



University of New Haven
College of Arts and Sciences
Humanities and Social Sciences

Course Information:

PHIL 4451, Section 01
Modernity and Liberation
Fall 2015
Tuesdays and Thursdays from 12:15 to 1:30
202 Kaplan Hall
3 Credit Hours

Contact Information:

Dr. Douglas Ficek
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200 Gate House
203-932-1177 (Office)
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Office Hours: M/W 1:00-3:00

Course Description:

What is modernity, and how should we understand its past, present, and potential future? Is it a positive thing – a historical development that should be universally praised and regarded as normative? Or is there more to modernity than democracy, science, secularism, technology, and the ideal of reason? These are important questions, and in this course we will explore them across twenty-plus readings and, time permitting, two remarkable documentaries.

In the first part of this course, we will consider modernity from the standpoint of some of its greatest defenders. We will read Kant, Bacon, Condorcet, Gibbon, and Jefferson, and we will attempt to outline the most important features of modernity – from a *Western* perspective.

In the second part of this course, we will look at the *Latin American* critiques of modernity by reading Las Casas, Leonardo and Clodovis Boff, Freire, Dussel, Alcoff, Mignolo, Anzaldúa, and Subcomandante Marcos of the EZLN (Zapatista Army of National Liberation). We will also watch the film *Zapatista*, which chronicles the early days of the Zapatista movement.

In the third part of this course, we will explore the *Africana* critiques of modernity by reading Walker, Du Bois, Césaire, Fanon, Davis, Oyěwùmí, and Wynter. We will also watch the film *Concerning Violence*, which itself explores Fanon's controversial analysis of violence in the modern/colonial context.

Course Objectives:

1. Students will learn about modernity and its Latin American and Africana critics.
2. Students will discover new (and possibly profound) ways to think about modernity.
3. Students will become better arguers (in the sense making and evaluating arguments).

Learning Outcomes:

1. Students will be able to explain course readings in class discussion and written papers.
2. Students will be able to evaluate course readings in class discussion and written papers.
3. Students will be able to develop their own arguments in class discussion and written papers.

Required Texts:

Bartolomé de Las Casas, *A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies* (London: Penguin Books, 1992)

Leonardo Boff and Clodovis Boff, *Introducing Liberation Theology* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1987)

David Walker's Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World, ed. Peter P. Hinks (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000)

Amié Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000)

Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 2004)

The other required texts for this course are available for download on my professional website: www.douglasficek.com. Download them ASAP, and always have the appropriate readings with you in class, either as hard copies or as electronic documents (PDFs).

Requirements:

We will cover at least one reading per class, and it is your responsibility to read the appropriate texts *before class begins*. To this end, I will assign several short papers throughout the semester, on which we will base class discussion. These papers should be two pages in length, but please print them out single-spaced to save paper.

In addition to these short papers, I will be assigning two substantial, ten-page papers in lieu of any exams. These assignments will consist of multiple questions, from which you can choose the one that is, from your point of view, the most interesting. The first paper will be on the Latin American critiques of modernity, and the second on the Africana critiques.

Grading:

Attendance – 10%
Short Papers – 30%
First Paper – 30%
Second Paper – 30%

Adding and Dropping:

The final day to add or drop a course without it appearing on your transcript is Monday, August 31st. To add or drop a course, you need the instructor's signature, so do not wait until the last minute to do so.

Attendance:

All students are expected to attend regularly and promptly all their classes, appointments, and exercises. While the university recognizes that some absences may occasionally be necessary, these should be held to a minimum. A maximum of two weeks of absences will be permitted for illness and emergencies. The instructor has the right to dismiss from class any student who has been absent more than the maximum allowed. After the last date to drop as published in the

academic calendar, a student will receive an F, if failing at that point, or a W, if passing at the time of dismissal.

Academic Integrity:

Academic integrity is a core university value that ensures respect for the academic reputation of the university, its students, faculty and staff, and the degrees it confers. UNH expects that students will conduct themselves in an honest and ethical manner and respect the intellectual work of others. Please be familiar with the UNH policy on Academic Integrity, and please ask about my expectations regarding permissible or encouraged forms of student collaboration if they are unclear.

Students are required to adhere to the Academic Integrity Policies found in the Student Handbook.

Please know that I take academic dishonesty very seriously, and that plagiarized work will count as zeros *at best*. Do not risk failing this course by stealing the work of others.

Coursework:

This course will require significant in-class and out-of-class commitment from each student. The university estimates that a student should expect to spend two hours outside of class for each hour they are in a class. For example, a three credit course should average six hours of additional work outside of class.

Bottom line: *If you cannot fully commit yourself to this course, then you should not take it.*

Support Services:

The University recognizes that students often can use some help outside of class and offers academic assistance through several offices. In addition to talking with your instructor and advisor, we recommend you contact the Office of Academic Services (OAS) for help with your academic work (call 203-932-7234 or visit 208 Maxcy Hall). The Center for Learning Resources (CLR) in Peterson Library is equipped to help you with writing, mathematics, biology and physics.

The University of New Haven seeks to maintain a supportive academic environment for all students inclusive of those with any disabilities, chronic medical conditions, or military-related disorders. If you feel that you may need such accommodations, please provide Linda Copney-Okeke, Director of Campus Access Services, with your Verification of Disability/Request for Reasonable Accommodations letter or contact the Campus Access Services office to begin the process to ensure that accommodations can be made available to you. Campus Access Services is located in Sheffield Hall on the ground floor in the rear of the building, and can be reached by email at CampusAccess@newhaven.edu or by phone at 203-932-7332.

Special Needs:

Students with disabilities are encouraged to share, in confidence, information about needed specific course accommodations. The Campus Access Services (CAS) office provides services and support that serve to promote educational equity and ensure that students are able to

participate in the opportunities available at the University of New Haven. Accommodations cannot be made without written documentation from Campus Access Services.

Religious Observances:

The University of New Haven respects the right of its students to observe religious holidays that may require their absence from class or from other required university-sponsored activities.

Students who wish to observe such holidays should not be penalized for their absence, although in academic courses they are responsible for making up missed work. Instructors should try to avoid scheduling exams or quizzes on religious holidays, but when such conflicts occur, should provide reasonable accommodations for any missed assignment deadlines or exams. If a class, an assignment due date, or exam interferes with the observance of such a religious holiday, it is the student's responsibility to notify his or her instructor, preferably at the beginning of the term, but otherwise at least two weeks before the holiday. In a similar vein, students who will not participate in other required activities due to religious observance should notify the staff or faculty member who oversees the activity with the same lead-time. More information about religious observance policies can be found in the Student Handbook.

Caveats:

As an instructor, I am fairly easy-going. I do, however, insist upon a respectful atmosphere in the classroom. What does this mean? It means: no phone calls, no texting or Facebooking, no sleeping, and no ridiculously long bathroom breaks. If your phone does go off during class, you have a choice: You can either sing a song for the class, or I can assign an additional paper that *everybody* must do. This is not a joke.

Also, "My flash drive broke" has become the new "My dog ate my homework," and I will no longer accept it as an excuse for late or incomplete work. Please use www.dropbox.com (or something similar) to ensure the security of your written work.

Schedule:

August 25 – Course Introduction

DEFENDING MODERNITY

August 27 – "What Is Enlightenment?" by Immanuel Kant & "The New Science" by Francis Bacon

September 1 – "The Future Progress of the Human Mind" & "The Perfectibility of Man" by Marquis de Condorcet

September 3 – "Of Empires and Savages" by Edward Gibbon & "On Indians and Negroes" by Thomas Jefferson

September 8 – NO CLASS

LATIN AMERICAN CRITIQUES

September 10 – *A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies* by Bartolomé de Las Casas, pp. xiii-56

September 15 – *A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies* by Bartolomé de Las Casas, pp. 57-130

September 17 – *Introducing Liberation Theology* by Leonardo Boff and Clodovis Boff, pp. xi-42

September 22 – *Introducing Liberation Theology* by Leonardo Boff and Clodovis Boff, pp. 43-95

September 24 – Selections from *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* by Paulo Freire

September 29 – “Liberation Philosophy from the Praxis of the Oppressed” by Enrique Dussel

October 1 – “Enrique Dussel's Transmodernism” by Linda Martín Alcoff

October 6 – “The Americans, Christian Expansion, and the Modern/Colonial Foundation of Racism” by Walter D. Mignolo

October 8 – “How to Tame a Wild Tongue” by Gloria Anzaldúa

October 13 – “The Fourth World War Has Begun” & “Do Not Forget Ideas Are Also Weapons” by Subcomandante Marcos

October 15 – Film: *Zapatista*

October 20 – NO CLASS

AFRICANA CRITIQUES

October 22 – *An Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World* by David Walker, pp. xi-36

October 27 – *An Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World* by David Walker, pp. 37-82

October 29 – “The Conservation of Races” & “Of Our Spiritual Strivings” by W.E.B. Du Bois

November 3 – *Discourse on Colonialism* by Aimé Césaire, pp. 7-46

November 5 – *Discourse on Colonialism* by Aimé Césaire, pp. 47-78

November 10 – *The Wretched of the Earth* by Frantz Fanon, pp. 1-62

November 12 – *The Wretched of the Earth* by Frantz Fanon, pp. 181-239

November 17 – Film: *Concerning Violence*

November 19 – “Unfinished Lecture on Liberation – II” by Angela Y. Davis

November 24 – “Visualizing the Body: Western Theories and African Subjects” by Oyèrónké Oyèwùmí

November 26 – NO CLASS

December 1 – “1492: A New World View” by Sylvia Wynter

December 3 – Discussion & Course Conclusion

December 10 – FINAL EXAM (1:00-3:00)