

**Phil 232:
Europe as a Philosophical Idea**



When/Where: Mondays, 1:30-4:00pm (McCook 303)

Instructor: Prof. Carmen De Schryver

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Office Hours: Mondays, 11:00am-12:00pm (McCook 326) and Tuesdays, 1:30-2:30 (Zoom: <https://trincoll.zoom.us/j/92869049533>)

Course Description:

In this course, we will examine Europe as a “philosophical idea” in post-Kantian continental philosophy. By looking at the role of Europe in texts by thinkers such as Kant, Hegel, Marx, Husserl and Heidegger, our discussions will critically interrogate the motivations, nature and impact of philosophical Eurocentrism. Some of the questions that the course will address are: What is philosophy? What is Europe? What does it mean to be European? What role should philosophy play in identity construction? If philosophy is universal, how can it also be specifically European? How is all of this related to the project of European colonialism? The final part of the course builds on this foundation by engaging with a variety of decolonial critiques, considering how the “Orient”; “Africa” and “Latin America” have been fabricated by and within European colonialist and philosophical discourse. Finally, we will consider the possibilities of a non-Eurocentric, genuinely universal philosophical practice.

Learning Outcomes:

- Identify and comment upon various philosophers’ conceptions of the role of Europe in philosophical thought and practice
- Develop a deepened understanding of the problem of Eurocentrism in philosophy and in contemporary discourse more broadly
- Come to understand related philosophical issues such as the philosophy of history; teleology; cosmopolitanism; the conception of the human being as the rational animal; etc.
- Gain an initial familiarity with seminal debates in Caribbean, Latin American and African Philosophy
- Cultivate skills in critically reading and evaluating technical philosophical material

Course Elements

Grades for this course are based on:

- Participation (20%):
 - (i) Two one-on-one meetings with me in the beginning and the middle of the semester. These are low-stakes encounters – you will not be assessed on what you say. You just need to show up!
 - (i) initial meeting to discuss your interests and familiarity with the course content. A sign-up sheet will be circulated during the first week of class.
 - (ii) mid-semester check-in to discuss your progress and experience in the course.
 - (ii) Reading.
 - In order to get the most out of the course, it is necessary that you read the assigned texts closely *in advance* of the class meeting on Tuesday. Often this will mean reading the text twice and taking detailed notes. The texts in this course will vary in length and difficulty. Don't be discouraged if you find the readings challenging or even confusing – philosophy is hard! I won't expect you to understand everything that you read, especially on the first try. I will expect you to make a good-faith effort to interpret the text on your own, and to participate in the class discussion on this basis. The lecture and the class discussion are designed to (i) collaboratively make sense of the text and (ii) equip you with the skills that you need to fully comprehend and critically interrogate the course material, and ultimately to engage difficult philosophical texts on your own. Don't hesitate to raise clarificatory questions and be upfront about elements of the reading you found challenging; if you are confused about something, it is likely your peers will be as well, and your questions will be welcomed!
 - (iii) Punctual weekly attendance.
 - If you can't make it to class, please message me in advance (if possible) to determine some way to make this up. If you miss more than three classes without providing an explanation, your participation grade will drop a letter grade. If you regularly show up to class 5 or more minutes late without an explanation, your participation grade will drop half a letter grade.
 - Please don't come to class if you have or suspect you might have COVID – we will determine some alternative way for you to participate.
 - (iv) In-class engagement and participation.
 - You should be prepared to positively contribute to some combination of lecture/seminar/office hours. A positive contribution can take on a variety of forms: asking a clarificatory question, raising a discussion point, weighing in on an interpretation, offering an opinion, pointing us back to the reading, etc. At minimum, it requires that you be a respectful and engaged listener not just to what I say but to what your peers say.
 - Speaking up in larger group settings will be more comfortable for some than for others. I encourage you to meet with me during office hours if speaking up in larger group settings is uncomfortable for you. If you tend to be more talkative, an important component of your contributing to a lively discussion will be making space for others to speak.
- Discussion Posts (10%)
 - Each week, I ask that you submit a post to the discussion before class. Depending on the week, you will be asked to either pose a question of your own based on the readings, or answer the question posted on the discussion board. The point of this is to encourage you to gather your thoughts prior to our meeting so that you can get the most out of our discussion.
- In-class presentation (10%)

- For our first meeting, you should come prepared to select a week in which you would like to present.
- The presentation should be about 7-10 minutes and set up the discussion by highlighting the key themes and arguments in that week's readings, as well as raising two discussion questions. (These questions should be formulated so as to conduce to in-depth philosophical discussion. If you are unsure whether your questions are suitable, don't hesitate to contact me.)
- Two term papers of 5 pages, double-spaced (15% each)
 - Prompts and a guide to writing philosophy papers will be circulated online. We will also devote a class session to a philosophy paper writing workshop, where we'll focus on developing a thesis argument.
- Final paper of 7 pages, double-spaced (30%)
 - Final papers may be devoted to a topic of your own choosing (to be discussed with me during office hours). I will also provide prompts to those who prefer them.
 - The final week will be devoted to final paper presentations and peer feedback (10% of the total). You should come to class prepared to present a detailed outline of your paper, including a thesis statement and a break-down of the various sections. You should plan to present for 10 minutes (please time yourself in advance). Your assessment on this portion of the final paper will incorporate your engagement with your peers, so please be prepared to offer feedback and/or ask questions during your peers' presentations.
- Extra Credit Opportunities
 - Opportunities for extra credit will be announced in class over the course of the semester. These may involve attending events, watching philosophy talks online, reworking assignments in light of comments, submitting additional reflection papers, etc. etc.

Note on Office Hours

Office hours are a time for us to meet privately to discuss any aspect of your course experience. I encourage you to come to office hours regularly – this is a time that I am just sitting in my office waiting to chat with you. You can come to my office hours with any questions, ideas, or worries that were raised for you during the lectures or discussions; any difficulties that you are experiencing with the material or your own learning process; or any additional help and guidance you might need for assignments... or anything else! Anything pertaining to the course and your experience of it is on the table.

Course Materials

All of the readings will be made available in PDF on the Moodle page. If you have trouble accessing any of the readings, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Course Schedule

If there is more than one reading, I recommend that you read the texts in the order in which they appear on the syllabus.

N.B. The following is a provisional course schedule for the semester. Any changes to the schedule will be announced in class. The syllabus posted at the top of the Moodle page will always be the latest version, so when in doubt please refer to that document.

Week 1 (January 30th): Introductions and Initial Discussion

Week 2 (February 6th):

- Denis Guénon, “Preface” in *About Europe: Philosophical Hypotheses*, pp. xi-xiii
- Simon Glendinning, “Preface” in *Europe: A Philosophical History, Part 1*, pp. iv-xxiv
- Nadia Yala Kisukidi, “As an Ideal, You Are Yet to Come into Being: Letter to Europe”, pp. 1-4

Unit 1: Europe in The Philosophy of History

Week 3 (February 13th): Reagan Gillooly

- Immanuel Kant, “Conjectures on the Beginning of Human History”, pp. 221-234
- Immanuel Kant, “Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose” in *Political Writings*, pp. 41-53

Week 4 (February 20th): Zeynep Su Oguzer

- G.W.F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, pp. 10-24; 40-44; 57-60; 84-85

Week 5 (February 27th):

Unit 2: Europe in Crisis

Week 6 (March 6th): Esme Ostrowitz-Levine and Shreyasi Oli

- Karl Marx, “The German Ideology”, pp. 147-63; pp. 172-175; pp. 186-200
- Karl Marx, “On Imperialism in India”, pp. 653-665

Week 7 (March 13th): Paper Writing Workshop

- No Reading, but please bring a 1-page outline to our class meeting (instructions will be made available on Moodle)

*****First Paper Due: Wednesday March 15th at 11:59pm*****

Week 8 (March 20th): Spring Break (No Class)

Week 9 (March 27th): Clark Agnew

- Paul Valéry, “The Crisis of the Mind”, pp. 94-107
- Paul Valéry, “The Greatness and Decline of Europe”, pp. 226-232

Week 10 (April 3rd): Izzy Deveney

- Edmund Husserl, “Philosophy and the Crisis of European Man”, pp.149-192

Unit 3: Europe and its Critics

Week 11 (April 10th): Jack Newhouse

- Martin Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, pp. 8-41

*****Second Paper Due: Wednesday April 12th at 11:59pm*****

Week 12 (April 17th): Gabe Grimeh and Chappy Jones

- V.Y. Mudimbe, “Discourse of Power and Knowledge of Otherness” and “The Geography of a Discourse” in *The Invention of Africa*, pp. 1-23; pp. 187-200.
- Jacques Derrida, “The Right to Philosophy from a Cosmopolitical Point of View”, pp. 1-13

Week 13 (April 24th): Michelle Romero

- Edward Said, “The Scope of Orientalism” in *Orientalism*, pp. 31-110

Week 14 (May 1st): Larry Bello-Castillo

- Santiago Castro-Gómez, “Latin America Beyond the Philosophy of History” in *Critique of Latin American Reason*, pp. 79-106

*****Final Paper Due: Wednesday May 3rd at 11:59pm*****

Course Policies

Norms of Conduct

During the first week of class, I will circulate a document of agreements to set the tone for our mutual engagement over the course of the semester. This document is open-ended and subject to your revisions.

Note on Religious Holidays

Trinity College does not observe all religious holidays. If you cannot attend a session because of a religious holiday, please let me know at least a day in advance and we can work out some alternate form of engagement for that week.

Policy on Late Submissions

If you think you won't be able to complete the assignment by the deadline, you should contact me at least **one day** before to discuss your situation and arrange an alternate schedule for completion. If you simply submit an assignment late without notifying me 24 hours in advance, this will result in a late penalty. Depending on the circumstances, late submissions may not receive detailed commentary.

Accessibility and Accommodations

Trinity College is committed to creating an inclusive and accessible learning environment consistent with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Like many things, the need for disability accommodations and the process for arranging them may be altered by the COVID-19 changes we are experiencing and the safety protocols currently in place. Students who may need some accommodation in order to fully participate in this class are asked to contact the Student Accessibility Resource Center, as soon as possible, to explore what arrangements need to be made to assure access. Student Accessibility Resources can be reached by emailing SARC@trincoll.edu. If you already have academic accommodations, please reach out to me by the end of week two of classes to let me know. For those students with accommodations approved after the start of the semester, a minimum of 10 days' notice is required.

Academic Integrity

Any written work you submit should be your own. This means that you should not copy/paste, paraphrase or borrow ideas from a text or internet source without proper citation (*i.e.* presenting them as though they are your own). Failure to do so amounts to plagiarism, and the college takes violations of plagiarism very seriously. For further information, you should consult the [Student Handbook's](#) policies and procedures regarding academic integrity and plagiarism. If you have any questions about how to use/cite material appropriately, please do not hesitate to ask – it is better to be sure than to risk a violation. You are welcome to use either parenthetical or footnote citations in this course, in either Chicago or MLA format.