

LIT6856: Modernity, Rationality, and Irrationality, Fall 2018



Paul Klee, "Was Fehlt Ihm?" ("What's he missing?" or "What's the matter with him?") 1930

Course Meetings: Fridays, periods 3-5 (9:35 AM-12:35 PM); in TUR 4112

Instructor: Professor Susan Hegeman / shegeman@ufl.edu / 352-294-2815 / TUR 4119

Office hours: Tuesdays, 11:35-1:35, or by appointment

Course Description

A nearly axiomatic definition of modernity, usually associated with Max Weber, emphasizes the increasing rationality – and rationalization – of social, economic, political, intellectual and other spheres of human life, and a concomitant “disenchantment” of the world: the inevitable and progressive banishment of the irrationalities of religion, superstition, emotion, aesthetics, political extremism, and so forth. Yet other great theorists of modernity, including Freud, Nietzsche, Horkheimer and Adorno, and many others, exposed and explored a pervasive irrational core to modern existence. Still others, meanwhile, have upended the “master narrative” of modernity altogether, revealing its limitations as an explanation for both historical change and our current condition. In this course, we will use Weber’s *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* as a touchstone for exploring the multiple ways in which thinkers from the late-nineteenth century to the present have challenged conventional assumptions associated with modernity about progress, subjectivity, belief, political agency, and much more, and developed new ways of thinking about the long narrative of historical change. This course should be of use to any graduate student who would like a grounding in Euro-American historiography and in key debates in critical theory.

Course Goals and Objectives

Through genuine and persistent engagement with course materials, activities, and discussions, students will:

- gain a critical understanding of some key historiographic and theoretical concepts, including modernity, civilization, capitalism, the commons, primitive accumulation, Enlightenment, romanticism, disenchantment, and neoliberalism
- develop knowledge of and skills in interpreting, discussing, and writing critically about key texts in critical theory
- gain fluency in current critical debates about labor, subjectivity, the histories of modernity and capitalism
- develop skills in academic writing

Required Course Materials

The following books are required for the course. They are listed in the order in which we will read them. I will not require you to use the editions listed below, but I do ask that you make sure you are reading the specified translations.

- Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* trans. Talcott Parsons (Dover 048642703X)
- Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*, trans. James Strachey (Norton 0393301583)
- Friedrich Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals, Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (Random/Modern Library 0679783393)
- Max Horkheimer and T. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Stanford University Press 0804736332)
- Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Richard Philcox (Grove Press; Revised edition 0802143008)
- Silvia Federici, *Caliban and the Witch* (Autonomedia; 1570270597)
- Michael Löwy and Robert Sayre, *Romanticism Against the Tide of Modernity*, trans. Catherine Porter (Duke University Press 0822327945)
- Raj Patel and Jason W. Moore, *A History of the World in Seven Cheap Things* (University of California Press; 0520299930)
- David Graeber, *Bullshit Jobs* (Simon & Schuster 150114331X)

All other course materials—other required and supplementary readings, syllabus, documents, assignments, course calendar and discussion prompts—are posted on the course's Canvas e-learning website.

Canvas E-Learning

You are required to have access to Canvas for accessing course materials and turning in assignments. Canvas e-learning can be accessed via the following link: “E-Learning Support Services” (<https://lss.at.ufl.edu>). Click on the orange “log in to e-learning” button. You will then be asked to log in using your GatorLink username and password. If for some reason have trouble using your GatorLink account, go to the GatorLink website (<http://gatorlink.ufl.edu>).

For help with Canvas, contact the UF Computing Help Desk:

Web: <http://helpdesk.ufl.edu>

Walk-in: HUB 132

Phone: (352) 392-HELP (4357)

Email: helpdesk@ufl.edu

Any requests for accommodations (i.e. credit for overdue work) due to technical issues must be accompanied by the ticket number received from LSS when the problem was reported to them. The ticket number will document the time and date of the problem.

Course Requirements

- Attendance and active participation in the seminar is expected. You should be prepared to be called upon. You will also be asked to informally introduce the readings for a given week.
- You will hand in 25-30 pages of written work over the course of the semester. Depending on your needs and goals for the course, this may be in the form of three short papers of 8-10 pages in length, one long paper, or a long and a short paper. Students choosing to write one long paper should be in consultation with me early in the semester and show me a prospectus of 1-2 pages by November. I recommend that advanced students working on extended projects related to the course material write one long paper. Students whose goals are to develop a strong familiarity with the material should consider writing shorter papers of a more explicatory sort.

Due dates

October 5, November 9: dates for turning in short papers

November 9: prospectuses for longer papers due; students writing two shorter papers must turn the first paper in by this date

December 7: last day to turn in papers and receive comments before the end of the semester

December 13: last day to turn in a paper and receive a GRADE for the semester.

Course policy on Incompletes: I am willing to let students take Incompletes to have more time to complete a long final research paper. However, in the interest of not excessively prolonging the work of this course, I will accept seminar papers and grade

them for full credit until the end of the spring 2008 semester. Students who turn in papers after this date will not receive an "A" in the course.

Accommodations for Disabilities

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter which must be presented to the instructor. Students needing accommodations should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

Academic Honesty Policy

Students are required to review the university's Academic Honor Code (<https://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code>). Plagiarism or any other form of academic dishonesty will result in an automatic failure of the assignment and the filing of a report in your academic file.

Course Evaluation

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/evals>. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results/>.

Campus Resources

Health and Wellness

U Matter, We Care: If you or a friend is in distress, please contact umatter@ufl.edu or 352 392-1575 so that a team member can reach out to the student.

Counseling and Wellness Center: <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc>, and 392-1575; and the University Police Department: 392-1111 or 9-1-1 for emergencies.

Sexual Assault Recovery Services (SARS): Student Health Care Center, 392-1161.

University Police Department at 392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies), or <http://www.police.ufl.edu/>

Academic Resources

E-learning technical support: 352-392-4357 (select option 2) or e-mail to Learning-support@ufl.edu / <https://lss.at.ufl.edu/help.shtml>

Career Resource Center: Reitz Union, 392-1601. Career assistance and counseling. <https://www.crc.ufl.edu/>.

Library Support: <http://cms.uflib.ufl.edu/ask> . Various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the libraries or finding resources.

Teaching Center: Broward Hall, 392-2010 or 392-6420. General study skills and tutoring. <https://teachingcenter.ufl.edu/>

Writing Studio: 302 Tigert Hall, 846-1138. Help with brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers. <https://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/>.

Schedule of Readings and Discussions

The schedule, located on the Canvas calendar, represents my current plans for readings and discussions. As we go through the semester, those plans may need to change based on the interests and needs of the class as a whole. Any such changes will be communicated early, in class and via Canvas. Students are responsible for staying informed about any changes in the class schedule by regularly consulting e-learning.

Course Summary:

Date	Details	
Fri Aug 24, 2018	Course Introduction	9:35am to 12:35pm
Fri Aug 31, 2018	The “master narrative.” Max Weber, The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism	9:35am to 12:35pm
Fri Sep 7, 2018	Civilization and (Ir)rationality, Part I: Sigmund Freud, Civilization and its Discontents	9:35am to 12:35pm
Fri Sep 14, 2018	Religion and (ir)rationality: Friedrich Nietzsche, Genealogy of Morals	9:35am to 12:35pm
Fri Sep 21, 2018	Enlightenment and (ir)rationality: Max Horkheimer and T. Adorno, Dialectic of Enlightenment, part 1	9:35am to 12:35pm
Fri Sep 28, 2018	Dialectic of Enlightenment, part 2	9:35am to 12:35pm

Date	Details	
Fri Oct 5, 2018	Civilization and (Ir)rationality, part 2: Frantz Fanon, Black Skin, White Masks	9:35am to 12:35pm
Fri Oct 12, 2018	Vanishing Mediators	9:35am to 12:35pm
Fri Oct 19, 2018	Other Histories I: Federici, Caliban and the Witch	9:35am to 12:35pm
Fri Oct 26, 2018	Other histories II: Löwy and Sayre, Romanticism Against the Tide of Modernity	9:35am to 12:35pm
Fri Nov 2, 2018	NO CLASS (Homecoming)	12am
Fri Nov 9, 2018	Other Histories III: History of the World in Seven Cheap Things	9:35am to 12:35pm
Fri Nov 16, 2018	Other Histories IV: Graeber, Bullshit Jobs	9:35am to 12:35pm
Fri Nov 23, 2018	THANKSGIVING BREAK	12am
Fri Nov 30, 2018	CLASS READINGS TBA	9:35am to 12:35pm
Fri Dec 7, 2018	Final papers due	due by 11:59pm