Ideas of the Twentieth Century
Course Description

Friedrich Nietzsche predicted that the twentieth century would be a century of great wars. It was. More than one hundred million people died in wars; about the same number died at the hands of their own governments.

In its early years, philosophers, scientists, psychologists, artists, musicians, poets, and writers of fiction overturned our understanding of the physical world, of human behavior, of thought and its limits, and our understanding of art, creativity, and beauty. The challenge of totalitarianism divided those committed to freedom. The devastation of two World Wars raised deep questions about the nature and meaning of human existence.

This course will explore these themes as they develop in twentieth-century philosophy, history, literature, and art.

Required Texts
Agatha Christie, The Murder of Roger Ackroyd
Iris Murdoch, Under the Net
Paul Johnson, Modern Times

Plus a variety of readings online, linked from the syllabus.

Unique Numbers 62745–62815, MWF 2 pm, JGB 2.324

This course counts towards the Certificate Program in Core Texts and Ideas, a 6-course sequence in the great books, ideas, and controversies that have shaped Western civilization. The program is open to students in all majors and colleges. Visit http://www.utexas.edu/cola/centers/coretexts/ or email the academic director, Lorraine Pangle.

Lectures from this course will be posted on a dedicated playlist on my YouTube channel.

What ought to be taught in schools: to attend and get things right.—Iris Murdoch, Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals
Ideas of the Twentieth Century
Syllabus

“A Mighty Maze”: The Enlightenment Paradox
W 8/30 Welcome! The Agricultural and Industrial Revolutions
F 9/1 The Problem of Normativity— David Hume, “Morals are not derived from reason,” A Treatise of Human Nature

“The Abdication of Belief”: The Nineteenth Century’s Legacies
W 9/6 Relativism—Friedrich Nietzsche, The Cheerful Science and Human, All Too Human
F 9/8 Narcissism—Fyodor Dostoevsky, “The Grand Inquisitor,” The Brothers Karamazov

“The Wisdom of the Age”: 1900-1910
M 9/11 Realism—Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, “A Scandal in Bohemia”
W 9/13 Cynicism—George Bernard Shaw, “Maxims for Revolutionists”

“Downward to Darkness”: 1910-1920
F 9/15 World War I—Paul Johnson, “A Relativist World” and “Waiting for Hitler,” chapters 1 and 3 of Modern Times
M 9/18 Reactions to the Great War—Erich Maria Remarque, All Quiet on the Western Front; Wilfred Owen, “Dulce et Decorum Est” (Paper 1 due)
W 9/20 Marxism and the Russian Revolution—Karl Marx, from The German Ideology; Marx and Engels, from Manifesto of the Communist Party, Chapters 1 and 2; V. I. Lenin, from What Is To Be Done?; Paul Johnson, “The First Despotic Utopias,” chapter 2 of Modern Times
F 9/22 Progressivism—Woodrow Wilson, The New Freedom; Calvin Coolidge, Speech on the 150th Anniversary of the Declaration of Independence
W 9/27 Cycles of Civilization—W. B. Yeats, “The Second Coming,” “Sailing to Byzantium”; Rainer Maria Rilke, The Duino Elegies

“No Country for Old Men”: 1920-1930
F 9/29 The Roaring Twenties—Paul Johnson, “The Last Arcadia,” chapter 6 of Modern Times
W 10/4 Prosperity—F. Scott Fitzgerald, from This Side of Paradise
F 10/6 Deep Structure—Sigmund Freud, from The Interpretation of Dreams, Chapters II, III, and IV
M 10/9 Masks and Illusions—Luigi Pirandello, Six Characters in Search of an Author
M 10/16 Perspectives—Agatha Christie, The Murder of Roger Ackroyd (Paper 3 due)

“We Are Dust and Dreams”: 1930-1940
W 10/25 Totalitarianism—Nadezhda Mandelstam, from Hope Against Hope and Without Hope
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“Not without Glory”: 1940-1950

F 10/27 World War II— Winston Churchill, “We Shall Fight on the Beaches” (audio); “Blood, Toil, Tears, and Sweat” (audio); “Their Finest Hour” (audio); Paul Johnson, “The High Noon of Aggression,” “The End of Old Europe,” and “The Watershed Year,” chapters 9–11 of Modern Times

M 10/30 Magical Realism— Jorge Luis Borges, “Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius”


M 11/6 Truth and Objectivity— C. S. Lewis, “Men without Chests,” The Abolition of Man

W 11/8 Recovery and Free Markets— Friedrich Hayek, The Road to Serfdom

“A Renaissance of Wonder”: 1950-1960


M 11/13 Searching for the Good— Iris Murdoch, Under the Net (Paper 4 due)


F 11/17 The 1960s and 1970s— John F Kennedy, “Inaugural Address” (video); “I Am a Berliner” (video); “The Cuban Missile Crisis” (video); Paul Johnson, “Experimenting with Half Mankind” and “America’s Suicide Attempt,” chapters 16 and 18 of Modern Times

M 11/20 Postmodernism— Jean-Francois Lyotard, The Postmodern Condition

Thanksgiving Holiday


F 12/1 Reviving Conservatism— Robert Nozick, from Anarchy, State, and Utopia

“No Other End of the World Will There Be”: 1980-2000


W 12/6 Failures of Courage— Alexandr Solzhenitsyn, from The Gulag Archipelago; “A World Split Apart”


Film to be scheduled: The Lives of Others

M 12/11 Review for Final Exam (Paper 5 due)

12/16 Final Exam, 9 am – 12 noon (Saturday!)

All papers are due at 2:00pm on the days listed.

Clicking on the date will take you to the slides used in class on that day. In general, they will be available on the day the lecture is given.
Quizzes. Quizzes (25% of the final grade) will be given through Canvas once a week. You can take them on your own schedule—but, once you open a quiz, you will have only 5 minutes to complete it. They will concentrate on recent material, but anything up to that point in the course is fair game. We have no objection to your working together on quizzes. But their main point is to prepare you for the final exam, so relying on others or on search engines will be self-defeating.

Final exam. The final (25% of the final grade) will consist of 105 questions. You may not use books or notes. The final will be held on Saturday, December 16, 10:00 am – 12:00 noon. The final is comprehensive; it covers the entire course. There will be a practice final online.

Papers. You must write five short papers, three of them on the assigned books for the course. The papers count 45% of the final grade.

September 18: Campus Gem Paper (1 page, 200–400 words, 5%)
October 2: Critical Lecture Paper (1 page, 200–400 words, 5%)
October 16: Reading Paper: Agatha Christie, The Murder of Roger Ackroyd (2–3 pages, 500–1000 words, 10%)
November 13: Reading Paper: Iris Murdoch, Under the Net (2–3 pages, 500–1000 words, 10%)

Campus Gem Paper: Your first paper is to be a thoughtful reaction to a twentieth-century artwork found on this campus (e.g., at the Blanton Museum or the Harry Ransom Center) or to an exhibit, item, or event at the Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Library. The general form of this paper:
1. A description of the artwork, exhibit, or event. (An image would be helpful, if you have one.)
2. Your own reaction—thoughts, feelings, questions, etc.—prompted by it.

Critical Lecture Paper: Your second paper is a lecture paper: a thoughtful reaction to an event you attend in the University Lecture Series. Focus on one person’s contribution, or even a single idea; do not try to discuss the entire event. The general form of this paper:
1. A clear presentation of the lecture or idea.
2. Your own reaction—thoughts, criticisms, questions, applications, implications, etc.—prompted by it.

Reading Papers: Here are the rules for the papers on readings:
1. Your paper must identify and discuss critically one philosophical theme in the book.
2. You must send your paper to your TA before class on the day the paper is due. Papers submitted once class begins will not count.
3. The papers must be your own work. You must not use material from anyone else without citing the source. That includes Wikipedia and other online sources. The best way to follow this rule is to read the works yourself and write your own reactions, not someone else’s.
4. The structure of an ideal paper is simple: (a) an introduction in which you clearly identify the philosophical theme you plan to discuss and, if possible, say what you’re going to say about it; (b) the body of the paper in which you trace key elements of the theme in the book (quotations helpful—but only a few key ones); and (c) a conclusion in which you sum up the book’s overall treatment of the theme.

Research Paper: Here are the rules:
1. Your paper must identify and discuss critically one philosophical theme in an essay, chapter, or film.
2. You must send your paper to your TA before class on the day the paper is due. Papers submitted once class begins will not count.
3. The paper must be your own work. You must not use material from anyone else without citing the source. That includes Wikipedia and other online sources. The best way to follow this rule is to read the work yourself and write your own reactions, not someone else’s, though in a research paper you will of course make reference to the views of others.
4. The structure of an ideal paper is simple: (a) an introduction in which you clearly identify the philosophical theme you plan to discuss and, if possible, say what you’re going to say about it; (b) the body of the paper in which you trace key elements of the theme in the essay (quotations helpful—but only a few key ones); and (c) a conclusion in which you sum up the book’s overall treatment of the theme.
5. You must refer to at least five items, other than encyclopedia articles, including at least two academic books or papers.

Attendance/participation in sections: 5% of your grade.
Reading and writing philosophy are unlike almost anything you’ve ever done. It’s hard to get the hang of philosophy. Even if you read the words faithfully, you’re likely to find it hard to grasp the point of what you’re reading. Writing philosophy is even harder. We don’t expect you to know how to do these things already.

Fortunately, there are many helpful guides to reading and writing philosophy. This pages points you to just a few of them.

**Reading Philosophy**

Jim Pryor of New York University has an excellent guide to reading philosophy. There is a helpful guide at Philosophy Pages. Most philosophers read with a pencil at hand, marking a line in the margin beside important sections, underlining key definitions and theses, and jotting notes and questions in the margin. Don’t try to read philosophy without marking or writing anything; you won’t retain enough of what you read. And don’t use a highlighter; it’s too indiscriminate. Look for key theses, terms, and arguments; mark them; and think about them. Thinking about concrete cases often makes it clearer what the philosopher is trying to say—and also where its inadequacies are.

**Writing**

To write philosophy well, you first need to know how to write! You might think you already know how to do that. But effective writing isn’t something most people learn until they’re out of college.

The best guide to writing I’ve found is *The Elements of Style*, by William Strunk and E. B. White. It’s still in print, and in a fourth edition; you can find the original 1918 version online.

There are some rules of style that are suspended in philosophy. First, feel free to use the first person. Philosophers often write “I think,” “I want to argue,” and the like. In philosophical writing, you want to take a stand, advance an argument for it, and contrast your view with the views of others. Using the first person is a good way of doing that. Second, don’t worry about using the verb ‘to be.’ Philosophers need to define terms, and ‘is’ and ‘are’ are useful for that purpose, among others. Third, sometimes it’s best to use foreign terms.

**Writing Philosophy**

Jim Pryor also has an outstanding guide to writing philosophy. I urge you to consult it. Peter Horban of Simon Fraser University, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Philosophy Pages, and the University of Wisconsin – Madison all have excellent pages devoted to the topic.

Start your paper by stating your goal. Say clearly what you’re going to accomplish. A well-known paper by Peter Geach begins, “I am arguing that identity is relative.” Aspire to such clarity. Don’t write fluff. (“Philosophers have argued about identity for centuries....” Ugh.) Don’t keep the reader in suspense. Philosophy isn’t a mystery story.

**Reading and Writing about Literature**

Reading literature is familiar to most of you, but writing about it at the college level requires some new skills. Its important, of course, to understand the setting of the story; understand the characters; follow the plot; and identify the author’s point of view. But there are many other things to think about:

1. **Conflict.** Conflict drives most works of literature. Who is in conflict with whom? Over what? Is the conflict resolved? How?
2. **Emotion.** What feelings does the story provoke in you? How does the author evoke them? What do they tell you about the author’s intentions, the nature of the conflict, the characters, and other aspects of the work?
3. **Culture.** How does the cultural context affect the literary work? Does it address cultural, artistic, historical, political, or philosophical themes?
4. **Symbolism.** Does the work use items, settings, characters, or plot devices as symbols for larger themes?
5. **Themes.** Why did the author write the book? What ideas are crucial to its development? What does the story mean? What ideas does it prompt in you? What does it tell you about the human condition?

The papers on literature in this course ask you to focus on philosophical themes—themes such as

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Ideas of the Twentieth Century
Rules for Good Writing

Our Grading Criteria

Intelligibility. Can we understand what you’re trying to say?

Clarity. Is your paper clear? Do you express your points with precision?

Understanding. Do you understand the writers and the issues well?

Support. Do you support what you say with reasons and arguments?

Depth. Do you get at the heart of the issues? Or does your paper show only a superficial understanding?

Strunk and White’s Rules

1. Use the active voice.
2. Put statements in positive form.
3. Use definite, specific, concrete language.
4. Omit needless words.
5. Avoid a succession of loose sentences.
6. Keep related words together.
7. Write in a way that comes naturally.
8. Write with nouns and verbs.
9. Revise and rewrite.
10. Do not overstate.
11. Avoid fancy words.
12. Be clear.
13. Do not take shortcuts at the cost of clarity.

Orwell’s Rules

1. Never use a metaphor, simile, or other figure of speech which you are used to seeing in print.
2. Never use a long word where a short one will do.
3. If it is possible to cut a word out, always cut it out.
4. Never use the passive where you can use the active.
5. Never use a foreign phrase, a scientific word, or a jargon word if you can think of an everyday English equivalent.
6. Break any of these rules sooner than say anything outright barbarous.

Pryor’s Principles

1. If you are going to evaluate an argument, be sure to give it as clearly as you can. Don’t ever say that an argument is good or bad, valid or invalid, convincing or not, unless you lay it out explicitly.
2. Always say precisely what you mean. Reread to make sure that your wording isn’t unclear.
3. Don’t use rhetorical questions.
4. Argue for your claims.
5. If you don’t need to make a contentious claim to make your point, don’t make the claim.
6. If something you say isn’t necessary for proving your point, or helpful in elucidating what you mean, drop it.
7. Sometimes more than you can chew. Given the choices of being broad and shallow or narrow and deep, go for narrow and deep.
8. Never say an unkind word about any thinker or that thinker’s intentions.
9. Be careful of amphibologically (ambiguity); it will invite your critics to poke fun at your expense.
10. Do all of the thinking for your reader. Never leave any inference, no matter how obvious, to the (in)capable hands of your reader.
11. The same goes for explaining quotations. Always tell the reader what she should take from the quotation, even if it is obvious to you.
12. Use signposts. First tell me what you are going to do. Then tell me that you are doing it. Finally, tell me what you have done. (“Tell ‘em what you’re gonna tell ‘em; tell ‘em; tell ‘em what you told ‘em.”)
13. Never employ a technical term before defining it unless you are confident that your reader knows exactly what it means from you.
14. Proof-read!
Ideas of the Twentieth Century

Policies

You may use your laptop computer or tablet to read and take notes in class. Research indicates, however, that people learn better when they write notes by hand.

You don’t need to bring any books to class. Quotations we discuss will be shown on screen.

Attendance is not a formal part of the grade. But attending class is by far the most efficient way to learn what you need to know. My research on performance of previous classes shows that each missed class costs you about a point on your final average. That adds up. Missing one class each week, on average, lowers your final grade 15 points—from an A to a C+, for example, or from a B+ to a C-.

Grades in this class use plusses and minuses in accord with University policy. The general pattern: A: 93–100; A–: 90–93; B+: 87–90; B: 83–87; B–: 90–83; etc.

Please review safety and evacuation procedures in case of an emergency. If you will need assistance in such a circumstance, please let me know in advance.

University of Texas Honor Code

“As a student of The University of Texas at Austin, I shall abide by the core values of the University and uphold academic integrity.”

The core values of The University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility. Each member of the university is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community.

Your papers must be your own work. You must not use material without citing your sources.

It can be tempting to plagiarize when you’re under time pressure. It’s easy to copy and paste. But that means it’s also easy for us to catch you. Don’t do it! If you need extra time, ask for it. We will say yes.

UT’s Academic Honesty Policy can be found at http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/acint_student.php For more on how to avoid plagiarism, see http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/acadint_plagiarism.php and http://www.lib.utexas.edu/services/instruction/learningmodules/plagiarism/index.html.

Religious Holidays

Religious holidays will be respected in accordance with University policy.

Disabilities

Students with disabilities may request appropriate academic accommodations from the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, Services for Students with Disabilities, 471-6259 (voice) or 232-2937 (video phone).

University Resources for Students

The Sanger Learning Center helps more than one-third of UT undergraduate students each year to improve their academic performance. All students are welcome to take advantage of the Center’s classes and workshops, private learning specialist appointments, peer academic coaching, and tutoring for more than 70 courses in 15 different subject areas. For more information, please visit http://www.utexas.edu/ugs/slc or call 512-471-3614 (JES A332).

The University Writing Center offers free, individualized, expert help with writing for any UT student, by appointment or on a drop-in basis. Consultants help students develop strategies to improve their writing, foster their resourcefulness and increase their self-reliance. http://uwc.utexas.edu/

The Counseling and Mental Health Center provides counseling, psychiatric consultation, and prevention services that facilitate students’ academic and life goals and enhance their personal growth and well-being. http://cmhc.utexas.edu/

Student Emergency Services:
http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/emergency/

ITS helps with technology: http://www.utexas.edu/its/
Libraries http://www.lib.utexas.edu/
Canvas help is available 24/7 at https://utexas.instructure.com/courses/633028/pages/student-tutorials

If you have concerns about the safety or behavior of fellow students, TAs or Professors, call BCAL (the Behavior Concerns Advice Line): 512-232-5050. Your call can be anonymous. If something doesn’t feel right, it probably isn’t. Trust your instincts and share your concerns.
Ideas of the Twentieth Century
Professor and Discussion Sections

The Professor


Office: WAG 403; 232-4333. Email: bonevac@austin.utexas.edu. Office Hours: M 3-5.

Teaching Assistants