

Political Science 772: The Past and Future of Modernity  
Spring, 2008

Office hours: Mondays, 10-11am; Thursdays, 2-3pm

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This course will examine the meaning and content of the idea of modernity, and whether the very idea is a sensible one. How does modernity differ from earlier eras? How does this difference affect our moral, social and political ideas? Is the idea of modernity a coherent concept? We will also look at critics of modernity, and some responses to these critics. We will pay special attention to the ideas of progress, civilization and freedom. We will begin the course with Kant, Mill and Marx and then move to twentieth century writers, including Polyani, Taylor, Foucault, Harvey, Gray, Habermas, Latour and others.

Requirements:

This course will be run through discussion, so you need to do the reading carefully before class. You should bring the week's readings to class. I expect all students to participate intelligently and respectfully in class. Participation counts for 20% of the grade. You will write three 5 page short papers (30%), and one longer research 15-25 page paper on the topic of your choice (50%).

Short papers should not summarize the texts, but should critically or sympathetically analyze an important argument in the readings. Reaction papers are due before class. You will find three schedules for the reaction papers at the end of the syllabus. You choose the schedule you prefer, though you must stick to it. You must email me your paper schedule by January 15.

You should buy the following books:

Kant, *Political Writings* (Cambridge)

Polyani, *The Great Transformation* (Beacon Press)

Berman, *All That is Solid Melts into Air* (Penguin)

Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries* (Duke)

Foucault, *Discipline & Punish* (Vintage)

Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Wiley)

Gray, *Enlightenment's Wake* (Penguin)

Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* (MIT Press)

Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity* (Polity)

Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern* (Harvard)

Many of the Mill readings you can access through Blackboard or borrow from me to copy. You need to get a hold of the Marx readings on your own. The Giddens book is *not* in the bookstore, and so you need to get a copy on your own, which should not be too hard. The other readings are in the bookstore. I will undoubtedly modify this syllabus as the semester progresses, but this should serve as a reasonably good guide to our readings.

## Class Schedule

January 9	Kant, <i>Political Writings</i> , pp. 41-60, 93-130, 177-234
January 16	Mill, "Civilization," "Spirit of the Age," <u>Subjection of Women</u> , ch. 1; August Comte and Positivism, Part I; A System of Logic, Book VI, Ch. 10. Marx, "Preface to a Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy," "Communist Manifesto"
January 23	Polyani, <i>The Great Transformation</i>
January 30	Berman, <i>All That is Solid Melts Into Air</i>
Feb 6	Taylor, <i>Modern Social Imaginaries</i>
February 13	Foucault, <i>Discipline &amp; Punish</i>
February 20	Nietzsche, <i>Twilight of the Idols, On the Advantage and Disadvantage of History for Life</i>
February 27	Harvey, <i>The Condition of Postmodernity</i> , parts 1 & 2
March 5	Harvey, <i>The Condition of Postmodernity</i> , parts 3 & 4
March 12	Spring Break
March 19	Gray, <i>Enlightenment's Wake</i>
March 26	Habermas, <i>The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity</i> , chs. 1,4, 9-12
April 2	Individual meetings about final paper
April 9	Giddens, <i>The Consequences of Modernity</i>
April 16	Latour, <i>We Have Never Been Modern</i>
April 23	TBA
April 28	Final papers due, 10am