

ISS 2106: The Origins of the Contemporary West II (*Enlightenment to Modernity*)

I. General Information

Class Meetings

- Spring 2026
- 100% In-Person, no GTAs, 35 residential students
- Tuesday | Period 4, 10:40AM-11:30AM in CSE 0429
- Thursday | Period 4-5, 10:40am-12:35PM in CSE 0429
- 3 Credits

Instructor

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- CSE E506
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Course Description

This multidisciplinary course surveys the big ideas in Western Civilization, and the societies and cultures which helped to form them. Students will learn about their cultural heritage by reading and discussing great works of philosophy, history, politics, literature, arts and science from the eighteenth century onwards. The course starts with the Enlightenment and ends in the twentieth century. Students will study the Enlightenment, the French Revolution, Romanticism, Marxism, liberalism, the rise of social science and the destructive theories of

twentieth-century totalitarianism. This course reveals how Western Culture is very much alive in our contemporary society, an inheritance evident in our structures of government, social patterns, cultural creations, religious and ethical belief systems.

Required Readings and Works

1. Required readings will be posted as PDFs to Canvas.
2. The writing manual for this course is R.M. Ritter, *The New Oxford Style Manual*, 3rd edn. (Oxford University Press, 2016). ISBN: 9780198767251.
3. Materials and Supplies Fees: N/A.

Course Objectives

1. Identify, describe, and explain the history and underlying ideas of Western Civilization from the Enlightenment to the twentieth century.
2. Analyze primary texts, situating them in their historical and literary context to develop critical interpretations of their significance to Western Civilization.
3. Evaluate multiple perspectives on politics, society, and religion and formulate arguments regarding central debates in these areas.
4. Communicate orally and in writing the contribution of art and literature to the development of Western Civilization, and their significance today.

II. Graded Work

Description of Graded Work

1. Active Participation and Attendance: 20%
 1. Participation: 10%
 1. An exemplar participant shows evidence of having done the assigned reading before each class; consistently offers thoughtful points and questions for discussion; and listens considerately to other discussants. See participation rubric below. (R)
 2. Class Attendance: 10%
 1. On-time class attendance is required for this component of the course grade. You may have two unexcused absences without any penalty. But starting with the third class missed your grade will be affected. Starting with the third unexcused absence, each unexcused absence reduces your attendance grade by 2/3: an A- becomes a B, and so on.
 2. Except for absence because of religious holiday observance, documentation is required for excused absences, per [university policy](#). Excessive unexcused absences (10 or more) will result in failure of the course. If you miss 10 or more classes (excused or not), you will miss material essential for successful completion of the course.
2. Midterm Examination: 20%
 1. Students will take an in-class, written midterm examination during Week 7. It will consist of essay and short answer questions.
3. Reading Quizzes: 15%
 1. Reading quizzes will be administered at the start of class, at given times throughout the semester. Reading quizzes will test the student's knowledge of the week's readings, and will contain short-answer, short essay, and/or multiple-choice questions. b. Weeks 3, 5, 9, 12.
4. Final Examination: 20%
 1. Students will take a written final examination during the university-assigned final examination time for their class. It will consist of essay and short answer questions.
5. Analytical Paper: 25%

1. In Week 13, you will submit a 2,000 word (minimum) analytical essay answering to a prompt provided by Week 7.
2. The professor will evaluate and provide written feedback, on all the student's written assignments with respect to grammar, punctuation, clarity, coherence, and organization.
3. Students may want to access the university's [Writing Studio](#).
4. An additional writing guide website can be found at [Purdue OWL](#).
5. See Writing Assessment Rubric on syllabus, below.

III. Weekly Schedule

WEEK 1: ENLIGHTENMENT: PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATIONS (January 14, 16)

The Enlightenment was a turning point in the development of Western civilization. However, what actually constituted ‘the Enlightenment’ was also contested from its very outset. This week students will examine the Enlightenment’s philosophical foundations by reading works by Locke, d’Alembert, Voltaire, and Kant.

Readings:

1. Jean le Rone d’Alembert, ‘The Human Mind Emerged from Barbarism’, *The Portable Enlightenment Reader*, ed. Isaac Kramnick (1995), pp. 7–17.
2. Voltaire, ‘Reflections on Religion’, in *Portable Enlightenment Reader*, ed. Kramnick, pp. 115–134.
3. Immanuel Kant, ‘What is Enlightenment’, in *Portable Enlightenment Reader*, ed. Kramnick, pp. 1–7.

WEEK 2: ENLIGHTENMENT: POLITICS (January 21, 23)

The Enlightenment was as much a political reform movement as a philosophical movement. This week students will begin to explore how influential Enlightenment authors conceived of the state of nature, representative government and the social contract.

Readings:

1. Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, *Readings in Western Civilization*, eds. George H. Knoles and Rixford Snyder (New York, 1968), pp. 411-421.
2. Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, in *Readings in Western Civilization*, eds. Knoles and Snyder, pp. 421-432.
3. Jean Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality* (Indianapolis, 1992), 35-38, 44-47, 50-51. (needs to be copied)
4. Jean Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, in *Readings in Western Civilization*, eds. George H. Knoles and Rixford Snyder (New York, 1968), 432-438.

WEEK 3: THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION (January 28, 30)

This week students will consider the political thought of one of the two most lastingly influential Enlightenment-era political revolutions—the American Revolution. In addition to surveying various rationales for revolution, students will also sample the debate between Federalists and AntiFederalists over what the post-revolutionary American constitution should look like.

Readings:

1. Samuel Adams, *The Rights of the Colonists* (1772), in *American Political Thought*, eds. Isaac Kramnick and Theodore Lowi (New York, 2019), pp. 108-113.
2. Jonathan Boucher, *On Civil Liberty, Passive Obedience and Non-Resistance* (1774), in *American Political Thought*, eds. Kramnick and Lowi, pp. 113-118.
3. Thomas Paine, *Common Sense* (1776), in *American Political Thought*, eds. Kramnick and Lowi, pp. 95-113.
4. *Declaration of Independence*, in *Princeton Readings in Political Thought*, ed. Cohen, pp. 316-318.
5. John Adams, *Thoughts on Government* (1776), in *American Political Thought*, eds. Kramnick and Theodore Lowi, pp. 124-130.
6. *Federalists and Anti-Federalists*, in *Princeton Readings in Political Thought*, ed. Cohen, pp. 319-333.

WEEK 4: THE FRENCH REVOLUTION (February 4, 6)

This week students will examine the thought concerning what most reckon was the first modern revolution—the French Revolution. In addition to surveying the various rationales for revolution, students will also consider the ways that both French revolutionaries and foreign observers envisaged the role of women in modern political life.

Readings:

1. Joseph Emmanuel Sieyès, *What is the Third Estate?*, in Sieyes, *Political Writings* (Indianapolis 2007), 93-98, 103-105.
2. *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen*, in *Princeton Readings in Political Thought*, ed. Cohen, pp. 336–341.
3. Robespierre, Maximilien. "Report on the Principles of Political Morality, 1794." In Keith M. Baker, ed. *The Old Regime and the French Revolution*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987: 368-383.
4. Mary Wollstonecraft, from *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, in *Ideals and Ideologies: A Reader*, eds. Richard Dagger and Daniel L. O'Neill (New York: Pearson Education, 2009), 356-359.

WEEK 5: ROMANTICISM AND CONSERVATISM (February 11, 13)

During the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Romanticism was a response to Enlightenment and political revolution that grew out of Enlightenment and revolution. Poets and authors, in particular, wrote in strongly emotional terms of man and his feelings; so too did artists give expression to Romanticism. This week students will consider the thought of leading Romantic authors, including Coleridge, and Pushkin, and authors such as Caspar David Friedrich. Students will also consider the potential role of the Romantic in conservative culture and politics, with the writings of Burke, Herder, and De Maistre.

Readings:

1. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "Dejection: An Ode," *Complete Poetical Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge: Poems*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1912: 362-368.
2. Alexander Pushkin, *Eugene Onegin* (Oxford, 1995), 22-23, 67-76, 200-203.
3. Caspar David Friedrich, "Observations on Viewing a Collection of Paintings," in Charles Harrison, et al, eds., *Art In Theory, 1815-1900* (Wiley, 1998), pp. 48-54.
4. Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, in *The Old Regime and the French Revolution*, ed. Keith Michael Baker (Chicago, 1986), pp. 428-425.
5. Joseph de Maistre, *Considerations on France*, in *The Old Regime and the French Revolution*, ed. Baker, pp. 445-452.

WEEK 6: IDEALISM (February 18, 20)

From Immanuel Kant's self-declared "Copernican revolution" in human thought to GWF's famously comprehensive lectures on the philosophy of history, the philosophical movement known as German Idealism completely transformed the world of Western philosophy. Students will consider Kant's "a priori," and Hegel's "dialectic" and the way they transformed human thought. Ralph Waldo Emerson presents a different, American, consideration of idealism worth considering in comparison to the German.

Readings:

1. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, in *The German Idealism Reader*, ed. Marina F. Bykova (London, 2020), pp. 41-70.
2. G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, in Bykova, *Idealism*, 283-289.
3. G.W.F. Hegel, *General Introduction to the Philosophy of History* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1988), 12-23.

WEEK 7: LIBERALISM AND ITS CRITICS (February 25, 27)

During the nineteenth century, liberalism emerged as a coherent political and economic philosophy. It emerged not just in response to political revolutions of the preceding years but also to the revolution in the production system, which we now call the Industrial Revolution. That revolution improved the lives of those living in the West, but at great cost to many workers, particularly during its early stages. Economic liberalism stressed the importance of free enterprise and free trade together with government non-interventionism, while political liberalism advocated for a restrained government. No sooner had liberalism emerged, though, than a new political phenomenon—mass democracy—emerged to challenge liberalism itself. This week students will read representative analyses of liberalism and democracy in the nineteenth century.

Readings:

1. Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, in *Readings*, ed. Knowles and Snyder, 595-605.
2. John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*, in *Readings*, ed. Knowles and Snyder, 609-630.
3. Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, in *Princeton Readings in Political Thought*, ed. Cohen, pp. 388-418.
4. Leo X, *Rerum Novarum*, in *Nineteenth-Century Europe: Liberalism and its Critics*, eds. Goldstein and Boyer, pp. 375-397.
5. Theodor Herzl, *The Jewish State*, in *Nineteenth-Century Europe: Liberalism and its Critics*, eds. Goldstein and Boyer, pp. 483-492.

WEEK 8: THE SCIENCE OF MAN (March 4, 6)

During the mid nineteenth century, a fascination with science as a tool for knowledge and as a technological practice swept through Europe. The scientific turn had positive and negative consequences. This week students will come to grips both with the effect of using science to understand humanity and its consequences in the late nineteenth century. Students will also consider “realism,” as an aesthetic movement that sought to incorporate a more scientific method in its exploration of the human condition.

Readings:

1. Thomas Malthus, *An Essay on Population*, in *Readings in Western Civilization*, eds. Knoles and Snyder, pp. 542–546.
2. Jeremy Bentham, *Principles of Legislation*, in *Nineteenth-Century Europe: Liberalism and its Critics*, eds. Goldstein and Boyer, pp. 6–32.
3. Charles Darwin, *Origin of Species* and *The Descent of Man*, in *Norton Anthology of English Literature II*, pp. 1679–1689.
4. Emile Zola, *Germinal*, trans. Havelock Ellis (London, 1885), Chapter 1.

Assignment: Midterm Examination

WEEK 9: MARX AND REVOLUTION (March 11, 13)

Prominent amongst the nineteenth-century reform programs was socialism, whose most influential proponent was Karl Marx. But in Russia, an older socialist tradition embraced terrorism as a form of political violence. Students will investigate the evolution of Marxism into Russian revolutionary practice, which culminated in the Russian Revolution of 1917.

Readings:

1. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, "Theses on Feuerbach" and "Manifesto of the Communist Party" in Robert Tucker, ed., *The Marx Engels Reader*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1978: 143-145, 469-500.
2. Sergei Nechaev, "Catechism of a Revolutionary,"
3. V.I. Lenin, *Bolshevism*, in *Princeton Readings in Political Thought*, ed. Cohen, pp. 481-492.

WEEK 10: MODERNISM RISING (March 25, 27)

Modernism represented a reaction to the perceived secularization and rationalization of Western culture. This week students will explore Modernism in philosophy, literature, and the arts. In addition to reading the works of Nietzsche and Dostoevsky, students will explore the art of Modern artists like Van Gogh, Manet, Renoir, Cezanne, Gauguin, Klimt, Picasso and others.

Readings:

1. Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals* (New York, 1989), pp. 24-56.
2. Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Grand Inquisitor* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1993), 1-37.

Assignment: Paper topic plus outline

WEEK 11: THE WORLD BETWEEN THE WARS (April 1, 3)

The era between the First and Second World Wars was one of considerable angst. The First World War had morally shocked the West. Burdened by economic depression and a sense that the First World War had resolved little, authors worried about the fate of Western civilization itself. This week students will consider a variety of responses to the interwar developments from those writing across the cultural and political spectrum.

Readings:

1. Sigmund Freud, "The Ego and the Id (1923)," in *TACD Journal*, 17:1, pp. 5-22.
2. Jean-Paul Sartre, "Bad Faith," in *Being and Nothingness*, 47-60.
3. Simone Weil, "Rights," and "Self" in *Simone Weil, an Anthology* (New York, 1986), 84-88, 93-100.
4. T.S. Eliot, *The Hollow Men* (1924-1925), in *Norton Anthology of English Literature: II*, pp. 2383-2386
5. Hugo Ball, et al., *Dada Manifesto* (1916)

WEEK 12: TOTALITARIANISM (April 8, 10)

This week students will consider fascism and communism as ideologies whose similarities (despite considerable differences) lead observers to call them “totalitarian.” Not only will students look at ideological writings by such monstrous dictators as Stalin and Hitler but will also consider the philosophy and literature that attempted to come to terms with the rise of murderous states bent on exterminating whole classes and races of peoples. another modern attempt at totalitarianism.

Readings:

1. Josef Stalin, *The Foundations of Leninism*, in *Twentieth-Century Europe*, eds. John W. Boyer and Jan Goldstein (Chicago, 1986), pp. 233–249.
2. Benito Mussolini, *The Doctrine of Fascism*, in *Twentieth-Century Europe*, eds. Boyer and Goldstein, pp. 219–233.
3. Adolph Hitler, *Hitler’s Speech to the People of Danzig*, in *Readings in Western Civilization*, eds. Knoles and Snyder, pp. 827–830.
4. Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, in *Princeton Readings in Political Thought*, ed. Cohen, pp. 544–557.
5. Alexander Solzhenitsyn, *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich, From the Gulag to the Killing Fields*, ed. Hollander, pp. 137–148.

Assignment: Rough Draft of Paper due

WEEK 13: A NEW LIBERALISM? (April 15, 17)

At the same time totalitarian regimes formed in the West, a new liberalism emerged. That new liberalism, like its classical forbear, had both economic and political dimensions. This week students will survey the economic theories of the new liberalism's leading proponents, including Keynes, Hayek and Schumpeter.

Readings (76 pages):

1. John Maynard Keynes, 'The End of Laissez-Faire', in idem, *Essays in Persuasion* (1963), pp. 312–322.
2. John Maynard Keynes, 'General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money' (1936), in *The History of Economic Thought: A Reader*, eds. Steven A. Medema and Warren J. Samuels (New York, 2003), pp. 603–608.
3. F.A. Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom*, in *Twentieth-Century Europe*, eds. Boyer and Goldstein, pp. 433–446.
4. Vaclav Havel, *The Power of the Powerless* (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1985), 23–44.

WEEK 14: THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD (April 22)

The world after the Second World War was one in which there were increasingly few shared answers to the age-old Western questions, 'Who am I?' and 'How are we best to live together?'. This week students will examine a range of assessments of the modern world.

Readings:

1. William Faulkner, [*Nobel Prize Banquet Speech*](#), 10 December 1950.
2. Francis Fukuyama, 'The End of History?', in *Princeton Readings in Political Thought*, ed. Cohen, pp. 645–655. (needs to be copied)
3. Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA, 2007), pp. 1–24. (needs to be copied)

Assignment: Analytical Paper Due

Final Examination:

IV. Grading Scale and Rubrics

Grading Scale

For information on UF's grading policies for assigning grade points, see [here](#).

A	94 – 100%		C	74 – 76%
A–	90 – 93%		C–	70 – 73%
B+	87 – 89%		D+	67 – 69%
B	84 – 86%		D	64 – 66%
B–	80 – 83%		D–	60 – 63%
C+	77 – 79%		E	<60

Grading Rubrics

Participation Rubric

A (90–100%)	Typically comes to class with pre-prepared questions about the readings. Engages others about ideas, respects the opinions of others and consistently elevates the level of discussion.
B (80–89%)	Does not always come to class with pre-prepared questions about the reading. Waits passively for others to raise interesting issues. Some in this category, while courteous and articulate, do not adequately listen to other participants or relate their comments to the direction of the conversation.
C (70–79%)	Attends regularly but typically is an infrequent or unwilling participant in discussion. Is only adequately prepared for discussion.
D (60–69%)	Fails to attend class regularly and is inadequately prepared for discussion. Is an unwilling participant in discussion.
E (<60%)	Attends class infrequently and is wholly unprepared for discussion. Refuses to participate in discussion.

Examination Rubric: Essays and Short Answers

	Completeness	Analysis	Evidence	Writing
A (90–100%)	Shows a thorough understanding of the question. Addresses all aspects of the question completely.	Analyses, evaluates, compares and/or contrasts issues and events with depth.	Incorporates pertinent and detailed information from both class discussions and assigned readings.	Presents all information clearly and concisely, in an organized manner.
B (80–89%)	Presents a general understanding of the question. Completely addresses most aspects of the question or address all aspects incompletely.	Analyses or evaluates issues and events, but not in any depth.	Includes relevant facts, examples and details but does not support all aspects of the task evenly.	Presents information fairly and evenly and may have minor organization problems.
C (70–79%)	Shows a limited understanding of the question. Does not address most aspects of the question.	Lacks analysis or evaluation of the issues and events beyond stating accurate, relevant facts.	Includes relevant facts, examples and details, but omits concrete examples, includes inaccurate information and/or does not support all aspects of the task.	Lacks focus, somewhat interfering with comprehension.
D (60–69%)	Fails fully to answer the specific central question.	Lacks analysis or evaluation of the issues and events beyond stating vague, irrelevant, and/or inaccurate facts.	Does not incorporate information from pertinent class discussion and/or assigned readings.	Organizational problems prevent comprehension.
E (<60%)	Does not answer the specific central question.	Lacks analysis or evaluation of the issues and events.	Does not adduce any evidence.	Incomprehensible organization and prose.

Writing Rubric

	Thesis and Argumentation	Use of Sources	Organization	Grammar, mechanics and style
A (90–100%)	Thesis is clear, specific, and presents a thoughtful, critical, engaging, and creative interpretation. Argument fully supports the thesis both logically and thoroughly.	Primary (and secondary texts, if required) are well incorporated, utilized, and contextualized throughout.	Clear organization. Introduction provides adequate background information and ends with a thesis. Details are in logical order. Conclusion is strong and states the point of the paper.	No errors.
B (80–89%)	Thesis is clear and specific, but not as critical or original. Shows insight and attention to the text under consideration. May have gaps in argument's logic.	Primary (and secondary texts, if required) are incorporated but not contextualized significantly.	Clear organization. Introduction clearly states thesis, but does not provide as much background information. Details are in logical order, but may be more difficult to follow. Conclusion is recognizable and ties up almost all loose ends.	A few errors.
C (70–79%)	Thesis is present but not clear or specific, demonstrating a lack of critical engagement to the text. Argument is weak, missing important details or making logical leaps with little support.	Primary (and secondary texts, if required) are mostly incorporated but are not properly contextualized.	Significant lapses in organization. Introduction states thesis but does not adequately provide background information. Some details not in logical or expected order that results in a distracting read. Conclusion is recognizable but does not tie up all loose ends.	Some errors.
D (60–69%)	Thesis is vague and/or confused. Demonstrates a failure to understand the text. Argument lacks any logical flow and does not	Primary and/or secondary texts are almost wholly absent.	Poor, hard-to-follow organization. There is no clear introduction of the main topic or thesis. There is no clear conclusion, and the paper	Many errors.

	utilize any source material.		just ends. Little or no employment of logical body paragraphs.	
E (<60%)	There is neither a thesis nor any argument.	Primary and/or secondary texts are wholly absent.	The paper is wholly disorganized, lacking an introduction, conclusion or any logical coherence.	Scores of errors.

V. Required Policies

Academic Policies

All academic policies in this course are consistent with university policies, which can be found here: <https://go.ufl.edu/syllabuspolices>