Modern Political Thought (PSC-272)
Fall 2015
TU-TH, 11:30am-12:45pm
Johns Hall 212

Dr. Jenna Storey
Office: Johns Hall 110 (across from the Riley Center)
Office phone: 294-2254

Dr. Jenna Storey jenna.storey@furman.edu
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Course Description

To be modern is to be self-consciously not old—not “ancient” or “medieval.” Being modern means being aware of having made a break with the past, having a sense, whether in rejoicing or regret, that one can never go “back.”

This course examines the distinctive form that modern self-awareness took in 19th-20th century Germany. Germany was the last major European country to modernize politically, achieving national unification only in 1870. The greatest German political thinkers were also late-comers, inhabiting a world already decisively formed by the modern natural science of Galileo, Bacon, and Descartes, and the modern political science of Machiavelli, Hobbes, and Locke. Whereas these early modern thinkers generally made a triumphant break with the past and proclaimed hopes for a future that more perfectly fulfilled human desires, the later German thinkers wrestled more explicitly with the intellectual consequences of modern science and the practical problems specific to modern politics.

All of the thinkers we will read in this course attempted to give direction to modernity not by returning to consider the older beliefs in common sense, divine providence, or philosophy as the search for wisdom about nature, but by trying to give direction to modernity on the terms set out by the early modern thinkers. In doing so, they intensified the basic premises of modern thought and also crystallized certain ideas that shaped the intellectual and political history of the 20th century. Many of these ideas remain influential in some form today: for example, the conviction that human history demonstrates progress, the argument that one’s consciousness is determined by one’s material circumstance, or the belief that the nature of reality is unknowable and values are subjective.

Ultimately, this course may be thought of as an exercise in self-knowledge, as it seeks to investigate the theoretical roots of some common contemporary convictions. In doing so, it aims to clarify our understanding of the modern rejection of the past and its consequences.
Please purchase the following texts (no electronic copies permitted):

Immanuel Kant, *Political Writings*, ed. H. S. Reiss (Cambridge)


*The Marx volume is an encouraged but not required purchase; the readings are available on Moodle.*

Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, ed. Rolf-Peter Horstmann and Judith Norman (Cambridge)


Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, trans. George Schwab (Chicago)

Selections from the work of Hannah Arendt will be made available on Moodle.

**Syllabus**

August 25: Course Introduction

August 27: *Genesis*:2-6 (Moodle)

Kant, “Conjectures on the Beginning of Human History” (pp. 221-235)

**Monday, August 31: REQUIRED PAPER DUE—2 pages, 9:00 am**

September 1: Kant, “What is Enlightenment?” (pp. 54-60)

September 3: Kant, “Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose” (pp.41-53)

September 8: Kant, *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*, pp. 1-17 (Preface & First Section)

September 10: Kant, *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*, pp. 19-48 (Second Section)

September 15: Kant, “Perpetual Peace,” (pp. 93-115)

September 17: Kant, “Perpetual Peace,” (pp. 116-130)

**Friday, September 18: REQUIRED PAPER DUE—2 pages, 6:00 pm**

September 22: Marx, *Manifesto of the Communist Party* (pp. 469-500)
September 24: Marx, “Contribution to the Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right: Introduction,” “Theses on Feuerbach,” and first section of The German Ideology, (pp. 53-65; 143-155)

September 29: Marx, Das Kapital, Volume I, Part 1, Sections 1, 2 and 4; selection from Volume 3 (pp. 302-312, 319-329, and 439-441)

October 1: Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil, Preface and Part 1 (pp.3-24)

**Friday, October 2:** OPTIONAL MARX PAPER DUE—2 pages, 6:00 pm

October 6: Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil, Part 2 (pp. 25-42)

October 8: Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil, Part 3 and 4 (pp. 43-74)

October 15: Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil, Part 5 and 6 (pp. 75-108)

October 20: Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil, Part 7 and 8 (pp. 109-150)

October 22: Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil, Part 9 and Aftersong (pp. 151-180)

**Friday, October 23:** REQUIRED NIETZSCHE PAPER DUE—2 pages, 6:00 pm

October 27: Weber, Science as a Vocation (pp.1-22, through the first full paragraph)

October 29: Weber, Science as a Vocation (pp. 22-31)

November 3: Weber, Politics as a Vocation (pp. 32-67)

November 5: Weber, Politics as a Vocation (pp. 67-94)

**Friday, November 6:** OPTIONAL WEBER PAPER DUE—2 pages, 6:00 pm

November 10: Schmitt, The Concept of the Political, Part 1-5 (pp. 19-53)

November 12: Schmitt, The Concept of the Political, Part 6-8 (pp. 53-79)

November 17: Schmitt, “The Age of Neutralizations and Depoliticizations” (pp. 80-96)

November 19: Arendt, selections (Moodle)

**Friday, November 20:** OPTIONAL SCHMITT PAPER DUE—2 pages, 6:00 pm

November 24: Arendt, selections (Moodle)

December 1: Arendt, selections (Moodle)

December 3: Arendt, selections (Moodle)
December 8: Concluding class

Tuesday, December 8: OPTIONAL ARENDT PAPER DUE—2 pages, 6:00 pm

Assignments

There are four main components to the assignments for this class:

1. **Do the reading.** Furman policy states that students should expect 2-3 hours of prep time per class, apart from the time required to write papers. You will likely need the full complement of that time to read these challenging selections well. To make sure that you have read for each class, there will be an occasional short pop quiz.

2. **Question assignments:** Each week you will be asked to articulate an informed question concerning the reading. This question should take the form of a short paragraph detailing something you don’t yet understand about the day’s assigned reading. The class will be divided into two groups; one group will turn in questions for Tuesday’s readings by 9:00 am Tuesday morning, the other group will turn in questions for Thursdays’ readings by 9:00 am Thursday morning.

3. **Short papers:** you are required to turn in 5 short (2-page) papers over the course of the semester. These papers will follow a question of your own choosing and (with the exception of the first paper) will require you to synthesize the various readings we’ve done on the author in question. The papers at the beginning and the end of our study of Kant, and the paper on Nietzsche are required. You may write your remaining 2 papers on any two of the remaining authors (Marx, Weber, Schmitt, Arendt). Please see the paper guidelines for more detailed information about this assignment.

4. **Final paper:** An 8-10 page final paper will be due at the end of the semester. This paper will also be a response to a question of your own choosing, and must include an analysis of at least two of the authors we’ve studied.

Breakdown of grades:

Participation (question assignments, verbal participation in class and in meetings, pop quiz score): 20%

1st paper: 8%

Remaining short papers: 52% (13% each)

Final paper: 20%
Policies

Attendance:
After three absences of any kind, every further absence results in the loss of 5% of your final grade.

Papers:
Please see the separate guidelines for paper instructions. You should note that (per the guidelines) more than three sloppy mistakes—misspellings or missing marks of punctuation—will result in a downgrade of 5% for the paper.

Academic Integrity: If you consult any source beyond the assigned reading for an assignment, you must cite that source. This includes electronic resources. Quotations or paraphrases from any source that are not accompanied by proper citations constitute plagiarism and will be treated as academic integrity violations. The penalty for such a violation may be failure of the course.

Please note that “secondary sources” such as sparknotes, novelguide, gradesaver, etc. are not permitted for this class. Evidence of use of this type of secondary source in preparing a paper will result in failure of the paper.

Electronics:
The use of electronic devices in the classroom is not permitted, as it inhibits discussion and has a demonstrably negative impact on the performance of the student using the device.