

Modernity and Its Critics
Political Science 7991
Spring— 2015

January 14 **A Prefatory Discussion: What Is Modernity?**

January 21 **Augustine as the First Modern**

Readings: Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, chapters 1 – 7.
Augustine, *On Free Choice of the Will*

January 28 **Descartes and the Subject**

Readings: Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, chapters 1 – 8.
Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*,
<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/59/59-h/59-h.htm#part1>
Descartes, Discourse on Method,
<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/59/59-h/59-h.htm#part1>

February 4 **John Locke and Rational Identity**

Readings: Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, chapters 9 - 17.
Locke, Essay on Human Understanding, (Chapters I, II, III, & XXVII)
<http://www2.hn.psu.edu/faculty/jmanis/locke/humanund.pdf>
Locke, *Second Treatise Of Civil Government*
<https://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/l/locke/john/181s/index.html>

February 11 **Immanuel Kant and Homo Noumena**

Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, chapters 18-20.
Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*

February 18 **Immanuel Kant and Perpetual Peace**

Kant, “What is Enlightenment?”
<http://www.columbia.edu/acis/ets/CCREAD/etscc/kant.html>
Kant, “Idea for a Universal History from a Cosmopolitan Point of View”
<https://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/ethics/kant/universal-history.htm>
Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals*, Excerpts on Rights & Virtue
<http://praxeology.net/kant7.htm>

February 25

Immanuel Kant and Judgment

Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, §84 & 84, Also Follow Arendt
Hannah Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*

March 4

Hegel and the Struggle for Recognition

Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, Chapter 21
Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, pp. 268-271
Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Introduction, Consciousness & Self-Consciousness

March 11

Hegel and the Ethical Life

Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Reason & Spirit
Hegel, *The Philosophy of Right*, Part III, Ethical Life
http://www.inp.uw.edu.pl/mdsie/Political_Thought/Hegel%20Phil%20of%20Right.pdf

March 18

Marx and Kojève on Hegel

Marx, Introduction to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right
http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/Marx_Critique_of_Hegels_Philosophy_of_Right.pdf
Marx, Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844
<https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1844/manuscripts/preface.htm>
Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*

March 25

Nietzsche: Beyond Self . . . and Good . . . and Evil

Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, Chapters 22 & 23
Nietzsche, *The Gay Science or Beyond Good and Evil*.

April 1

Heidegger and the "forgetting of being."

Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, Chapter 24
Heidegger, *Being and Time*, Part I

April 15

Heideggerian Paths to Politics

Heidegger, *Being and Time*, Part II

April 22 **By Way of a Conclusion: Premodern Solutions to Modern Dilemmas**

Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, Chapter 25
Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*

April 29 **By Way of a Conclusion: Postmodern Solutions to Modern Dilemmas**

Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, Chapter 25
Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*

Course Objectives:

This is a reading intensive seminar. Its subject matter spans the universe of what we call modernity. The focal point, or unifying concept, of our inquiry will be the development of the self, or as Charles Taylor puts the matter, the “sources of the self.” Indeed, Taylor’s book of that title will be a historical and conceptual text for much of the course. The foundational or primary texts of the course, aside from brief forays into Augustine, Descartes, and Locke, will be the conversation on modernity engaged by a coterie of German philosophers: Kant, Hegel, Marx, Nietzsche, and Heidegger. Our purpose is to arrive at a better understanding of modernity and its critics.

Our gatherings will be, as the above outline suggests, an opportunity to discuss the various readings assigned. It is best to do this in terms of what sort of questions are being asked by the individuals under consideration, as well as how they answer those questions. And, of course, whether we are satisfied with those answers. Toward this end, I will suggest some of those questions; however, I will expect you to suggest some of your own.

Each week, I will ask each of you to write a brief commentary on some aspect of the readings, whether general or particular. These commentaries should be no shorter than two and no longer than four pages, double-spaced and typewritten in font no smaller than 10 pitch. (I prefer 12!) The commentaries will be due by 10:00 AM Tuesday morning, preceding our seminars on Wednesday afternoon. After they are submitted on Moodle, I will make them available to all members of the seminar. You will be asked to comment upon your commentary in the ensuing seminar. In addition, and at the conclusion of the course, I will ask that you collect your thoughts on the commentaries, amplified by our discussions throughout the semester, and write an 8–10 page final exposition on what you regard as the most seminal characterizations of modernity, coupled with an analytical critique of those characterizations.

Grades

14 Commentaries =	140 points
Final Exposition =	60 points
Course Total =	200 points