HISTORY OF MODERN PHILOSOPHY

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Office hours: Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday from 11 to 12:30 a.m.
(It is advisable to request an appointment in advance by email)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The main aim of the lectures is reaching a critical and reflexive understanding of the development, meaning and consequences of modern thought (from roughly the end of the 15th century to the first third of the 19th century). The topics and approaches discussed and held by modern philosophers will be regarded taking into particular consideration the impact of modern philosophy on the emergence of contemporary ideas. Classic philosophical texts will be carefully examined in class in order to obtain first-hand knowledge of modern ideas.

TOPICS AND TEXTS FOR DISCUSSION:

1.- The discovery of the individual in modernity: from theocentrism to anthropocentrism. The modern project: controlling nature and freeing men.
Texts: Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, Oration on the Dignity of Man.
2.- Utopia: in search of a better new world. Criticism of the present and the project of a new future.
Texts: Thomas More, Utopia; Francis Bacon, New Atlantis.
4.- Uncertainty and subjectivity. Qué sais-je? The place of man in the world: Me and my cat.
Texts: Michel de Montaigne, Essays.
5.- Looking for certainty: scepticism and methodic doubt. I think, therefore I am. God and reason. Bodies and minds: the dualistic point of view. Freedom in a mechanical world?
Texts: René Descartes, *Discourse on the Method, Meditations on First Philosophy, Principles of Philosophy.*

6.- Human frailty and the dignity of man. The frailty of reason. Pascal’s wager and the meaning of life.

Texts: Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*

7.- New politics for new men. Individuals, freedom and submission to power. Politics without ethics?

Texts: Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince; Étienne de la Boétie, Discourse on Voluntary Servitude*

8.- Men from a mechanical point of view. Political individualism. The other as enemy and the social pact. The estrangement between ethics and politics.


Texts: Baruch Spinoza, *Ethics, Theologico-Political Treatise, Political Treatise.*

10.- Individuals versus atoms. Determinism and freedom. The best of all possible worlds?

Text: Leibniz, *Discourse on Metaphysics, Monadology.*


Texts: Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality, Discourse on Political Economy, The Social Contract*


15.- The dubious universality of modern subject.

Texts: Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*

16.- Idealism, Romanticism and the crisis of the modern project.


All the TEXTS to be discussed in class will be available in VIRTUAL CAMPUS and also in REPROGRAPHY, if a printed version is desired.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**

**MAIN WORKS OF MAJOR MODERN PHILOSOPHERS:**

PICO DELLA MIRANDOLA, G., *Oration on the Dignity of Man.*

MORE, T., *Utopia.*

MACHIAVELLI, N., *The Prince.*

DE LA BOËTIE, E., *Discourse on Voluntary Servitude, or the Anti-Dictator.*

MONTAIGNE, M. de, *Essays.*

BACON, F., *The Great Instauration.*

HOBBES, T., *Leviathan.*

    On the Citizen.

DESCARTES, R., *Discourse on the Method, Meditations on First Philosophy.*

PASCAL, B., *Pensées.*

SPINOZA, B., *Ethics, Demonstrated in Geometrical Order.*
Theologico-Political Treatise.
LEIBNIZ G.W., *Monadology.*
WOLLSTONECRAFT, M., *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*
HÖLDERLIN, F. *Hyperion or The Hermit in Greece.*

**SOME USEFUL BOOKS AND RESOURCES**


https://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au

http://www.earlymoderntexts.com

**ASSESSMENT METHOD**

Students should write an **ESSAY** on any of the texts discussed in class. The **essay** must be a minimum of about 10 pages long (1.5 spaced, Times New Roman 12 pt.) and must include:

* A summary of the main ideas and arguments.
* A brief introduction to the main ideas of the philosopher of choice (no more than two or three pages). The point of the essay is not to exposit the philosopher, but rather to present a philosophical problem or evaluation of the philosopher on one issue.
* Explanation and argumentation of the ideas of the chosen text. This must constitute the core of the essay.
* Bibliography.

The essay must be **printed on paper** and not just electronically submitted. **Deadline** for essay submission: Tuesday, 15 January 2019.

**REGULAR ATTENDANCE** and **ACTIVE PARTICIPATION** in class are required.
HISTORY OF MODERN PHILOSOPHY From Nicolas of Cusa to the Present Time. by RICHARD FALCKENBERG Professor of Philosophy in the University of Erlangen. Third American from the second German edition translated with the author's sanction by A.C. Armstrong, Jr. Professor of Philosophy in Wesleyan University. 1893.

Translator's preface. The aim of this translation is the same as that of the original work. Each is the outcome of