

Philosophy 215

Philosophy of History

General Information

Instructor	Dr. Kenneth A. Lambert
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Home Page	http://home.wlu.edu/~lambertk/
Class Period and Location	M/W/F 12:20-1:15, Wilson 2017
Office Hours	M/W/F 10-11:30, or by appointment

Required Texts

Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future* (Penguin Classics; Revised edition, 2006, ISBN 978-0143104810, \$10.44).

Immanuel Kant, *Perpetual Peace, and Other Essays on Politics, History, and Morals* (Hackett Publishing Company, 1983, ISBN 978-0915145478, \$12.58).

G.W.F. Hegel, *Introduction to the Lectures on the Philosophy of History* (Hackett Publishing Company, 1988, ISBN 978-0872200562, \$8.77).

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto: A Road Map to History's Most Important Political Document* (Haymarket Books, 2005, ISBN 978-1931859257, \$12.47).

Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Advantage and Disadvantage of History for Life* (Hackett Publishing Company, 1980, ISBN 978-0915144945, \$6.93).

Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents* (W. W. Norton & Company; Reprint edition, 2010, ISBN 978-0393304510, \$8.49)

Morris Berman, *Wandering God: Studies in Nomadic Spirituality* (State University of New York Press, 2000, ISBN 978-0791444429, \$22.89)

Morris Berman, *Dark Ages America: The Final Phase of Empire* (W. W. Norton & Company; Reprint edition, 2007, ISBN 978-0393329773, \$15.26).

Total cost: \$97.83 (based on Amazon pricing)

In addition, several required essays are available on the course site at sakai.wlu.edu.

Course Description

Who makes history: individual human beings, social or economic classes, or broad and deep circumstances, such as climate, disease, or currency exchange rates? How are explanations of historical events different from explanations in physics, biology, psychology, or economics? Is our understanding of historical events influenced by ethical or ideological considerations? Is history just one thing happening after another, or is there a discernable pattern or meaning in it? What role do theories play in our understanding of history? What does history tell us about ourselves?

The philosophy of history is the philosophical examination of such questions and problems relating to our study and experience of history. This course provides an overview of the field and an introduction to its subject matter and methods of inquiry. We will examine various classical theories of historical agency and explanation and discuss contemporary theories as well. Classroom activities will consist of lecture and discussion. Readings will be from classical and contemporary theories.

Course Objectives

1. Students will be able to recognize fallacies, premises, and conclusions in theories of history.
2. Students will be able to distinguish and assess various theories of history and use these to become aware of their own historical situation.
3. Students will be able to converse and write effectively about major concepts such as historical agency and historical explanation.
4. Students will be able to cite major thinkers and traditions in the philosophy of history.

Participation

Students are required to attend class on time, and attendance will be taken. If you believe that you will be unable to attend a class or if you miss a class, please notify me in order to determine if work needs to be done to make up for missing the class. Failure to do this may result in a failing grade for participation, and may also result in a failing grade overall.

The assigned reading will follow the class schedule (see below). Students are required to do all the assigned reading before class. A prepared student will not only read the material but will have reflected upon the claims and arguments made therein. It will be wise to start this reading early, because some material may require more than one reading.

Students are to respect their classmates and me by raising their hand when they wish to ask a question or when they wish to reply to a question asked or statement made by another. Students are expected to listen to their classmates and the professor carefully

and respectfully. This entails not Web surfing, texting, e-mailing, or allowing cell phones to ring in class.

Students are encouraged to discuss the readings, assignment questions, and paper topics with me outside of class during office hours or by scheduling a meeting. All participation, whether in class or outside of class, counts towards the participation grade.

Written Work for the Course

Written work for the course consists of three parts:

1. You will write a **one-page essay each week**. Each essay will take the form of an answer to a question about the reading. This question will be provided to you one week before the essay is due. These assignments will be due at 12 noon on their due dates. For example, the first question will appear on Monday, September 9, and your answer will be due at noon on Monday, September 16. You will be notified via email when a new question becomes available. Therefore, you are responsible for checking your email. Essays will be turned in as Word files via Sakai and will be marked up and returned promptly to you via Sakai (a paperless process).
2. You will write **two six-page papers**. All students will schedule a meeting with me about these longer papers at least one week before each paper is due.
3. You will write a **comprehensive final examination**, to be given during the W&L final examination week. This three-hour examination will range over all of the material covered in the course. More details about the examination will be given closer to examination week.

The grading scheme and criteria for written work are described later in this syllabus. Late assignments or papers will be docked a full letter grade, unless you receive permission from me to turn the paper in by an extended due date. No late assignment or paper will be accepted after a three-day delinquent period, unless the professor agrees to an extenuating circumstance. *You must complete all writing assignments to pass the course (a necessary but not a sufficient condition).*

Academic Integrity

All work submitted for credit should be your own work. You must give full and accurate credit to sources that are not your own (books/journals, other students). Do not use online sources in support of your papers. Deliberate concealment of sources constitutes plagiarism and will result in a failing grade for the course and a report to the EC. Cite and credit everything, except your own class notes. All work must be pledged. Please familiarize yourself with W&L's policy on plagiarism at http://library.wlu.edu/research/ref/cite_plag.asp

Accommodations

Washington and Lee University makes reasonable academic accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. All undergraduate accommodations must be approved through the Office of the Dean of the College. Students requesting accommodations for this course should present an official accommodation letter within the first two weeks of the (fall or winter) term and schedule a meeting outside of class time to discuss accommodations. It is the student's responsibility to present this paperwork in a timely fashion and to follow up about accommodation arrangements. Accommodations for test-taking should be arranged with the professor at least a week before the date of the test or exam.

Grading

Upon completion of *all* assigned work, your grade will be computed as follows:

Two six-page papers	15% each
Final examination	30%
Weekly assignments	30%
Participation	10%

Tentative Schedule of Topics and Readings

Day	Topic	Reading
Week 0		
Sept 6	Introduction and overview	
Week 1		
Sept 9	History and nature	Arendt, pp. 40-63 (Chapter 2, section I)
Sept 11	History and earthly immortality	Arendt, pp. 63-75 (Chapter 2, section II)
Sept 13	History and politics	Arendt, pp. 76-90 (Chapter 2, section III and epilogue)
Week 2		
Sept 16	What is enlightenment?	Kant, pp. 41-48
Sept 18	Universal history	Kant, pp. 29-33 (Theses 1-5)
Sept 20	Universal history	Kant, pp. 33-40 (Theses 6-9)
Week 3		
Sept 23	The methods of history	Hegel, pp. 3-11 (Section 1)
Sept 25	Reason in history	Hegel, pp. 12-18 (Section 2)
Sept 27	History and spirit	Hegel, pp. 19-56 (Section 3)
Week 4		
Sept 30	History and development	Hegel, pp. 57-82 (Section 4)
Oct 2	Bourgeois and proletarians	Marx, pp. 39-57 (Section 1)
Oct 4	Proletarians and communists	Marx, pp. 58-71 (Section 2)
Week 5		

Oct 7	Three uses of history	Nietzsche, pp. 7-22 (sections 1-3)
Oct 9	The modern abuses of history	Nietzsche, 22-32 (sections 4-5)
Oct 11	Reading Day 1	
Week 6		
Oct 14	History and life	Nietzsche, pp. 32-64 (sections 6-9)
Oct 16	Tradition and the modern age	Arendt, pp. 17-40 (Chapter 1)
Oct 18	Reading Day 2	
Week 7		
Oct 20	History and the psyche First long paper due	Freud, pp. 23-56 (sections 1-2)
Oct 22	History and the psyche	Freud, pp. 57-101 (sections 3-5)
Oct 24	History and the psyche	Freud, pp. 102-149 (sections 6-8)
Week 8		
Oct 28	What is authority (the Greeks)?	Arendt, pp. 91-120 (Chapter 3, sections 1-2)
Oct 30	What is authority (the Romans)?	Arendt, pp. 121-141 (Chapter 3, section 3)
Nov 1	What is freedom?	Arendt, pp. 142-169 (Chapter 4)
Week 9		
Nov 4	History and the body	Berman, "The Body of History," on Sakai
Nov 6	Horizontal and vertical consciousness	Berman, <i>Wandering God</i> , pp. 1-83
Nov 8	History and religion	Berman, <i>Wandering God</i> , pp. 85-151
Week 10		
Nov 11	History and nomadic alternatives	Berman, <i>Wandering God</i> , pp. 153-190
Nov 13	Other voices	Berman, <i>Wandering God</i> , pp. 191-245
Nov 15	The American scene	Berman, "conspiracy vs Conspiracy in American History" and "Locating the Enemy," on Sakai
Week 11		
Nov 18	The virtues of the Old South	Berman, "The Rebuke of History," on Sakai
Nov 20	Liquid modernity, etc.	Berman, <i>Dark Ages America</i> , pp. 1-79
Nov 22	America abroad	Berman, <i>Dark Ages America</i> , pp. 81-157
Week 12		
Dec 2	The Middle East and 9/11 Second long paper due	Berman, <i>Dark Ages America</i> , pp. 159-234
Dec 4	Looking ahead	Berman, <i>Dark Ages America</i> , pp. 235-330
Dec 6	Conclusion	

How to Read Philosophy

Philosophy texts, if they are saying anything significant, must be read more than once. Reading a piece of philosophy is not like surfing the Web or reading a magazine or a newspaper, where the primary purpose is to skim for information. Reading philosophy is much more like reading literature, where other things, such as aesthetic engagement, analysis, and self-discovery, are happening as well.

Your approach to reading a philosophy text should consist of at least two passes through the text. On the first pass, your reading should be receptive, but not passive. Try to suspend your own opinions and preconceptions. Let the author, or rather the terms and ideas of the text, speak to you. Make a note of new or unusual terms and the ways in which they are related. Try to isolate those terms or ideas, if any, to which the author returns again and again as the essential terms or ideas of the text.

The second pass should be a more active reading. Try to articulate how the essential terms or concepts fit together to form a coherent whole. Are there one or two central concepts around which the text is organized? Is there a single thread that ties together the main ideas of the text? Can you put that thread into your own words? You will rarely find an explicit argument (a set of premises and a conclusion) in terms of which these concepts are developed and presented. Try to tease an argument out of the central body of ideas. Are the premises of the argument true, and do the conclusions of the argument follow from its premises? Or, if you cannot find an argument, does the presentation of the ideas enhance your understanding of related ideas? Now confront your preconceptions with these central ideas. Are your preconceptions shifting, being overthrown, or remaining firmer than ever? What fundamental question(s) does the text raise for you?

How to Write Philosophical Criticism

Just as literary criticism goes well beyond mere plot summary, writing about philosophy does more than summarize or even restate the main ideas of a text. There are many criteria for judging a piece of philosophy: Are the arguments (if any) sound? Are the claims of fact consistent with those of science and common sense? Do claims that seem to go beyond common sense or the scientifically verifiable make sense and enhance your understanding of the world? Are statements consistent with each other, and do they give a coherent picture of the world? What is the text really driving at, and how do you respond (intellectually, aesthetically, morally)? How do things stand with your preconceptions about the text's central ideas?

Guidelines for Writing Short Papers

Short papers are due on the date and time given by me, although I will accept a paper earlier if you have finished it. The turnin for all papers will be via the course site on Sakai. Sakai automatically marks a paper as late, on time, or not turned in at all. I will return the graded and commented papers to you via Sakai.

Remember that you must complete and turn in all writing assignments to pass the course (this is a necessary, but not a sufficient, condition).

Criteria for grading short papers are as follows, working from the bottom up:

F – Any or all of the following: this paper is riddled with spelling, punctuation, and/or grammatical errors. The paper demonstrates little or no attempt to understand the material or no critical examination of it. The paper is turned in late.

B – This paper has very few spelling, punctuation, or grammatical errors. The paper demonstrates an acceptable understanding of the material and a reasonable attempt to critically examine it.

A – This paper has no spelling errors and practically no punctuation or grammatical errors. The paper demonstrates excellent understanding of the material and a well-developed critical examination of it.

When you cite an author from the required readings in a short paper, you can simply mention the page number from the text in square brackets. For example, “Blah blah blah ...” [Hegel, p. 67]