POSC 255-00
Post-Modern Political Thought
Fall 2019
Class Hours: 10:10-11:55
Classroom: CMC 210
Professor: Mihaela Czobor-Lupp
Office: Willis 418 (fourth floor in Willis!)
Office Hours: **Tuesday: 3:15-5:00 and Thursday: 3:15-4:30, or by appointment**

Course description

In this course we will explore some of the main themes of post-modern political thought: (i) the criticism of the Enlightenment, of the idea of universal and totalizing reason, and of science; (ii) the attempt to critically rethink modern humanism (the idea that human beings and their happiness are central to the world); (iii) the critique of technology and the re-conceptualization of its place and role in human life; (iv) the relationship between power and reason/knowledge, that is, the project to denounce the claim to scientific and objective truth as being just an attempt to dominate other human beings, the perspectivism and, even the relativism that might follow from this position; and (v) the project to critically rethink the relationship between thinking and language and, consequently, the ways in which it is still possible to reinvent Western culture today from its Greek, Judaic, and Christian 'origins.'

Course Objectives

- To critically discuss and understand the controversial meaning of the term "post-modern," as this appears, not only in the context of political thought, but also in philosophy and culture in general;

- To understand how post-modern discourse came into being through the criticism of modernity, modern culture and philosophy, and, consequently, to understand the main differences between modern and post-modern political thought;

- To explore and understand specific post-modern themes, such as the attack on grand narratives, the pluralization and decentralization of power, the attack on universal and totalizing reason, the critique of technology, but also the re-conceptualization of technology's place and role in human life;

- To explore new and constructive ways in which post-modern culture can provide us with a new philosophical language and vocabulary, thus increasing our capacity to understand the most recent developments of the contemporary world, such as the need to build and protect peaceful coexistence in a world of increased plurality and differentiation.

Achieving the Course Objectives:

We will learn about post-modern political theory, by carefully and closely reading (from) the following books:

1. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, Barnes and Noble, 2006, ISBN: 9780760780862
2. Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Vintage Books, 1967, ISBN: 9780679724629
3. Michel Foucault, *The Politics of Truth*, Semiotext(e), 2007, ISBN: 9781584350392
4. Martin Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, Harper, San Francisco, 1993, ISBN: 9780060637637
5. Jacques Derrida, *The Politics of Friendship,* Verso, 2005, ISBN: 9781844670543

Course requirements

1. **One paper on Nietzsche (length: six double spaced pages), due on October 11, e-mail the paper no later than 4 PM,** (25%)

   On one of the following topics:

(i) In the *Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche 'argues' (rather declares) that art, in the guise of tragedy, is essential to life. He also criticizes the Socratic, theoretical man, and modern science. Do you agree with Nietzsche's criticism of modern culture? Justify your answer!

(ii) Explain the meaning of Nietzsche's idea of genealogy and then choose one topic from *On the Genealogy of Morals* and show how the method works. At the end, explain in which ways Nietzsche's idea of genealogy affects the meaning of morality, particularly of Christian morality. Do you agree with Nietzsche's criticism of morality? Do you think he is fair to Christianity? Justify all your answers.

2. **One paper Heidegger (length: six double spaced pages), due on November 8, e-mail the paper no later than 4 PM**, (25%)

   On one of the following topics:

(i) Heidegger criticizes modern technology for its dehumanizing and alienating effects on the human condition. Do you agree with his argument? When you justify your answer, make sure that you consider possible moral and political aspects of the issue of technology, although Heidegger claims that his approach is solely ontological.

(ii) In *Letter on Humanism*, Heidegger re-conceptualizes humanism (the place and the role of human beings in the world). Do you agree with Heidegger's criticism of traditional humanism? Do you agree with the role that Heidegger assigns to human beings? Do you see any dangers in it? Do you see any positive consequences, moral or political, or both?

3. **Active and informed class participation** (10%) This includes: (i) attending classes; (ii) doing the readings for the day; and (iii) participating in class discussion.

4. **Final paper (40%) will be due on November 25, by 5PM** (e-mail a copy to mlupp@carleton.edu). I am convinced that, one way or another, you previously came across the idea of post-modern condition, post-modern society, etc. Hence, you might have half-digested thoughts and opinions about postmodernity in general. While immersing yourself in the readings for the class, I urge you to start thinking of a possible topic that you would like to write about in your final paper. The recommendation is that after you pick up a possible topic, you come and talk with me and we start thinking together about ways in which you can draw on the class literature to construct your argument and in general your approach in the final paper. The idea is that you engage the class literature as much as possible to develop and better grasp your previous knowledge. The paper should not be longer than 12 double-spaced pages.
Please do not forget to write your name on your final paper and number your pages!

What is expected from the students?

Students will be expected to read, think, form arguments and counter-arguments, understand the fundamental concepts, and participate (in a critical and creative manner) in class discussion. This means that students must keep up with their reading assignments, watching the movies, and attending class regularly. Students must be fully prepared *at all times* to discuss the arguments and concepts from the previous readings. The best students will be knowledgeable, critical, but balanced in their critical assessments, and will develop coherent and sound arguments that they can defend in their quizzes, in their exams, and in class discussion.

Academic dishonesty:

"All assignments, quizzes, and exams must be done on your own. Note that academic dishonesty includes not only cheating, fabrication, and plagiarism, but also includes helping other students commit acts of academic dishonesty by allowing them to obtain copies of your work. You are allowed to use the Web for reference purposes, but you may not copy material from any website or any other source without proper citations. In short, all submitted work must be your own.

Cases of academic dishonesty will be dealt with strictly. Each such case will be referred to the Academic Standing Committee via the Associate Dean of Students or the Associate Dean of the College. A formal finding of responsibility can result in disciplinary sanctions ranging from a censure and a warning to permanent dismissal in the case of repeated and serious offenses.

The academic penalty for a finding of responsibility can range from a grade of zero in the specific assignment to an F in this course." (Office of the Dean)

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES AND READINGS:

September 17: *Postmodernism and post-modern theory*
Nietzsche: The Apolline and the Dionysiac
Reading: Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, 14-36

September 19: *Greek tragedy: its origin and death*
Reading: Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, 36-59

September 24: *Nietzsche's criticism of the Socratic man and of modern culture*
Reading: Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, 59-116

September 26: *The meaning of genealogy for Nietzsche*
Reading: Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, 15-56

October 1: *The origins of 'good and bad' and 'good and evil,' of conscience, guilt, and philosophy*
Reading: Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, 56-129

October 3: *The moral and political role of the ascetic priest*
Reading: Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, 129-163

October 8: *Foucault on genealogy: rethinking the meaning of 'origin'*
Reading: Michel Foucault, *Nietzsche, Genealogy, History*, 76-97

October 10: *Rethinking Enlightenment: power and resistance*
Reading: Michel Foucault, *The Subject and Power*, 326-348
Michel Foucault, *What is Enlightenment?* 97-119

October 15: *Rethinking the essence of modern technology*
Reading: Martin Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology*, 311-327

October 17: *Heidegger's criticism of modern reason*
Reading: Martin Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology*, 328-341

October 22: *Rethinking the meaning of humanism: Da-sein*
Reading: Martin Heidegger, *Letter on Humanism*, 217-235

October 24: NO CLASS

October 29: *Being and thinking*
Reading: Martin Heidegger, *Letter on Humanism*, 236-251

October 31: *Language, poetry, and thinking*
Reading: Martin Heidegger, *Letter on Humanism*, 252-261

November 5: *Derrida: deconstruction and friendship*
Reading: Jacques Derrida*, The Politics of Friendship*, 1-25

November 7: *Nietzsche on friendship*
Reading: Jacques Derrida, *The Politics of Friendship*, 26-74

November 12: *Is Schmitt right?*
Reading: Jacques Derrida, *The Politics of Friendship* 75-137

November 15: *Friendship and war*
Reading: Jacques Derrida, *The Politics of Friendship*, 138-226

November 19: *Is friendship possible in politics?*
Reading: Jacques Derrida, *The Politics of Friendship*, 227-308.