

European Intellectual History – HTS3032

Fall 2026

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Course Description

This course brings before students some of the most consequential writings of European culture and their enduring ideas. Through a study of primary sources, the course traces the roots of modern thought in the ancient and medieval world before proceeding to explore modernity as a series of complex dialogues and debates about the nature of knowledge, the individual, and society.

Course Objectives

This is a Core IMPACTS course that is part of the Social Sciences area.

Core IMPACTS refers to the core curriculum, which provides students with essential knowledge in foundational academic areas. This course will help master course content, and support students' broad academic and career goals.

This course should direct students toward a broad Orienting Question:

- How do I understand human experiences and connections?

Completion of this course should enable students to meet the following Learning Outcome:

- Students will effectively analyze the complexity of human behavior, and how historical, economic, political, social, or geographic relationships develop, persist, or change.

Course content, activities and exercises in this course should help students develop the following Career-Ready Competencies:

- Intercultural Competence
- Perspective-Taking
- Persuasion

Course-Specific Learning Outcomes: At the end of this course the students will:

*demonstrate knowledge of the origins of modernity

*be able to provide an account of the most important currents of thought in the modern world and the most consequential debates on the nature of knowledge, human nature, and society

*be able to connect the ideas studied with the political, economic, and social contexts which conditioned their emergence and development, as well as discuss their continued relevance to our world

*be able to engage critically with primary sources using the tools of intellectual history

*have developed their critical reading, writing, and thinking skills.

This course also carries the Ethics designation

Ethics Attribute Learning Outcomes and Assessment

An ability to recognize ethical and professional responsibilities in real-world contexts

- Students will be able to distinguish between the definitions of a moral agent in virtue ethics, deontology, and consequentialism, and to discuss how these theories help us understand what it means to be a moral agent in our contemporary world. Assessed through class discussions, quizzes, and exams.

An ability to assess actions or decisions based on established ethical principles and theories, or through deliberative processes.

- Students will be able to explain the ways in which ideas in modern philosophy and political theory can serve as a guide to action. Assessed through class discussion, quizzes, and exams.

An ability to consider the implications of actions, both broadly (e.g. global, economic, environmental, or societal) and for individuals.

- Through the study of ethical thought in the modern period, students will develop self-reflection and cultivate a more nuanced approach to human action and the consequences of our actions, both at the individual and societal levels. Assessed through class discussion, quizzes, exams, and Reacting to the Past activity.

Policy on absences

Attendance is recorded daily. You are allowed two unexcused absences and one make-up quiz. For every additional unexcused absence you will lose $\frac{1}{4}$ of your participation grade. Being late for two classes will count as one unexcused absence. Excused absence=**documented** illness, **documented** emergency, and Institute-approved absences; some examples of absences that will **not** be excused: travel outside of Institute programs, errands, work-/internship-/interview-related absences).

Materials

Required books*

Forrest Baird, *Philosophic Classics: From Plato to Derrida*, Sixth Edition, ISBN 978-0-20-578386-1

Gretchen K. McKay, Nicolas W. Proctor, Michael A. Marlais, *Modernism versus Traditionalism
Art in Paris, 1888-1889*, ISBN: 978-1-4696-4126-3

Recommended book

Machiavelli, *The Prince*, ISBN 978-0-19-953569-9

*Some required materials on the course calendar will be provided in electronic format on Canvas

Requirements

1. **Attendance and participation** in class discussion and out-of-class group discussions.
NB: assigned readings should be **prepared *before* each class; this is essential to meaningful participation in class discussion.**
Detailed participation rubric is available on canvas. – 20%
2. **Quizzes and/or short writing assignments** – 20%
3. **Two in-class exams (see course calendar)** – 20% each
4. **Reacting to the Past (Modernism vs Traditionalism: Art in Paris 1888-1889)** – 20% (split between game participation and two short writing assignments)

Calendar

COURSE CALENDAR

<i>Day</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Readings</i>	<i>Assignment</i>
Week 1			
Wednesday	08/26	Introductions. Course overview	
Friday	08/28	Plato, Republic (Baird, 71-82 and 87-110; optional: 110-118)	Quiz 1
Week 2			
Wednesday	09/02	Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics (164-187 (Books I and II); 191-192 (beginning of Book VI); 221-226 (Book X)	
Friday	09/04	Hellenistic philosophy – Epicurus (Baird, 230-238); Epictetus (Baird, 241-251); Sextus Empiricus (Baird, 253-257)	Quiz 2
Week 3			
Wednesday	09/09	Neoplatonism – Plotinus (Baird, 258-266); Augustine of Hippo (Baird, 275-280)	
Friday	09/11	Anselm (Baird, 308-313) Abelard, The Story of My Misfortunes https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/basis/abelard-histcal.asp	Quiz 3

		Abelard, Prologue to Sic et Non https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/source/Abelard-SicetNon-Prologue.asp	
Week 4			
Wednesday	09/16	Aquinas (Baird, 331-357); William of Ockham (Baird, 361-365)	
Friday	09/18	Machiavelli, The Prince	Quiz 4
Week 5			
Wednesday	09/23	Giovanni Pico Della Mirandola (Baird, 366-370) Marsilio Ficino (Canvas)	Quiz 5
Friday	09/25	Council of Trent; Galileo, Letter to the Grand Duchess Christina; Starry Messenger – on Canvas	
Week 6			
Wednesday	09/30	Exam 1	
Friday	10/02	René Descartes (Baird, 377-399 and 417-420)	
Week 7			
Wednesday	10/07	Thomas Hobbes (Baird, 424-425 and 437-460)	Quiz 6
Friday	10/09	John Locke (Baird, 545-574) and on Canvas	
Week 8			

Wednesday	10/14	Jean-Jacques Rousseau (Baird, 765-774) and on Canvas	Quiz 8
Friday	10/16	Immanuel Kant, Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals (Baird, 851-894)	
Week 9			
Wednesday	10/21	Mary Wollstonecraft (Baird, 898-904)	
Friday	10/23	G.W.F. Hegel (Baird, 907-919)	
Week 10			
Wednesday	10/28	John Stuart Mill (Baird, 948-961)	Quiz 9
Friday	10/30	Karl Marx (Baird, 995-1006)	
Week 11			
Wednesday	11/04	Nietzsche (Baird, 1045-1060)	
Friday	11/06	Exam 2	
Week 12			
Wednesday	11/11	RTTP setup – discussion of core texts	
Friday	11/13	RTTP session 1: artists present and respond to 1888 Salon; critics support artists; dealers advertise their galleries.	

Week 13			
Wednesday	11/18	RTTP session 2: artists present and respond to 1888 Salon; critics support artists; dealers advertise their galleries.	
Friday	11/20	RTTP session 3: Planning for the Exhibitions at the 1889 Universal Exposition.	
Week 14			
Wednesday	12/02	RTTP session 4: 1889 Universal Exposition: annual Salon, private shows in dealers' galleries, one-man exhibitions, etc.	
Friday	12/04	RTTP debriefing; course conclusion.	

Grading scale

90-100=A, 80-89=B, 70-79=C, 60-69=D, 0-59=F

Academic Integrity

Students are expected to abide by the Georgia Tech [Academic Honor Code](#) . **Plagiarism is a serious academic offense. According to our Academic Honor Code, plagiarism is the “submission of material that is wholly or substantially identical to that created or published by another person or persons, without adequate credit notations indicating the authorship.” Use of AI-generated content without proper attribution will be treated as plagiarism. The penalty for plagiarism will be a “0”**

grade for the assignment/test in question. A repeat offense will result in a failing grade for the course. All cases of plagiarism will be reported to the Office of Student Integrity ([see process here](#)).

Accommodations

Support for students with disabilities: Please discuss your ODS-approved accommodations with me at the beginning of the semester so we can plan for any necessary adjustments to course requirements.

Student/Faculty Conduct

Please refer to the [Georgia Tech Student-Faculty Expectations Agreement](#).