Course syllabus: THE INTELLECTUAL HISTORY OF EUROPE
(A two-semester course)

Lecturer: Krister R. Sairsingh
Class teacher: Krister Sairsingh

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. After a consideration of the Pre-Socratic philosophers and their importance for understanding Plato, we shall be concerned with the following questions: How do the ancient Greek philosophers understand the idea of happiness and the good life? How important is politics to their conception of happiness and the good life? How do they understand the nature of reality? How do they view the relation between beauty, goodness and truth? What have these philosophers contributed to the emergence of the political and cultural institutions of the West? The course will give special attention to the influence of Plato and Aristotle upon major Christian thinkers from Augustine and Anselm to Thomas Aquinas and consider the role of Islam in the revival of Aristotelian philosophy on the 12th and 13th centuries. We will also examine in the impact of Aristotle’s philosophy in shaping the conception of money and usury in medieval philosophy. To what extent the medieval view of money and usury influenced Reformation thought?

In the second semester we will begin with Descartes and discuss the epistemological revolution 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 conducted in English.

**Course 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.

**The methods:**
The following methods and forms of study are used in the course:
- Lectures (2 hours per week)
- Seminars (2 hours per week)
- Consultations with teachers
- Self study with literature
- Use of Internet resources

The course includes: 48 hours of lectures, 48 hours of classes. During each semester students will be expected to contribute to class discussion, submit printed answers to class assignments, and write an essay of 4 to 5 pages.

**Main texts:**
Apart from Internet sources, most of the required and recommended readings will refer to the following texts. Selections from these texts can be found in the Reader 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 many of the second semester readings will be assigned.
7. Bertrand Russell, A History of Western Philosophy (available in Russian translation from local stores). Apart from the Reader, this is the main textbook for the course.
14. Plato, The Apology, The Eutypbro, the Crito and selections from the Republic (The Internet Classics Archives: http://classics.mit.edu

Highly Recommended:

3. Frederick Copleston, A History of Philosophy. (New York: Doubleday). This is an eleven-volume set that is available in Russian.
4. Anthony Kenny, A New History of Western Philosophy. (Oxford: Clarendon Press.) This is a four-volume work now available in one volume. This is perhaps the best history of philosophy available in one volume.

**Internet sources for required reading**

Socrates, http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/socrates/ (especially section 3 A)
Plato, The Euthyphro.  [http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/euthyfro.html](http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/euthyfro.html)


Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics. The Internet Classic Archives: [http://classics.mit.edu](http://classics.mit.edu)


Justin Martyr, [http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0126.htm](http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0126.htm)


Descartes, Meditations on First Philosophy.  [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Meditations_on_First_Philosophy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Meditations_on_First_Philosophy)


Locke, Second Treatise on Civil Government.  [http://www.constitution.org/jl/2ndtreat.htm](http://www.constitution.org/jl/2ndtreat.htm)


Kant, What is Enlightenment?  [http://www.english.upenn.edu/~mgamer/Etexts/kant.html](http://www.english.upenn.edu/~mgamer/Etexts/kant.html)

Hegel, The Philosophy of History  [http://www.class.uidaho.edu/mickelsen/texts/Hegel](http://www.class.uidaho.edu/mickelsen/texts/Hegel)

Marx,  [http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/sw/index.htm](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’s books on Utilitarianism and his autobiography are also available on this website.


1. Ancient Greece.  [www.ancientgreece.com](http://www.ancientgreece.com)
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 a 4 to 5-page essay on assigned topics will be required. Attendance and active participation in the weekly seminars are required. The final grade will consist of:

- Home assignments and participation in seminars 20%
- Essays 20%
- Final examination 60%

Course outline:

First Semester

1. Ancient Greek Civilization.
   A. Emergence of the Polis.
   B. Historical and political developments from Minoan and Mycenaean civilization to the Sixth century.
   C. The flowering of Greek culture 500-336 BCE.
   D. The beginnings of Greek philosophy in Miletus and Southern Italy.

Literature:

Required reading.
Highly recommended: Copleston, A History of Western Philosophy, Volume 1. The Cradle of Western Thought: Ionia, pp. 29-27.


2. The Development of Greek Thought.
   A. Beginnings of Greek Philosophy.
   B. The development of pre-Socratic thought: Pythagoras, Heraclitus, Parmenides and the Atomists.
   C. 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. The most important figures to focus on are Pythagoras, Heraclitus, Parmenides and Democritus.
Socrates, http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/socrates/ (Read section 3 A)

3. The Sophists and Socrates.
   A. The Sophists and their rejection of cosmology, metaphysics and truth.
   B. Socrates in the early dialogues of Plato. Sources of our knowledge of the historical Socrates.
   C. The last days of Socrates and the argument of the Apology and the Crito
   D. Why is Socrates considered the ideal philosopher?

Literature:
Socrates, http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/socrates/ (especially section 3 A)

4. **Plato.**
   
   A. Life of Plato and the influence of Socrates upon him.
   B. Plato’s philosophy of virtue and the good life.
   C. The Plato’s theory of Forms and its importance for the interpretation of Truth.
   D. Plato’s allegory of the cave.
   E. 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.


Bertrand Russell, History of Western Philosophy. Book 1, Part 2. Plato’s Utopia, The Theory of Ideas. Chapters 14 and 15. It is essential to read these two chapters in Russell.

Recommended reading for essays and examination.

Copleston, Volume 1, Part 1, Chapters 20, 22, and 23.


5. **Aristotle.**
   
   A. Aristotle and his teacher Plato.
B. Aristotle the great scientist, metaphysician and logician.
C. The Four Causes: Meaning and Purpose in Nature.
D. Politics as the supreme practical science.
E. Ethics and the search for happiness.

Literature:
Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics: Book 1, chapters 1 through 8, and 13. Book 2, chapters 1 and 6, especially the last page of chapter 6. Book 6, chapters 12 and 13. Book 7, chapters 1 and 2. Book 10, chapters 7 and 8. Several of these chapters are no more than one or two pages. Please read carefully these texts that you can find at The Internet Classic Archives: 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.

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

6. Ancient Philosophy after Aristotle
   a. The Hellenistic World
   b. Cynics and Skeptics
   c. The Epicureans
   d. Stoicism
   e. Plotinus.

Literature;

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

B. The role of Greek Philosophy in the early Christian Apologists: Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian and Origen.

C. The conversion of Constantine and the religion of the Empire. Lactantius and the idea of toleration.

D. Christianity and the development of the western intellectual tradition.

Literature:

8. Augustine and the Transformation of Ancient Thought.

   A. Augustine as the Christian Plato.
   B. Augustine’s life and his search for truth: Augustine’s Neo-Platonic quest.
   C. Augustine’s theory of time and his philosophy of history. The Two Cities.
   D. Augustine’s theory of the state. Church, state and society.

Literature:
Although it is long and comprehensive, for motivated students Copleston’s discussion of Augustine is worth reading. Copleston, The History of Philosophy, Book 2, Part 1, Chapters 3, 4, 5.


9. The Formation of Western Christendom.
   A. The Western Church and the Conversion of the Barbarians. (300-700).
   B. The Carolingian Renaissance: The achievement of Charlemagne.
   C. The Papacy and the political order (700-1300).
   D. The Division between the Eastern Orthodox Church and the Latin Western Church.
   E. Philosophy in the dark ages.

Literature:
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
    A. The rediscovery of Aristotle.
    B. The scope of reason. The unity of philosophy and faith in medieval Scholasticism.
    C. Anselm and the Ontological Argument
    D. Realism and Nominalism in Medieval Philosophy.
    E. Aquinas and Natural Law
    F. Moral and political theory of Aquinas.
    G. Collapse of the medieval synthesis with the rise of Nominalism.

Literature:

10. The Renaissance.
   A. The rediscovery of classical civilization
   B. Renaissance humanism from Petrarch to Erasmus.
   C. Individualism and the nature of man.
   D. The new politics: Machiavelli.
   E. The rise of the European nation state.

Literature:
Petrarch, Letter to Classical Authors: Baumer, 123-126; Mirandola, Oration on the Dignity of Man: Baumer, 126-128; Erasmus, Christian Humanism: Baumer, 149-161.

11. The Reformation.
   A. Theories of the origins of the Reformation,
   B. Lutheranism, Calvinism, Anglicanism, the Radical Reformation and the Counter-Reformation. In what respects do they differ?
   C. Main principles of the Reformation.
   D. Luther’s theory of the Two Kingdoms and the role of the State.
   E. Luther’s economic theory: On trade and usury.
Literature:
Luther, On Trade and Usury: Stackhouse, 171-179 in the Reader.
Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion: Baumer, 189-198.
Calvin, Letter on Usury: Baumer, 231-234.

Second Semester

   B. Bacon’s method: An attack on medieval metaphysics and tradition.
   C. Galileo’s “Two New Sciences.”
   D. Descartes’ revolution.
   F. 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.

Recommended: Pascal [http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/pascal-wager/]

2. The Rationalist Tradition in European Thought: Descartes.
   A. The birth of modern philosophy and the epistemological revolution.
   B. The Cartesian method of doubt.
   C. Descartes’ Cogito argument.
   D. The function of God in Descartes’ method.
   E. The validation of reason
   F. The ghost in the machine: Mind and body in Descartes.

Literature:
Descartes, Meditations on First Philosophy. 
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Meditations_on_First_Philosophy
Read books 1-3.
Descartes’ Method of Doubt, Robert Wolff: About Philosophy, 42-54. (This text will be carefully analyzed in the seminars.)

   A. Spinoza’s pantheism as a solution to the Cartesian mind/body problem.
   B. Nature, freedom and determinism according to Spinoza.
   C. Spinoza’s Ethics: The emotions and happiness.
   D. The meaning of Leibniz’s Monadology.
   E. Russell’s critique of Leibniz’s theistic arguments.
   F. Leibniz’s Theodicy: A rationalist approach to the problem of evil.
G. 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. Video on You Tube in several parts.
Russell, History of Western Philosophy. Book 3, Spinoza and Leibniz, chapters 10 and 11.

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

   A. How Descartes shaped the terms of the debate among the empiricists.
   B. Locke’s theory of knowledge. What is an Idea?
   C. Hume’s theory of knowledge. What is a Cause?
   D. Hume’s affirmation of the passions and his attack on reason.
   E. Berkeley’s theory of knowledge.
   E. Ethics without rational foundation. Hume’s ethics.

Literature:
Locke, Journal: Baumer, 297-299. The Reader
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.

Locke  http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/locke/
Hume  http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/hume/
5. European Social and Political Philosophy in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century. Social contract theories and the basis of governmental authority.

   B. Locke’s theory of government and the Social Contract.
   C. Locke’s political liberalism and his theory of natural law.
   C. Rousseau’s on the origins of political society and the social contract.
   D. Montesquieu and political theory.
   E. How has theory affected practice? Locke and the American Revolution.

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

6. The European Enlightenment: Reason, Progress and the Conquest of Nature
   A. Voltaire and the age of reason. His synthesis of Locke and Newton
   B. Kant and the concept of Enlightenment.
   C. The Encyclopedia and the unification of knowledge.
   D. Condorcet’s Utopia: Reason and progress.
   E. The ideals of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution

Literature:
Kant, What is Enlightenment? http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/kant-whatis.html
7. Kant’s Copernican Revolution and His Moral Worldview.

   a. Kant’s theory of knowledge
   c. Kant’s resolution of the rationalism/ empiricism opposition.
   d. Kant’s moral worldview. The categorical imperative.
   e. Kant’s moral argument for God’s existence.
   f. Kant’s response to the conflict of science and religion.

Literature:
Ethical Theory, Wolff: 158-172, The Reader. (Wolff’s analysis of Kant’s moral philosophy will be carefully analyzed in the seminars.)
The Bourgeois Century, Baumer: 451-459. The Reader

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/

8. Hegel and Marx.

   a. Hegel’s philosophy of history and the idea of reason.
b. Hegel’s social and political philosophy. Ethical Theory.
c. The concept of dialectic in Hegel and Marx.
d. The main pillars of Marxism.

Literature:
Hegel, Lectures on the Philosophy of History, Baumer: 479-484. The Reader
Hegel and Marx, in Magee’s interview with Singer: The Great Philosophers, 188-208. The Reader. Also on YouTube.

The Socialist Attack on Capitalism: Wolff, About Philosophy, 256-266. The Reader (This is an excellent analysis of the main principles in Marx, especially the social forces of production and the concept of alienation. This should be read at least once.)

Recommended: Hegel, The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy.
http://www.utm.edu/research/iep/


c. The rise of Utilitarianism: Bentham and Mill.
d. Mill on Liberty.
e. Mill’s views on women.
f. Positivism in the philosophy of A. Comte.
g. Newman’s attack on liberalism.

Literature:
Mill and Classical Laissez-Faire Liberalism: Wolff, About Philosophy, 244-256. The Reader.
Liberalism http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/liberalism/
http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/mill/

Nietzsche and the Death of God.
   a. Schleiermacher’s response to Enlightenment rationalism.
   b. Feuerbach on atheism and alienation.
   c. Nietzsche on the cultural crisis of Europe and the meaning of the death of God.

Literature:
Ludwig Feuerbach, The Essence of Christianity: Baumer, 569-572. The Reader
Thomas Huxley, On Honest Disbelief and Ethics: Baumer, 572-575.
Ernst Haeckel, The Riddle of the Universe: Baumer, 575-579.
Russell’s chapter on Nietzsche is too negative a portrait of Nietzsche. It should be read with caution.

11. The Twentieth Century: An Age of Anxiety.
   a. The Freudian revolution. The unconscious and reason.
   b. World War 1 and cultural despair: Poets from the trenches.
c. T. S. Eliot’s Wasteland, Pirandello’s bleak stage, pessimism in Joyce, Ionesco, and Beckett.
d. Religious responses to cultural despair: Karl Barth, Martin Buber, Jacques Maritain, and Paul Tillich.
e. Affirmations of Freedom and Justice: Hayek, Friedman, Berlin, Rawls and Nozick.

Literature:
Paul Tillich, Age of Anxiety: Baumer, 598-599. The Reader
Sigmund Freud, Selected texts on the nature of man: Baumer, 654-662.
Recommended: Isaiah Berlin, Two Concepts of Liberty.


12. Movements in Twentieth Century Thought:
A. Logical Positivism,
B. Existentialism,
C. Structuralism and Post-Structuralism,
D. Feminism and philosophy
E. Postmodern rejection of scientific 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.


**Teaching hours for topics and activities:**

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<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Topic titles</th>
<th>TOTAL (hours)</th>
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<td>Lectures</td>
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<td>Historical background of European Civilization.</td>
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<td>2.</td>
<td>History of Ideas from early Greeks to Aristotle</td>
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<td>The Christian Civilization of the West from Augustine to the late Middle Ages.</td>
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<td>The Renaissance and the Reformation</td>
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<td>Science and the Birth of the Modern World.</td>
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<td>The Rationalist Tradition in European Culture</td>
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<td>7.</td>
<td>British Thought in the 17th &amp; 18th Centuries: Social, Political and Epistemological</td>
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<td>8.</td>
<td>The European Enlightenment and the Romantic Reaction.</td>
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<td>The Hegelian Synthesis and its Collapse: Hegel, Mill and Marx.</td>
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<td>The Philosophical and Scientific Critique of Religion in the 19th Century</td>
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<td>Movements of Thought in the 20th Century.</td>
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