Intellectual History of Europe

Lecturer: Krister Sairsingh
Class teachers: Krister Sairsingh, Simon Skempton, Dominic Rubin

Course description

The Intellectual History of Europe is a one-year course in which the main traditions of epistemological, moral and political thought in European history are analyzed and their significance discussed and assessed. The course also provides the necessary historical and philosophical background for the second year courses in sociology and in philosophy and the methodology of the social sciences.

Through both primary and secondary sources students are introduced during the first semester to the main themes in Western thought from the Pre-Socratics, Plato, Aristotle, later Hellenistic philosophy, early Christian thought, Augustine, Anselm, Abelard, Aquinas, the Renaissance and the Sixteenth Century Reformation. We shall be concerned with the following questions: What is the conception of the good life that the great philosophers defend? How do they understand the nature of reality? How do they view the relation between goodness and truth? What have these philosophers contributed to the emergence of the political and cultural institutions of the West? To what extent economic forces shape or determine the great ideas of the philosophers?

In the second semester we will begin with Descartes and discuss the epistemological turn that he brought about in European thought. We will then analyze the responses of Spinoza, Leibniz, Locke, Hume and Kant to Cartesian rationalism. In a scientific age that no longer appeals to traditional religious authority, what is the basis for ethics, moral values and political authority? How did Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Kant, Mill, Marx, Hegel and Nietzsche reorient European political and moral thought without the support of the church and traditional authority? Students will be introduced to primary source material from internet sites. Bertrand Russell’s History of Western Philosophy, Robert Paul Wolff’s About Philosophy, and a collection of primary sources in Franklin Le Van Baumer’s Main Currents of Western Thought will be the main texts for the course. All assigned readings for the course can be found in the ICEF Reader, Russell’s History of Western Philosophy, and sources from the Internet. The lectures and seminars are taught in English.

Teaching objectives

The course aims at introducing students to the fundamental categories of thought which have shaped the Western mind. One objective is to enable students to
appreciate the diversity of traditions and modes of critical inquiry within Western thought; another is to illustrate how these various traditions of thought have defined the major epochs of the West from Greco-Roman civilization, Medieval Christendom, the Renaissance, the Scientific Revolution of the Seventeenth Century, and the Enlightenment to the contemporary re-assessment of the whole Western tradition from feminist, postmodern and anti-rationalist perspectives. Fundamental to the course is an introduction to the main ideas of the great philosophers from ancient Greece to modern times and their role in shaping the mind of the West. While the major emphasis will be upon ideas and their cultural and historical impact, the course also attempts to draw attention to the political and social context in which the great ideas have emerged and to discuss their economic implications.

**Teaching methods**

The following methods and forms of study are used in the course:

- Lectures
- Seminars
- Consultations with teachers
- Self study with literature
- Use of Internet resources

During each semester students will make an oral presentation and write an essay (5–6 pp.).

**Grade determination**

There will be an intermediate examination at the end of the first semester and final examination at the end of the second semester. During each semester an oral presentation and a 5-6-page essay on assigned topics will be required of each semester. Attendance and active participation in the weekly seminars are required. The final grade will consist of:

- Participation in seminars — 20%
- Written assignments (Essays) — 20%
- Final examination — 60%
Main reading

Required and recommended texts for writing the two required essays for the course.

1. Franklin Le Van Baumer, Main Currents of Western Thought (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966). This is a collection of primary sources from which most of the second semester readings will be assigned.


6. Frederick Coplestone, A History of Philosophy. Volumes one and two are highly recommended for writing essays on Socrates, Plato, Aristotle and Augustine.


21. Plato, The Apology, The Eutyphro, the Crito and selections from the Republic (The Internet Classics Archives: http://classics.mit.edu)

Additional reading


3. Frederick Copleston, A History of Philosophy. (New York: Doubleday). This is an eleven-volume set that is available in Russian.

Internet resources and databases

• Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics. The Internet Classic Archives: http://classics.mit.edu


• Aristotle’s Politics: http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/aristotle-politics

• Justin Martyr, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0126.htm


• Descartes, Meditations on First Philosophy. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Meditations_on_First_Philosophy


• Locke http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/locke/


• Kant, What is Enlightenment? http://www/english.upenn.edu/~mgamer/Etexts/kant.html

• Hegel, The Philosophy of History http://www.class.uidaho.edu/mickelsen/texts/Hegel

• Marx, http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/sw/index.htm (Marx’s Theses on Feuerbach, Critique of the German Ideology, and The Communist Manifesto are available through this website.)

• Mill, J.S. On Liberty. http://www.utilitarianism.com/ol/one.html Mill’s books on Utilitarianism and his autobiography are also available on this website.


• Ancient Greece http://www.ancientgreece.com

• Internet Encyclopaedia of Philosophy http://www.utm.edu/research/iep/
Course outline

First Semester

1. Ancient Greek Civilization

- Emergence of the Polis.
- Historical and political developments from Minoan and Mycenaean civilization to the Sixth century.
- The flowering of Greek culture 500-336 BCE.
- The rise of Athens.

Literature:


4. Bertrand Russell provides an interesting overview of the rise of Greek civilization in the first chapter of his History of Philosophy. Unlike McNeill, he gives detailed attention to the role of Orphic religion in the early history of Greece.

2. The Development of Greek Thought

- Beginnings of Greek Philosophy.
- The development of pre-Socratic thought: Pythagoras, Heraclitus, Parmenides and the Atomists.
- The Sophists and Socrates: The Socratic method.

Literature:

Bertrand Russell, History of Western Philosophy, Read chapters on Pythagoras, Heraclitus, Parmenides and the Atomists. Chapters 3, 4, 5 and 9 in the English text.
3. The Sophists and Socrates

- The Sophists and their rejection of cosmology and metaphysics.
- Socrates in the early dialogues of Plato. Sources of our knowledge of the historical Socrates.
- The last days of Socrates and the argument of the Apology and the Crito
- Why is Socrates considered the ideal philosophy?

**Literature:**
Read the Apology and the Crito. [http://classics.mit.edu](http://classics.mit.edu)

4. Plato

- Life of Plato and the influence of Socrates upon him.
- Plato’s philosophy of Virtue in the Euthyphro.
- Education in Plato’s ideal state.
- The Plato’s theory of Forms and its importance for the interpretation of Truth.
- Women and the Family in Plato’s Republic.
- Plato’s politics. What is Justice?

**Literature:**
The Eutyphro. The Internet Classic Archives: [http://classics.mit.edu](http://classics.mit.edu) Go to 441 titles and select Plato.
The Republic: Read the section on Women and the Family in Part 6, Chapters 1 and 2.
Recommended reading for essays and examination.
Copleston, Volume 1, Part 1, Chapters 20, 22, and 23.
5. Aristotle

- The Four Causes: Meaning and Purpose in Nature.
- Politics as the supreme practical science.
- Ethics as the search for happiness.

**Literature:**
Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics: Book 1 and 2, in The Internet Classic Archives: [http://classics.mit.edu](http://classics.mit.edu)
Bertrand Russell, Chapters on Aristotle’s Metaphysics, Ethics and Politics. These chapters will be discussed in the seminars. Chapters 19–21 in the English text.

6. Ancient Philosophy after Aristotle

- The Hellenistic World
- Cynics and Skeptics
- The Epicureans
- Stoicism
- Plotinus.

**Literature:**
Bertrand Russell, Ancient Philosophy after Aristotle. Read chapters 25, 26, 27, 28 and 30

7. The Roman Empire, Early Christianity and the Division of Christendom

- From Jerusalem to Rome. The Jewish background of the early church. The encounter with the Roman Empire. Geographical expansion and the growth of the Church: The causes of the expansion of the Church.
- Church, state and society in the third and fourth century.
- The conversion of Constantine and the religion of the Empire. Lactantius and the idea of toleration.
• Early Christian Apologists: Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian and Origen.

**Literature:**
Justin Martyr, First Apology to the Romans. [http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0126.htm](http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0126.htm)

8. Augustine and the Transformation of Ancient Thought

• Augustine as the Christian Plato.

• Augustine’s life and his search for truth: Augustine’s Neo-Platonic quest.

• Augustine’s philosophy of history. The Two Cities.

• Augustine’s theory of the state. Church, state and society.

**Literature:**

9. The Formation of Western Christendom

• The Western Church and the Conversion of the Barbarians. (300-700).

• The Carolingian Renaissance: The achievement of Charlemagne.

• The Papacy and the political order (700-1300).

• The Division between the Eastern Orthodox Church and the Latin Western Church. R.W. Southern.

**Literature:**
Bertrand Russell, History of Western Philosophy, Book 2, Part 2, chapters 7 & 8. The Papacy in the Dark Ages, John the Scot.
The Divisions of Time (700–1550): R. W. Southern, Western Society and the Church in the Middle Ages. 24–52 in the Reader

10. The Golden Age of Medieval Scholasticism

• The rediscovery of Aristotle.

• The scope of reason. The unity of philosophy and faith.

• Anselm and the Ontological Argument

• Realism and Nominalism in Medieval Philosophy.

• Aquinas and Natural Law

• Moral and political theory of Aquinas.

• Collapse of the medieval synthesis: The harvest of Medieval Nominalism.

Literature:
Read the whole of chapter 13 on Saint Thomas Aquinas.
Thomas Aquinas, On the Contemplative Life: Baumer, 28–32.
Of Reason and Faith: Baumer, 51–53

11. The Renaissance

• The rediscovery of classical civilization

• Renaissance humanism from Petrarch to Erasmus.

• Individualism and the nature of man.

• The new politics: Machiavelli.

• The rise of the European nation state.
12. The Reformation

- Theories of the origins of the Reformation,

- Lutheranism, Calvinism, Anglicanism, the Radical Reformation and the Counter-Reformation. In what respects they differ?

- Main principles of the Reformation.

- Luther’s theory of the Two Kingdoms and the role of the State.

- Luther’s economic theory: On trade and usury.


Literature:
Luther: On the Babylonian Captivity of the Church: Baumer, 185–187.

Second Semester

13. Science, the Birth of the Modern World and the Religious Reaction: Copernicus, Galileo, Bacon, Newton, and Pascal


- Galileo’s “Two New Sciences”.

- Bacon’s method: A polemic against metaphysics and tradition.
• The Newtonian World-Machine.

• Science and religion: Pascal and the reasons of the heart.

**Literature:**
Selections from Francis Bacon: Baumer, 280–289.
Newton’s Optics: Baumer, 322–325.
Galileo, On Theology as Queen of the Sciences: Baumer, 326–328.

**14. The Rationalist Tradition in European Thought: Descartes**

• The birth of modern philosophy and the epistemological turn.

• The Cartesian method of doubt.

• Descartes’ Cogito argument.

• The function of God in Descartes’ method.

• The validation of reason

• The ghost in the machine: Mind and body in Descartes.

**Literature:**

**15. The Rationalist Tradition in European Thought: The Metaphysics of Spinoza and Leibniz**

• Spinoza’s pantheism as a solution to the Cartesian mind/body problem.

• Nature, freedom and determinism according to Spinoza.

• Spinoza’s Ethics: The emotions and happiness.

• The meaning of Leibniz’s Monadology.
• Russell’s critique of Leibniz’s theistic arguments.

• Leibniz’s Theodicy: A rationalist approach to the problem of evil.

• The modernity of Leibniz’s view of the world according to Quinton and Magee.

Literature:
Bryan Magee, Spinoza and Leibniz. BBC interview with Anthony Quinton in The Great Philosophers, 98–117 in the Reader.
Russell, Book 3, Modern Philosophy, Spinoza and Leibniz, chapters 10 and 11.

16. British Thought in the 17th and 18th Century. The Empiricism of John Locke, David Hume and Bishop Berkeley

• The consequences of Descartes’ decision to make ideas primary.

• Locke’s theory of knowledge. What is an Idea?

• Hume’s theory of knowledge. What is a Cause?

• Hume’s attack on reason

• Berkeley’s theory of knowledge.

• Ethics without rational foundation. Hume’s ethics.

Literature:
Locke, An Essay concerning Human Understanding, in Baumer: This excerpt is about
Locke’s discussion of faith and reason—the role of reason in religious belief. The Reader.
http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/locke/
Hume http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/hume/

17. European Social and Political Philosophy in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century

• Hobbes’ theory of the origin of political association and the Social Contract.

• Locke’s theory of government and the Social Contract.
• Locke’s political liberalism and his theory of natural law.

• Rousseau’s on the origins of political society and the social contract.

• Montesquieu and political theory.

• How has theory affected practice?

**Literature:**
Bertrand Russell, Book 3, Chapter 8, Hobbes’ Leviathan.
Russell, Chapter 14, Locke’s Political Philosophy.
Recommended: Locke’s Second Treatise on Civil Government [http://www.constitution.org/jl/2ndtreat.htm](http://www.constitution.org/jl/2ndtreat.htm)

18. The European Enlightenment: Reason, Progress and the Conquest of Nature

• Voltaire and the age of reason.

• Kant and the concept of Enlightenment.

• The Encyclopedia and the unification of knowledge.

• Condorcet’s Utopia: Reason and progress.

• The ideals of the Enlightenment

**Literature:**
Kant, What is Enlightenment? [http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/kant-whatis.html](http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/kant-whatis.html)

19. Kant’s Copernican Revolution and His Moral Worldview

• Kant’s theory of knowledge

• Kant’s relation to the Enlightenment. A Copernican revolution.

• Kant’s resolution of the rationalism/ empiricism opposition.
• Kant’s moral worldview. The categorical imperative.
• Kant’s moral argument for God’s existence.
• Kant’s response to the conflict of science and religion.

**Literature:**
Ethical Theory, Wolff: 158–172, Reader. (This is an analysis of Kant’s moral philosophy.)
Recommended. Kant (sections on empiricism, rationalism, resolution of the opposition, and sections on ideas of reason and ethics), The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy: [http://www.utm.edu/research/iep/](http://www.utm.edu/research/iep/)

20. Hegel and Marx

• Hegel’s idea of reason and the concept of dialectic.
• Hegel’s social and political philosophy. Ethical Theory.
• The concept of dialectic in Hegel and Marx.
• The main pillars of Marxism.

**Literature:**
Hegel, Lectures on the Philosophy of History, Baumer: 479–484.
The Socialist Attack on Capitalism: Wolff, About Philosophy, 256–266.
(This is an excellent analysis of the main principles in Marx, especially the social forces of production and the concept of alienation.)


• The ideals and legacy of Classical Liberalism. Difference from modern Liberalism.
• The decline of 19th Century Liberalism: Economic trends.
• The rise of Utilitarianism: Bentham and Mill.
• Mill on Liberty.
• Mill’s views on women.

• The Positivism in the philosophy of A. Comte.

• Newman’s attack on liberalism.

**Literature:**


• Schleiermacher’s response to Enlightenment rationalism.

• Darwinism and the crisis of faith in England.

• Feuerbach on atheism and alienation.

• Nietzsche on the cultural crisis of Europe.

**Literature:**


Thomas Huxley, On Honest Disbelief and Ethics: Baumer, 572–575.

Ernst Haeckel, The Riddle of the Universe: Baumer, 575–579.


23. The Twentieth Century: An Age of Anxiety

• The Freudian revolution. Freud’s critique of Marx.

• World War 1 and cultural despair: Poets from the trenches.

• T. S. Eliot’s Wasteland, Pirandello’s bleak stage, pessimism in Joyce, Ionesco, and Beckett.
• Religious responses to cultural despair: Karl Barth, Martin Buber, Jacques Maritain, and Paul Tillich.

• Affirmations of Freedom and Justice: Hayek, Friedman, Berlin, Rawls and Nozick.

**Literature:**
Paul Tillich, Age of Anxiety: Baumer, 598–599
Sigmund Freud, Selected texts on the nature of man: Baumer, 654–662.
Karl Barth, The Word of God and the Word of Man: Baumer, 613–616.

24. Movements in Twentieth Century Thought

• Positivism,

• Existentialism,

• Structuralism and Post-Structuralism,

• Feminism, the Culture Wars.

• Postmodern rejection of reason and rationality.

**Literature:**
Jean-Paul Sartre, Existentialism: Baumer, 612–625, 710–712. The Reader
Oswald Spengler, The Decline of the West, Baumer, 721–724. The Reader.
Local Knowledge, (Science and Society in Postmodern Thinking): Peter Watson, The Modern Mind, 667–677. This is the most important of the assigned readings in this unit. The Reader.

**Distribution of hours**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Total hours</th>
<th>Contact hours</th>
<th>Self study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lectures</td>
<td>Seminars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Ancient Greek Civilization</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>The Development of Greek Thought</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>The Sophists and Socrates</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Plato</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Aristotle</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Ancient Philosophy after Aristotle</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>The Roman Empire, Early Christianity and the Division of Christendom</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Augustine and the Transformation of Ancient Thought</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>The Formation of Western Christendom</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>The Golden Age of Medieval Scholasticism</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>The Renaissance</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>The Reformation</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Science, the Birth of the Modern World and the Religious Reaction: Copernicus, Galileo, Bacon, Newton, and Pascal</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>The Rationalist Tradition in European Thought: Descartes</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>The Rationalist Tradition in European Thought: The Metaphysics of Spinoza and Leibniz</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>British Thought in the 17th and 18th Century. The Empiricism of John Locke, David Hume and Bishop Berkeley</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>European Social and Political Philosophy in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>The European Enlightenment: Reason, Progress and the Conquest of Nature</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>Kant’s Copernican Revolution and His Moral Worldview</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#</td>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Total hours</td>
<td>Contact hours</td>
<td>Self study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Hegel and Marx</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Liberalism, Utilitarianism, Positivism, and Social Darwinism: Bentham, Mill, Comte, and Newman</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>The Conflict between Science, Philosophy, and Religion in the 19th Century. Nietzsche and the Death of God</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>The Twentieth Century: An Age of Anxiety</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Movements in Twentieth Century Thought</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total:</td>
<td>216</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>