Photocopies of additional readings marked by asterisks on the following schedule have also placed on reserve at Fogelman.

# SCHEDULE OF COURSE MEETINGS, READINGS, AND ASSIGNMENTS

\* Indicates photocopied readings on reserve at Fogelman Library

## 1. PROLOGUE: CLASSICAL & MODERN

- Wed., 4 Sept. Introduction: Modernity and Critical Thought  
No reading.
- Mon., 9 Sept. The Traditional Problem of Philosophy  
Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*, Books 1-3, pp. 35-115.
- Wed., 11 Sept. The Classical Ideal  
Boethius, Books 4-5, pp. 116-69.
- Mon., 16 Sept. French Lessons: The Modern Problem with Philosophy  
François-Marie de Voltaire, *Candide*, chs. 1-21, pp. 19-96.
- Wed., 18 Sept. Enlightenment  
Voltaire, chs. 22-30, pp. 96-144.  
\*Immanuel Kant, "An Answer to the Question: What Is Enlightenment?" in *Perpetual Peace and Other Essays on Politics, History, and Morals* (Hackett, 1983), pp. 41-46.
- Mon., 23 Sept. YOM KIPPUR--HOLIDAY!
- Wed., 25 Sept. German Lessons: Inner Truths  
Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, pp. 23-94.  
\*\*FIRST PAPER TOPICS DISTRIBUTED\*\*
- Mon, 30 Sept. Romanticism  
Goethe, *The Sorrows* and "Reflections on Werther," pp. 94-155.

## 2. REVOLUTIONARY SOCIAL PRAXIS

- Wed., 2 Oct. Women and the Society of Man  
Flora Tristan, *Flora Tristan, Utopian Feminist*, intro., chs. 1, 2, 4, pp. ix-xxi, 1-33, 53-73.
- Mon., 7 Oct. Toward Utopian Associations  
Tristan, chs. 4 (selection)-5, pp. 74-123.  
\*\*FIRST PAPER DUE AT THE BEGINNING OF CLASS\*\*
- Wed., 9 Oct. Living Criticism  
Karl Marx, "Introduction" (selection); "Toward a Critique of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*: Introduction"; "Alienated Labor"; "Theses on Feuerbach," *The German Ideology* (selections), in *Selected Writings*, pp. ix-xvii, 27-39, 58-68, 98-101, 103-112.
- Mon., 14 Oct. History Lessons  
Marx, *German Ideology* (selection), pp. 115-56.
- Wed., 16 Oct. Radical Political Economy (1)  
Marx, "Preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*" and *Capital* (selection), pp. 209-64.

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| Mon., 21 Oct. | <u>Radical Political Economy (2)</u><br>Marx, <i>Capital</i> (selection), pp. 264-300.  |
| Wed., 23 Oct. | <u>Revolutionary Praxis: The Marriage of Enlightenment and Romanticism?</u><br>Marx and Engels, <i>The Communist Manifesto</i> (selections), pp. 157-76, 182-86.                            |
| Mon., 28 Oct. | <u>Midterm Examination in Class</u><br>No reading.<br>**REWRITES OF FIRST PAPER DUE**   |
| Date TBA      | <u>LES MISERABLES</u><br>Lecture on Victor Hugo and revolutionary socialism, 6:30 pm, location TBA.<br>Trip to see the Broadway production at 8 pm, Imperial Theatre, 249 West 45th Street. |

### 3. THE CRITIQUE OF CULTURE

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| Wed., 30 Oct. | <u>The Modern Problem with Philosophers</u><br>Friedrich Nietzsche, <i>Beyond Good and Evil</i> , Preface, Parts 1-2, pp. 31-73.          |
| Mon., 4 Nov.  | <u>Of Spirits and Natures</u><br>Nietzsche, <i>Beyond Good and Evil</i> , Parts 3-4, pp. 74-107.  |
| Wed., 6 Nov.  | <u>The Moral of Scholarship</u><br>Nietzsche, <i>Beyond Good and Evil</i> , Parts 5-6, pp. 108-46.  |
| Mon., 11 Nov. | <u>Virtues and Civilization</u><br>Nietzsche, <i>Beyond Good and Evil</i> , Parts 7-8, pp. 147-91.<br>**SECOND PAPER TOPICS DISTRIBUTED** |
| Wed., 13 Nov. | <u>Savage Enlightenment or Romantic Savagery?</u><br>Nietzsche, <i>Beyond Good and Evil</i> , Part 9, pp. 192-223.                        |
| Mon., 18 Nov. | <u>Perspectives Considered</u><br>André Gide, <i>The Immoralist</i> , Preface, Part 1, pp. xiii-68.<br>**DRAFTS OF SECOND PAPER DUE**     |
| Wed., 20 Nov. | <u>Troubling Truths or Trouble with Truth?</u><br>Gide, <i>Immoralist</i> , Part 2, pp. 69-171.   |

### 4. ANALYZING THE SELF

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| Mon., 25 Nov. | <u>Approaching Psychoanalysis: Before Society and Culture</u><br>S. Freud, <i>New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis</i> , Lec. 29, 31-32, pp. 8-37, 71-138.<br>**SECOND PAPER DUE AT THE BEGINNING OF CLASS** |
| Wed., 27 Nov. | <u>Psychoanalytic Theory</u><br>Freud, <i>An Outline of Psycho-Analysis</i> , pp. 13-97.   |
| Mon., 2 Dec.  | <u>Civilization</u><br>Freud, <i>Civilization and Its Discontents</i> , chs. 1-4, pp. 10-63.   |

Wed., 4 Dec. Discontents: The Tragedies of Enlightenment and Romanticism?  
 Freud, *Civilization*, chs. 5-8, pp. 64-112.  
 \*\*TAKE-HOME FINAL DISTRIBUTED\*\*

## 5. THE ENDS OF MODERNITY?

Mon., 9 Dec. Modernity in Retrospect  
 \*Selections from *Postmodernism: A Reader*, ed. Thomas Docherty (Columbia, 1993):  
 Zygmunt Bauman, "The Fall of the Legislator," pp. 128-140;  
 Thomas Docherty, "Introduction," pp. 35-37;  
 Jürgen Habermas, "Modernity--An Incomplete Project," pp. 98-108; and  
 Jean-François Lyotard, "Answering the Question: What Is Postmodernism?" and  
 "Note on the Meaning of 'Post-'," pp. 38-50.

Wed., 11 Dec. Review and Conclusions  
 No reading.

Mon., 16 Dec. \*\*FINAL EXAMINATIONS DUE AT 5 PM\*\*

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

### Written Assignments

Course requirements will include two formal, typewritten essays on assigned topics. The first paper may be rewritten and resubmitted for an additional credit of up to 15 points. Drafts (or detailed outlines) of the second paper will be due one week prior to the completion of the paper.

First paper (3-4 pages): due Mon., 7 October.  
 First paper rewrite: due Mon., 28 October.  
 Second paper drafts: due Wed., 18 November.  
 Second paper (4-5 pages): due Mon., 25 November.

In addition, there will be an in-class midterm and a take-home final examination/project. For the midterm and final examinations, students will be given essay questions to prepare beforehand. For the project part of the final, students will be asked to turn in four one-page criticisms of their first paper, criticisms that they believe Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud, respectively, would make if they were here today and reading that paper, along with the students' own self-criticisms of their essay.

Midterm examination: Mon., 28 October.  
 Take-home final exam/project: Mon., 16 December.

Short, in-class writing exercises may also be administered from time to time, without warning, to insure that students keep up with the readings.

### Participation

Students will be expected to participate in class discussions regularly. Grades for participation will be based upon my evaluation of students' comments. What I will look for is whether students have a basic understanding of the readings, whether they are able to follow and contribute to class discussion, how intelligent and informed their questions and comments are, and how much effort they are putting into the class. Attendance and in-class assignments will be a significant portion of the participation grade.

### Grading Policy

Grades will be assigned on an 100-point scale, and weighted in the following manner:

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| First paper:   | 15% |
| Midterm:       | 20% |
| Second paper:  | 25% |
| Final exam:    | 15% |
| Final project: | 15% |
| Participation: | 10% |

### Office Hours

I will hold regular office hours on Mondays and Wednesdays in my office, Lang 455. The exact time of those office hours will be announced during the first week of class. I can also be available before or after class by appointment in my office. Notes can be left for me in my mailbox in the Lang Dean's Office, 350 Lang. If necessary, phone messages can be left for me at my home number, (914) 591-6931, between 10 am and 9:30 pm.