

PHIL 275: From Modern to Postmodern: Philosophical Thought and Cultural Critique

Winter Term 2022-23/ SGW Campus (3 credits)

© Natalie Helberg, Department of Philosophy, Concordia University, 2023

Instructor:	Natalie Helberg (Lecturer, Department of Philosophy)
Office:	S-210 (2145 Mackay)
	*Note: we will not have access to the building my office is in until around February; office hours will be held at an alternative location until then. I'll indicate this location in the Moodle announcement section during the second week of class.
Email:	natalie.helberg@concordia.ca (email is my preferred contact method; please do not email/contact me via Moodle, as I do not reliably receive those messages)
Telephone:	TBA
Office hours:	Thursday 11:45AM-2PM (or by appointment)
	*There will be no office hours the first week of class
Class schedule:	Mo & We 10:15AM-11:30AM, H 620 SGW

Calendar description: This course focuses on key developments in modern and postmodern philosophy and their cultural influences. The course provides an introduction to philosophers (such as Kant, Nietzsche, and Foucault) and philosophical movements (such as empiricism, existentialism, and post-structuralism) of the modern era. It also introduces students to the tremendous influence that philosophical theory has had on the arts, on social and political movements, and on virtually every field of study in the humanities and social sciences.

Course description: In this course, we will track the shift from modernity to postmodernity through a close examination of texts which are exemplary of the philosophical ideas and trends that characterize each. Our reading list takes us from the seventeenth century into the twenty-first. We will consider the respects in which postmodern thought arises as a critique of modernity as well as the respects in which it responds to the darker dimensions of the postmodern era. As modernity cedes to postmodernity, new ideas concerning the sovereignty of reason, the nature of truth and knowledge, the possibility and desirability of certainty, the nature of the subject, and the relation between the body and ambient technologies emerge. Old forms of anxiety and alienation give way to new ones as economic forces and forms of political organization transform. New technologies burst onto the scene in tandem with pervasive forms of control, giving the lie to the conceptions of freedom which were among modernity's polestars. As old forms of revolutionary optimism suffer, new conceptions of critique develop along with new political sensibilities.

Required texts: Electronic versions of most readings will be available on Moodle via Course Reserves. Note that there are no readings for the first week of class. (Consult our reading schedule to see the reading requirements for each week.). Some texts will have to be purchased (they will be available through Concordia's BookStop):

Nietzsche, Friedrich. 1980 [1874]. *On the Advantages and Disadvantages of History for Life*. Indianapolis: Hackett.

Jameson, Fredric. 1991. *Postmodernism, or The Cultural Logic of Late-Capitalism*. Durham: Duke UP.

Course objectives: The course will (1) acquaint students with the features of and ideas associated with modernity and postmodernity, (2) provide students with an understanding of the interventions postmodern thought is effecting in relation to modernity and modern philosophy as well as in relation to postmodernity, and (3) provide students with a meticulous understanding of specific texts which refract the transition from modern to postmodern thought. Assignments will (4) allow students to sharpen their philosophical writing skills, as well as reading skills, and develop their critical and creative capacities.

How the course will run and expectations:

We will meet at our scheduled times in the room that has been assigned to us.

The weekly lectures will be more enriching if students complete the readings for the week in advance, and I highly encourage this practice. Engagement with the readings is essential for success in the course, so please do keep up with the readings. Some are lengthier than others. I recommend attending all lectures as well; I will be linking the readings and considering them in connection with our general preoccupations as we proceed. If you just try to ‘do the readings alone,’ you won’t be able to get a sense of how the course fits together. Some of our texts are rather difficult as well; learning how to read them will be a bit like learning how to read another language, and this is precisely what lectures will help students do. It will be difficult, and perhaps impossible, to do this work alone. Beyond this, you’ll want to ensure you’re present in the event of a pop ‘attendance & participation’ quiz (see ‘assignments’ below).

I will provide my lecture notes via Moodle after the lectures, as students often find them useful to have while working on written assignments. Please also take your own notes (creating a personalized set of notes while engaged in a learning process is a special, enriching activity!). The lectures themselves contain more detail than the typed-up lecture notes can convey and you may want to capture some of it.

I will invite questions, comments, and some discussion during my lectures. You’re also free to jump in with questions and comments at any time—just raise your hand. The more communal the classroom is, the more lively it will be, and a convivial atmosphere will benefit everyone.

Please monitor the announcement section in Moodle regularly, just in case there are messages from me. Please do not email me/message me via Moodle. You can definitely email me, just send your message to natalie.helberg@concordia.ca from a standard inbox.

Assignment requirements:**1) Attendance & Participation ‘Pop Quizzes’ x 5 (4% each; worth 20% in total)**

These quizzes are designed to test students on their understanding of the lectures. Each quiz will consist of a single question asking students to explain a specific portion of the material covered during our lectures (perhaps I’ll ask you to explain a certain idea we covered, for instance). Students should write a short paragraph in response to the question (between 150 and 200 words). They will have approximately 15 minutes to respond. The quizzes will take place towards the end of lecture. I will announce a given quiz at the beginning of the lecture on the day it is to happen (these are pop quizzes, again). A given quiz will never cover material covered during the same day students are writing the quiz (So, if we have a quiz during our Monday lecture on Week 4 of the course, you will not be tested on the material I lecture on during the first part of that class, before the quiz starts). Quizzes will always bear on material covered 1 or 2 weeks prior to the quiz. Students should frequently be reviewing the course material and their own course notes so that they can succeed on the quizzes.

2) Critical Exegesis Exercise #1 (1250-1500 words; worth 20%)

Due: Feb 12 by 11:59pm via Moodle.

The ‘critical exegesis’ exercises (there are two; see below) each ask students to (1) work closely with one of the readings for the course, explaining the text’s main task or tasks while unpacking specific ideas and arguments advanced in the text and commenting on the parts of the text and their relation to one another, and (2) motivate and pose a critical question about the reading. The portion of the assignment devoted to ‘explaining the text’ (1, above) should be about 1000 words; the portion devoted to motivating and posing the critical question (2, above) should be about 250 words. No introductory paragraph flagging the critical question you’re setting out to pose is necessary; just pose the critical question towards the end of the assignment. The question you pose should be original, hard-won and philosophical in nature, the sort of question you wouldn’t be able to put to the text without first engaging with it in an attentive and rigorous way. There’s no need to ‘answer’ the question. Posing a philosophical question is work in itself and genuine philosophical questions are not easily answered and never definitively answered.

Specific topics will be distributed at least 2 weeks before the deadline.

3) Critical Exegesis Exercise #2 (1250-1500 words; worth 20%)

Due: March 26 by 11:59pm via Moodle

See instructions under ‘Critical Exegesis Exercise #1.

4) Final Paper (2500 words; worth 40%)

Due during exam period. Precise date TBA.

This is a standard philosophical essay. Students should use readings from the class to support an original philosophical thesis. Please consult the ‘Essay-writing Checklist’ on Moodle to get clear on the components of a strong philosophy paper. Topics will be distributed at least 2 weeks in advance of the deadline.

*Note that, although this course’s language of instruction is English, students have the option of submitting their written work in French.

Grading scheme:

Philosophy Department Statement Regarding Grades and Grade Distribution:

1) The Undergraduate Calendar 16.3 specifies that As, Bs, and Cs are for “outstanding,” “very good” and “satisfactory” work, respectively. The Philosophy Department interprets this to mean that: Cs are awarded for work that is adequate, yet in some way fails to completely meet all expectations and requirements; Bs are awarded for work that fully meets all expectations and requirements; As are reserved for outstanding work that exceeds expectations and requirements by, e.g., demonstrating outstanding rigour, clarity, or insight.

2) In 200 & 300 level courses with over 30 students, it is normally expected that: the grade average will be in the C+ to B- range; there will be no more than 25% As.

Numerical Equivalents:

A- 80-84% 3.7 GP	A 85-89% 4.0 GP	A+ 90-100% 4.3 GP
B- 70-72% 2.7 GP	B 73-76% 3.0 GP	B+ 77-79% 3.3 GP
C- 60-62% 1.7 GP	C 63-66% 2.0 GP	C+ 67-69% 2.3 GP

D- 50-52% 0.7 GP	D 53-56% 1.0 GP	D+ 57-59% 1.3 GP
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I emphasize that A-range grades are reserved for work that EXCEEDS expectations and requirements. Outstanding, A-range work will, while grounding itself in a rigorous understanding of the course content, and while meeting all assignment requirements, move course content in new directions. It may set itself apart by advancing notably original ideas, by making unique connections between ideas, or by in other ways demonstrating keen philosophical insight while at the same time being well-argued. Exceptional assignments will also be well-composed.

The evaluation scheme and more in light of extraordinary circumstances: In the event of extraordinary circumstances and pursuant to the Academic Regulations, the University may modify the delivery, content, structure, forum, location and/or evaluation scheme. In the event of such extraordinary circumstances, students will be informed of the changes.

Important advice: If a special condition or circumstance in your life may or will affect your performance, please let me know about it as soon as possible. It will be treated with the strictest confidence. Please do not wait until the condition or circumstance is impending or has already happened before telling me about its impact on you. If something unanticipated occurs, bring it to my attention and we will work out a way of dealing with it.

Accessibility: I will strive to make the course as accessible and inclusive as possible. If you have accessibility needs that require academic accommodations, please meet with an advisor from the Access Centre for Students with Disabilities (ACSD) as soon as possible to set up an accommodation plan. I welcome meeting with all students to discuss their accessibility needs.

Undergraduate general assignment policies: To hand in one of the longer papers late, please negotiate a new arrangement with me at least one week in advance of the deadline. Your paper will not be accepted unless you do this (barring exceptional circumstances, which will require documentation). Note that if you make arrangements to hand in your paper late, I may not be able to comment on it. The short-term absence form can be used to acquire additional time for the critical summary, if necessary. It can only be used for assignments that are less than 30% of the final grade, so it cannot be used for either of the longer papers.

Ensure that you keep backup copies of your work in paper and/or electronic form. This is good common sense. Don't make the mistake of typing up an assignment in a hurry on a library computer without saving it to an online account at the university or elsewhere, to a memory key, etc. Consider purchasing a small USB key that you can carry with you at all times with your work on it, or finding an online resource such as DropBox or SugarSync where you can store files. Also, develop good backup practices: turn on the timed auto-recover function in your word

processor, the save backup copy function, and get in the practice of saving versions of your work under a new name when you start making drastic revisions (or use version management functions of your word processor). Also note that according to the calendar (16.3.9.2) “Students are responsible for the preservation of any material, in its entire and original form, which has been returned to them.”

Academic integrity: Your academic Code of Conduct makes it very clear that plagiarism, as well as any other form of academic dishonesty, is entirely unacceptable. The Code defines plagiarism as “the presentation of the work of another person as one’s own or without proper acknowledgement” (CU Undergraduate Calendar; the Code goes on to state other offences). This could be material copied word for word from books, journals, internet sites, professor’s course notes, etc. It could be material that is paraphrased but closely resembles the original source. It could be the work of a fellow student, for example, an answer on a quiz, data for a lab report, a paper or assignment completed by another student. It might be a paper purchased through one of the many available sources. Plagiarism does not refer to words alone - it can also refer to copying images, graphs, tables, and ideas. “Presentation” is not limited to written work. It also includes oral presentations, computer assignments and artistic works. If you translate the work of another person into French or English and do not cite the source, this is also plagiarism. If you cite your own work without the correct citation, this too is plagiarism. In Simple Words: DO NOT COPY, PARAPHRASE OR TRANSLATE ANYTHING FROM ANYWHERE WITHOUT SAYING FROM WHERE YOU GOT IT! DON’T FORGET TO USE QUOTATION MARKS!

Plagiarism and academic dishonesty are highly disruptive of the learning that we should be doing here. Should I detect any form of academic dishonesty, including plagiarizing from the internet, from books, journals, other students, etc., I will report it directly to the Vice-Dean of Academic Affairs. The penalties for plagiarism tend to be rather severe, and in any case undermine your learning process. So avoid it. In case of doubt as to what counts as plagiarism, ask me. Cite your sources and inspirations; this enriches your ideas by showing their roots in the thoughts of other people, and does not detract from your exposition, articulation, and development of ideas.

Note on intellectual property: Content belonging to instructors shared in online courses, including, but not limited to, online lectures, course notes, and video recordings of classes remain the intellectual property of the faculty member. It may not be distributed, published or broadcast, in whole or in part, without the express permission of the faculty member. Students are also forbidden to use their own means of recording any elements of an online class or lecture without express permission of the instructor. Any unauthorized sharing of course content may constitute a breach of the Academic Code of Conduct and/or the Code of Rights and Responsibilities. As specified in the Policy on Intellectual Property, the University does not claim any ownership of or interest in any student IP. All university members retain copyright over their work.

Note on behaviour: All individuals participating in courses are expected to be professional and constructive throughout the course, including in their communications. Concordia students are

subject to the Code of Rights and Responsibilities which applies both when students are physically and virtually engaged in any University activity, including classes, seminars, meetings, etc. Students engaged in University activities must respect this Code when engaging with any members of the Concordia community, including faculty, staff, and students, whether such interactions are verbal or in writing, face to face or online/virtual. Failing to comply with the Code may result in charges and sanctions, as outlined in the Code.

Note on gender neutral language & human diversity: In addition to all the other reasons for using gender neutral language and language that attends to human diversity, there are philosophical reasons for this too. Philosophy demands that we think very carefully, clearly and rigorously about human life and ideas. To do this well, we have to attend to the diversity of human life. Otherwise we build in and reinforce prejudices that betray who we are as human beings. Using gender neutral language in your writing and speaking reminds us that human beings are diverse in gender, that not all of them are “he.” And this reminds us of further diversities of human being. There are different ways of approaching the task of keeping gender and other differences in mind, e.g., substituting “she” where “he” might have traditionally been expected, alternating systematically between the two, using “she/he,” and so on. No formal procedure is adequate to the task, for the task is improving your thinking and that of our culture and future generations, and the form of thinking adequate to this cannot be set in advance. For helpful discussion and guidelines, Google: Warren, Virginia L. “Guidelines for the Nonsexist Use of Language.”

Note on pronouns: All course participants have the right to request which names and pronouns instructors use to refer to them. I respect this right and will do my best to satisfy any of these requests. If you want to be called by a name other than what is listed on the class list, please feel free to pass along the information to me. If I mistakenly use the wrong pronoun when referring to you, please advise me as soon as possible.

Note on sexual violence: Concordia’s [Policy Regarding Sexual Violence](#) defines sexual violence as “any violence or misconduct, physical or psychological, carried out through sexual means or by targeting sexuality. This includes, but is not limited to, sexual assault; sexual harassment; stalking; coercion; sexist, homophobic and/or transphobic jokes; indecent exposure; stealthing; voyeurism; degrading sexual imagery; recording and distribution of sexual images or video of a member of the University without their consent; cyber harassment or cyber stalking of a sexual nature or related to a person’s sexual orientation and gender identity and/or presentation.”

The Policy further defines sexual assault and harassment.

- The Philosophy Department condemns sexual violence. The Department encourages all students to report sexual violence to the Department Chair, the Dean, or to the Office of Rights and Responsibilities.
- Concordia’s [Sexual Assault Resource Centre \(SARC\)](#) is an important resource on campus for students needing support, accompaniment, resources or information about sexual

violence. SARC may convene a Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) to support a survivor/victim reporting sexual violence. See the [Policy](#) for further details.

- Other resources include the [Centre for Gender Advocacy](#) and the [CSU Advocacy Centre](#).
- The Philosophy Department welcomes Concordia's [Consensual Romantic Or Sexual Relationships Guidelines](#), which “strongly discourage[] all instructors from commencing or continuing any consensual romantic or sexual relationship with a student.”

Territorial acknowledgment:

I would like to acknowledge that Concordia University is located on unceded Indigenous lands. The Kanien'kehá:ka Nation is recognized as the custodians of the lands and waters on which we gather today. Tiohtiá:ke/Montreal is historically known as a gathering place for many First Nations. Today, it is home to a diverse population of Indigenous and other peoples. I respect the continued connections with the past, present and future in our ongoing relationships with Indigenous and other peoples within the Montreal community.

List of student services/resources:

[Counselling and Psychological Services](#)
[Concordia Library Citation and Style Guides](#)
[Student Success Centre](#)
[Health Services](#)
[Financial Aid and Awards](#)
[HOJO \(Off Campus Housing and Job Bank\)](#)
[Academic Integrity](#)
[Access Centre for Students with Disabilities](#)
[CSU Advocacy Centre](#)
[Dean of Students Office](#)
[International Students Office](#)
[Student Hub](#)
[The Otsenhákta Student Centre](#)
[Birks Student Service Centre](#)
[Sexual Assault Resource Centre](#)

Reading Schedule

*Note: Our reading schedule isn't set in stone and we will be free to adjust it as the course progresses if we need to. Some topics may require slightly more time to cover than our reading schedule indicates, in which case we will allow them to spill over into subsequent weeks. Think

of the course, of our thinking in the course, as an organism developing, rather than as a body of pre-partitioned information whose delivery is rigidly determined in advance.

<i>Weeks</i>	<i>Readings</i>
1 <i>Jan. 9/2023</i> <i>Jan. 11/2023</i>	Introduction to the class (no reading) General remarks on modernism vs. postmodernism (no reading; feel free to jump into the readings for Week 2)
2 <i>Jan. 16/2023</i> <i>Jan. 18/2023</i>	Bordo, Susan. 1987. "The Epistemological Insecurity of the Cartesian Era." In <i>The Flight to Objectivity: Essays on Cartesianism and Culture</i> . Albany: State University of New York Press. 33-44. Descartes, René. 1995 [1637]. <i>A Discourse on Method</i> . Trans. John Veitch. The Project Gutenberg. E-Book: https://www.gutenberg.org/files/59/59-h/59-h.htm .
3 <i>Jan. 23/2023</i> <i>Jan. 25/2023</i>	Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. 2014 [1762]. Book II & III from "The Social Contract." The Project Gutenberg. E-book: https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/46333/pg46333-images.html . Continuing with Rousseau (finish the reading).
4 <i>Jan. 30/2023</i> <i>Feb. 1/2023</i>	Kant, Immanuel. 1993 [1781]. Prefaces to the first and second editions of the <i>Critique of Pure Reason</i> . London: Everyman. 3-29. Kant, Immanuel. 1798. "What is Enlightenment?" E-version: https://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/ethics/kant/enlightenment.htm Marx, Karl. 1988 [1844]. "The Meaning of Human Requirements Where There is Private Property and under Socialism. The Difference between Extravagant Wealth and Industrial Wealth. Division of Labor in Bourgeois Society." In <i>Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844</i> and <i>The Communist Manifesto</i> . Amherst: Prometheus. 115-34.

	<p>Marx, Karl. 1999 [1852]. Chapter I and Chapter VII (Summary) of “The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte.” E-version: https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1852/18th-brumaire/</p>
5	
Feb. 6/2023	Friedrich Nietzsche. 1980 [1874]. <i>On the Advantage and Disadvantage of History for Life</i> . Indianapolis: Hackett.
Feb. 8/2023	Continuing with Nietzsche (finish the reading).
Feb. 12/2023	*Critical Exegesis Exercise #1 due by 11:59pm via Moodle.
6	
Feb. 13/2023	Sigmund Freud. 2001 [1913]. “The Claims of Psycho-Analysis to Scientific Interest.” In <i>The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud: Volume XIII</i> . London: Hogarth. 165-190.
Feb. 15/2023	Benjamin, Walter. 1985 [1938]. “The Flâneur.” In <i>Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in The Era of High Capitalism</i> . London: Verso. 35-66. Optional: Read or listen to selections some of <i>Les Fleurs du mal</i> by Charles Baudelaire: https://fleursdumal.org/
7	
Feb. 20/2023	Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno. 1996 [1947]. “The Concept of Enlightenment.” In <i>The Continental Philosophy Reader</i> . Ed. Richard Kearney and Mara Rainwater. London; New York: Routledge. 194-211.
Feb. 22/2023	Jameson, Fredric. 1991. Selections (TBA) from <i>Postmodernism, or The Cultural Logic of Late-Capitalism</i> . Durham: Duke UP.
8	
Feb. 27/2023	Midterm break (Feb. 27 th -March 5 th)

<p>9</p> <p>March 6/2023</p> <p>March 8/2023</p>	<p>Jameson, Fredric. 1991. Selections (TBA) from <i>Postmodernism, or The Cultural Logic of Late-Capitalism</i>. Durham: Duke UP.</p> <p>Jameson, Fredric. 1991. Selections (TBA) from <i>Postmodernism, or The Cultural Logic of Late-Capitalism</i>. Durham: Duke UP.</p>
<p>10</p> <p>March 13/2023</p> <p>March 15/2023</p>	<p>Roland Barthes. 1977 [1967]. "The Death of the Author." In <i>Image—Music—Text</i>. New York: Hill and Wang. 142-48.</p> <p>Roland Barthes. 1977 [1971]. "From Work to Text." In <i>Image—Music—Text</i>. New York: Hill and Wang. 155-164.</p> <p>Michel Foucault. 2003 [1971]. "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History." In <i>The Essential Foucault</i>. London; New York: New Press. 351-369.</p>
<p>11</p> <p>March 20/2023</p> <p>March 22/2023</p> <p>March 26/2023</p>	<p>Michel Foucault. 1997 [1984]. "What is Enlightenment?" In <i>Ethics, Subjectivity and Truth</i>. New York: New Press. 303-320.</p> <p>Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. 1983 [1972]. "The Desiring-Machines," "The Body without Organs" and Section 3 of "Introduction to Schizoanalysis" (Title: "Psychoanalysis and Capitalism"). In <i>Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia</i>. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota Press. 1-8; 9-15; 296-321.</p> <p>*Critical Exegesis Exercise # 2 due by 11:59pm via Moodle</p>
<p>12</p> <p>March 27/2023</p> <p>March 29/2023</p>	<p>Jacques Derrida: 1983. "The Principle of Reason: The University in the Eyes of Its Pupils." In <i>Diacritics</i> 13(1): 3-20.</p> <p>Jacques Derrida. 1992 [1984]. "Before the Law." In <i>Acts of Literature</i>. New York; London. 181-220.</p>

<p>13</p> <p><i>April 3/2023</i></p> <p><i>April 5/2023</i></p>	<p>Haraway, Donna. 2016 [1985]. "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century." In <i>Manifestly Haraway</i>. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P. E-book.</p> <p>Continuing with Haraway (finish reading the text).</p>
<p>14</p> <p><i>April 10/2023</i></p> <p><i>April 12/2023</i></p>	<p>University closed (Easter holiday).</p> <p>Jean-François Lyotard. 1993 [1988]. "An Answer to the Question, What Is the Postmodern." In <i>The Postmodern Explained</i>. Minneapolis; London: U of Minnesota Press. 1-16</p> <p>Jean-François Lyotard. 1991 [1988]. "Rewriting Modernity." In <i>The Inhuman</i>. Stanford: Stanford UP. 24-35.</p> <p>Jean-François Lyotard. 1991. "Time Today." In <i>The Inhuman</i>. Stanford: Stanford UP. 58-77.</p>
<p>15</p> <p><i>April 17/2023</i></p>	<p>Judith Butler. 2004. "Violence, Mourning, Politics." <i>Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence</i>. London; New York: Verso. 19-49.</p> <p>Optional: Brown, Wendy. 2019. Introduction to <i>In the Ruins of Neoliberalism: The Rise of Anti-Democratic Politics in the West</i>. New York: Columbia UP. 1-21. E-book.</p> <p>Last day of class.</p>
<p>16</p> <p><i>April 20/2023</i></p> <p><i>Exam Period Begins</i></p>	<p>*Final paper due during exam period. Date TBA.</p>

