European Thought and Culture in the 19th Century

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European Thought and Culture in the Nineteenth Century

Scope:

This course of twenty-four lectures examines major themes and authors in nineteenth-century European thought. We begin with a survey of the intellectual themes that emerged in the eighteenth-century Enlightenment, because this was the starting point for most of the important new nineteenth-century themes in philosophy, political theory, social thought, and literature. Our discussion of these themes will emphasize the links between the history of ideas and the history of the social, cultural, and political contexts in which influential new ideas appeared. This approach to the history of ideas rests on the assumption that ideas shape and influence all other aspects of the historical process, but it also stresses the importance of social, political, and economic realities in the formation and diffusion of all ideas.

The course describes nineteenth-century intellectual history as a set of overlapping dialogues with several key contextual influences on modern thought: (1) the response to the cultural legacy of the Enlightenment, (2) the political impact and legacy of the French Revolution, and (3) the broad social impact of the Industrial Revolution and the growth of modern cities. Important texts do not simply "reflect" the contexts in which they appear, but this course stresses the ways in which creative thinkers interpret, reframe, criticize, and influence the evolving historical world in which they live.

The lectures in the course trace this intellectual dialogue by looking at a number of important themes in modern European culture. After an introductory lecture on the characteristics of intellectual history, we will use three lectures to discuss the main themes of Enlightenment intellectual life and the Enlightenment's relation to the French Revolution. The following six lectures then examine the emergence of nineteenth-century political and cultural theories that developed in response to the French Revolution. These are the famous "isms"—conservatism, liberalism, Romanticism, and so on—that interpreted the new post-revolutionary social and political world.

Beginning with Lecture Eleven, we turn to the cultural impact of the other great revolution of the era, the Industrial Revolution. We will look at the social characteristics of this new industrial system and discuss the theoretical responses it evoked. Intellectual interpretations of the new economy ranged from the pro-capitalist responses of classical economists to the critiques of early socialists and the ideas of early Marxism. We then move on to discuss the emergence of early feminism and the widening movement for human rights in the new industrial society.

In the last seven lectures, we will survey a number of cultural responses to what might be called the new "mass culture" of modern urban societies: nationalism,
realism in literature, positivism, Darwinian science, Social Darwinism, and various philosophical critiques of modern, democratic cultural life. These lectures lead us back to the dialogue with the Enlightenment (its faith in science, reason, and progress), which marked the end of the nineteenth century, as well as its beginning.

Our goal throughout the course is to understand the ideas of influential nineteenth-century European intellectuals, to reflect on the interactions between ideas and social experience, and to think critically about how the ideas of creative nineteenth-century writers still raise questions for our own time. Intellectual history emphasizes the multiple dialogues among and between the people of other places and times, but it also stresses the importance of a continuing dialogue between the present and the past. This course seeks to expand our dialogue with the intellectual world of nineteenth-century Europe—a world of influential ideas that still enter most cultural debates at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

Lecture One
What Is Intellectual History?

Scope: This lecture introduces the overall themes of the course and explains the nature of intellectual history as a subdiscipline within modern historical studies. It notes how intellectual historians study the influential ideas, writers, cultural movements, and cultural institutions of past societies. It also introduces the guiding assumption of this course, which stresses the interaction between social experience and the history of thought. Social and political realities influence the development of all ideas and creative thinkers, but ideas and human consciousness also shape all social and political realities. Finally, this lecture notes some of the methods that intellectual historians use to understand the work of influential writers and the diffusion of influential ideas.

Outline

I. Let's begin by defining intellectual history and modern historiography.

A. This course examines the history of ideas and cultural contexts in European societies during the nineteenth century; it is, therefore, an example of what professional historians usually call "intellectual history."

1. We’ll look at the history of influential thinkers and ideas from the time of late Enlightenment thinkers, such as Voltaire and Rousseau, to the era of late nineteenth-century thinkers, such as Darwin and Nietzsche.

2. We must begin with a general question about the kind of history we will pursue in this course: What is intellectual history?

B. Intellectual history is the subdiscipline of history that deals most explicitly with systems of interpretation and meaning.

1. That is, intellectual history takes as its object of study the ideas and symbols that people use to make sense of their world.

2. The guiding assumption in the study of intellectual history emphasizes that human experience depends on the use of language and consciousness.

3. This use of language gives meaning to individual lives and to all social realities or social experiences.

C. The use of language can take the form of great books or works of art or of everyday conversations, beliefs, and fears.

1. In all cases, people use ideas about reality to give structure to reality itself; theories are part of reality.
2. Intellectual history thus stresses the idea that what we call reality is, in various ways, an intellectual construction, and it analyzes how the meaning of reality changes across time.

II. This emphasis on the role of ideas, symbols, and language has often made intellectual history somewhat marginal among historians who prefer to focus on the cold, hard facts of political and economic life.

A. Intellectual history has often seemed vague to these historians because it is concerned more with interpretation and meanings than with the accumulation of facts; it seeks to explain how people interpret the facts that others describe.
1. The question, then, is not, for example, how or when did the King of France die during the French Revolution; intellectual historians want to know how did people interpret this event.
2. In what ways did people at the time and later give meaning to such an event and place it in a wider cultural or theoretical context?
3. Critics say that intellectual history becomes interpretations about interpretations and loses touch with reality.

B. I don’t think this charge is correct, and, in fact, most historians have become much more interested in language and symbols and the influence of culture.
1. The new forms of cultural history stress the shaping influence of cultural mentalities and values in all historical eras.
2. The new cultural history, however, tends to give more attention to popular ideologies and popular culture and the values of daily life.
3. Intellectual history, by contrast, tends to give more attention to the ideas of elite thinkers or what were traditionally called great writers.

C. What cultural and intellectual history share, though, is an emphasis on the dialectical interaction between social reality or social forces and ideas.
1. Changes in the economy, political leadership, social relations, and warfare constantly change people’s ideas about the world.
2. At the same time, their ideas about the world or about how the world should be affect their actions in the economy, politics, social life, and warfare.
3. To put it simply, social realities influence the development of all ideas, and ideas influence the development of all social realities.

D. In this course, we will approach intellectual history by emphasizing the constant interaction between social changes and changing ideas.
1. This approach to the history of ideas contrasts with many literary and philosophical approaches to texts, which tend to look more at the internal development of ideas.

2. Unlike most philosophers, most intellectual historians examine the relation between texts and social or cultural contexts.

E. Intellectual history seeks to bring out the complexity of human experience by investigating both the ideas of the past and the social-cultural experience or reality in which these ideas developed and made sense.
1. It requires that we take the ideas of the past seriously and that we allow those ideas to challenge or criticize our own interpretations of reality.
2. Because human reality can’t be separated from our ideas about it, I see intellectual history as an essential component of the real world.
3. All our present interpretations of reality are based on ideas and symbols that derive from past intellectual history.

III. All intellectual historians are concerned with problems of meaning and interpretation, but they have developed many different methods for their work; intellectual history often draws on a wide variety of disciplines.

A. Let’s examine briefly five of the major ways in which intellectual historians see the historical objective or methods of this field. Some of these methods have close links to cultural history; others don’t, but all have connections to disciplines outside historical studies.

B. Some historians see intellectual history as an extension of social history or as a way to clarify what we know about the social and political history of the past.
1. In this view, intellectual history simply confirms other forms of history.
2. For example, if we know from the study of economics or social relations that a new social class of wage earners was developing in the nineteenth century, we can read novels to see if people noticed this change.

C. The second group of intellectual historians sees intellectual history as essentially the study of great books and abstract ideas about truth, beauty, literature, or human nature.
1. These historians might be called textual intellectual historians.
2. They stress the internal themes and ideas of major thinkers or authors.
3. Textual historians place little emphasis on the social context; they prefer to show how ideas move from author to author or from era to era.
4. They emphasize the careful reading of complex texts—like literary critics—and, since the 1980s, their work has been influenced by various literary theories and contemporary literary criticism.
Lecture Two

The Scientific Origins of the Enlightenment

Scope: This lecture begins with the general claim that nineteenth-century European intellectual history evolved as an extended dialogue with the leading ideas and thinkers of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment. To understand that dialogue, we must look at the shaping themes of the Enlightenment—a movement in European thought that grew out of the scientific revolution and sought to extend scientific methods and forms of knowledge to social and political life. This lecture briefly summarizes the development of the new science and the cultural influence of Isaac Newton. We then turn to the influential philosophical and political ideas of John Locke, a thinker who leads us into the key ideas of the Enlightenment tradition.

Outline

I. European culture in the eighteenth century is generally described as the Age of the Enlightenment; this era is usually viewed as the starting point of modern European intellectual history—though the themes of modern thought began to emerge earlier.

A. During the Enlightenment, many of the debates about politics, society, and knowledge developed recognizable modern forms.

1. This modernity can be attributed to a remarkable intellectual confidence in science, which was seen as the foundation for truth.

2. The origins of Enlightenment thought can be traced in many ways to the influential scientific revolution of the seventeenth century.

3. Belief in the truths of science is one of the key elements of modern thought in Europe—and in other areas of the world, too.

4. Science became the model for knowledge about human beings and society, as well as the basis for knowledge about nature.

B. European thought in the nineteenth century developed as a kind of extended dialogue with the Enlightenment; later thinkers both accepted and challenged the leading ideas of Enlightenment theorists, including the faith in science.

II. To see how the new science altered European intellectual life and shaped the themes of the Enlightenment, we'll survey three aspects of this cultural transition.

A. First, we look at how the modern scientific form of thought developed in the scientific revolution of the seventeenth century.

B. Second, we note the culminating event of the new science, Newtonian physics, and suggest why Newton's work was so influential.
C. Third, we discuss the implications of this new form of knowledge for social and political theory, noting especially the ideas of John Locke. The new science became decisive in intellectual history, because it created both new knowledge and a method for creating knowledge.

III. The form or method of scientific thought is especially important, because this method offered answers to that ancient philosophical question: How do we know what we know?

A. The classical Christian view of truth had stressed that ultimately truth comes from divine revelation, but religious conflicts had generated skepticism about such claims; people could not agree on what truths God had revealed.

1. The scientific revolution and the subsequent Enlightenment began with the idea that truth must rest on something other than revelation.
2. The new conception of truth was built on a belief in the reliability of empirical observation and mathematics.
3. One way to define the scientific revolution would be to say that scientists sought to confirm mathematical theories by observation and to confirm observations by mathematical theories.

B. This method of establishing truth was actually a synthesis of two rather different innovators in seventeenth-century thought: Francis Bacon (1561–1626) and René Descartes (1596–1650).

1. Bacon argued that knowledge must be based on empirical observation, specific evidence, and the use of inductive reason.
2. Knowledge grows as we observe, measure, and describe objects or natural phenomena; we must accumulate observed facts.

C. Bacon tended to underestimate the role of mathematics, which Descartes stressed in such works as his Discourse on Method (1637).

1. Mathematics was Descartes's model for truth; he believed that whatever can be established by mathematical proof can be taken as a secure truth.
2. Descartes was less empirical than Bacon, but he shared Bacon's belief that knowledge was cumulative and that general laws could be known.
3. The scientific method, as Bacon and Descartes defined it, thus linked inductive and deductive thought, empirical evidence, and mathematics.

IV. The full possibilities of this method were realized soon after Descartes when Newton published the Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy (1687).

A. Newton (1642–1727) synthesized what had been observed about the motion of planetary and earthly bodies with the new study of mathematics.

1. He showed how all motion on earth or in the solar system could be explained by the law of universal gravitation.
2. Newton's explanation of this law emphasized that it was universal and that the workings of gravity could be measured and predicted.
3. Newton's book became one of the most influential scientific works ever published, despite the difficulty of understanding it.
4. It became the basis for a new faith in science and an almost sacred text for Enlightenment writers in the eighteenth century.

B. Newtonian science gave rise to the optimistic belief that everything in nature could ultimately be known—a claim that fueled a growing belief in progress.

V. The main themes of Enlightenment thought began to develop when people drew on the lessons of the new science for the study of people and society.

A. The scientific confidence in a method to discover reliable truths, the emphasis on empiricism, and the idea of progress were all carried from the study of nature into the study of human institutions and traditions.

B. This new interest in applying scientific insights to society spread rapidly in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, and it appeared in the work of John Locke.

1. Locke (1632–1704) was trained in medicine and science; he knew Isaac Newton and, like most thinkers of the era, he was concerned with epistemology and the nature of knowledge.
2. One of Locke's most important attempts to deal with this issue appeared in An Essay Concerning Human Understanding (1690).
3. Locke argued for a radical empiricism; that is, he said that all knowledge comes from sensory experience and from observation.
4. Locke's key point was that we all come into the world as a tabula rasa, or a blank tablet, which means that our social environment shapes our beliefs, actions, and knowledge.

C. These epistemological assumptions had important social implications, because they suggest that changes in the environment will change ideas and behavior.

1. Such ideas contributed to a confidence in social reform and raised new questions about the purpose of government and laws.
2. Locke's empiricism was, thus, like Newtonian science, one of the foundations for Enlightenment thought and social theory.
3. Locke himself recognized the political implications of his philosophy when he wrote his Two Treatises of Government; this work was published shortly after the English Revolution of 1688 overthrew King James II.
4. Locke's Treatises shows his scientific inspiration, especially in his theories of natural rights and natural law.
Lecture Three
The Emergence of the Modern Intellectual

Scope: This lecture argues that the Age of the Enlightenment created the cultural identity of the modern “intellectual.” Although the word intellectual was not used until the late nineteenth century, the group of critical writers called philosophes developed a self-conscious conception of how their writing and the “Republic of Letters” should influence modern societies. Most of these writers promoted a strong belief in reason, progress, and the harmonious laws of nature. This lecture discusses the Enlightenment’s conception of the intellectual’s social role, with particular attention to the lives and ideas of Montesquieu, Diderot, and Voltaire. Such figures created a model for the work of later writers and social theorists.

Outline

I. The eighteenth-century Enlightenment promoted an intellectual transition toward a widespread modern confidence in science and the possibilities for social reform.
   A. At the same time, the new culture of the Enlightenment contributed to the development of a new social group—the modern intellectuals.
      1. Although the term intellectual was not used at the time, the writers of the eighteenth century began to identify themselves as a group whose actions and ideas would give this term its modern meaning.
      2. They viewed themselves as writers who wanted to change the world by using reason, knowledge, social criticism, and public commentary to alter public opinion and policies.
      3. This was the activist theme of the philosophes, the famous writers who created a cultural model for the intellectuals of the nineteenth century.
   B. Philosophes weren’t really philosophers; they wrote plays, journalism, novels, poems, history, social theory, political theory, and science, all of which could influence public opinion.
      1. They were far less specialized than most recent intellectuals, and they wrote huge quantities of material.
      2. This vast production reflected the belief that the pen was somehow mightier than the sword, or at least a rival to the sword.
   C. The pen was to be used as a weapon in social struggles. This was the role of intellectuals in society: to write texts that would affect the world.
      1. The philosophes expressed the common belief that intellectuals should be critics—a kind of secular clergy, urging reforms.

Essential Reading:
René Descartes, Discourse on Method, pp. 1–42.

Supplementary Reading:
Margaret Jacob, Scientific Culture and the Making of the Industrial West, pp. 15–50, 73–96.
Thomas Kuhn, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, pp. 1–91.

Questions to Consider:
1. Why would science gain particular appeal in the aftermath of religious wars and the European encounter with other cultures in the Americas and Asia?
2. Do you think the idea of progress remains a central theme in our own time?
2. This conception of the intellectual's social role may have become
the most enduring legacy of the work of the philosophes.
3. They believed that words could reshape social and cultural
realities.
D. I want to discuss the aspirations of the philosophes by noting some of
the key concepts or words they used in their writing.
1. We should also note how these ideas influenced their desire to
reform the state, their belief in social reform through education or
learning, and their conception of intellectual freedom.
2. These three themes can be seen in the work of three major
philosophes, Montesquieu, Diderot, and Voltaire; their lives and
writings serve as examples of the wider Enlightenment culture.
E. These three philosophes were typical of the group as a whole in that
they wrote literature, as well as social theory and history.
1. They also came to believe that they were part of a "Republic of
Letters," which contrasted with the actual monarchy of princes.
2. The philosophes sought to transform the Republic of Letters into a
real world society of enlightenment and equal intellectual
opportunity.
3. Recent historical studies have stressed that eighteenth-century
philosophes wanted to create a public sphere in which public
opinion would be shaped by reasonable discourse and free debate.
4. This public sphere might be viewed somewhat like an ideal French
salon—an intellectual meeting place, governed by rational debate.

II. This public culture was supposed to implement or defend various ideas and
concepts.
A. The key philosophes ideas might be summarized in three related words:
reason, progress, and nature. These ideas drew on Newton and Locke.
B. The emphasis on reason referred primarily to a method of thought. To
think with reason meant to take nothing on faith. You must subject
customs and ideas to doubt and reasonable investigation, much as
scientists analyze nature. Reason is a tool for systematic analysis.
C. One of the great benefits of reason is that it ensures progress; it allows
people to correct past mistakes and accumulate knowledge.
1. The faith in progress thus became a second key assumption of
philosophe thought, and concern with the future on earth replaced
the older theological concern with a future in heaven.
2. Diderot summarized this faith when he wrote: "Posterity is for the
philosopher what the other world is for the religious man."
3. Philosophes knew that problems would continue to exist; they were
not naïve, but they believed that many problems could be
overcome.
D. The future social world that reason and progress would ultimately
create should resemble the rational harmony of nature—that third key
concept.
1. Using reason, people could develop orderly, clear laws that were as
rational as the laws of nature, and the philosophes could point the
way.
2. Most philosophes believed that God had started nature running like
a great watchmaker starting a clock (a theme of eighteenth-century
deism).
3. Similarly, humans might get the human world running like an
efficient, well-designed machine that could be in tune with natural
harmony.
E. These overlapping concepts of reason, progress, and nature shaped
much of the philosophes' approach to politics, society, and religion.

III. One approach to politics appears in the work of Charles-Louis de Secondat,
Baron of Montesquieu (1689–1755), who was from a noble family in
southwestern France.
A. His family was influential in politics there, and he held a seat in the
Bordeaux parlement, or law court, from an early age. He was also
drawn to literature as an alternative to the law; he liked to read books
and soon became a writer.
B. His first major work was one of fiction: The Persian Letters (1721), a
satire on prejudices and social practices in contemporary France.
C. His later work focused on history and politics. Montesquieu is often
called the first sociologist, because he wanted to understand the deep
structures or underlying causes that shaped political life.
D. He spent a year and a half in England and seemed to develop an interest
in Newtonian ideas; he wanted to explain the determining cause of
actions in the social world, as Newton described gravity in nature.
E. This search for underlying causes is the theme of his most important
political book, The Spirit of the Laws (1748). In one section of this
book, he argues that the laws of nations are shaped by geography and
climate.
1. More influential, though, was Montesquieu's argument that the law
works best (i.e., harmoniously, as in nature) when the power to
make laws is divided between various parts of government.
2. His model was England, which he believed divided political power
effectively between the Parliament, king, and courts.
F. These ideas later helped to justify challenges to the absolute power of
kings.
1. As a political theorist or sociologist, Montesquieu's greatest
contribution was to stress the deep structures of society and the
state.
2. Subsequent social theory and historical analysis returned to this emphasis, focusing on social structures rather than personalities.

IV. By the time Montesquieu published The Spirit of the Laws, other philosophers were beginning to develop an educational approach to reform.

A. This was the project of Denis Diderot (1713–1784), who came from eastern France near Dijon; his father was an artisan who made knives.
1. Diderot came from the class of skilled artisans rather than the nobility. He went to Paris to study in a Jesuit college.
2. There, he lost interest in religion and studied law, then science, then Greek, Latin, and English; then philosophy; and then literature. Because he could not get a job, he began to work as a translator and writer.
3. He wrote some stories about love and sex before gradually moving toward more theoretical concerns; he came to believe that science and learning could reform the world—a key theme of the Enlightenment.

B. Diderot developed the most famous of all philosophe projects: The Encyclopedia, which would summarize all knowledge about science, society, nature, politics, and economics
1. The goal was explicitly reformist; Diderot assumed that knowledge could transform the world, and the Republic of Letters would expand.
2. Diderot solicited articles from all the leading philosophers on various subjects. Despite censorship, late articles, and other problems, he published seventeen volumes of the Encyclopedia (1751–1772).
3. About 25,000 sets were sold before 1789. The work expressed a strong faith in reason, progress, and the laws of nature.
4. More generally, these books conveyed the philosophe message that writing had power and that it could change the social world.

V. This same faith in writing appears also in the work of Voltaire (1694–1778), perhaps because he had the most brilliant prose style of the century.

A. Voltaire’s real name was François-Marie Arouet; he came from a wealthy family, but he was not from the nobility.
1. As a young man, he got into trouble for comments he made at the French court and spent eleven months in the Bastille. He later got into a fight with a young noble and was forced to flee to England (1726–1729).
2. Voltaire had experience with intolerance and repression in his own life, but the repression was not severe enough to silence him.
3. Much of his early writing was for the theater. He developed a reputation for witty, satirical plays and books.

4. His writings fill more than seventy volumes; after 1758, he lived on an estate near the Swiss border and wrote often on public controversies.

B. Although Voltaire wrote about almost everything, his main concern was freedom of thought. This was the main theme of his Letters on England (1734), a book that stressed the intellectual achievements and freedom of the English.
1. Voltaire believed that the Catholic Church was the greatest opponent of intellectual freedom, and he often condemned religious intolerance.
2. He argued that different interpretations of religion reflected different historical factors; therefore, they must be tolerated.
3. He campaigned to “Ecrasez l’infame”—“Stamp out the infamy”—and he wanted reason to prevail over superstition.

VI. The long-term success of the philosophes’ project remains a subject of debate, but the ideas of the Enlightenment clearly influenced the French Revolution of 1789.

A. The philosophes’ ideas continued to influence reform movements in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, though many later critics attacked the philosophes for their optimistic view of progress or for placing too much faith in human reason.

B. Despite the modern challenges to Enlightenment thought, the philosophes’ conception of the intellectual has remained influential.

C. The key idea was that the intellectual should play a critical public role and help shape public opinion; the pen could be as mighty as a sword.

D. The philosophes created much of the modern intellectual’s social identity, and Voltaire became an enduring symbol of that identity.

Essential Reading:

Supplementary Reading:

Questions to Consider:
1. What makes Voltaire the typical or atypical modern intellectual?
2. Were the philosophes correct when they argued that human beings can use reason to change and improve the world?
Lecture Four
The Cultural Meaning of the French Revolution

Scope: The French Revolution became the most influential modern political and cultural event for virtually every nineteenth-century European social and political theorist and for many creative artists and novelists. This lecture describes the Revolution as both an expression and a destruction of Enlightenment ideas. It also discusses the important cultural influence of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, notes the various phases of the Revolution, and emphasizes the ways in which France’s revolutionary events raised new, critical questions about the validity and legacy of Enlightenment theories.

Outline

I. The question of whether or how the Enlightenment influenced the French Revolution is one of the oldest debates in European history; it had emerged by 1790.
   A. All later European thinkers, especially in the nineteenth century, had to come to terms with the legacy of the French Revolution because it embodied ideas.
      1. The Revolution was much more than a transfer of political power from the French monarchy to a republic; it was also a decisive event in intellectual history.
      2. It shaped modern debates about political theory, the nature of historical change, the meaning of democracy, and the effects of social equality.
      3. The French Revolution achieved many goals or themes of the Enlightenment, but it also marked the end of the Enlightenment as a self-conscious movement.
      4. Revolutionary events brought out the diversity and tensions in the Enlightenment tradition and provoked debates about that tradition.
   B. This lecture discusses how the Revolution both completed and undermined the Enlightenment tradition.
      1. First, I will summarize new developments in the last phase of Enlightenment thought.
      2. Second, I want to suggest how the phases of the Revolution can be seen as expressions of various tendencies in Enlightenment thought.
      3. Finally, I’ll examine how the Revolution affected the ways in which people began to interpret the meaning of the Enlightenment.

C. The Revolution changed the intellectual meaning of the Enlightenment: It became the key modern political event for both radicals and conservatives.
   1. Indeed, the very terms left and right emerged in this era.
   2. The liberal and radical members of the French National Assembly sat on the left side of the meeting hall; conservatives sat on the right.

II. The conflicts among the revolutionaries reflect changing themes in the Enlightenment during the last decades before 1789 as some philosophers adopted more radical ideas.

A. They moved beyond the earlier work of Voltaire and developed a new interest in political equality, stressing the radical equality of natural rights.
   1. Earlier philosophes were not much concerned with the lower classes and generally accepted the need for social hierarchies.
   2. They were also cosmopolitan thinkers, stressing the universal value of reason rather than the political rights of specific nations.
   3. Later philosophes were interested in equality and national sovereignty.
   4. These new patterns appeared in the work of Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778), whose writings had enormous influence after about 1760.

B. Rousseau wrote with passion and emotion. Unlike Voltaire, he didn’t use humor, but he told emotional stories that helped prepare the way for Romanticism.
   1. He also loved nature, but more as a poet than as a scientist.
   2. Also unlike Voltaire, he was self-educated, poor, and a loner. He was born in Geneva, but his mother died at his birth, and his father had little interest in him. Jean-Jacques ran away from Geneva when he was sixteen.

C. After wandering for many years, Rousseau eventually went to Paris, where he never fit into the salons, though he now had strong intellectual ambitions.
   1. By the late 1740s, he was living with an uneducated woman named Thérèse Levasseur.
   2. They had five children—all of whom were given to orphanages (a response to Rousseau’s early loss of his own parents?).

D. Rousseau was poor, but he became suddenly famous in the 1750s when he won a literary prize from the Dijon academy for his Discourse on the Sciences and Arts, which argued that civilization was a decline from the state of nature.
   1. Similar themes appeared also in the Discourse on the Origin of Inequality (1754). This work is usually called the Second
Discourse; it claimed that people living in nature had been free and equal.

2. Rousseau also wrote novels, including the wildly popular *Nouvelle Héloïse* (the story of a failed love affair) and a book about how to educate children in ways that foster their natural virtue (*Emile*).

E. Rousseau was most concerned with issues of social equality; he stressed that people were neither free nor equal in modern societies, but he believed they should be both.

1. His most famous political work, *The Social Contract* (1762), described the traits of an egalitarian society and began with a famous opening line: “Man is born free, but everywhere he is in chains.”

2. Rousseau’s argument stressed the idea of a link between liberty and equality; to be truly free, people must be equal—as in nature.

3. Rousseau’s conception of equality suggested that nations are founded on the dignity of the common people rather than on hierarchies (though he said that only men should have a political role).

F. This assumption leads to the second key theme of the later Enlightenment, the belief that sovereignty lies in the whole nation rather than in kings or nobles.

1. This theme also appeared in the American Revolution and Declaration of Independence, which attracted wide attention in France.

2. The later Enlightenment of Rousseau and Jefferson added equality and new views of national sovereignty to earlier Enlightenment themes, such as the importance of reason and tolerance and the belief in progress.

III. The sometimes-conflicting themes in Enlightenment theory became more apparent after 1789, as claims for individual rights ran into claims for equality or the nation.

A. At first, all supporters of the Revolution united in endorsing the “Declaration of the Rights of Man”; most people wanted to dismantle the privileges of the old regime.

B. This agreement could be found in the famous slogan “Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité,” which appeared later but linked the early and late Enlightenment.

1. Liberty suggests personal freedom and the exercise of political rights.

2. Equality suggests no legal distinctions on the basis of birth.

3. Fraternity suggests the unity of a sovereign nation—early nationalism.

C. The phases of the Revolution reflected different parts of this slogan and, hence, different aspects of the Enlightenment.

D. The first phase (1789–1792) was the era of constitutional monarchy, a moderate phase that produced a constitution and policies that implemented many of the classic philosophe goals.

1. In these years, the Revolution abolished special legal privileges and promoted freedom of speech, press, religion, and trade. The Catholic Church lost its traditional role in the French state.

2. Many believed that the rational progress predicted by the philosophes was arriving and a new era in human history had begun.

E. By 1792, many people believed that the Revolution had gone too far in abolishing the old regime. Opposition became more organized, but this growing opposition also radicalized many of the Revolution’s supporters.

1. The second phase of the Revolution (1792–1794) became the most radical. King Louis XVI was deposed and executed, and a war with counterrevolutionary powers spread across Europe.

2. New leaders of the revolution, the Jacobins, emphasized equality and fraternity; they drew on Rousseau and claimed to express the will of the nation.

3. Facing violent opposition and claiming to represent the revolutionary will of the people, the Jacobins instituted the Terror (1793–1794).

4. Revolutionary tribunals sent about 40,000 people to die on the guillotine or by other means; many (but not the majority) of those executed were members of the old nobility and clergy.

5. The abstract emphasis on equality or the nation became more important than other human rights, but this push toward more radical views of equality and the nation alienated even many revolutionaries.

6. The most radical Jacobins were overthrown in July 1794, and their leaders were executed, including the famous Robespierre.

F. The overthrow of the radical Jacobins launched the Revolution’s third phase (1794–1799), in which the leaders sought to re-establish the rights and order of the early Revolution and continue earlier reforms in such areas as education.

1. This third shift was possible because France’s foreign enemies had been defeated, but there was also a growing reliance on the army.

2. Gradually, the theme of fraternity became more important than liberty or equality—a tendency that culminated in the coup-d’état of 1799 that brought Napoleon to power and essentially ended the Revolution.
IV. The Revolution played out many of the key themes of the early and late Enlightenment, though in ways that no philosophe could have anticipated.

A. By 1800, many of the rights of 1789 were again threatened or destroyed, and notions of radical equality had been rejected (though Napoleon often promoted people on the basis of merit).

B. The most obvious and perhaps enduring “survivor” among the themes of the late Enlightenment creed was the idea of nationalism or national sovereignty, which Napoleon claimed to represent.

V. What had happened to Enlightenment ideas by the end of the French Revolution?

A. The ideas of radical equality and a radical, philosophical rationalism were linked to the Terror and went into eclipse for a time.

B. The violence of the French Revolution made a great impression on everyone who lived through it and almost everyone who later wrote about it, though it was in fact less deadly than many earlier religious wars or crusades.

1. It promoted high ideals of human rights and was much less deadly than the revolutions and wars of the twentieth century, but the violence of 1792–1794 gave the French Revolution much of its haunting later meaning.

2. Yet it was also true that various legal and economic rights, including property rights, were better established; that government offered more support for education; and that ideas of national sovereignty had spread.

C. Thus, though the Revolution broke much of the late Enlightenment optimism and much of the confident belief in human rights, reason, equality, and social change, it also provided the great modern example of radical ideas in action.

Essential Reading:


Supplementary Reading:


Questions to Consider:
1. Do you think the Revolution enacted the main ideas of the Enlightenment, or do you think the revolutionaries corrupted and distorted these ideas?
2. Can liberty exist without various kinds of equality?

Lecture Five

The New Conservatism in Post-Revolutionary Europe

Scope: In this lecture, we begin a survey of the various intellectual and cultural responses to the momentous events in late eighteenth-century France. The modern political themes of conservatism arose as a strong intellectual reaction to the French Revolution, but the critique of the Revolution also evolved into a more general criticism of the Enlightenment and of all political attempts to restructure societies on the basis of theoretical abstractions. This lecture discusses the influential conservative ideas of Edmund Burke and Joseph de Maistre, both of whom argued for the social and political value of European traditions. It also notes how conservatism—which began as an attack on the danger of social theories—became a new self-conscious social and political theory.

Outline

I. The French Revolution represented ideas that its supporters believed were relevant to all other people; the revolutionaries assumed that their claims for human rights and for the social utility of reason expressed universal truths.

A. Many people outside France also believed that the Revolution expressed universal truths, but the Revolution soon provoked vehement opposition from critics who believed it threatened Europe’s most valuable traditions.

B. This debate about the meaning of the Revolution helped produce the main political “isms” of the early nineteenth century: conservatism, liberalism, socialism, and nationalism.

1. The writers who advocated each of these “isms” held different views of the Revolution. We’ll consider all these views, but we’ll begin with the Revolution’s harshest critics—the conservatives.

2. Conservatives attacked the revolutionary doctrines and activists much as sixteenth-century Catholic writers had attacked the Protestant Reformation.

3. The ideological disputes were as vehement as the earlier theological conflicts. In both cases, critics of the new movement claimed that it was destroying the accumulated wisdom of European culture.

C. There were different forms of conservatism, as there are different forms of every influential ideology, political theory, or religion.

1. We can discuss post-revolutionary conservatism by looking at the English conservatism of Edmund Burke and the conservatism of Joseph de Maistre on the Continent (he wrote in French).
2. Both of these writers strongly opposed the French Revolution, and both stressed the social value of tradition and inherited institutions.
3. They also ran into a similar theoretical problem because they wrote theories about social practices that they wanted to leave shrouded in mystery; they attacked theorists but became theorists themselves.
4. Despite these similarities, Burke and Maistre represented different conservatisms that developed in England and France and flowed widely across the Western world during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

II. The first sustained foreign analysis of the French Revolution came from England. The key figure here was Edmund Burke (1729–1797).

A. Burke was originally from Ireland, but he became an important figure in the British Parliament during the 1770s and 1780s.
1. Burke was one of the first Europeans to see that the French Revolution was both a social revolution and a revolution in doctrines and ideas.
2. He quickly decided that the Revolution’s impact could not be confined to France; it would produce international conflicts.

B. For Burke, the international aspect came from the challenge to traditional social, political, and religious institutions (the aristocracy, monarchy, and Church).
1. In Burke’s view, people must either adopt this system or fight it.
2. Burke thought it was an evil force that must be fought.

C. To describe the dangers, Burke wrote his Reflections on the Revolution in France (1790)—the founding text of modern conservatism.
1. Defenders of tradition had not previously articulated their creed so systematically; they mainly affirmed the legitimacy of ruling powers.
2. Under the systematic challenge of the Revolution, Burke saw the need for a more systematic statement of anti-revolutionary theory.

D. Burke launched a full-scale assault on revolutionary doctrines, which of course came mostly from the ideas of the philosophes.
1. He totally rejected the idea that natural rights existed outside society or before history; he said that all rights derive from the history of the society in which they are exercised.
2. Rights are, therefore, not an abstraction but an inheritance from the past; this inheritance is built up over many centuries.
3. Each generation must pass these rights on to posterity, much as one passes on property. Government institutions are passed on in this same way—a kind of inheritance from earlier eras.
4. Rejecting the notion that society was like a machine that could be rebuilt, Burke compared it to a slowly growing plant or organism.

E. The great mistake of the revolutionaries, as Burke described them, was their attempt to break radically from France’s own organic traditions.
1. He emphasized respect for the past; this is the source of all wisdom and provided much better guidance than theoretical abstractions based on reason—which Burke wanted England to avoid.
2. He said changes must come slowly; meanwhile, it was much better to accept the national inheritance as a mystery that expressed wisdom.
3. The only kind of revolution that might be justified would be one like the Revolution of 1688 in England, which defended national traditions.

F. Burke’s conservatism broke with much Enlightenment theory; it rejected excessive rationalism and abstract natural rights and defended the value of tradition, prejudice, religion, and the mysteries of inherited institutions.

G. He also stressed the importance of historical continuities and argued for the importance of national ideas over universalizing abstractions.

H. Conservatism took its modern form as a repudiation of France’s Revolution and as a justification of old regime privileges and traditions.
1. The tension here appeared in the fact that Burke had to use theories to attack those whom he criticized for using theory (philosophes).
2. Once conservatism became a theory, it could be analyzed and attacked like other theories; it was no longer simply reality itself but a theory about social relations that Burke did not want reduced to social theory.

III. Burke’s ideas gained support in England, but by the early nineteenth century, a somewhat different conservatism was developing on the Continent.

A. Burke had stressed the importance of upholding traditions that were inherited from the past, but some of the traditions in France could be quite radical.

B. In France, the Enlightenment and the philosophes formed an important national tradition; other traditions (e.g., Protestantism) could be seen as threats to what Burke called the organic social community.
1. Burke had, of course, defended the Protestant tradition in England, but the major characteristic of the new conservatism in France and many other places on the Continent was its link to Catholicism.
2. This revision of Burke can be seen most notably in the work of Joseph de Maistre (1753–1821).

C. Until recently, Maistre was ignored by many modern historians or seen as simply a kind of proto-fascist; more recently, he has been seen as one of the first social theorists to recognize the role of violence in all political systems.
IV. This reintegrated social community became the positive program in Maistre’s conservatism.

A. For Maistre, monarchy was the form of government in which divine will could be expressed without the egoism of individual interests.
   1. This kind of monarchical state, per Maistre, would not base its laws on rationalism or written constitutions but on religion; the Catholic Church would resume its central role in the social order.
   2. Maistre believed that the restored French monarchy would destroy the ghost of Voltaire, but he was disappointed when the Restoration did not do enough to follow his theories—a familiar problem for intellectuals.

B. Despite his own frustrations, Maistre’s philosophy provided an influential conservative explanation for what had gone wrong in modern France.

C. As for Maistre himself, he faced the same problem one finds in Burke.
   1. He had to write about and explain a system that he wanted to be mysterious; he theorized about what he did not want to describe.
   2. To analyze is also to demystify, and conservatives in general preferred to keep the state’s power shrouded in mystery.

D. The French Revolution’s attempt to implement Enlightenment ideals provoked the modern, systematic conservative defense of social traditions, inherited institutions, and religious authority.

E. At the same time, it also stimulated a new defense of unique national traditions and histories—a pattern that appeared also in new forms of German thought that emerged during and after the French Revolution.

Essential Reading:
Joseph de Maistre, Considerations on France, pp. 3–61.

Supplementary Reading:

Questions to Consider:
1. Did conservatives such as Burke and Maistre want to stop historical change?
2. Do you think people have “natural rights,” or do all rights come to people through the specific traditions of their own societies?
Lecture Six
The New German Philosophy

Scope: The German philosophical critique of the French Enlightenment had begun even before the French Revolution, but it became much more influential in Germany during the early nineteenth century. This lecture examines the development of German Idealist philosophy and discusses the fusion of this philosophy with the new German nationalism that evolved rapidly in the first decades of the nineteenth century. It discusses how the French Revolution and Napoleonic wars fostered the spread of nationalist ideas across Europe, stressing the cultural influence of the German writers J. G. Herder and J. G. Fichte. These philosophers developed themes that contributed to the nineteenth-century cultural interest in distinctive national histories.

Outline

I. The spread of the Revolution and France's expansionary policies during the era of Napoleon contributed to numerous intellectual trends in the early nineteenth century.

A. First, as we've seen, the Revolution contributed to the rise of conservatism as a systematic intellectual position—both in England and on the Continent.

B. Second, it led to a strong critique of the Enlightenment and to criticism of the French dominance of eighteenth-century intellectual life. This challenge appeared in Romanticism, which we'll discuss later, and it was very important in Germany.

C. Third, the response to the French Revolution contributed to the philosophical development of nationalism, especially in Germany but also in other places.

1. Although France under Napoleon (1799–1814) was the strongest power in Europe and its ideas spread abroad, it lost its position as the intellectual leader of Europe in the early nineteenth century.

2. The Napoleonic wars and repression undermined France's creative intellectual life. Germany came to be seen as the philosophical nation.

D. The period between about 1780 and 1830 is often referred to as the era of the German "philosophical revolution." Its intellectual significance has been compared to the revolutionary upheaval of the French Revolution.

1. To summarize some early themes of this German philosophical revolution, we'll note the key ideas of three important philosophers: Immanuel Kant, Johann Herder, and J. G. Fichte.

2. These thinkers developed a critique of two central ideas of the Enlightenment tradition—sensory epistemology (Locke's theory about the basis of knowledge) and universalisms (Voltaire's view of reason).

3. This new German philosophy became linked to later forms of Romanticism and to a new emphasis on cultural differences.

4. In these ways, the German philosophical response to the French Revolution, which culminated in Hegel, helped to shape the new nineteenth-century interest in national histories and the ideas of nationalism.

II. German critics of the French Revolution became influential in the late 1790s, though many German intellectuals had at first welcomed the Revolution as a political defense of individual rights; many Germans had also supported the Enlightenment.

A. But in the 1790s, much German thought moved away from Enlightenment epistemology and cosmopolitanism—a tendency that led toward a new philosophical Idealism, which stressed the role of the mind over the senses.

B. The new patterns in German thought appeared in Immanuel Kant (1724–1804), though Kant also defended the Enlightenment and the importance of reason.

1. Kant lived his whole life in Königsberg in east Prussia and never traveled, but he wrote complex, influential philosophical texts.

2. He was interested in Enlightenment values, especially in the epistemological question: How do we know things about the world?

3. Kant was bothered by the consequences of radical empiricism; he disliked the Lockean theory that knowledge comes from the senses.

4. The eighteenth-century English philosopher David Hume had shown the weakness of this theory in his books Treatise of Human Nature (1739) and Enquiry Concerning the Human Understanding (1748).

5. Hume said that we can't really know if something is true by observation because causality can't be proved in a reliable way; in short, the sensory base of knowledge is inadequate (this view led to skepticism).

C. Kant recognized the force of Hume's argument and wrote a book to challenge Hume's skepticism—The Critique of Pure Reason (1781).

1. He said that practical reason is possible; we can know certain reliable truths with reason—a practical reason.

2. The key theme here and in Kant's other work is that the basic conditions of thought are not derived from sensory experience.

3. These conditions are in the mind itself, a priori, in forms and categories that are present before sense perception takes place.
IV. After Kant had challenged Locke's epistemology and Herder had challenged Voltaire's universalism, the new themes in German thought came together in the early nineteenth-century work of Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762–1814).

A. Fichte challenged the Enlightenment conception of nature as simply "out there" for analysis; he went beyond Kant to stress a radical Idealism.
1. He said that the mind creates all knowledge of the world and is, thus, essentially responsible for reality itself; the mind constructs the world.
2. What we take to be objective reality "out there" is really our consciousness projected onto the world; our egos create reality.

B. These individual egos are in turn part of a universal spirit, but we participate in this spirit through our minds; we understand the world through an extension of our ideas to the external world.
1. For Fichte, the world is no longer simply a mechanism whose laws are understood through Newtonian science.
2. Instead, the world is an evolving creation of many minds or egos that glimpse some part of a supreme spirit in their own ways.
3. This Idealism places the mind rather than nature at the center of reality and goes beyond Kant in rejecting important themes of the philosophes, especially the belief in a universal form of knowledge.

C. Fichte believed that Germans could not express their distinctive egos or spirits after Napoleon conquered Prussia and other German states in 1806–1807.
1. Linking his Idealist philosophy to a new affirmation of German cultural identity, Fichte argued that the German spirit was restrained and denied expression when the French held Berlin.
2. Fichte combined the philosophical emphasis on the knowing mind or unique spirit with Herder's conception of the Volksgeist.
3. He argued that the Germans had a primordial spirit, different from that of the French, that comprehended the world in a different way.
4. Fichte explained these ideas in a series of lectures delivered during the French occupation of Berlin in the winter of 1807.
5. They were published the following year under the title Addresses to the German Nation (1808).

D. Fichte argued in these lectures that Germany had to express its national spirit, its own distinctive language (so different from Latin languages), its own philosophy, its own laws, and its own institutions.
1. In other words, German patriots should expose the myths of French universalism and defend their own national differences.
2. In making these claims for the German nation, Fichte developed the idea of national exceptionalism—the idea that one's own nation is the best or only expression of the highest ideals of humanity.
Lecture Seven

Hegel's Philosophical Conception of History

Scope: This lecture examines the most influential German philosopher in the decades following the French Revolution and Napoleon. It discusses Hegel's complex relation to the Enlightenment, early German Romanticism, and the wider Western philosophical tradition. More specifically, this lecture summarizes Hegel’s influential philosophy of history, which described the historical process as the dialectical “unfolding” of a transcendent spirit or idea in different societies and historical eras. Hegel’s theories encouraged the study of historical conflicts and gave philosophical meaning to every historical event.

Outline

I. The revolutionary upheavals of the late eighteenth century strongly influenced the emergence of new conceptions of history, as well as new social and political theories.

A. The early nineteenth century was a period in which modern historical consciousness became a central component of intellectual life, somewhat similar to the emergence of science as a key element of thought at the end of the seventeenth century.
   1. Of course, people had studied history since antiquity, especially since the Renaissance, and the Enlightenment produced important historical works (e.g., books by Voltaire and Edward Gibbon).
   2. But many philosophes were more interested in universal or natural laws or in social critique; they had less interest in specific traits of past eras.
   3. They did not ignore history, but they looked for signs of progress or for events leading toward their own view of the world.

B. The revolutionary events and wars, however, raised questions about the nature of progress and the alternatives to Enlightenment conceptions of truth.
   1. History provided valuable intellectual resources for people who sought to explain the meaning of contemporary events or for those who wanted to challenge the legacy of eighteenth-century thought.
   2. We’ve seen how Burke, Herder, and Fichte, for example, emphasized the importance of national uniqueness or cultural particularities.
   3. Such ideas stimulated the search for historical knowledge about specific human societies—knowledge that showed the meaning and cultural value of the past.

Essential Reading:


Johann Gottlieb Fichte, Addresses to the German Nation, pp. 1–15, 78–91, 111–129.

(Note: The English language editions of these books are now out of print but are available in most good libraries.)

Supplementary Reading:


George Armstrong Kelly, “Introduction,” in Fichte, Addresses to the German Nation, pp. vii–xxxii.

Questions to Consider:

1. How did the nationalism of German thinkers emerge as a critique of the French Revolution and Napoleon?
2. From the German perspective, what were the flaws in the French claim to represent universal principles?
C. Yet this knowledge would be only a mass of unrelated facts if it lacked some kind of philosophy to give it meaning or coherence.
   1. This was the intellectual achievement of Hegel (1770–1831), whose philosophy provided a way to identify universal historical meanings in specific national histories and historical eras.
   2. For Hegel and his many nineteenth-century followers, history revealed the highest truths of human experience and transcendent ideas.
   3. Hegel showed how every historical event carries higher meanings.

D. Hegel was both the culmination of developments in German thought and the starting point for the next half-century of philosophical theories.
   1. In this respect, Hegel was the German intellectual equivalent of the French Revolution—an “event” that influences future thought.
   2. He drew partly on the Enlightenment to stress the importance of reason, but he also drew on German Idealism to emphasize the power of the mind or the idea moving through history.
   3. Hegel was also influenced by other strands of German thought, especially the new Romanticism, which challenged the philosophes and stressed the organic unfolding of life and culture across time.

E. Hegel’s influential conception of history can be described as an ambitious attempt to synthesize Enlightenment reason, German Idealism, German Romanticism, and Western metaphysics.
   1. This was an enormous philosophical project, but the range of its intellectual themes helps explain why it appealed to such a wide group of early nineteenth-century intellectuals and writers.
   2. Hegel described history as a process of endless change in which a transcendent spirit evolved with purpose and direction across time.
   3. This explanation for endless change and conflict gave meaning to the violent upheavals of the recent past, as well as the events of all former societies; it also suggests why Hegel became so influential after 1815.
   4. But to understand Hegel’s influence, we need to look more closely at the specific themes of his philosophy.

II. Hegel developed his themes and achieved his fame as a professor in universities at Jena, Heidelberg, and finally, Berlin, where he delivered his lectures on the philosophy of history in the 1820s.

A. He was highly interested in the French Revolution, which he supported as a student, and he was fascinated by Napoleon, though he was neither a militant supporter of Napoleon nor a radical critic.
   1. Hegel’s lectures drew large crowds, but he died during the cholera epidemic in 1831 before he finished his writings on history.
   2. His loyal students published the material from his lectures after his death in a book called Introduction to the Philosophy of History.

B. This work helps us see Hegel’s influence on historical thought.
   1. Hegel drew on Romanticism in his emphasis on the evolution of history and the unfolding spiritual processes of cultural change.
   2. Many Romantics, however, became subjective idealists who argued that each individual must express transcendent or spiritual truths in his or her own way—an idea that led toward belief in an isolated genius.
   3. Hegel, on the other hand, favored a kind of objective idealism in which the individual must try to comprehend the rationality of a transcendent spirit and conform to its unfolding development.
   4. People shouldn’t just do whatever they want to do; they should use philosophy to understand the spirit and follow its direction.

C. How do people know the meaning and direction of the spirit?
   1. They must look to history to see the unfolding of the spirit; this is why history is the source of knowledge.
   2. The spirit or idea embodies reason and freedom, which the philosopher can discern in history rather than in nature or the Bible.

III. These themes in Hegelian thought have been described as a restatement of the classical Western worldview in modern, secularized form.

A. Hegel believed (in concert with Christianity) that history has meaning even when it appears to be chaotic or without direction, and the events of history have a fundamental unity, because they express the unfolding of a world spirit.
   1. This spirit, which Hegel calls the idea of reason or freedom, became separated from itself and the historical process began.
   2. As in the Christian story, the spirit had an original unity, but then a separation occurred; the spirit became alienated from itself. History is the story of the spirit’s journey back toward unity.
   3. Human history shows the growth of reason and freedom as the spirit evolves toward a higher and higher realization of itself in human societies, but this process of realization is filled with conflict.

B. History, therefore, reveals truth, because it always expresses some part of the evolving spirit; this is also a theme of Hegel’s important book, Phenomenology of Spirit (1807), which provides an intellectual context for his later work.
   1. Although the particular expressions of the spirit or idea differ in different historical eras, the process by which the spirit moves is always the same. This is the dialectical process of history.
   2. Hegel argues that reality is not stable or consistent, and history is always in movement.
   3. At every moment, history consists of contradictions and conflicts. Because these contradictions operate on the level of the idea, they
are described in intellectual terms; ideas “negate” or oppose each other.

C. This dialectical process of negation appears in the interaction of **thesis** and **antithesis**, which became a famous theme in the Hegelian view of history.
1. The thesis is challenged or negated by an antithesis; out of this conflict comes a higher synthesis, which preserves what is essential from each side and lifts it to a higher level.
2. This synthesis becomes the new thesis and, thus, expresses the advance or progress of the idea (reason, freedom) in history.

D. Hegel thought that history had meaning because it steadily accumulates more and more elements of the truth, of the idea.
1. Conflict is intrinsic to the historical process, but the conflict is useful in that it contributes to the advance toward a final harmony, or synthesis.
2. All this theory gives great support to the study of history. We may not see the idea or spirit operating clearly in our own moment or culture, but we can see it in the events of history.
3. As Hegel put it: “The Owl of Minerva flies at dusk,” and we can only have wisdom at the end of the day (through history).

E. The philosophical comprehension of history can, therefore, turn to every historical period because every past era reflects some stage of the spirit.
1. This view fostered the concept of historicism, which stresses the distinctiveness and significance of each era in history.
2. The Middle Ages reveals aspects of the unfolding of the spirit, but the spirit also appears in the French Revolution and in Napoleon.
3. Each age has its own distinctive spirit, which historians can discover and describe—a Zeitgeist, or spirit of the times.
4. The leaders, institutions, and conflicts of every age show phases of the conflict that the spirit engenders in its progress across time.
5. Various aspects of reason and freedom face their antitheses, struggles develop, and new stages of history emerge from the conflicts.
6. Even the most terrible, dramatic events—a French Revolution, a vast Napoleonic war—are simply phases of a spirit unfolding in the world.

F. When Hegel talked about the idea in his own time, he tended to locate it in the Prussian state. Following the spirit in the 1820s could mean obedience to the government and laws in Berlin.
1. But it might also mean something else; Hegel said “The Real is Rational and the Rational is Real.”

2. This could mean that the existing order is the rational expression of the spirit, but it could also mean that a rational idea could become more real in future institutions and moments of history.
3. These contrasting implications of the theory led to the emergence of Right and Left Hegelians, conservatives and radicals.

IV. The significance of Hegel, however, lay more in his descriptions of the historical process than in his specific commentaries on the current political situation.

A. Through Hegel and his followers, German thought became profoundly historical, seeking truth in history and historical studies.
1. Historical studies moved away from many of Hegel’s abstractions in the course of the nineteenth century, but the confidence in history remained strong.
2. The modern historical profession emerged in Germany.

B. German conceptions of history carried several key beliefs.
1. History consists of unending change, but this change has meaning and the change reveals patterns of development.
2. This change comes about through permanent conflicts; conflict is a mechanism of progress.
3. These conflicts can be understood through analysis of a dialectical process in which all ideas face contradictions and negations.
4. All periods and places in history carry importance as part of the unfolding historical process and express distinctive characteristics.

C. All these ideas drew on Hegelian philosophy and entered widely into the modern historical study of the humanities, social systems, and politics. Indeed, this course on intellectual history exemplifies the Hegelian legacy as we trace the evolution of ideas in specific historical contexts.

**Essential Reading:**

**Supplementary Reading:**

**Questions to Consider:**
1. Is the meaning of history simply imposed on the past by later interpreters? Do events carry an inherent meaning that historians and philosophers can objectively discern?
2. Do you think history is a reliable source of truth? Can we understand what is happening in public life or in our own lives while we are in the midst of complex events?
Lecture Eight
The New Liberalism

Scope: This lecture discusses another important "ism" that gained intellectual adherents in the early nineteenth century and sought to explain the meaning of the French Revolution. It stresses the liberal conception of individual liberty and human rights; it also notes contrasts between Britain's liberal utilitarian movement and the French liberals' quest for a stable, constitutional political system. These differences appear in the works of Jeremy Bentham and Benjamin Constant, whose lives and ideas are compared here as examples of the contrasting trends in British and French liberalism.

Outline

I. Many historians have argued that liberalism became the dominant post-revolutionary political "ism" in nineteenth-century Europe.

A. Its advocates claimed to be connected to the most dynamic social class of the era—the expanding middle classes—and many liberals were active participants in the new industrial economy.
   1. Many liberals also identified with the reforms and ideas of the first phase of the French Revolution (1789–1791).
   2. The economic side of liberalism appeared in the laissez-faire ideas of the classical economists, which we'll discuss later.
   3. The political themes of liberalism stressed civil liberties and individual rights; liberals disliked revolutions and Jacobinism, but they liked the "Rights of Man," legal equality, free speech, and a free press.

B. Liberalism fit more readily than other "isms" into the historical conditions in Europe after the French Revolution and industrialization.
   1. Conservatism was generally hostile to both the political and the economic "revolutions" because they both rejected key traditions.
   2. Socialism, as we'll see later, tried to move beyond both the French and industrial revolutions toward the creation of social equality.
   3. Most nineteenth-century liberals claimed to represent the best features of post-revolutionary societies: individual liberty and economic growth.
   4. Liberals saw themselves as realists rather than as reactionaries or revolutionaries; critics called them apologists for the new system.

C. The term liberalism emerged in the 1820s and 1830s; it came from the Latin word liberalis, which meant "pertaining to a free man."
   1. This was in fact the principal theme of liberalism: the importance of individual liberty or freedom, especially for men.
   2. Liberals favored civil liberties, freedom of conscience, and a pluralistic, secular state; they favored the free competition of ideas and opposed attempts to link religion to the state.
   3. Liberals also believed strongly in the idea of progress, but they believed that progress was embodied in institutions. They stressed the importance of legal procedures rather than revolutionary change.
   4. They assumed that progress would come through rational reforms, a theme that linked nineteenth-century liberalism to the Enlightenment.

D. After the French Revolution, liberals generally dropped the idea of natural rights or natural law as the justification for reforms.
   1. Like other nineteenth-century political groups, they tended to see rights and laws as something that emerge and evolve in history.
   2. In this respect, many liberals resembled Burke, but liberals usually went far beyond Burke in emphasizing the value of political reforms.

E. Liberalism thus emphasized an open-ended process and a belief that the ends of freedom could not be separated from the means used to get there.
   1. According to most liberals, the ends don't justify the means. You can't kill people to make them free; this was the Jacobins' big mistake.
   2. Liberals assumed that rational reforms produce and protect freedom.

F. This liberal creed was strongest in Britain and France, though it took somewhat different forms in these places. Liberals could also be found in Germany, central Europe, Italy, and many other places.
   1. In Britain, the most prominent form of liberalism was called utilitarianism, which was influential between about 1810 and 1830.
   2. Utilitarians generally accepted the parliamentary and even monarchical framework in England, but they pressed for reform of the laws; they emphasized legal reforms within the system.
   3. In France, on the other hand, the Revolution and the restoration of the monarchy caused many liberals to believe that the structures of the political system itself were not yet properly established.
   4. French liberals tended to focus more on structural changes in the government and to see constitutionalism as the path to greater liberty.
   5. Let us look more closely at the contrasts between early nineteenth-century English and French liberalism by discussing the utilitarianism of Bentham and the French theories of Benjamin Constant.
1. Bentham and Constant both favored reforms to protect individual liberty—the main liberal concern—but there were differences in their utilitarian and Romantic approaches to the liberal objectives.

II. Bentham (1748–1832) was in some respects the last theorist of the late Enlightenment, because he started writing in the 1770s.

A. His famous book, *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* (1789), introduced his ideas on utility, but these ideas did not gain much support in Britain until the early nineteenth century.
   1. Bentham was a great believer in rationalism; he wanted to rationalize society and the legal system.
   2. He said that social problems could be solved scientifically. His goal was to make rational reforms that would create the greatest good for the greatest number of people.
   3. This project would mean breaking with traditional habits or customs; Bentham was by no means a Burkean supporter of traditions.
   4. For Bentham, the question was always: How good is a law or an institution, and how can it be improved?
   5. His goal was enlightened self-interest, not natural law. He was inclined to pursue his ideas of rationalism in eccentric ways.
   6. Bentham asked that his body be preserved after his death. The mumified body can still be seen at the University of London.

B. In specific terms, Bentham believed that the greatest good would come by minimizing pain and maximizing pleasure.
   1. The point of politics is to calculate how the most people will get the most pleasure from any legal reform or law. This was a recurring theme in his writing.
   2. To calculate the level of pleasure in various actions, Bentham developed what he called "felicific calculus"—a new method to measure pain and pleasure.
   3. All this theory radically de-emphasized the emotional side of life, but it led to detailed proposals for reforming laws, improving schools, changing the prison system, and so forth.
   4. Bentham assumed that individuals could know their own self-interest, and with the proper freedom, they could act on their interests.
   5. Blind adherence to tradition would block the rational pursuit of interests, but rational laws could provide the necessary freedom.
   Utilitarians generally favored laissez-faire economic policies.

C. Many utilitarians also favored radical political reforms, including universal manhood suffrage; all men should vote to ensure their happiness.
   1. If all men voted, the laws were more likely to produce the greatest happiness or the greatest good for the greatest number of people.

2. The utilitarian philosophy was optimistic because it assumed that the interests of all could coincide with the interests of each individual.
3. If all individuals pursued their own greatest happiness, then all would benefit; this was a kind of free-market model of social life.

D. Bentham's most famous supporter was the economist James Mill, father of John Stuart Mill—the most influential liberal theorist of the next generation in England (we'll discuss him later in this course).
   1. As John Stuart Mill himself pointed out, the extreme rational emphasis in liberal utilitarianism left out a crucial emotional element of life; it assumed and expected rational self-control.
   2. Other liberals turned to Romanticism to find a view of human beings that recognized the emotional or aesthetic side of life.
   3. This more Romantic form of liberalism appears in Benjamin Constant.

III. Although the utilitarians stressed the importance of legal reforms in the British system, French liberals focused more on the structures of society.

A. Benjamin Constant (1767–1830) promoted such constitutional reforms, but he emphasized the importance of pursuing personal freedom.
   1. Constant was from a noble family; he lived a complex personal life and was involved with numerous women, including Germaine de Staël.
   2. He wrote about religion and love, as well as politics. His famous novel *Adolphe* portrays a relationship that falls apart, but it describes how people become obsessed with those they love (and then lose).
   3. His writings on religion examined how religious feelings affect a person's perception of the world; he saw that feelings affect actions.

B. Constant wanted to find a political system that would ensure more liberty and provide a space for the private pursuit of human passions.
   1. He favored a well-regulated constitutional monarchy as the system that would best protect the liberties of the French people.
   2. Constant developed his theories in newspapers and in a famous essay, "Liberty of the Ancients Compared to That of the Moderns" (1819).
   3. This essay stressed the commercial components of modern liberty and contrasted this liberty with liberty in the ancient Roman Republic.
   4. Constant believed that France's modern revolutionaries and Napoleon made the mistake of looking to the ancient Roman Republic (Jacobins) or Empire (Napoleon) for political models that didn't fit a modern world.
   5. Nobody understood how to protect modern liberties.
C. Constant argued that the French Revolution had shown that if the masses exercised power without limits, liberty would be destroyed.
   1. Jacobins had tried to replicate the ancient concept of liberty that required total adherence to the general will of the people.
   2. But the Restoration showed that if power were given to a king without limits, liberty would also be destroyed in this system.
   3. Constant argued for a balanced constitutional monarchy that would avoid the dangers of a radical republic and a reactionary king.

D. Constant's program for the legal, constitutional defense of individual liberty was the project of French liberalism during the Restoration (1815–1830).
   1. The Revolution of 1830 in France was led by such liberals, who wanted to reform the system and set up a constitutional monarchy.
   2. This revolution created the July Monarchy (led by King Louis Philippe), which allowed more participation in politics and created a more active legislature, but it still excluded most men and all women.
   3. Another revolution in 1848 overthrew the monarchy and created a new republic—which soon gave way to the Second Empire.

E. French liberals interpreted each revolution as a further step in the spread of liberty (until Napoleon III seized power); English liberals, by contrast, worked within the existing system to promote reforms.

F. Both liberalisms aimed to expand liberties, but many French liberals were more drawn to Romanticism—the new cultural and political movement that spread across much of Europe in the early nineteenth century.

Essential Reading:
Benjamin Constant, “The Liberty of the Ancients and the Moderns,” in The Political Writings of Benjamin Constant, pp. 309–328.

Supplementary Reading:
John Dinwiddy, Bentham, pp. 1–37.

Questions to Consider:
1. Do you think that Bentham's utilitarian goals offer a valid framework for shaping social policy?
2. Did post-revolutionary liberals such as Constant understand the complexity of the connection between public and private freedoms?

Lecture Nine
The Literary Culture of Romanticism

Scope: The nineteenth-century cultural responses to the French Revolution and the Enlightenment extended into the creative arts, literature, and poetry. The most influential cultural movement of this period became known as Romanticism, a term that refers to creative movements in a number of different countries and encompasses a wide range of literary and philosophical themes. This lecture notes why historians have increasingly turned to literature to understand nineteenth-century European ideas. It then describes the main themes of Romantic thought, stressing the ways in which it differed from the Enlightenment and gained influence in both philosophy and literature. It notes some differences between German philosophical Romanticism and English literary Romanticism, drawing on the examples of Friedrich Wilhelm Schelling, Germaine de Staël, and Lord Byron to suggest the diversity of Romantic thought.

Outline

I. Cultural histories of the early nineteenth century often describe this era as the “Age of Romanticism,” but this is perhaps the most difficult post-revolutionary “ism” to define with either cultural or political precision.

A. The themes of Romanticism began to emerge in the late eighteenth-century writings of such authors as Rousseau and Goethe, yet the Romantic movement had its greatest influence in European intellectual life between about 1800 and 1840.
   1. The movement was more of a literary and artistic movement than a coherent political movement, though it often became linked to politics.
   2. Romantics could be found in almost every political faction—liberal, conservative, socialist, and nationalist.
   3. They generally shared a critical view of the Enlightenment, or at least the scientific and rationalist themes of Enlightenment thinkers.
   4. Almost all Romantics also responded in some way to the French Revolution and joined many of the post-revolutionary debates.

B. This lecture discusses the main themes of Romantic thought and notes some aspects of Romanticism by referring to three exemplary figures: Friedrich Wilhelm Schelling, Germaine de Staël, and Lord Byron.
   1. These writers represent the main cultural centers of early Romanticism: Germany, France, and England. They also represent some of the key philosophical and political themes of the movement.
II. One of the important trends in the recent study of history has been an emphasis on the decisive role of language and symbols in every sphere of human life.

A. Meaning in history always depends on language. The narratives that explain human realities don’t simply reflect reality; they also shape reality.
1. Historians in recent decades have looked at the use of language in both popular and elite cultures, but the history of literature, novels, and poetry offers one of the best ways to look at the use of language.
2. Intellectual historians look at literary texts, such as Romantic literature, as important historical “events”; they are events in the history of language and the development of cultural meanings.
3. Because language is an essential component of all historical events and all cultures, novels and poetry are as important to history as political conflicts, economic changes, wars, and philosophical movements.

B. The importance of literature and literary movements in the wider history of modern societies can be seen in the case of nineteenth-century Romanticism.
1. Romanticism helped to shape a wide range of social, cultural, and political values and offered imaginative literary expressions of a central theme in the revolutionary era: the quest for individual freedom.
2. Yet it redefined this theme in new literary and artistic styles, and it made the individual creative life a kind of modern form of “art.”
3. Literary narratives of the Romantic life helped to create a new cultural sensibility, as well as the image of exiled Romantic heroes.

C. There were many forms of Romanticism, but in general, the Romantics emphasized the value and even the necessity of individual freedom.
1. Romanticism stressed the uniqueness of creative individuals and assumed that creativity usually flourished outside “normal” social life.
2. Romanticism was both a philosophy of life and an aesthetic sensibility, but amid this diversity, it is possible to identify several key ideas.

III. In most general terms, Romanticism challenged Enlightenment rationalism and the philosophers’ influential views of reason, nature, and progress.
A. Rousseau was in some respects an early Romantic, but in the late eighteenth century, Romanticism developed mainly in Germany and England.

B. First, Romantics challenged the idea that reason provided the only valid path to truth; instead of celebrating reason, most Romantics argued that reasonable inquiry cannot adequately account for the mysteries of life or the human mind.
1. Romantics wrote about the irrational components of human desire and human feelings that reason alone could never fully describe.
2. This interest in the nonrational aspects of experience led to a new interest in religion—but usually not the religion of traditional churches.

C. Second, Romantics challenged mechanistic conceptions of the world that stressed general laws and the orderness of nature.
1. Romantics loved to write about nature, but they did not view nature as a set of Newtonian laws; they saw nature as somewhat wild and mystical.
2. Nature for the Romantics was a place in which poets sought spiritual truths rather than rational laws; it offered consolation for despairing artists and a refuge from modern urban life.

D. Third, the Romantic fascination with nature, travel, and exotic cultures (for, example, “noble savages” in the wilderness) expressed a skepticism about the value of progress and modern urban society. Romanticism helped to launch the modern critique of urban life and the modern nostalgia for rural communities or the Middle Ages.

E. Fourth, the Romantics attacked formalism in literature and art; they rejected the themes of classicism and order in culture (as in nature).
1. Aesthetic theorists and writers in the early Enlightenment tried to define general laws for creating classical beauty in the arts.
2. Romantics denied that one could define general laws for creative work; they wanted to break with traditions and pursue the unexpected.

F. Fifth, this conception of creativity led to strong claims for the creative genius of individual writers and artists; such persons must defy cultural conventions.
1. This theme suggested that creative persons were like the religious visionaries of other times; they have access to the transcendent or divine sphere of existence.
2. Romantic theory gave a special cultural role to artists and writers, and it drew on Idealist philosophy, which celebrated the creative mind.

G. Finally, Romantics argued that creativity unfolds through an organic process of change and “becoming.” This is the creative pattern in nature, in art, and in individuals; nothing in nature or human life ever stays the same. This theme also encouraged the study of historical change.
H. No single individual defended or embodied all these themes, but I want to turn now to three writers (Schelling, Staël, and Byron) who promoted Romantic ideas or expressed the Romantic quest for individual freedom.

IV. Friedrich Wilhelm Schelling (1775–1854) was a German theorist who described the connection between nature and creative artists.

A. Schelling was a complex author and a close friend of Hegel in his youth.
   1. He was influenced by Fichte's Idealist philosophy, which he extended to an analysis of art and creativity in such works as the System of Idealism (1800). These works were influential at the time but are rarely read now.
   2. Fichte's Idealism located the spirit in the human mind; he thought that the mind is linked to the spirit in unique individual ways.

B. Schelling accepted this idea, but he said that the spirit also appears in nature, though nature is the unconscious expression of the spirit. This theory is often called pantheism, because it sees a spiritual element everywhere in nature.
   1. The human mind, in contrast to nature, is the conscious expression of the spirit, which is why the artist is so important.
   2. Schelling argued that artists bring the unconscious and conscious expressions of the spirit together in artistic objects, which unite nature and the mind; artists give material substance to the spiritual realm.

C. Schelling was part of the German Idealist philosophical movement that gave a theoretical foundation to the Romantic claims for the creative genius.
   1. But for most people in early nineteenth-century Europe, the creative Romantic artist was a social rebel rather than an abstract philosopher.
   2. This other side of Romanticism—the lived experience of the writer or artist striving to be free—appears in the lives of Staël and Byron.

V. Germaine de Staël (1766–1817) was born into a wealthy family (the banker Jacques Necker was her father) and was married at age nineteen to the Swedish ambassador in Paris.

A. She had literary ambitions from an early age and was writing books by her early twenties. She also broke with the conventions of marriage and began a series of affairs with unconventional men, including Benjamin Constant.

B. Staël wrote on the social dimensions of literature. She also wrote famous novels (including Corrine, the story of a woman in Italy), works about politics and the French Revolution, and works on German culture. Her works stressed the value of freedom.

1. Her book On Germany (banned by Napoleon before publication in 1810) contrasted the philosophy of Germany and France and explained the differences between Romanticism and Classicism.

2. This work and her novels helped to create French Romanticism, but it was her famous life that shaped a Romantic motif—exile, travels, persecution, love outside marriage, a quest for freedom.

3. Germaine de Staël linked the Age of Revolution to the Romantic portrayal of feelings and personal liberation.

VI. Lord Byron (1788–1824) embodied some of the same themes in England; he was also a friend of Germaine de Staël and notorious for his unconventional life, which included affairs with his half sister and many other women (and some men).

A. Byron's life expressed the Romantic challenge to traditional social norms, but his poetry, such as Childe Harold (1812), often made the same point. Like Staël, he called for personal freedom.

B. Byron's early death in the Greek Revolution of the 1820s gave him a permanent, symbolic status as the famous Romantic hero, defying traditions and fighting for freedom.

C. The stories of Lord Byron and Germaine de Staël helped to shape the cultural meaning of Romanticism and the modern Romantic writer.

Essential Reading:
Germaine de Staël, Ten Years of Exile, pp. 3–121.

Supplementary Reading:

Questions to Consider:
1. How would you describe the similarities and differences in the main themes of Romanticism and the Enlightenment?

2. How does the Romantic image of creative artists and writers continue to influence the image of creative artists in our own time?
Lecture Ten
The Meaning of the "Romantic Hero"

Scope: This lecture continues our discussion of early nineteenth-century European Romanticism by examining the literary construction of the new "Romantic hero." Such heroes became familiar characters in European novels and drama as writers sought to show how creative, unconventional artists or independent persons defied the norms of both aristocratic and bourgeois society. The Romantic hero eventually became a cultural cliché, but such characters also represented a literary response to a changing European social world in which the traditional aristocracy was losing its social and cultural significance. After discussing the general themes in this genre of writing, the lecture looks at specific examples in the works of Goethe (The Sorrows of Young Werther), Chateaubriand (Rénée), and Victor Hugo (Hernani).

Outline

I. The Romantic movement influenced virtually every sphere of early nineteenth-century European culture—literature, art, architecture, music, philosophy, and historical work.

A. We have seen how it emerged as a literary and philosophical critique of the Enlightenment, though it also shared the Enlightenment concern with freedom and the challenge to traditions.

B. Many of the best-known Romantic writers were poets (including Wordsworth, Coleridge, Keats, and Shelley in England) or aesthetic theorists who wrote about poetry (Friedrich Schiller and Friedrich Schlegel in Germany).
   1. Romanticism linked literature and philosophy, but its best-known works also provided a psychological portrait of personal identity.
   2. Novels such as Germaine de Staël’s Corinne or poems such as Byron's Childe Harold told stories of self-exploration and personal journeys.

C. Romanticism celebrated in literary form a cultural image of the unique, self-conscious Romantic hero, a cultural model that also emerged in the famous life stories of Romantic writers and artists themselves.
   1. The Romantic hero’s individualism is his or her most important trait, but this individualism could take many forms; most such heroes in Romantic literature were young men (women could not be so free).
   2. Above all, Romantic heroes had to be different from the world of ordinary people, and all such heroes expressed intense feelings.

D. The popularity of Romantic literature made the Romantic hero a well-known cultural figure and created a lasting image of how creative persons must live a life of rebellion, alienation, or despair.
   1. Some examples of this influential literary model can be found in works by Goethe, Chateaubriand, and Victor Hugo.
   2. But first we need to look at the typical traits of the Romantic hero, a kind of alienated youth whom we still encounter in rock music or cafés.

II. The Romantic hero can be seen as a kind of transitional figure who combined the new individualist themes of liberal, bourgeois culture with the sense of superiority that had long been an important component of aristocratic cultures and identities.

A. In the first place, Romantic heroes were always introspective; they looked for their identities through prolonged, painful contemplation of the self.
   1. Self-knowledge ultimately came through experience, never simply through books, education, or traditional social institutions.
   2. The typical Romantic seeker had to wander, travel to exotic places, and somehow leave the practical world of work and careers.

B. Romantic heroes, however, did not wander as ordinary tourists; they brought heightened emotional sensitivities to every trip and every social experience.
   1. Romantic writers and artists attempted to portray the meaning of such feelings and the self-conscious analysis that they provoked.
   2. The classical hero—the kind of person who appeared in the classical seventeenth-century plays of Jean Racine—was someone who suppressed his feelings, followed codes of behavior, and maintained self-control.
   3. The Romantic hero, by contrast, must express strong feelings and follow his impulses wherever they may lead.

C. Romantics believed that persons who expressed such feelings in their daily lives were superior to other people who conformed to social conventions. This sense of superiority justified revolts against society and explained the distinctive, personal vision of the Romantic hero.

D. But the revolt of the sensitive Romantic hero was often tragic because the rigid social structures of the world cannot tolerate such behavior. Indeed, Romantic heroes in literature and in life often died young in tragic situations; many ended by killing themselves.

E. In many ways, this image of the Romantic hero became the cultural image of the modern artistic personality; the artist is alone, rebellious, restless, sensitive, and misunderstood, but this is the fate of a genius.

F. Romantic ideology grew out of a new bourgeois culture that it also rejected and condemned. Like post-revolutionary liberals, the
Romantics viewed the individual as the autonomous, creative force in social and cultural life.

III. The Romantic hero reappeared often in novels, poems, plays, and autobiographies beginning in the late eighteenth century (Rousseau’s Confessions also offered a model).

A. Famous examples of this new social figure can be found in Goethe’s The Sorrows of Young Werther (1774), in Chateaubriand’s René (1802), and in Victor Hugo’s Hernani (1830).
   1. These writers became famous in different national traditions, but their lives all exemplified themes of the Romantic writer’s life, much like Byron and Shelley in England.
   2. Byron and Shelley lived as rebels and died young (like Keats).

B. Goethe, Chateaubriand, and Hugo lived long lives, but like good Romantics, they traveled to such places as Italy or America, and they all had numerous, intense love affairs. Chateaubriand and Hugo also spent many years in exile.

C. They all contributed to Romanticism by portraying famous literary characters who had difficult and tragic breaks with the social order.

IV. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832) was not a famous social rebel like Byron. He served for many years as the director of the official theater in Weimar.

A. But his youthful novel about the unhappy love life of young Werther became an all-time “bestseller” portrait of a Romantic figure.
   1. Young Werther loved nature and seemed to revel in radical mood swings in which he felt either total ecstasy or total despair.
   2. He falls madly in love with a young woman, Lotte, who is already engaged to marry another man; the other man is a practical, down-to-earth person—a lawyer.
   3. Werther pursues this relationship with self-destructive intensity and expresses the most extreme feelings.

B. Feeling that his way is superior to the practical life of lawyers, he follows his feelings to the point of giving up his work and ignoring all reasonable limits, but the relationship is impossible, and the sad Werther ultimately kills himself.
   1. Werther’s extreme sensibility and existential angst were typical of the pure Romantic hero; he couldn’t follow social conventions or fit into society, and he is driven to self-destruction by an impossible love.
   2. He was also young and male, like most Romantic heroes, so he became an almost ideal type of a Romantic character.
   3. Goethe himself seemed to view his novel as a kind of warning about the dangers of such behavior, but the novel could also be read as a powerful critique of the dangers of repressive social conventions.

V. Similar Romantic patterns emerged in the work of Chateaubriand (1768–1848), who became one of France’s most influential literary figures in the early nineteenth century.

A. Chateaubriand never felt at home in any society. As a young man, he left revolutionary France (in 1791), visited America, then lived in exile in England.
   1. His politics were conservative and royalist, but his literary values were radical and experimental, which created tensions for him.
   2. Such tensions often appear in literary figures who may explicitly support conservative political principles but seem to undercut these values in their literary works (Balzac is another example).

B. Chateaubriand said that he longed for the orderly world of the old regime monarchy in France, but his short novel René depicted a rebel and misfit.
   1. Most scholars see the novel as at least partly autobiographical.
   2. Like other Romantic heroes, René has a tragic, blocked relationship with a woman, but this woman is his own sister, Amelia.
   3. This passion is as hopeless as that of young Werther, and when his sister retreats to a convent, René goes more or less crazy.
   4. He has always been a melancholy wanderer, but he now flees to the New World to escape his problems and seek a purer life.
   5. Having decided that his European life is empty, René looks to the noble American Indian for meaning, but life in America does not live up to René’s expectations. He is still alone and finally dies there.

C. Chateaubriand himself was somewhat like his novel’s hero in that he could never settle comfortably into European social life; he saw himself as a man who would always be partly out of place in the nineteenth-century world.
   1. He carried aspects of Rousseau’s thought into nineteenth-century France, but he wrote about individual alienation rather than an ideal republic.
   2. Chateaubriand continued to develop many of Rousseau’s emotional and aesthetic themes, but he did not embrace the egalitarian themes in Rousseau’s political writings.

VI. The more liberal political themes of French Romanticism appeared in the works of Victor Hugo (1802–1885), who became a prominent writer by about 1830.

A. Hugo was more liberal than Chateaubriand. He tried to connect Romanticism with a social and political agenda, supported the
revolutions of 1830 and 1848, and resisted Napoleon III (hence, his exile from 1851 to 1870).

1. Yet Hugo also shared the Romantic attraction to the exotic, unusual, grotesque, and extraordinary.

2. He wrote about strange-looking people or the misery of the poor; all this reflected his growing social and political concerns and appeared most famously in his later work, *Les Misérables* (1862).

B. Hugo's literary fascination with the grotesque and the bizarre also reflected the Romantic challenge to classicism.

1. Hugo wanted to defy theunities and order of classical art; he wanted to create art that expressed the artist's vision.

2. He believed the artist must create his own life and that the "aim of art is almost divine," a theme he developed in a famous essay that called for the pursuit of individual visions ("A Preface to Cromwell" [1827]).

C. Hugo's own literary challenge to classical symmetry came out in his play *Hernani*, which was first performed in Paris in 1830.

1. The play violated classical rules of theater (the story didn't unfold in a single place on a single day) and provoked a theatrical riot.

2. *Hernani* is another story about a Romantic hero who lives outside the codes of his society and ultimately kills himself.

VII. Romantic literary works created a popular following in Europe's literate classes, but by the mid-nineteenth century, such themes had become a cliché.

A. Younger writers began to mock or reject the Romantic tradition, but they couldn't ignore it.

B. Both the Romantic critique of the Enlightenment and the Romantic image of the heroic quest for a creative life have had an enduring cultural influence.

**Essential Reading:**


**Supplementary Reading:**


**Questions to Consider:**

1. Has the belief in a Romantic hero disappeared from modern literature and culture?

2. What flaws do you see in the Romantic image of creative human beings?

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**Lecture Eleven**

**The Industrial Revolution and Classical Economics**

**Scope:** In this lecture, we begin to discuss the cultural significance of the other great revolutionary changes as Europe moved from the eighteenth into the nineteenth century: the Industrial Revolution. We examine the social and economic characteristics of this great transformation in European societies, with special attention to the ways in which the growth of cities and the expansion of a new industrial working class attracted the interest of social theorists. This social change occurred first in Great Britain, where the theoretical works of political economy also began to appear. This lecture summarizes the ideas of the most influential early theorists, Adam Smith and David Ricardo. It also notes how the population theories of Thomas Malthus contributed to English economic theory in the early nineteenth century.

**Outline**

I. Historians often describe the era of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries as the period of two revolutions: the French Revolution and the Industrial Revolution.

A. We have discussed some of the ways in which the French Revolution spread the ideas of the Enlightenment and stimulated the development of a wide range of new political theories.

1. The revolutionary political changes also contributed to the spread of Romanticism, which became part of a wider challenge to tradition.

2. The Romantics and most other writers of the era could also see the effects of an evolving Industrial Revolution (though the term itself came later); this revolution also stimulated new social theories.

3. The great economic transformation eventually affected everyone in modern societies, even people who had no interest in politics.

4. The Industrial Revolution became a social context that elicited as much analysis as the political revolutions. We must turn now to both the context and texts of the new industrial age.

B. The Industrial Revolution developed first in England, expanding rapidly during the era of the French Revolution and Napoleon.

1. The main "take-off" period of the Industrial Revolution occurred between 1780 and 1830, but by the mid-nineteenth century, a new industrial economy was developing on the Continent and in Britain.

2. The theoretical response to the Industrial Revolution emerged in the rise of modern economics and social science.
3. The political and economic revolutions of the era also coincided with the German "philosophical revolution" and with early Romanticism, all of which shaped what we now call modernity.

C. The Industrial Revolution changed the social and economic relations between people, much as the French Revolution had altered such relations.
   1. Both revolutions challenged the old order and the old nobility, but they seemed to produce different patterns.
   2. Where the theory and practice of the French Revolution pushed toward the creation of political equality, the Industrial Revolution produced new forms of economic inequality, thus posing problems for theorists.
   3. How could the ideas of political equality (the French Revolution) be reconciled with new economic inequalities (the Industrial Revolution)?
   4. The search for answers to that question shaped many of the theoretical debates in nineteenth-century Europe and led to the rise of socialism.

D. To analyze the cultural significance of this economic transformation, we must note several important features of the Industrial Revolution.
   1. Then we'll turn to the intellectual problem of how this new economy generated a new theoretical defense of the capitalist economy.
   2. Although there were important economists in France and elsewhere in this era, the most influential theoretical defense of the new economy developed among the classical economists in Britain.
   3. Their theories (as we'll see later) were often criticized, but the work of Adam Smith, Thomas Malthus, and David Ricardo created an intellectual framework for all later debates about modern economies.

II. The starting point for the new forms of social thought was, of course, the new industrial economic system.

A. In most general terms, the Industrial Revolution can be described as the transition from an economy based on hand tools and animal or human power to an economy based on machine tools and machine power.
   1. The economic transformation was, thus, closely linked to a technological revolution and new methods for production.
   2. This revolution has been almost continuous since the late eighteenth century, and we've been going through the latest phase in the computer revolution of recent decades.
   3. The first phases were preceded by an agricultural revolution that placed land ownership in a shrinking class of large landowners.
   4. This social change in the organization of agriculture was accompanied by new kinds of technology, fertilizer, and machinery; fewer people produced more food—the basic pattern of modern agriculture.

5. Economists in eighteenth-century France (a group called the physiocrats) launched modern economic theory by studying this agriculture.

6. Writers such as Turgot and Quesnay argued that governments should allow free markets for grain production, a laissez-faire system.

B. These theories began to attract attention in Britain, where the changes in the agrarian system were producing a large supply of cheap labor.
   1. People who left the farms needed work, but this search for work coincided with the arrival of cheap raw materials from Britain's empire.
   2. The cheap labor and cheap raw materials could be put to productive use because of new machines, which were especially advanced in the new textile industry.
   3. The textile industry brought together steam-powered machines, lots of workers, and the need for coal and cotton.
   4. New towns formed near the coal mines in northern England; the most famous was Manchester, which grew from 25,000 people in 1770 to 455,000 in 1850.

C. The new towns were crowded, dirty, and filled with uprooted people who worked for low wages; most worked fourteen-hour days, and everyone in the family was employed—men, women, and children.
   1. Most of this labor was low-skill work; there were frequent cycles of unemployment but very little regulation of work or markets.
   2. This system produced unprecedented wealth for the owners of the new industries and a rapidly growing new class of workers.
   3. People outside England became interested in this new economy, and English economists became influential.
   4. English economists became famous for their laissez-faire theories, which both explained and justified what was happening.

III. Classical British economists were somewhat like French physiocrats; they shared the physiocrats' desire to find the natural laws of economic life.

A. The starting point for this method of economic analysis was the famous work of Adam Smith (1723–1790), The Wealth of Nations (1776).
   1. Smith was a professor of moral economy at the University of Glasgow, but he had met such physiocrats as Turgot and Quesnay in France.
   2. He liked their concept of laissez-faire economic policies, though he decided that labor was more important than land in producing wealth.
   3. Smith argued that wealth could accumulate most efficiently if business activity were free of government intervention.
4. Natural laws of economic life could function in a free market; this market (like nature) was controlled by a kind of natural law of supply and demand.

B. Smith assumed that each nation had a “comparative advantage” in some area of the market; for example, sugar producers from the West Indies had an advantage in sugar, but they could not really compete with British planters.

1. Smith believed workers and owners of capital would benefit from the “invisible hand” of the market, but this must be exercised with moral restraint, and everyone should be allowed to benefit.

2. His theory spread quickly in liberal intellectual and social circles in Europe; by the early nineteenth century, it had been translated into every language in Western Europe (except Portuguese).

3. Smith had an optimistic view of economic markets and expected steady social progress to emerge from a free-market system.

IV. By the early nineteenth century, however, it was clear that most workers were not getting more wealth; they were living in almost subsistence conditions in crowded cities.

A. This situation seemed to call for new theoretical perspectives, which appeared in the work of David Ricardo (1772–1823), a wealthy English stockbroker.

1. Ricardo’s most important work was a long book called The Principles of Political Economy (1817), which explained why workers were poor.


3. Malthus (1766–1834) said that as workers gained wealth, they produced more children, then they didn’t have enough food.

4. Indeed, Malthus argued that the whole modern world was threatened by the rapid growth of population, an argument that has influenced much modern analysis of the world’s social and economic problems.

B. Malthus argued that the population of modern nations was growing geometrically; the number of people was likely to double every few decades (1, 2, 4, 8, 16, 32, and so on).

1. Malthus also claimed that the food supply was growing arithmetically (1, 2, 3, 4, 5...), and the population would outgrow the supply; there was bound to be famine in the future.

2. Malthus became known as a prophet of gloom and doom because his theory suggested that when workers moved above a subsistence level, they inevitably began to have too many babies.

3. This population pattern would lead to future food crises and death.

C. Ricardo drew on this population theory to describe what he called the “Iron Law of Wages.”

1. According to Ricardo, this “law” showed that wages should not rise above a subsistence level because an increase beyond this level results in too many children and, ultimately, an imbalance in the food supply.

2. Wages are, thus, “naturally” at a subsistence level, which is why workers remained poor.

3. Classical economics, as explained by Ricardo, assumed that the economic “laws” of the capitalist economic system necessarily make most people poor.

D. Ricardo’s book quickly became a classic (and popular among industrialists, as well as economic theorists).

1. Such theories helped to explain the reputation of political economy as the Dismal Science, because they showed that the conditions of the new industrial economy reflected natural, inescapable social laws.

2. Some writers soon began to question the assumptions, or “laws,” of Ricardo and other economic theorists, developing a critique of the new industrial system.

E. Some critiques emerged among the Romantic writers of the era, and others appeared in the new theories of early socialism. Indeed, various forms of Romanticism and socialism began to fuse into a new social critique of industrial capitalism, launching a debate about capitalism that would continue down to our own time.

Essential Reading:

Supplementary Reading:

Questions to Consider:
1. Does the classical economist’s conception of the market continue to influence economic and social life in the modern world?
2. Do you think that Ricardo was correct when he argued that capitalist economies must adhere to an “Iron Law of Wages”? Has modern capitalism transformed the earlier wage system?
Lecture Twelve
Early Critiques of Industrial Capitalism

Scope: Rapid industrialization provoked social critiques of the new economic system and intellectual challenges to the works of the classical economists. This lecture notes the Romantic response to the new industrial cities and also examines the emerging socialist critique of laissez-faire capitalism. Social theorists in England and France began to develop their vision for a new socialist society, which would be built on the principle of cooperation rather than on the laissez-faire practices of unregulated economic competition. The most prominent early socialists were Robert Owen, Henri Saint-Simon, and Charles Fourier, all of whom are discussed in the last sections of this lecture.

Outline

I. The nineteenth-century industrialists and economic theorists who wrote in support of the new industrial capitalism saw the new economy as a remarkable example of modern human progress; economic progress came to be equated with general social progress.

A. This idea became a permanent theme in European thought and has shaped the pervasive social belief in “modernization” since the nineteenth century.
   1. Since the early nineteenth century, industrialization has been viewed as the hallmark of a modern, productive social system.
   2. But the rise of industry in a capitalist market system also provoked the development of a new critical social theory.

B. From the beginning, this critique took two rather different forms.
   1. Some critics looked back to an earlier agrarian age and complained that industrial progress was destroying the pastoral beauty of nature.
   2. This theme became prominent among some Romantic writers. It marks the beginning of what we might call environmentalism.

C. Other critics were more willing to embrace industrialization, but they argued that the system must be reorganized to benefit the workers.
   1. This theme extended the egalitarian ideas of the French Revolution from politics into economic life and marked the beginning of what soon became known as socialism.
   2. Both the environmentalists (to use a more recent term) and the socialists believed that important aspects of an older world were disappearing—natural beauty and social community.
   3. Yet they were not simply nostalgic for a lost world; the socialists in particular developed numerous plans for a better future world.

D. We’ll look briefly at the Romantic critique of industrialization, then discuss three of the most influential early socialist theorists: Robert Owen, Henri Saint-Simon, and Charles Fourier.
   1. These writers all became known in intellectual history as utopian socialists, and they were all strongly criticized by later Marxist socialists, as well as by almost all conventional economists.
   2. Yet their critiques of the competition and inequality in modern capitalist economies also attracted the interest and support of many who worried about new social inequalities and miseries.

II. Romantic poets and philosophers complained that new industries and the cities that grew up around them were defacing nature; industry destroyed natural beauty.

A. Romantics often stressed the spiritual elements of nature, but industrialization simply used nature as a source of raw materials and created ugly cities.
   1. Romantics said that such cities caused misery for people as well as problems for nature; all of this was somehow “unnatural.”
   2. Romantic poets such as Shelley condemned the unnatural aspects of industry, which harmed the workers as well as nature.
   3. Shelley could see nothing “natural” in the new industrial system, and he wrote bitter poems about it; his “Song to the Men of England” later became a kind of a socialist lyric.
   4. The poem reminds workers that “The robes ye weave, another wears/The arms ye forge, another bears,” and it urged workers to assert their rights to a just reward for their work.

B. Romantic writers who complained about the defacement of nature or the misery of workers didn’t really work out a plan for social reform.
   1. Many poets (not Shelley) simply held sentimental views of an earlier world that was lost, such as the Middle Ages.
   2. From this perspective, industrialization itself was the problem, but most social theorists recognized that there was no going back to an earlier agrarian age.

III. The other critique of industrialization and of early political economists emerged among socialists who sought to change the industrial system because they understood that industries and cities were inevitably shaping a new social world.

A. The term socialism became common by the 1830s. Some socialists were like the Romantics in attacking industry itself; they preferred pre-industrial, agrarian communes.
   1. But most socialists argued that industrialization itself was not the problem; the problems emerged in the specific economic system that was developing the new industries—the capitalist market system.
2. Socialists generally argued against doctrines that said competition was the most “natural” form of human behavior.
3. They also rejected the claim that private ownership of property brought the most good to the most people.

B. Socialists sought to develop plans that stressed cooperation over competition. They believed that cooperation would bring more benefits to the whole society and was actually more “natural” than competition.
   1. They argued that cooperation was the basis of human life in families, nations, and social institutions.
   2. They also rejected the claims of Ricardo and Malthus, who had said that most people must live at subsistence-level wages.
   3. Socialists said this was not natural. They went back to the ideas of such writers as Rousseau, who had said that equality is “natural.”

C. Socialists also built their arguments on claims that went beyond social egalitarianism; they said that it would be more rational to create an economic system that avoided the chaotic economic cycles of a laissez-faire system.

IV. Many of these general assumptions appear in the famous works of early socialists: Robert Owen (1771–1858), Henri Saint-Simon (1760–1825), and Charles Fourier (1772–1837). These people differed, but they all criticized capitalism.

A. They shared the idea of creating more cooperative societies that would work for the common good rather than for private profits.
   1. Owen was originally Welsh, but he became the owner of a cotton mill in Manchester, which made him a very wealthy man.
   2. Owen became convinced that laissez-faire practices ruined the workers; the industrial environment destroyed their character.
   3. He complained that neither the capitalists nor the churches did enough to improve the lives of workers.

B. Owen purchased a cotton factory in Scotland, where he created a new kind of ideal factory town with shorter work hours, better working conditions, cooperative stores, and a school for the children.
   1. This community, called New Lanark, suggested the value of a more cooperative system because workers actually produced more (and better) cotton thread than the workers in other factories.
   2. Owen wrote about his community and argued that a cooperative factory system would benefit the whole society.
   3. He wanted to found other “New Lanark” factory communities around Britain (with government support), but his plans gained little support.
   4. He went to America to create his ideal society at a place he called New Harmony, which was located in southern Indiana (1824).

C. This kind of utopian community depended on strong leaders, such as Owen, and it soon fell apart when he returned to England.
   1. The community did not provide a general social model because it was an isolated village rather than a complex modern city.
   2. This emphasis on isolated communities was a recurring problem for the early socialists, who seemed not to have plans for existing places.

V. Among the early contributors to socialism, Saint-Simon seemed to have the greatest appreciation for the actually emerging industrial economy.

A. He was from an old noble family in France and had served in the French army in America during the American Revolution.

B. He also supported the French Revolution and welcomed the end of the French nobility’s privileges; he developed a deep interest in the new industrial economy, but he wanted it to operate more efficiently.

C. Saint-Simon opposed the laissez-faire theories of classical political economy, because he thought a well-planned economy would work better.
   1. He assumed that this economy should be led by a talented elite of engineers and scientists who understood modern technology.
   2. Such persons were, in his view, the best prepared to manage the new forces of social and economic life.

D. Unlike many of the early socialists, Saint-Simon had a more comprehensive view of history. He said that the world was entering an era in which new scientific elites were replacing the old elites of aristocrats, kings, and clergymen.
   1. He saw the traditional social elites as basically useless in this new world, which would have to be directed by talented planners.
   2. After Saint-Simon’s death in 1825, he became something of a cult figure. His followers created a kind of Saint-Simonian “religion” that attracted many writers and artists.
   3. Many Saint-Simonians became early advocates for women’s rights; others eventually became technical managers in the French government.
   4. The Saint-Simonians included an interesting mix of idealistic visionaries and practical, science-minded social planners.

VI. The followers of Charles Fourier, by contrast, tended to be the more purely utopian visionaries, which is how Fourier himself might be described.

A. In his youth, he worked for various provincial cloth merchants, and he supported the French Revolution, but he lived in obscurity until his publications began to attract attention in the 1820s and 1830s.
   1. Fourier could be compared to Robert Owen in that he wanted to create small cooperative communities in France.
2. Each commune would be called a *Phalanx*, and each would include 1,620 persons (Fourier was obsessed with mathematical precision); these communes would develop a new “associative order.”

B. Fourier believed that work must become more satisfying because most people in the modern world were unhappy in their jobs.
1. People in modern cities didn’t work in jobs that interested them, but in the Phalanx, each person would work in ways that fit his or her own nature or passions.
2. This would create an ideal division of labor. For example, boys who liked dirt or debris would be in charge of the garbage, and people who liked fruit would manage the orchards; each job fit one’s passion.
3. Everyone would also receive his or her fair share of the money that the community economy would generate.
4. Finally, Fourier (another early advocate for women’s rights) wanted to create a community in which sexual desires were freely expressed.

C. Fourier’s vision of the ideal community attracted the interest of intellectuals who believed it offered alternatives to the emerging industrial society.
1. Some Fourierists tried to establish new communities, including the famous Brook Farm community in Massachusetts in the early 1840s.
2. But Fourier’s system (like Owen’s) did not help people who had to live in modern cities, and it lacked a coherent theory of history; new historical theories came into socialism through the Hegelians.

Essential Reading:

Supplementary Reading:

Questions to Consider:
1. Do most human interactions depend on cooperation or on competition?
2. Do you think that Saint-Simon’s conception of the ways in which experts should lead or manage modern societies tells us anything about the economic or political systems of our own time? Are modern societies shaped by “planners”?

Glossary

**Alienation:** The belief that some part of the self is separated from one’s own identity or from other people; for Marx, this meant that workers became separated from their own labor when capitalists gained the profit from the objects that workers produced.

**Comparative advantage:** An economic theory advanced by Adam Smith to explain why people in various nations or regions can profit more than other people from the sale of certain goods or products. Access to materials or skilled labor enables some people to produce specific goods more efficiently or cheaply and, hence, gain a comparative advantage in free markets.

**Conservatism:** A political and social theory that defends past traditions and inherited institutions as the best guide for present and future political or social policies; it seeks to conserve what is valuable from the past and typically condemns abstract or rationalist theories of social reform.

**Constitutional monarchy:** A political system in which the powers or actions of a king or queen and royal ministers are limited by laws, judicial systems, and elected legislative assemblies.

**Context:** A term used by intellectual historians to describe the political, social, economic, and cultural setting in which intellectuals or creative artists live and in which books, ideas, and ideologies must inevitably circulate. The context includes institutions and intellectual traditions, as well as public events, public conflicts, and each individual’s personal world of family, friends, and social experiences.

**Cultural history:** An approach to historical study, influenced by anthropology and literary studies, that stresses the shaping role of cultural traditions, languages, symbols, and systems of communication in past and present societies. It often examines popular beliefs or the language of daily life, as well as the more self-conscious expressions of artists and writers.

**Deductive reason:** A method of logical analysis or philosophical thought that uses general assertions to explain or predict specific events or outcomes. For example, “All people are mortal; Socrates is a person; therefore, Socrates is mortal.”

**Deism:** A popular eighteenth-century philosophy that described God as a kind of supreme watchmaker who created the world but never again intervened directly in nature or in the lives of human beings. Deists said that God set the world ticking like a well-oiled clock.

**Dialectical:** A term used to describe intellectual or social processes in which opposing ideas or social forces enter into debate or conflict. Dialectical change in history refers to a pattern in which every concept or social force gives rise to
its opposite, thus creating conflicts that carry an argument or historical culture to higher levels of development.

**Empiricism:** A philosophical tradition and research method that stresses the importance of sensory experience and observable material evidence in the creation of knowledge. Empiricism became important in seventeenth-century England and shaped the modern scientific method.

**Enlightenment:** An intellectual and cultural movement in eighteenth-century Europe, led by writers called *philosophes*. The main themes of Enlightenment thought included strong beliefs in reason, science, natural laws or natural rights, religious tolerance, the free exchange of ideas in public debates, and the rational advance of human progress.

**Epistemology:** The term used by philosophers to describe the study of the fundamental structures or categories of human knowledge. The key epistemological question is simply: How do we know what we know? This question appears implicitly or explicitly in most intellectual debates (and defies simple answers).

**French revolutions:** There were three important French revolutions. The Revolution of 1789 led to the overthrow of the Bourbon monarchy (Louis XVI) and the creation of the First French Republic. The Revolution of 1830 overthrew a restored Bourbon king (Charles X) and created the “July Monarchy,” in which another branch of the French royal family (King Louis Philippe) held power. The Revolution of 1848 created the Second French Republic, which soon gave way to the Second Empire of Napoleon III.

**Great Man theory of history:** This theory argues that certain great figures in history are the most important forces in the evolution of human societies, governments, and cultures. This theory suggests that historians should mostly study those few exceptional persons who have had the greatest influence in changing the world.

**Hegelianism:** A philosophical movement in the 1830s and 1840s that debated the social implications of the ideas of the German philosopher G.W.F. Hegel. “Left Hegelians” believed these ideas showed the need for radical social changes that would promote the growth of reason and freedom in the world. “Right Hegelians” assumed that existing institutions generally embodied the reason and freedom that Hegel had described.

**Historicism:** A theory of history that stresses the distinctive spirit or characteristics of each past culture or historical era (rather than universal human traits). This view encourages historical studies of the specific beliefs or institutions in diverse societies and suggests that each historical era has unique social values and conceptions of truth.

**Idealism:** A philosophical theory that emphasizes the decisive, shaping role of human ideas in the construction of knowledge about the world. “Objective idealists” argued for the existence of a universal idea that individuals should understand and promote in their lives and thought. “Subjective idealists” argued that because each person or culture has a unique understanding of the idea, specific ideas or forms of knowledge must be expressed differently in different cultures. Idealism emerged in late eighteenth-century Germany as a challenge to earlier arguments for the environment’s role in the creation of knowledge.

**Inductive reason:** A method of logical analysis or philosophical thought that accumulates specific empirical evidence to make general assertions about past or future events in nature or history. For example, “Socrates and every other ancient Greek died; all Greeks were people; therefore, the evidence shows that all people are mortal.”

**Industrial Revolution:** The transition in modern societies from economies based on hand tools and animal or human power to economies based on machine tools and machine power. New technologies led to the emergence of a new factory system in England after about 1770, and the new industrial economy spread rapidly across Europe and North America in the nineteenth century.

**Intellectual:** A person who writes about ideas, the creative arts, or society. The term *intellectual* emerged in late nineteenth-century France, but the modern identity of intellectuals developed much earlier. Intellectuals played two social roles: They produced (1) new knowledge and (2) new critiques of society, thus becoming “experts” or “critics” or both.

**Intellectual history:** A branch of historical studies that examines systematic statements of human ideas and of the people who produce or interpret ideas. In contrast to social or cultural history, intellectual history tends to emphasize the ideas of complex and original thinkers rather than the general intellectual themes of popular cultures or daily life. But in contrast to most philosophers and literary critics, intellectual historians tend also to emphasize the distinctive social or cultural contexts in which new ideas develop.

**“Iron Law of Wages”:** An economic theory promoted by the nineteenth-century English economist David Ricardo and others. The “law” argued that workers’ wages could never rise above a subsistence level, because higher wages caused a growth in the population, food shortages, and an oversupply of labor—which would result again in lower wages.

**Jacobins:** The most radical faction of revolutionaries during the French Revolution of 1789; the Jacobins supported a republic rather than a constitutional monarchy, led the revolutionary wars against other European powers, and organized the Terror in 1793–1794.

**Laissez faire:** A French term developed by the physiocrats during the eighteenth century to argue that the government should allow a free market for the sale of grain. Adopted by English economists, laissez faire (meaning, roughly, “let it do
as it wants to do") was used to describe economies that were free from government controls.

Liberalism: A nineteenth-century political theory that argued for individual rights, constitutional government, rational legal reforms, religious tolerance, and a free-market economy. Liberalism generally opposed revolutionary change but favored institutional reforms that would protect or enhance equal civil rights and personal freedom.

Messianic nationalism: An influential form of Romantic nationalism that describes a specific nation as the "messiah" among the peoples of the world. According to this theory, the sacrifices of a "messiah nation" bring salvation or freedom to other nations.

Metaphysics: A term used to describe the philosophical study of realities or ideas that go beyond the physical world. The metaphysical tradition goes back to ancient Greek philosophy and seeks to show the higher meaning of material existence or being.

Minerva: The ancient Roman goddess of wisdom.

Nationalism: The political and cultural ideology that stresses the unique traditions, ideas, language, institutions, territory, history, and identity of a specific group of people. It describes what these people share and how they differ from other peoples. Nationalism has generated numerous political movements demanding the creation of new national states in which people with shared traditions would have their own government. It also influences the policies of all established nation states.

Natural rights: The belief that human beings derive certain rights from nature itself, so that all living persons have a right to life, liberty, property, or the government of their society. The belief in natural rights became a key idea in Enlightenment political theory.

Natural selection: The theory developed by Charles Darwin and others to explain why certain variations in the biological development of each species enhanced or reduced an organism's chances of survival in a natural environment. Natural selection was the mechanism through which the evolution of species could take place.

Phalanx: A term used by the French social theorist Charles Fourier to describe small communes of 1,620 persons in which people would work at jobs that fit their passions and the income would fairly reward the labor they performed for the community.

"Philistines": The label that Matthew Arnold and other social critics used to describe middle-class persons who ignored complex ideas or the great creative works of the Western cultural tradition. Philistines were viewed as unthinking social conformists.

Philosophes: Writers and social critics in eighteenth-century Europe (mostly in France) who wrote in diverse literary genres, advocated the use of reason and the advance of scientific knowledge, and created a tradition of social critique that shaped the social or cultural identity of many later intellectuals.

Physiocrats: The economic theorists in eighteenth-century France who criticized government control of the grain markets and argued for the creation of a free-market, laissez-faire economic system.

Positivism: An intellectual movement that developed in nineteenth-century France. Positivism viewed science as the only "positive" form of human knowledge and described the development of science as the foundation for human progress. It argued that scientific studies of society should examine only behaviors that can be observed and measured.

Progress, idea of: One of the main themes of modern intellectual life, this idea rests on the belief that each generation has more knowledge and more advanced technologies than all previous generations. The idea of progress often refers to scientific knowledge, but it suggests that political and social institutions are also advancing or becoming more rational; for example, each generation acquires more civil rights, freedom, or education.

Realism: A cultural trend that developed in the post-Romantic era of the mid-nineteenth century. Realism condemned naïve sentimentality in literature and the arts. It often focused on the struggles of daily life rather than on the exotic adventures of heroes in distant lands. Realism sought to portray life as it was rather than life as it should be; it also described the greed and clichés of nineteenth-century social life.

Restoration, the: A term that refers to a previous government's or royal family's return to political power. The main nineteenth-century "Restoration" referred to the Bourbon family's return to the throne of France (1814-1830) after the French Revolution and Napoleon.

"Rights of Man and Citizen": The French Revolution's famous declaration of fundamental human rights (1789). Beginning with the claim that "men are born and remain free and equal in rights," the French declaration included rights to free speech, property, participation in government affairs, and legal equality.

Romantic hero: A prominent figure in early nineteenth-century Romantic literature, the Romantic hero was usually a young man who sought freedom from social constraints, traveled to exotic places, pursued a creative life and personal love in defiance of social conventions, lived with emotional passion rather than reason, found solace in nature, and died young.

Romanticism: An influential cultural movement in the arts and philosophy (developing between 1780-1840) that challenged Enlightenment beliefs in reason, classicism, and science. Romanticism praised human feelings, the mysteries of nature, the unique creativity of artists, and the organic unfolding of
life and history (rather than rational, abstract universal laws). Romanticism helped create the modern belief in art as the source of personal or cultural salvation.

**Social Darwinism:** A social theory that applied the concepts of biological evolution and natural selection to human history and social life. Often linked to racism and arguments for European superiority, Social Darwinism described human societies as a sphere of struggle in which only the “fittest” people could survive and flourish.

**Socialism:** A social theory that stresses social cooperation over social competition and calls for a more equal distribution of wealth and economic resources. Many nineteenth-century socialists argued for the creation of small utopian communes that would create a more egalitarian society. Others believed that a radical revolution would overthrow capitalism and create an economic order in which the workers controlled the means of production.

**Terror, the:** A term used to describe the judicial prosecution and execution of persons deemed to be “antirevolutionary” during the French Revolution. This systematic Terror lasted for more than a year in 1793–1794.

**Text:** The term that intellectual historians use to describe intellectual works, such as books, poetry, plays, or articles. Texts typically take the form of a written work, though intellectual historians sometimes refer also to the social world as a “text”; that is, the social world has to be “read” and interpreted like other aspects of culture.

**Uniformitarianism:** An important theory in early nineteenth-century geology, which argued that the surface of the earth has always changed slowly through the same uniform geological processes, such as erosion, earthquakes, volcanoes, or other climatic forces. This geological theme influenced new evolutionary theories about natural selection.

**Universalism:** This term refers to the belief that certain ideas express truths that cross all specific national or cultural boundaries; for example, the ideas that all people can use reason or that all people have natural rights or that everyone has a soul rest on a belief in universal truths about human beings.

**Utilitarianism:** A liberal political and philosophical movement in early nineteenth-century Britain that called for rational reforms in laws and institutions so that the social and political system would produce the “greatest good for the greatest number” of people.

**“Will to power”** An important theme in the works of Friedrich Nietzsche, the “will to power” suggests that human beings have a deep drive to achieve power in both their personal and social lives. For Nietzsche and others who accept this idea, human beings channel deep biological and psychological instincts into a desire to control or dominate other people. In Nietzsche’s view, this desire expresses healthy, noble human instincts.

**Biographical Notes**

**Arnold, Matthew** (1822–1888). English writer and cultural critic who criticized the complacency of middle-class culture. His book *Culture and Anarchy* (1869) called for the study of the “best which has been thought” as an alternative to the daily newspapers.

**Bacon, Francis** (1561–1626). English government official and scientific writer who contributed to the modern scientific method by arguing that the careful observation of empirical evidence provides the foundation for reliable scientific knowledge.

**Balzac, Honoré de** (1799–1850). French writer whose fictional portraits of post-revolutionary society became part of the new literary “realism” in nineteenth-century France. He wrote some ninety novels in a series that he called *The Human Comedy*. Much of his work portrayed the ambitious pursuit of money and social status in modern Paris.

**Bentham, Jeremy** (1748–1832). English social and political theorist who became the most influential figure in the liberal movement called utilitarianism. A strong believer in rational social policies, Bentham advocated reforms to bring “the greatest happiness to the greatest number” of people in modern societies.

**Burke, Edmund** (1729–1797). The most important theorist in the new English conservatism that emerged during the revolutionary era of the 1790s. Burke’s *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790) defended the value of traditional institutions and rights, which he described as an “inheritance” that each generation must protect and pass on to posterity. Burke’s writings became a classic conservative critique of attempts to reform society on the basis of abstract theories.

**Byron, George Gordon, Lord** (1788–1824). English Romantic poet whose unconventional life and love affairs attracted as much attention as his poems. In such works as *Childe Harold* (1812), Byron described his voyages of self-discovery and created images of the Romantic artistic identity. He died in Greece, where he had gone to join the Greek war for national independence from Turkey.

**Carlyle, Thomas** (1795–1881). Scottish-born historian and creative writer whose work promoted a “Great Man” theory of history. Carlyle described the achievements of exceptional persons in the past (most notably in his book *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History* [1841]), but he worried about the egalitarian political and social trends in nineteenth-century European nations.

**Chateaubriand, François René, Vicomte de** (1768–1848). French writer who helped to create the Romantic literary movement in France. Born into the upper class, Chateaubriand went into exile during the French Revolution and often expressed a sense of isolation in his later life in nineteenth-century Paris. His
fictional works, such as René, portrayed the lonely, intense life of the Romantic wanderer.

**Coleridge, Samuel Taylor** (1772–1834). English Romantic poet and writer whose descriptions of the imaginative, visionary artist helped to define the aesthetic theories of Romantic literature.

**Comte, Auguste** (1798–1857). The French social theorist who developed the ideas of positivism, a sociological theory that promoted the scientific description and solution of modern social problems. Comte coined the term sociologist to describe the scientific elites whom he saw as the prospective leaders of a new scientific social order.

**Condorcet, Marquis de** (1743–1794). A French philosophe of the late Enlightenment whose famous book, *Sketch of the Progress of the Human Mind* (1794), described the optimistic view of human progress. Condorcet was one of the few men who advocated equal political rights for women in the political debates of the French Revolution, but he died in prison after his arrest for “antirevolutionary” activity.

**Constant, Benjamin** (1767–1830). The leading liberal theorist in France during the French Restoration (1815–1830), Constant argued for the expansion of civil rights and political freedom. He wrote on the history of religion and portrayed the complexity of human emotions in his novel *Adolphe* (1816). He linked liberal political themes with the cultural themes of Romanticism.

**Darwin, Charles** (1809–1882). The most famous scientist of the nineteenth century, Darwin developed the theory of biological evolution after traveling in South America and after many years of research in England. His book *The Origin of Species* (1859) argued that animal species evolve because specific traits give certain organisms a better chance to survive in various natural environments. His view of nature and the evolutionary process provoked religious and social debates throughout the late nineteenth century.

**Deroin, Jeanne** (1805–1894). An early French feminist who wrote for Saint-Simonian newspapers. During the French Revolution of 1848, she published a journal (*Women's Opinion*) and demanded equal social and political rights for women. She argued that women’s distinctive social role as mothers made them essential, well-qualified participants in French political life.

**Descartes, René** (1596–1650). A French philosopher whose *Discourse on Method* (1637) helped to define the modern scientific method. He viewed mathematics as a valuable tool for scientific studies and science as the means to gain new knowledge that would ensure human progress.

**Diderot, Denis** (1713–1784). A French writer who developed plans for publication of the famous *Encyclopedia* of the French Enlightenment. Diderot believed that this seventeen-volume work could spread the knowledge and values of the modern “Republic of Letters” and that writing could help create a more enlightened future society.

**Dostoevsky, Fyodor** (1821–1881). Russian novelist whose literary works portrayed the complex desires and nonrational drives of the human mind. He traveled widely in Europe but defended Russia’s distinctive cultural and religious traditions; he was also critical of the optimistic nineteenth-century faith in modern science.

**Feuerbach, Ludwig** (1804–1872). An influential “Left Hegelian” in Germany during the 1840s, Feuerbach developed an anthropological explanation and critique of religious beliefs in *The Essence of Christianity* (1841). His analysis of religion influenced the early writings of Karl Marx.

**Fichte, Johann Gottlieb** (1762–1814). An Idealist philosopher who contributed to the emergence of nineteenth-century German nationalism by stressing the distinctive historical and cultural “spirit” of the German people. His *Addresses to the German Nation* (1808) urged Germans to defend their national culture after Napoleon’s French army occupied Berlin in 1807.

**Flaubert, Gustave** (1821–1880). French novelist and critic of the cultural clichés in nineteenth-century French society. In such novels as *Madame Bovary* (1857), Flaubert criticized the Romantic literary tradition, developed a new “realist” style of literary narrative, and explored the complex relation between language and experience.

**Fourier, Charles** (1772–1837). A French “utopian socialist” who devised plans for cooperative communes called *Phalanxes*. Fourier wanted to create communities in which people would work at jobs that matched their personal interests or passions and in which each person would receive a fair share of the wealth that the community produced.

**Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von** (1749–1832). German writer whose novels, plays, poetry, and autobiographical works made him the most influential cultural figure of his generation (and in all of modern German literature). His early novel, *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (1774), helped to shape the image of Romantic heroes.

**Gouges, Olympe de** (1748–1793). The best-known French advocate for women’s rights during the French Revolution. De Gouges wrote the “Declaration of the Rights of Woman” (1791), which described the political, social, and legal rights that women should receive in the new French society. She was executed for “antirevolutionary” activities.

**Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich** (1770–1831). The German philosopher who viewed history as the unfolding expression of a transcendent spirit. Hegel said that this spirit could be seen in the progressive development of reason and freedom, which advanced through the conflicts of world history. His ideas
encouraged a new cultural interest in human history and in the philosophical meaning of historical change.

**Herder, Johann Gottfried** (1744–1803). One of the early German critics of the French Enlightenment belief in universal truths and universal laws. Herder emphasized the diversity of human cultures and the distinctive spirit (or *Volksgeist*) of the people in every cultural tradition. This idea became a common theme in modern nationalism.

**Hugo, Victor** (1802–1885). An influential writer in the French Romantic movement and in later political debates, Hugo challenged the aesthetic theories of eighteenth-century classicism in controversial works such as the play *Hernani* (1830). He also expressed political sympathy for the lower classes (e.g., in his novel *Les Miserables* [1862]) and went into exile to oppose the authoritarian government of Napoleon III.

**Hume, David** (1711–1776). Skeptical Scottish philosopher who argued that the senses cannot provide reliable knowledge (thus challenging Locke). Hume’s critique raised questions about the limits of both empiricism and reason.

**Kant, Immanuel** (1724–1804). The German philosopher whose influential book *The Critique of Pure Reason* (1781) responded to Hume’s skeptical view of human knowledge. Kant said that human understanding does not rely solely on the senses, because the mind encounters and interprets the world with its own pre-sensory structures or categories of thought. He also argued that human beings can agree on various truths through the use of reason—a recurring theme in nineteenth-century liberal political theory.

**Keats, John** (1795–1821). One of the important English Romantic poets. Keats argued that truth emerges in poetry and beauty (not simply in philosophy or science). He died young in Rome, thereby contributing to the cultural image of a Romantic poet’s fate.

**Kierkegaard, Søren** (1813–1855). Danish philosopher and critic of modern European Christian churches. Kierkegaard described the anguish of human existence—an experience of dread that emerges from recognition of the conflict between the desire for life and the inevitability of death. Rejecting the rituals and clichés of modern religion and culture, Kierkegaard said that human beings must take a “leap of faith” toward God.

**Locke, John** (1632–1704). English philosopher and political theorist who helped to shape Enlightenment thought in two ways: (1) his view that people gain knowledge through their environment (after being born as “blank slates”) encouraged belief in the practical value of social reform and education; (2) his concept of natural rights and the implicit political contract between people and their governments encouraged belief in the right of people to change their governments.

**Lyell, Charles** (1797–1875). English geologist whose work helped Charles Darwin develop his theory of evolution. Lyell’s *Principles of Geology* (1830) argued that the earth changed slowly over long periods of time through uniform geological processes.

**Maistre, Joseph de** (1753–1821). An influential conservative political theorist from Savoy (now part of southeastern France). Maistre interpreted the French Revolution as a divine punishment for the Enlightenment’s rejection of religion. He strongly supported a stable social order and hoped that such stability might emerge in France through the restoration of the French monarchy and the religious influence of the Catholic Church.

**Malesherbes, Lamoignon de** (1721–1794). Prominent French lawyer who defended King Louis XVI at his trial during the French Revolution. Malesherbes was executed during the Terror. He was the great-grandfather of the historian and political theorist Alexis de Tocqueville, whose work analyzed the legacy and meaning of the Revolution.

**Malthus, Thomas Robert** (1766–1834). English social theorist and economist who argued that population growth was bound to outstrip the supply of food, thus causing famine and social crises. His *Essay on the Principle of Population* (1798) influenced classical economic theory and later debates about the social effects of population growth.

**Marx, Karl** (1818–1883). German social theorist who developed many of the historical and economic theories that came to be called *communism*. Marx worked out his main ideas in Paris and London by drawing on French political concepts of revolution, English economic accounts of capitalism, and German Hegelian descriptions of historical change. He both used and redefined all these traditions in such works as *The German Ideology* (1845) and *Capital* (1867), which argued for a materialist view of history and social revolution.

**Michelet, Jules** (1798–1874). A prominent French historian and nationalistic writer. Michelet taught history in Paris at the Collège de France and described the exceptional French sacrifices for freedom in various books, including *The People* (1846).

**Mickiewicz, Adam** (1798–1855). A Polish poet who lived in exile in Paris from the 1830s to 1850s. He lectured on Slavic literature at the Collège de France in the early 1840s and promoted the ideas of messianic nationalism. He argued that Poland was the Christ of nations; like Christ, Poland had been put to death, but the Polish nation would rise from the dead (also like Christ) to bring freedom and salvation to Europe.

**Mill, James** (1773–1836). A close friend of Jeremy Bentham and a leading advocate of British utilitarianism. He sought to implement his ideas by raising his son (John Stuart Mill) in accordance with strict utilitarian principles.

Montesquieu, Baron of (1689–1755). A French nobleman from the region around Bordeaux, Montesquieu developed an important Enlightenment-era political argument for the division of government powers in his book The Spirit of the Laws (1748). His work focused on the structures of government rather than on personalities.

Napoleon I (1769–1821). The military leader who seized power in France in late 1799, thus bringing an end to the republican government that had emerged during the French Revolution. Napoleon’s military expansion created a large French-controlled empire, which lasted until 1814 and introduced legal reforms to many parts of Europe. New forms of nationalism and liberalism emerged among the opponents of Napoleon.

Napoleon III (1808–1873). His full name was Louis Napoleon Bonaparte, and he was the nephew of the first Napoleon. He was elected president of the Second French Republic after the Revolution of 1848, but he destroyed the Republic in late 1851 and became the emperor in the authoritarian government of the “Second Empire.”

Newton, Isaac (1642–1727). The most acclaimed scientific genius of the scientific revolution. Newton described the law of universal gravitation (1687), thereby giving later European writers great confidence in science and an optimistic faith in the human ability to explain the mysteries of nature. This belief in scientific knowledge shaped the main themes of Enlightenment thought and the modern idea of progress.

Nietzsche, Friedrich (1844–1900). German philosopher and social critic. Stressing the “will to power” and the importance of instinctual drives, Nietzsche challenged the Western philosophical conception of reason, as well as the traditions of Christian morality. He celebrated the virtues of a small philosophical elite that might define its own moral values and create its own noble truths. His books, such as Beyond Good and Evil (1886), influenced later critiques of the Enlightenment and democratic cultures.

Owen, Robert (1771–1858). An English industrialist and “utopian socialist” who favored the creation of new industrial communities in which the workers’ children received a good education and the workers themselves worked shorter hours for better wages. He created such communities with mixed success at New Lanark in Scotland and New Harmony, Indiana.

Proudhon, Pierre Joseph (1809–1865). An early French socialist who once described private property as a form of “theft” and who promoted various plans to protect the economic interests and freedom of artisan-workers.

Quesnay, François (1694–1774). One of the French physiocrats, the eighteenth-century economic theorists who said that government should not interfere in the workings of the grain markets; the physiocrats used the term laissez faire to describe this idea.

Ricardo, David (1772–1823). The English economist whose book The Principles of Political Economy (1817) described an “Iron Law of Wages.” According to this “law,” workers’ wages must remain low in capitalist economies, because higher wages would allow workers to have larger families, which would soon cause food shortages and social instability.

Robespierre, Maximilien (1758–1794). A prominent leader of the radical Jacobin faction during the French Revolution. Drawing on ideas from Rousseau, Robespierre wanted to create a Republic of Virtue. He supported the Terror as a means to defend the republic, but his execution in July 1794 ended the Revolution’s most radical phase.

Rousseau, Jean-Jacques (1712–1778). The most influential French writer of the late Enlightenment. His arguments for equality and republicanism in such works as The Discourse on the Origin of Inequality (1754) and The Social Contract (1762) influenced the French Revolution and later political theorists. His writings on nature and education contributed to the emergence of early Romanticism.

Ruge, Arnold (1802–1880). A “Left Hegelian” journalist and social critic. Ruge worked with Karl Marx in Paris to produce the German-French Yearbooks, a radical journal that collapsed after the publication of one issue in 1844.

Saint-Simon, Henri, Comte de (1760–1825). French social theorist who argued that modern societies should be managed by expert planners. He claimed that engineers and scientists contributed far more to social progress than either the nobles or the clergy, and he envisioned a future society that scientists would run on the basis of enlightened scientific principles. Saint-Simonian groups promoted his ideas in Paris after his death.

Sand, George (1804–1876). Her real name was Aurore Dupin, but she wrote books under the pen name of George Sand. Her novels became popular throughout much of nineteenth-century Europe, and her life attracted as much attention as her books. Sand defied the gendered social conventions of her era, called for the legalization of divorce, and came to symbolize a new kind of creative, independent woman.

Schelling, Friedrich Wilhelm (1775–1854). German philosopher whose Idealist philosophy contributed to Romantic aesthetic theories. Schelling said that artists give material expression to the higher realm of the spirit. His ideas suggested
that artists played a unique cultural role because they helped other people understand the spirit.

Schiller, Friedrich von (1759–1805). German playwright, poet, and aesthetic theorist. His plays portrayed struggles for liberty, but he also helped to shape Romantic aesthetic theory in writings that stressed the need to reconcile beauty, morality, and the sublime.

Schlegel, Friedrich von (1772–1829). German aesthetic philosopher and the editor of an influential Romantic journal. Schlegel described Romantic poetry as an expression of change or “becoming,” thereby drawing contrasts with classical art and shaping the early nineteenth-century conception of Romanticism.

Shelley, Mary (1797–1851). English writer and daughter of the feminist author Mary Wollstonecraft, the wife of a prominent Romantic poet. She wrote important fictional works, most notably the novel Frankenstein (1818).

Shelley, Percy Bysshe (1792–1822). English Romantic poet and political radical. A close friend of Lord Byron, Shelley identified with the French Revolution, wrote critical poems about the conservatism of British politics, and died young in a boating accident.

Smith, Adam (1723–1790). British economist and professor at Glasgow University. Smith’s book The Wealth of Nations (1776) helped to shape the modern belief in the social and economic efficacy of free markets and laissez-faire capitalism.

Spencer, Herbert (1820–1903). British social theorist who promoted the ideas of Social Darwinism. Spencer argued that human societies resemble nature in that they evolve from lower to higher forms of organization. He also believed that human progress came about through struggles that resulted in the “survival of the fittest” (as in nature).

Staël, Germaine de (1766–1817). French writer who defended the liberal ideals of the French Revolution, defied the authoritarian empire of Napoleon Bonaparte, and contributed to French Romanticism in both her novels (e.g., Corinne [1807]) and cultural commentaries (e.g., On Germany [1810]). She was forced to live in exile in Switzerland, but her life and writings made her an enduring example of Romantic liberalism and the independent woman writer.

Stendhal (1783–1842). French novelist who criticized the superficial social and intellectual life of post-revolutionary French society. His novel The Red and the Black (1831) provided an influential literary depiction of modern (hollow) personal ambition.

European Thought and Culture in the 19th Century

Professor Lloyd Kramer
The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Part II
Lecture 13: Hegelianism and the Young Marx
Lecture 14: Marx's Social Critique
Lecture 15: Feminism in Nineteenth-Century Culture
Lecture 16: Women's Rights in a Man's World
Lecture 17: Tocqueville and Mill—Rethinking Liberal Theory
Lecture 18: Nationalisms and National Identities
Lecture 19: The Novel as Art and Social Criticism
Lecture 20: Science and Its Literary Critics
Lecture 21: Charles Darwin and the New Biology
Lecture 22: The Controversies of Social Darwinism
Lecture 23: The Heroic Critic in Mass Society
Lecture 24: Nietzsche's Critique of European Culture

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Scope:

This course of twenty-four lectures examines major themes and authors in nineteenth-century European thought. We begin with a survey of the intellectual themes that emerged in the eighteenth-century Enlightenment, because this was the starting point for most of the important new nineteenth-century themes in philosophy, political theory, social thought, and literature. Our discussion of these themes will emphasize the links between the history of ideas and the history of the social, cultural, and political contexts in which influential new ideas appeared. This approach to the history of ideas rests on the assumption that ideas shape and influence all other aspects of the historical process, but it also stresses the importance of social, political, and economic realities in the formation and diffusion of all ideas.

The course describes nineteenth-century intellectual history as a set of overlapping dialogues with several key contextual influences on modern thought: (1) the response to the cultural legacy of the Enlightenment, (2) the political impact and legacy of the French Revolution, and (3) the broad social impact of the Industrial Revolution and the growth of modern cities. Important texts do not simply “reflect” the contexts in which they appear, but this course stresses the ways in which creative thinkers interpret, redefine, criticize, and influence the evolving historical world in which they live.

The lectures in the course trace this intellectual dialogue by looking at a number of important themes in modern European culture. After an introductory lecture on the characteristics of intellectual history, we will use three lectures to discuss the main themes of Enlightenment intellectual life and the Enlightenment’s relation to the French Revolution. The following six lectures then examine the emergence of nineteenth-century political and cultural theories that developed in response to the French Revolution. These are the famous “isms”—conservatism, liberalism, Romanticism, and so on—that interpreted the new post-revolutionary social and political world.

Beginning with Lecture Eleven, we turn to the cultural impact of the other great revolution of the era, the Industrial Revolution. We will look at the social characteristics of this new industrial system and discuss the theoretical responses it evoked. Intellectual interpretations of the new economy ranged from the pro-capitalist responses of classical economists to the critiques of early socialists and the ideas of early Marxism. We then move on to discuss the emergence of early feminism and the widening movement for human rights in the new industrial society.

In the last seven lectures, we will survey a number of cultural responses to what might be called the new “mass culture” of modern urban societies: nationalism,
realism in literature, positivism, Darwinian science, Social Darwinism, and various philosophical critiques of modern, democratic cultural life. These lectures lead us back to the dialogue with the Enlightenment (its faith in science, reason, and progress), which marked the end of the nineteenth century, as well as its beginning.

Our goal throughout the course is to understand the ideas of influential nineteenth-century European intellectuals, to reflect on the interactions between ideas and social experience, and to think critically about how the ideas of creative nineteenth-century writers still raise questions for our own time. Intellectual history emphasizes the multiple dialogues among and between the people of other places and times, but it also stresses the importance of a continuing dialogue between the present and the past. This course seeks to expand our dialogue with the intellectual world of nineteenth-century Europe—a world of influential ideas that still enter most cultural debates at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

Lecture Thirteen
Hegelianism and the Young Marx

Scope: This lecture takes up another strand of social theory that emerged in the intellectual responses to the Industrial Revolution. Karl Marx eventually became the most influential critic of modern capitalism, but his ideas emerged in the specific cultural and social context of the 1840s. This lecture begins by noting that Marx's theories are an example of how ideas influence social and political life. It then turns to the development of Marx's multicultural intellectual project, which brought together various themes from nineteenth-century German, French, and English social theory. We also look at Marx's early life and his relation to the German philosophical movement of the so-called Left Hegelians, giving particular emphasis to Marx's interest in the ideas of Ludwig Feuerbach. Marx developed his own distinctive views of history and society, however, after he moved to Paris in 1843.

Outline

I. Intellectual historians sometimes argue that the history of thought goes through cycles of creativity followed by periods of consolidation or synthesis.

A. Some periods embody creative new departures, and other eras are more characterized by synthesis.
   1. In the history of European thought, the 1840s was a period of remarkable creativity for social theorists; earlier trends in post-revolutionary political and economic theory came together.
   3. Even people who discount the role of ideas in history have often seen this text as an important influence on later political and social action; the Manifesto is an example of how ideas influence history.

B. The ideas of The Communist Manifesto, which was published in 1848, have long been debated both within and beyond Europe.
   1. The collapse of communist regimes in Europe has coincided with the declining influence of Marxist theory around the world.
   2. But Marx's ideas are still debated—did he understand capitalism? Was modern communism a distortion of his ideas?

C. The Manifesto of 1848 was only one summary of a broader social theory that Marx developed during the 1840s; this theory was related to earlier socialist thought, but it also pushed socialism in a new direction.
   1. In this lecture we'll look at how Marx's ideas evolved in the context of the 1840s. Much of his later intellectual influence can be
explained by his early ability to draw on the diverse intellectual
tendencies of this period.

2. Marx claimed by 1845 that he had created a new scientific social
analysis that went beyond the ideologies of other German thinkers.

D. Many scholars have agreed with Marx's claim about himself, and they
have described two Marxes: the young Marx, who was a radical
Hegelian concerned with philosophical problems, and the later
"scientific" Marx.

1. Most people who stress the different phases of Marx's thought see
the mature Marx emerging in *The German Ideology* (written in
1845), but the true Marx is most apparent in his later book *Capital*
(1867).

2. The later Marx stressed the processes of dialectical materialism,
which he saw as a scientific explanation for history.

3. In fact, there is probably more continuity between the young Marx
and the mature Marx than many have argued, but his thought did
change over time as he became more concerned with economics.

E. I will focus on the Marx of the 1840s, because this is the era in which
his mature thought developed and this is the decisive moment in the
emergence of the new socialism (as seen in the *Manifesto* of 1848).

1. Placed in the context of the 1840s, Marx's new social theory can be
seen as an intellectual fusion of three traditions that we've
discussed.

2. He brought together German Hegelianism, French political and
social radicalism, and British economics—criticizing and drawing
on each of these traditions to shape a new kind of socialism
(communism).

3. This cross-cultural synthesis and critique ultimately gave Marx an
unusual influence across all of Europe's national boundaries.

F. In this lecture, I'll note some aspects of Marx's early life, then discuss
the importance of so-called Left Hegelianism in the early 1840s; in the
next lecture, I'll discuss the specific critical synthesis that Marx
developed in Paris.

II. Marx (1818–1883) began his critical project as an intellectual in the German
context; he came from a Jewish family in the Rhineland, the part of
Germany west of the Rhine River and controlled after 1815 by Prussia.

A. Marx's father was a lawyer with liberal views who wanted his son
to have the best possible education. The young Marx studied at
universities in Bonn and Berlin; his father did not want him to turn to
Hegelian philosophy.

1. As a student in Berlin, however, Marx went through a period of
intense study of Hegel's work.

2. After one prolonged immersion in Hegel (for three weeks), he
emerged from his room to announce that he was now an Hegelian;
he explained this in a letter to his father, calling Hegelianism a
philosophy of truth.

B. But by the early 1840s, several "Hegelianisms" existed, ranging across
the political spectrum from right to left. As it happened, Marx was
drawn to the most radical "Left Hegelianism."

1. This group has often been called the "Young Hegelians," though in
fact younger and older Hegelians could be found on both the right
and left.

2. The key theme in Left Hegelianism argued that history should be
seen as an unfolding process (as Hegel had claimed), but that the
current world was by no means the final expression of that process.

3. Although Hegel himself tended to support the established order in
Berlin by the time of his death in 1831, the Left Hegelians said that
his theory showed why the world must still be changed.

4. The progress of reason and freedom in the world required further
radical changes in the government and social system.

5. In other words, the rationality of advanced, critical philosophy
must be implemented in the real world of social and cultural life.

C. The Left Hegelians accepted Hegel's view of history as a process in
which freedom evolved through conflicts and dialectical struggles.

1. They argued, however, that Hegel had misinterpreted the driving
force of history in his emphasis on an abstract, unfolding spirit.

2. The Left Hegelians began to argue that history consisted of human
activity alone; they agreed that history is a process of constant
change, but they said that humans alone are responsible for the
change.

3. In short, there's no transcendent spirit shaping the world, and
history must be viewed in material and humanistic terms.

D. These themes led Hegelian theorists, such as David Friedrich Strauss
and Bruno Bauer, to examine the history of religion.

1. Strauss, for example, wrote a controversial *Life of Jesus* (1835–
1836) to show the cultural meaning of religion.

2. The Hegelian spirit tended to drop out of all such works.

III. Among the various Left Hegelians of the era, however, Marx found the most
important theoretical perspectives in the work of the philosopher Ludwig
Feuerbach (1804–1872).

A. Feuerbach was the son of a professor and had studied philosophy to
pursue an academic career, but his views of religion and his Left
Hegelian philosophy blocked him (and many others) from a university
appointment.
1. He continued to work as an independent philosopher and published an influential book called *The Essence of Christianity* (1841).
2. In this book, Feuerbach analyzed religion in terms of psychology and anthropology; he argued that religious ideas did not come to humans from a transcendent realm or from a higher spirit.
3. He described religious ideas as a projection of human consciousness; this human consciousness was the "essence" of Christian belief.

B. According to Feuerbach, human beings create an ideal image of themselves, then project this image on to an imagined being they call God.
1. The history of religion, Feuerbach argued, was really the history of the human species creating new descriptions of its own ideals.
2. Instead of describing the dawn of history as the alienation of the spirit from itself (Hegel's theme), Feuerbach described the history of religion as the alienation of human beings from themselves.
3. Humans take what is best from themselves, project it beyond themselves, then worship what they have created (God).

C. Like most radical Hegelians, Feuerbach was mainly concerned with the history of religion and the critique of philosophy. His concerns led him to a kind of anthropological humanism.

IV. Marx was impressed by the way that Feuerbach had inverted Hegel and created a more human-centered conception of history and culture.

A. Where Hegel saw history as the unfolding of the spirit, Feuerbach said that all reality consists of material and human processes.
1. Marx wanted to develop such critiques himself, but he could not find a job (though he had earned a doctorate with a dissertation on ancient Greek philosophy).
2. Few positions were available in German universities, and Marx's political views did not enhance his prospects.

B. He began to write for various Left Hegelian publications, hoping to pursue a career as a radical journalist.
1. When the Prussian government censors suppressed all the Left Hegelian journals, Marx decided to join the Hegelian writer Arnold Ruge in Paris, where he could publish critical articles.
2. Marx settled in Paris with his wife (Jenny von Westphalen) in the fall of 1843 and lived there until 1845.
3. He was expelled at the request of the Prussian government. After several years in Belgium and a brief return to Germany, Marx finally moved to London; he wrote his later works in England.

C. In Paris, Marx met Friedrich Engels (1820–1895), who became his lifelong intellectual collaborator, co-author, and financial supporter; Engels was from a wealthy family that owned textile mills in Manchester and elsewhere.
1. Marx plunged into the study of French history and social theory as he prepared articles for the journal he planned to publish with Ruge.
2. The journal, *The German-French Yearbooks*, which was supposed to link the critical thinkers of Germany and France, collapsed after one issue, but Marx continued to work in Paris.

D. This French context stimulated Marx's exploration of two major themes: the revolutionary political tradition in France and the development of classical economics and industrialization in Britain.
1. Marx examined the two great revolutions of recent history (the French and Industrial Revolutions), but he studied these events with the perspectives of a German Hegelian, Feuerbachian historian.
2. This critical, creative project took shape in the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, which he wrote in 1844.
3. Although many of the texts he wrote in Paris were not published until the twentieth century, Marx began to develop the themes for a new kind of socialism during this period of Parisian exile.

E. This is a story of transition from Left Hegelianism to the communist critique of modern capitalism—a transition that would have a wide influence in Europe's later intellectual and political history.

Essential Reading:


Supplementary Reading:


Questions to Consider:

1. Do you think the Hegelian critique of religion misrepresented the nature of religious thought?
2. The Left Hegelian critics assumed that philosophy could be a force to change the world. Is this a naïve assumption, or were the Hegelians correct?
Lecture Fourteen
Marx's Social Critique

Scope: Marx studied French political theory and English economic theory with the critical perspectives of a Hegelian philosopher and historian. This lecture examines how Marx used Hegelian conceptions of historical change to criticize France's political revolutionaries and England's political economists, all of whom (in his view) lacked historical understanding of how change occurs across time. As he developed his critique of French and English theorists, however, Marx also began to attack the German Hegelians, all of whom (in his view) failed to understand that history was driven forward by economic forces and material realities. These cross-cultural themes shape the interpretation of Marx in this lecture, which argues that much of his social and cultural influence can be traced to his creative synthesis of three different European intellectual traditions. Marx continued to develop these ideas in later works that he wrote in London.

Outline

I. The new social and historical theories of "Marxism" became exceptionally influential in European intellectual history (and in many other parts of the world), but these theories always carried the traces of a mid-nineteenth-century European cultural context.
   A. We have seen that Marx moved to Paris in 1843, partly because he could not find work in Germany and partly because he saw Paris as the best place for radical German writers to publish their social critiques.
      1. Paris had become the home to thousands of political exiles in the 1840s, including Poles, Russians, Italians, Germans, and others.
      2. In this thriving center of political and intellectual debate, Marx found the theoretical framework to develop his new conception of socialism.
   B. Soon after his arrival in Paris, Marx broke with his friend Arnold Ruge—the Left Hegelian who had been Marx's partner in the critical journal that folded after one issue—because Ruge did not share Marx's new interest in socialism.
      1. Marx gradually came to believe that Ruge and all the Left Hegelians, including Feuerbach, did not give enough attention to economics.
      2. He spent much of his time in Paris studying the French Revolution and the British classical economists, in whom he found other flaws.

II. Marx's basic critique of both the French revolutionaries and the English classical economists stressed that they lacked an understanding of history.
   A. The French revolutionaries, for example, claimed to support the universal rights of man, but in fact, they supported the interests of a single class.
      1. They were (in Marx's view) the advocates of a rising bourgeois class as it overthrew an older feudal aristocracy; their ideas served specific class goals or economic interests.
      2. Instead of supporting the true needs of people who should have the right to receive the products of their labor, the Jacobins supported private property—which served the interest of one specific class.
   B. The Jacobins ignored or denied their own historical specificity and falsely claimed to represent a universal condition or universal political interests.
      1. Marx argued that they opened the way for the bourgeoisie to take power, but they lacked the historical perspective to see that their revolution also opened the way for workers.
      2. Marx complained that even later French advocates of the workers, such as Fourier or Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, also lacked historical perspectives when they created their utopian social schemes.
   C. Marx said that the French socialists didn't link their work to an unfolding dialectical process.
      1. The French didn't understand history, though they did understand politics and the importance of revolution.
      2. The French understanding of politics needed to be extended through a more comprehensive understanding of history.
III. According to Marx, the same problem of ahistorical thinking showed up in the British economists; he read Adam Smith and David Ricardo closely while in Paris.

A. Although he accepted much of their economic analysis, he argued that economists like Ricardo made the mistake of assuming that the economic conditions under capitalism were natural and universal.
   1. In fact, Marx said, these conditions (e.g., subsistence wages for workers) simply reflected the historical development of capitalism.
   2. Political economy, Marx wrote, made a “universal standard” out of what was actually “the worst possible state of privation which life can know.”
   3. Economists wrongly accepted the alienating or animal-like conditions of workers’ lives as a kind of natural law.

B. Marx interpreted the classical economists as Feuerbach had interpreted the theologians: Religion described the human being’s alienation from himself or herself as God, then accepted this alienation as the true nature of reality.
   1. Economists, in Marx’s view, described the workers’ economic alienation and misery as the natural condition of the species.
   2. But this description was ahistorical, because the deprivation of workers did not come from the inevitable processes of economic life; it came from the specific historical development of capitalism.
   3. Despite what Marx saw as their historical blindness, however, he admired the economists for studying the material aspects of society.

C. Thus, Marx drew on the English economists to develop a strong interest in the role of economic relations in history and modern societies.

D. With his German Hegelian background, however, he condemned the economists (as he had the French political activists) for not recognizing the historical dimensions of economic and political life.

IV. At the same time, though, Marx began developing a systematic critique of the German Hegelians, which led eventually to The German Ideology. (This important work was not published until the early twentieth century.)

A. He attacked the German tradition by arguing that German philosophies of history lacked the crucial political and economic reality that the French and English recognized in their social analysis.
   1. Hegelians understood the importance of history, but the Hegelian dialectic was upside down; history is not the story of the spirit.
   2. It is not even the story that Feuerbach told when he described human thought as a series of human projections in religion.
   3. Instead, Marx said that history consists essentially of social relations, which are ultimately shaped by economic relations.

B. Marx said that history moves through stages, as Hegel had suggested.
Lecture Fifteen
Feminism in Nineteenth-Century Culture

Scope: The legacy of the French Revolution included a growing nineteenth-century debate about how the “Rights of Man” could be extended to women. This lecture examines the development of early feminism, one of the many new “isms” to emerge in the aftermath of the revolutionary upheavals. We discuss contrasting themes in early feminist works and note the ideas of Olympe de Gouges and Mary Wollstonecraft, who proposed that women should be granted all the new social and political rights that modern societies granted to men. Other writers, however, sought more opportunities for women to participate in the mostly male world of European cultural life—a theme that appears in the life and books of Germaine de Staël. We conclude with a look at the continuing (and unsuccessful) campaign for women’s rights in the French Revolution of 1848.

Outline

I. We have seen that the French Revolution developed new definitions of the “Rights of Man and Citizen,” which helped to shape political cultures and debates during much of the nineteenth century (and throughout modern times).

A. All political groups held distinctive views about who should exercise the right to participate in modern politics and governments.

1. Conservatives wanted to restrict political rights to social elites, while socialists wanted to extend such rights to every social class, including the workers.

2. Nationalists claimed that the rights of national sovereignty and independence were the most important; they claimed that each national group should have its own rights.

3. Liberals wanted to ensure equal legal rights for individuals, but they were hesitant to expand political rights to all social classes.

B. One large group of Europeans was regularly excluded from the new movements for political and legal rights: European women.

1. Women outnumbered men in the nineteenth century, as they do today, but they lacked political rights and equal legal rights in every country.

2. Some historians argue that the French Revolution actually reduced the rights and autonomy of women because the revolutionaries viewed republicanism as a sphere for distinctly male virtues.

Essential Reading:
Karl Marx, excerpts from the Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts, in Marx, Selected Writings, pp. 83–104.

———, excerpts from The German Ideology, in Marx, Selected Writings, pp. 175–208.

Supplementary Reading:

Questions to Consider:
1. Do you think that human societies are ultimately shaped by their modes of economic production?
2. Did Marx develop a persuasive account of “alienation”? Is the concept of alienation still useful for the analysis of social relations or economic life?
3. The old regime, as many Jacobins defined it, had been corrupted by the excessive influence of women at court and in elite political circles.
4. Only a few radicals in the Revolution (e.g., Condorcet) favored women's rights; thus, women were excluded from the right to vote or to hold office. Even women's political clubs were suppressed.

C. Yet the French Revolution also marked the starting point for modern European feminism; it stimulated some of the first systematic claims for women's political rights.
1. The most important feminist writers in the 1790s were Olympe de Gouges in France and Mary Wollstonecraft in England.
2. During the first half of the nineteenth century, a new generation of writers and political activists followed up on their work and began to develop a new feminism.
3. The term feminism was first used by a few writers in France in the 1830s—Fourier and a few Saint-Simonians seem to have been the first to use the word (feminism entered English in the 1890s).

D. From the beginning, there were several strands of feminism, just as there were varieties of Romanticism, liberalism, socialism, and other "isms."

E. All feminists wanted to improve the social position and rights of women, but they differed in their emphases.
1. One group of feminists stressed the importance of political rights and called for the extension of voting rights to women; they also wanted women to have the right to hold government offices.
2. This was the political tradition that Olympe de Gouges and Mary Wollstonecraft established during the era of the French Revolution.
3. Other feminists focused more on legal reforms (e.g., reform of divorce laws) and on the rights of women in the cultural sphere.
4. These women became public advocates for women's right to publish books or enter public debates; Germaine de Staël was a prominent example of a woman who asserted the right to join in cultural debates.

F. These political and cultural strands of early feminism also tended to emphasize somewhat different views on the "nature of women."
1. Some feminists (following Wollstonecraft) stressed that women had the same qualities as men—for example, they could use reason and think rationally—which meant that they should have the same political rights.
2. This argument emphasized important similarities between women and men.
3. Other early feminists, however, stressed that women differed from men in important ways—for example, they had a distinctive social role as mothers—but this difference made their rights equally important.
4. This argument about difference suggested that because women shaped each new generation, they must have the right to the best education, as well as a deep understanding of public issues.

G. These different forms of early feminism have shaped a debate that continues to the present. In what ways are women and men similar or different? How should gender similarities or differences affect the rights of women?

II. The starting point for the nineteenth-century debate about women's rights, like the starting point for many other debates, was the French Revolution.

A. Early in the Revolution, the writer and playwright Olympe de Gouges (1748–1793) published the Declaration of the Rights of Woman and Citizen (1791).
1. She argued that the seventeen "Rights of Man" should also apply to women, including voting rights and the rights to free speech and writing.
2. Women should also have rights to divorce and to control property in marriage (the Revolution soon recognized the right to divorce).
3. She also said women should have equal access with men to higher education and to jobs in government and in the economy.
4. De Gouges proposed that the principles of the French Revolution should apply in the same way to women as to men; women would be equal citizens and equal participants in the new social order.
5. Yet the Jacobins saw such views as dangerous to the republic, and her ideas were rejected; she was arrested and executed in 1793.

B. The execution of de Gouges did not end the call for women's rights. The other important feminist work of this period came from Mary Wollstonecraft (1759–1797) in England.
1. Wollstonecraft also died young, but from complications after the birth of a daughter, Mary, who would later make her own claims for a woman's voice by writing various works, including the famous novel Frankenstein.
2. Wollstonecraft's book A Vindication of the Rights of Woman (1792) contributed to the emerging feminist demand for the political and social rights of women.

C. Wollstonecraft said that women could use reason and should be allowed access to advanced education and politics; she attacked Rousseau and others who said that women could only have a role in domestic life.
1. Wollstonecraft built an argument for equal political and civil rights by claiming that women could make vital contributions to public life.
2. The whole of society would benefit, therefore, if women were allowed to exercise basic human rights, receive a rational education, and participate in government and public debates.

3. "The divine right of husbands, like the divine right of kings, may...in this enlightened age, be contested without danger," she argued.

4. Wollstonecraft's work justified both a social and a political change in the rights of women.

III. Feminists in the early nineteenth century built on the main themes of de Gouges and Wollstonecraft to argue that the "rights of man" would not really be universally implemented until they were extended to women.

A. Feminism gained support among those groups that were most concerned with the problem of extending human rights to previously excluded groups.

1. Early nineteenth-century feminists appeared mainly in early socialist groups, such as among the followers of Robert Owen or the Saint-Simonians.

2. In England, for example, two Owenites, William Thompson and Anna Wheeler, published an important appeal for women's rights in 1825.

3. Their book, Appeal of One Half the Human Race, Women, against the Pretensions of the Other Half, Men, called on utilitarian liberals, such as Bentham, to include women in their campaigns for reform.

4. Thompson and Wheeler argued that women had a particular ability to understand and work for the happiness of all people and that such qualities would make them outstanding legislators.

B. English feminist writers in the early nineteenth century tended to emphasize the need for women to gain equal voting rights with men.

1. On the Continent, however, there was often more interest in other legal reforms and in questions about women's access to cultural life.

2. Germaine de Staël (1766–1817), whom we discussed earlier as an example of an emerging French interest in Romanticism, made a key contribution to the nineteenth-century conception of the woman writer.

3. In addition to challenging the most powerful man of the era—Napoleon Bonaparte—Staël also claimed the right to join public debates about politics, history, and culture.

4. Her important Considerations on the Revolution in France (1818) became one of the first nineteenth-century liberal commentaries on the meaning of the French Revolution.

5. Staël also argued for the right to divorce in her novel Delphine (1802); this theme became especially important in France after 1816 because divorce was illegal there from 1816 until 1884.

6. Staël wrote about cultural freedom and political rights in more general terms and did not agitate specifically for women's voting rights.

IV. Staël remained a model for later French women, including those who were active in the Saint-Simonian movement in the 1830s; they founded the first women's journals.

A. Women created publications, such as The Free Woman. Some of the women writers for these journals used only their first names (followed by an X) to show their freedom from patriarchal names.

1. One of the writers to emerge from this Saint Simonian circle was Jeanne Deroin (1805–1894).

2. Deroin carried the earlier campaign for women's rights into the French Revolution of 1848; she published a journal called Women's Opinion.

B. Deroin defended the political themes of feminism by claiming (with de Gouges) that women should have equal political rights with men.

1. She based this claim above all on the fact that women had qualities that differed from men; she stressed that women were less selfish than men because as mothers, they knew how to care for others.

2. Because women were less selfish than men, they were well qualified to participate in public life.

C. This claim for women—and for mothers—was ignored in French political culture in 1848, as it had been ignored in 1791.

Essential Reading:

Mary Wollstonecraft, A Vindication of the Rights of Woman, chapters 1–4.

Supplementary Reading:
Joan Wallach Scott, Only Paradoxes to Offer: French Feminists and the Rights of Man, pp. 1–18, 57–89.


Questions to Consider:
1. Do you think the early feminist arguments for women's participation in public life have now been fully accepted in modern societies?

2. Is there still a cultural tendency to draw distinctions between female (domestic) and male (public) spheres of social life?
Lecture Sixteen
Women's Rights in a Man's World

Scope: The ideas of feminist writers began to attract support in the nineteenth century, especially among women in the growing middle class, but a new generation of male political leaders and writers continued to argue that women should not be granted equal rights with men. This lecture discusses the sociological, biological, and psychological arguments that were deployed against feminist movements. It goes on to look at two influential writers who challenged the anti-feminist arguments and developed literary and political critiques of women's inferior position in nineteenth-century Europe: George Sand and John Stuart Mill. Although their approaches to the issue differed, both Sand and Mill sought to show why the modern conception of human rights would not become a reality unless such rights were also extended to women.

Outline

I. The growing nineteenth-century campaign for human rights provided a strong theoretical foundation for a feminist movement that demanded the extension of new political and legal rights to women.

A. Many women writers, and some men, began to stress the contradictions in modern societies that celebrated the new equality of social and political rights, but then denied these rights to women (and to enslaved people in America).
   1. Systematic analysis of the so-called “Woman’s Question” emerged through the application of liberal theories to the status of women.
   2. Middle-class urban women often took the lead in analyzing this issue, but women activists (like the theorists) disagreed on the question of how to make the case for women’s rights.
   3. Some activists stressed women’s differences with men; others stressed the importance of similarities, but all urged the expansion of rights.

B. Middle-class women debated the nineteenth-century assumption that women should focus on the domestic sphere; the use of contraception began to reduce the number of children in middle-class families and opened more social options.
   1. Like other political movements, feminism was linked to a changing social world in the cities of modern European nations.
   2. But the movement for women’s rights provoked strong opposition and theoretical explanations for why women should not have equal rights.

3. Some theories were sociological; some, biological; and others, psychological. Women claiming rights had to challenge these theories.

4. This lecture summarizes the main theories that were used to oppose the extension of new rights to women, then discusses two influential writers who rejected such ideas: George Sand and John Stuart Mill.

5. Sand’s life and work as a writer challenged prevailing gender theories in French culture, while Mill’s work challenged the political exclusion of women in England.

6. Both Sand and Mill, however, attacked the hypocrisy of liberal societies that excluded women from the exercise of basic human rights.

II. To understand the work of Sand and Mill, it’s important to look at the gender theories that shaped the cultural context of nineteenth-century feminist writers.

A. One theory might be called the sociological theory, though the term sociology only gradually came into use over the course of the nineteenth century.
   1. This theory argued that women were in an inferior social position, because all societies are hierarchical and men have always been on top.
   2. This is a tradition, as Burke would put it, and the past was wise about this; logical reasons existed for the gendered social hierarchy.
   3. Men should be in a superior position because they know how to lead a well-organized social hierarchy.
   4. Families provide the hierarchical model for the whole social system; they work well because the natural leaders are in control.

B. The German historian Heinrich von Treitschke expressed this argument when he wrote: “In the family we find the political principle of subordination. The father is the supreme head, he administers justice.”
   1. Both the family and social system as a whole must uphold the authority of men over women to protect social traditions.
   2. These traditions show the wisdom of a gendered social hierarchy.

C. This sociological argument for gender hierarchies was the most vulnerable to the liberal call for women’s rights; it resembled the old defense of aristocratic privilege, which liberals generally attacked.
   1. The second theme in arguments about gender difference turned to biology and stressed that women could not be given equal rights because they differed physically from men.
   2. The main claim was that women’s reproductive functions kept them from understanding the rational processes of public life.
3. Biological theories stressed women’s menstrual cycle to justify their exclusion from politics.
4. It was said that this disruptive cycle prevented women from developing rational analysis of public problems or using reason as men did.

D. This theory appeared, for example, in Jeremy Bentham, who said that women were limited to a “domestic condition”; their needs were all private.
1. In France, Edmond and Jules Goncourt wrote in 1855 that a woman’s physical strength was located in the pelvis, whereas man’s strength was located in the “upper nobler parts” and the “high forehead.”
2. The key biological difference was that women functioned in a lower physical realm; they had less capacity for abstract thought because a woman’s body was seen as more important than her mind.

E. The biological theories led directly to a third theory, a psychological explanation that was said to explain woman’s inferior status.
1. This explanation stressed the difference in women’s brain size; some scientists said that women had less capacity for abstract thought because their brains were smaller than men’s brains.
2. Women’s brains made them more emotional and less rational, though perhaps more sympathetic to other people.
3. This kind of brain-size determinism suggested why women could be the guardians of emotional life; lacking reason, they protect morality.

III. Advocates of women’s rights had to challenge all these social, biological, and psychological theories, as we can see in the life and work of George Sand (1804–1876) and John Stuart Mill (1806–1873).
A. Sand challenged dominant views of women in her novels and essays, which often expressed Romantic aesthetic values.
B. Mill challenged the dominant view of women in liberal political treatises.
C. Both writers shared the strong, nineteenth-century liberal belief in individual rights and freedom. They wanted personal independence and equal legal rights for women.
D. Sand’s real name was Aurore Dupin; she was married at the age of eighteen to a man named Casimir Dudevant—a drunk, a womanizer, and a terrible husband.
1. They had two children; he opposed all forms of independence for his wife and tried to isolate her from other people.
2. She finally left him (divorce being illegal) and decided to become a writer; she saw writing as the path to independence.

3. She struggled to get a legal separation and was finally successful, in part because he had threatened her with a gun.
4. She settled in Paris, though she also spent time at a country home called Nohant. She said that her goal was to become “as nearly a free woman as our wretched civilization permits.”

E. Sand decided that she could never marry again; she said she would rather be in prison than to remarry, because marriage precluded freedom for women.
1. But she was interested in relations with creative men; she had intense relationships with the poet Alfred de Musset and the composer Frederic Chopin.
2. Meanwhile, she wrote novels about romantic heroines who followed their instincts or struggled to cope with social conventions.
3. Novels such as Indiana (1832) and Consuelo (1842) made her one of the most famous writers in Europe. Her life was equally famous and even more scandalous to many people at the time.

F. People began to describe independent women’s lives as examples of “George Sandism.” She wore trousers, smoked cigarettes, wrote books (a male activity), and lived with men outside of marriage.
1. She made her life into a political statement against the inequalities of marriage; she saw marriage as an unfair institution that prevented women from achieving freedom or their own identities.
2. “The hardest thing on earth…” she wrote, “is to say what we want to say and do what we want to do”; this was even harder in marriage.
3. She said that she wanted a new kind of “reciprocal” marriage with equal partners, but laws would have to be changed; divorce must be legal.

G. Through her writings and her life, Sand explicitly challenged the sociological argument for gender hierarchies; she claimed that women must break free from such hierarchies and find their own way to themselves.
1. She wrote often about politics and public life—showing that women were fully capable of participating in public debates.
2. Sand never denied her strong emotional reactions, but she strongly denied that her emotions precluded public action or political writings.

IV. Sand never became an activist in the movement to gain women the right to vote; this movement was stronger in England and America than in France.
A. The theoretical, political arguments for women’s right to vote developed in England. John Stuart Mill was a key theorist.
1. Mill was the son of James Mill, a follower of Bentham.
2. As a child, Mill was raised according to strict utilitarian principles; he read Greek and Latin by the age of three or four.
3. He reacted against the extreme rationalism of his training and, in his early twenties, suffered a nervous collapse; he couldn’t work.
4. He wrote in his *Autobiography* that he came out of this crisis by reading Romantic poets, including Wordsworth and Keats.

**B.** Mill rebelled against his father and Bentham by describing the importance of feelings, yet he retained a rationalist emphasis in his writing.

1. He sought to promote liberal principles of individual liberty.
2. His famous work *On Liberty* (1859) condemned intolerance, censorship, and impediments on the intellectual or political liberty of individuals.

**C.** Mill also contributed to feminism by applying the notion of individual happiness and freedom to women—unlike his father and Bentham had done.

1. He particularly stressed the role of Harriet Taylor in helping him see the importance of this issue.
2. Mill and Taylor met in 1830 and developed an intense platonic, intellectual friendship over the next twenty-one years; she was already married.
3. Mill and Taylor finally married after her husband died in 1851.

**D.** Mill’s influential book *The Subjection of Women* (1869) explained that Taylor was the decisive influence on the book, but she died before it was published. Mill said society needed women’s talents.

**E.** In making his arguments, Mill challenged and rejected all the sociological, biological, and psychological theories that opposed women’s rights.

**Essential Reading:**


**Supplementary Reading:**


**Questions to Consider:**

1. Was feminism more radical than other nineteenth-century “isms”?
2. In what ways did the personal lives of these authors carry public political meanings?

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**Lecture Seventeen**

**Tocqueville and Mill: Rethinking Liberal Theory**

**Scope:** This lecture continues the discussion of the intellectual campaign for human rights by examining the themes of the influential liberal writers John Stuart Mill and Alexis de Tocqueville. Mill’s defense of individual rights in his classic work *On Liberty* (1859) provided a generally optimistic summary of how liberal principles and institutions could ensure social and political progress, but many liberals in this era were becoming concerned about the social patterns in modern mass societies. In this lecture, we look at Mill’s arguments, then turn to the writings of Tocqueville, focusing especially on his historical study of the French Revolution (published in 1856). Liberals were looking for ways to defend their conceptions of individual liberty, but the new economy, nation-states, and political parties all posed challenges for the liberal belief in autonomous individuals.

**Outline**

**I.** The nineteenth-century social and political campaigns for individual human rights often drew on what might be called the “liberal interpretation” of the French Revolution.

**A.** This view of the revolutionary events at the end of the eighteenth century usually argued that the Revolution had been a valuable challenge to the noble privileges and monarchy of the old regime.

1. The Revolution had advanced the cause of freedom, at least in the beginning, and most nineteenth-century liberals praised this achievement.
2. Yet the Revolution had also shown that despotism could come from below, as well as from above; the masses could be tyrants, too.
3. This suggests the political and theoretical position of liberal writers throughout the nineteenth century: They were located in the theoretical center or political “middle” of European societies and cultures.

**B.** This middle position meant that from the time of the French Revolution itself and throughout most of the nineteenth century, liberals were regularly criticized by both conservatives and radicals.

1. Conservatives found them too disrespectful of inherited traditions and social hierarchies; radicals always found them too cautious about implementing the social reforms that would create egalitarian societies.
2. This middle position can be seen in most liberal theorists (we’ve already discussed the example of Benjamin Constant), but perhaps Mill and Tocqueville were the most influential liberal theorists.

C. We have seen how John Stuart Mill supported equal rights for women and argued for the social utility of such reforms.
   1. Tocqueville was a somewhat more cautious thinker, but he shared Mill’s overarching commitment to liberty.
   2. Both Mill and Tocqueville favored a social and political system in which individual rights and liberties would be strongly protected.
   3. Yet they worried that nineteenth-century European societies were threatened by an obsession with money making, a social pattern that (like tyranny from above or below) ultimately threatened human liberty.
   4. I want to note some of the key ideas of mid-nineteenth-century European liberalism and suggest that such liberals as Mill and Tocqueville were concerned about the dangers to liberty in modern political systems.
   5. They worried that neither old aristocrats, nor middle-class merchants, nor most workers understood the true nature of liberty.

II. Mill (1806–1873) grew up in the utilitarian milieu of James Mill (his father), Jeremy Bentham, and what Mill himself called the “philosophic radicals.”

A. His education, as we’ve noted earlier, was perhaps the most extraordinary of his generation; his father wanted to show that the environmental principles of John Locke and the utilitarians could work as a strategy for childrearing.
   1. Mill grew up immersed in Greek and Latin classics but also reading the economic works of Adam Smith and David Ricardo and all the leading writers of the Enlightenment.
   2. Mill’s depression, which struck at about age twenty, led him to develop some critical perspective on the utilitarian tradition.
   3. He nevertheless remained a social reformer with wide intellectual interests. Beginning in his adolescence, he traveled often in France and had a lifelong interest in French political thought.

B. He met Alexis de Tocqueville in the 1830s and wrote a famous review of Tocqueville’s Democracy in America in the Westminster Review.
   1. Later, after Mill married Harriet Taylor in the early 1850s, Mill often visited France. Taylor died in Avignon (1858) and Mill bought a house there to be near her grave; he ultimately died in France, as well.
   2. Mill did not really embrace the strong state-centered themes that were important in the French revolutionary tradition.

C. Mill laid out his classic liberal defense of liberty in his work On Liberty (1859), much of which he wrote while he was in Italy in 1855.
   1. This book made an argument for the social advantage that results when each individual is free to pursue his or her own development; personal liberty should not be impeded by the state.
   2. Mill stressed that people must have the right to express even the most unpopular ideas or opinions and that repression was bad for society.
   3. Truth emerges and social progress continues through the free expression of every idea; stifling ideas, by contrast, hurts everyone.
   4. “We can never be sure,” he explained, “that the opinion we...stifle is a false opinion; and if we were sure, stifling it would be an evil still.”

D. Mill had confidence that the free exchange of ideas could ensure social progress and the growth of freedom—liberty would produce yet more liberty.
   1. One consequence of this progress would be an improvement in the social rights of women, but Mill also worried that social forces in his own society threatened the creative individual.
   2. This theme linked Mill to Tocqueville and, in some ways, to the Romantic belief in the value of the creative self.
   3. Mill was a liberal who drew on both the utilitarian and Romantic traditions to defend the individual against the modern mass society and the dangers of an overbearing civil power.

III. Similar anxieties about the fate of liberty in the modern world appear in the works of Alexis de Tocqueville (1805–1859), who believed that the modern development of democratic societies threatened individual liberty.

A. Tocqueville was fascinated by the history of the French Revolution, in which his great-grandfather (Malesherbes) and two of his grandparents died, and by the early history of the United States.
   1. He believed that the American and French Revolutions launched the modern history of democracy, which Tocqueville saw as a movement toward social equality; he thought this equality would destroy liberty.
   2. Tocqueville was concerned with a central liberal problem: How can modern societies reconcile liberty and equality?
   3. He thought that democracy engenders this conflict because a leveling tendency in democracy threatens liberty, and the majority overwhelms the individual; he said that modern people preferred equality over liberty.

B. Tocqueville himself was from an aristocratic background; he had some nostalgia for the old regime and identified with the aristocracy.
1. His family was from Normandy in western France; there was little sympathy for any form of modern radical thought in his family's world.

2. Unlike many nineteenth-century aristocrats, however, Tocqueville did not think or even hope that the old world could be restored; the tendency toward democracy was inevitable.

3. He believed that democracy was inevitable because of his travels in America during the early 1830s, which he described in his famous two-volume book, *Democracy in America* (1835, 1840).

4. Tocqueville said that America showed the extreme leveling tendency in modern history, but it also showed that democracy could be stable.

C. At the same time, however, the American system showed the dangers of the tyranny of the majority because America discouraged eccentric or exceptional behavior.

1. The majority in American culture determined what was appropriate and fostered a numbing conformity; there was no security outside the group.

2. Tocqueville said that democracy, as in America, had more equality but less freedom than the older, aristocratic European societies.

D. For Tocqueville, the key to freedom was to maintain strong intermediary groups or associations between the individual and the central government.

1. He wrote about this idea in his later work, *The Old Regime and the Revolution* (1856), where he expressed his dislike for the government of Napoleon III by writing about France before 1789.

2. He said that the tendency of modern governments was to be more and more centralized; this was already the case in France before the Revolution.

3. In this respect, the Revolution merely confirmed what the old regime in France had already begun; it further centralized power.

E. But for liberty to survive (and liberty was always Tocqueville's goal), groups must exist to mediate between individuals and the central power.

1. Such intermediary groups existed in older societies in the Church and aristocracy or noble law courts; such institutions or secondary associations protected exceptional individuals and their liberty.

2. Such groups also allowed nonconformity to flourish, unlike the situation in both authoritarian states and egalitarian democracies.

3. Aristocratic societies have less equality than democracies but also less despotism (though only some are free in such situations).

F. Because Tocqueville believed that the old aristocratic world was gone, he decided that liberal societies must create more secondary institutions to protect individuals from the power of the state; institutions could do this.

1. Like other nineteenth-century liberals, Tocqueville wanted to avoid abstractions; he attacked the philosophes for being too abstract.

2. Tocqueville himself felt the situation was urgent because of the Revolution of 1848; he had been a member of the Chamber of Deputies.

3. Observing the events of 1848, he was appalled by the radical, egalitarian, and socialist tendencies of the Parisian crowds.

4. To understand these developments, Tocqueville began his systematic study of late eighteenth-century French history.

G. Because he believed that liberty was threatened by equality, he wanted to go back to the historical process whereby the aristocratic tradition broke down.

1. This was the point of *The Old Regime and the Revolution*, a text in which Tocqueville argued that love of freedom was the highest ideal, more valuable than any economic gain or abstract equality.

2. "What has made so many men...stake their all on liberty," he wrote, "is its intrinsic glamour, a fascination it has in itself, apart from all 'practical' considerations."

IV. Tocqueville has often been compared to Montesquieu; both came from the nobility, both were interested in the deep structures of society, and both wanted to protect liberty through strong, intermediary institutions that resisted centralizing powers.

A. Tocqueville died in 1859 before he could finish a planned second volume on the meaning of the French Revolution.

B. The modern nation-state (as many older liberals perceived it) was becoming the political embodiment of a new mass society; neither the new radicals nor the old aristocrats offered liberals a way to escape this modern situation.

**Essential Reading:**


**Supplementary Reading:**


**Questions to Consider:**

1. Would the ideas of Mill and Tocqueville be called "liberal" in contemporary political cultures?

2. What do you think is the relation between freedom and equality? Did Tocqueville overstate the conflict between these two ideals?
Lecture Eighteen
Nationalisms and National Identities

Scope: The growth of European cities and the expanding power of European nation-states steadily transformed the social position of writers and intellectuals. This lecture describes how intellectuals became increasingly connected to the urban cultural institutions of modern nations, including the new schools and newspapers. These institutions fostered nationalism, and the national idea became a central component of cultural and personal identities. Intellectuals played a major role in the expansion of nationalism—the combination of cultural and political ideas that may well have become the most influential, pervasive “ism” of the modern era. In this lecture, we look at the connections between intellectuals and nationalisms, focusing on the examples of the French historian Jules Michelet and the Polish poet Adam Mickiewicz, both of whom lived and worked in Paris.

Outline

I. We have discussed many of the nineteenth-century “isms” that emerged from the era of the French Revolution and Napoleon, but none of the other “isms” spread as widely or as deeply in European culture as nationalism.
   A. Nationalism overlapped with almost every other “ism”; even socialists and feminists often shared some of the nationalism of their societies, and almost all liberals, conservatives, and Romantics shared nationalist ideas.
   B. Nationalism spread along with the influence of the two great revolutions (the French and Industrial), but it was also linked to other developments in this era.
      1. The nineteenth-century social context for new nationalisms included the increasing power of nation-states and the growth of cities, all of which historians often call nation-building and urbanization.
      2. The growth of nations was linked to the ideology and centralizing power that evolved out of the French Revolution.
      3. Nationalism expressed the concept of fraternity—one key theme of the Revolution—and it became the ideology of all modern nation-states.
      4. The growth of cities was connected to the rise of new industries and to the centralizing power of modern national governments.
      5. Both the nation-states and the cities shaped the institutional context in which ideas evolved and spread.

II. The growth of nineteenth-century cities altered the networks and markets of cultural life.
   A. London grew from 959,000 (1800) to 2.6 million (1850) to 6.5 million (1900); Paris grew from 600,000 (1800) to 1.4 million (1850) to 3.6 million (1900); Berlin grew from 172,000 (1800) to 500,000 (1850) to 2.7 million (1900).
      1. Europe’s population grew rapidly in these years, mainly because of a steady decline in infant and childhood mortality.
      2. Women began having fewer babies because more children grew to adulthood. Family life in the cities was less tied to the extended family than in rural communities, which also gave women more options.
   B. City life also altered cultural patterns, as well as the social role of the family.
      1. City life was impersonal; it fostered innovation more than tradition.
      2. Growth in cities and education created a rapidly growing market for cultural goods, a market for writers, intellectuals, and artists.
   C. Cities provided a social context for new publications and newspapers, as well as the new institutions of the nation state.

C. Nations developed new institutions, including universities and public schools.
   1. Cities also fostered new institutions, including newspapers, cafés, book publishers, and intellectual associations.
   2. Cities encouraged cultural innovations, in part because city people were less tied to traditional social arrangements and, in contrast to people in small villages, they were generally more open to new ideas.
   3. Modern intellectual life and nationalism flourished in the cities.

D. The institutions of the nation-state (including schools and universities) developed in cities and contributed to the nationalization of urban people.
   1. Schools instructed people in national histories and languages, and cities became filled with national monuments, museums, and symbols.
   2. National identities increasingly displaced other identities; the work of intellectuals contributed to the creation of these identities.

E. This lecture notes how the new institutional context of national and urban life affected the work of intellectuals, then discusses the ideas of Jules Michelet and Adam Mickiewicz—two writers who defined national identities.

F. Writers made essential contributions to all nationalist ideologies because historians, poets, and other writers described the meaning of nations and connected personal identities with national identities.
D. Michelet expressed the nationalism of a Western European people who had established the institutions of an independent nation-state. One of these institutions was the Collège in which he taught history.

E. Mickiewicz expressed the nationalism of an Eastern European people who did not have an independent nation-state. He became the poetic and literary spokesperson for a national cultural and linguistic identity that lacked a state (Russia controlled Poland).

F. Both these writers expressed the faith that their own national people were the chosen people of history—a secularized religious idea.

G. The belief that one's nation has an exceptional mission or a unique historical role became typical of all modern nationalist ideologies.

IV. Michelet naturally believed that the French people were the special people of Europe. (Fichte had earlier claimed this role for Germany.)

A. Michelet thought each national group could contribute to liberty, but he was certain that the French had contributed more than any other people to the growth of liberty in the modern world.

1. Michelet had a Romantic view of the common people of the French nation; he said that through their suffering and blood they had expressed the universal human aspiration for liberty.

2. This was the meaning of the French Revolution and later wars.

B. Michelet's vision of history can be compared to Hegel's, but Michelet saw history as the unfolding of the will of the people rather than as the unfolding of the universal spirit or reason.

1. For Michelet, the people of the nation were somewhat like a deity.

2. The suffering of the French people leads to redemption; from their experience, other people may learn the truth of liberty. He summarized these ideas in his book The People (1846).

3. He described France "both as the representative of the liberties of all the world and as the country that links all the others together by sympathetic ties, the true introduction to universal love."

C. According to Michelet, France's mission in the world and role in history was to spread its understanding of liberty to other people. Michelet's own role in this process was to write about and teach this national history to help the French people know themselves.

D. Mickiewicz undertook a similar intellectual task for the Poles; he said that the suffering of the Polish nation would ultimately redeem Europe.

1. Poland had been divided by the other European states and suppressed by the Russian tsar; it had no national freedom or state.

2. Mickiewicz said that these events proved the uniqueness of Poland.

3. Poland was the Christ of Nations, he explained in Paris, because, like Christ, Poland had been persecuted and put to death.

4. But, also like Christ, Poland would rise from the grave, find new life, and bring hope or salvation to all other people.
5. This kind of nationalism became known as messianic nationalism, and it became all the more fervent because it had no national state.

E. The key theme of messianic nationalism stressed that suffering was necessary; it purified the nation’s people and showed that Poles were a chosen people.

1. When Poland became free, all other people would be free, too. Poland’s national salvation was the key to universal liberation.

2. Mickiewicz linked nationalism to religion and his lectures became increasingly emotional; large crowds attended and people wept.

3. Finally, the French government suppressed the lectures, which were seen as disruptive. At the last lecture, a woman rushed to the stage, shouting, “Long live Poland; long live Adam Mickiewicz.”

4. The police worried about such disruptions; the state officials wanted to decide which kinds of nationalism were appropriate.

F. The French authorities decided that Mickiewicz’s nationalism was no longer acceptable, and he lost his job as a state-supported professor.

V. Michelet and Mickiewicz expressed the influential themes of Romantic nationalism, which became an important form of nationalism both in Europe and other places.

A. Their expression of nationalism also brought together many of the main cultural patterns of nineteenth-century intellectual life.

B. They wrote and published books in a large capital city, they worked for a government institution (the Collège de France), and they viewed the nation as the fundamental source of personal and social identities.

C. More generally, Michelet and Mickiewicz showed how nationalism could replace or merge with older cultural and religious identities.

Essential Reading:

Supplementary Reading:

Questions to Consider:
1. Intellectuals became a more clearly defined professional group as they went to work in the schools of the modern nation-state and the culture industry of modern cities. Did intellectuals evolve from Enlightenment-style social critics into university-based experts?

2. Do you think the belief in national “exceptionalism” (as developed by such writers as Michelet and Mickiewicz) remains a powerful ideology in contemporary nations?

Lecture Nineteen
The Novel as Art and Social Criticism

Scope: The growth of cities and a new urban economic life helped to stimulate the development of new literary works. These new novels have often been described as a post-Romantic “literary realism,” because they were more concerned with the social world, social mores, and social relations than with the exotic or heroic actions of Romantic heroes. This lecture discusses three writers who contributed to new nineteenth-century conceptions of the novel: Stendhal, Honoré de Balzac, and Gustave Flaubert. Each of these writers criticized what he perceived as the “hollowness” of modern, ambitious people. They saw the nineteenth century as the era in which bourgeois social and economic values had come to dominate all of social life. We look at these themes with reference to several important novels and conclude with particular emphasis on Flaubert’s critique of cultural clichés in *Madame Bovary*.

Outline

I. The growth of modern cities and the development of a modern “culture industry” contributed to the growing popularity of novels, as well as the spread of nationalism.

A. The evolution and popularity of the modern novel was perhaps the most important literary trend in European culture during the nineteenth century.

B. The novels of the era became an innovative cultural form in which writers explored various uses of language and narrative; novelists increasingly viewed themselves as artists who depicted social reality in words.

1. The most notable trend in mid-nineteenth-century novels was the movement away from Romanticism toward what is called realism.

2. The stories of Romantic heroes, though still popular with many readers, eventually became a cultural cliché.

C. Romanticism gradually lost influence as a literary genre, but it was particularly challenged in France and England, perhaps because revolutionary political and economic changes were felt most acutely there.

1. The novels of Charles Dickens represent a famous literary response to the social effects of the Industrial Revolution in Britain.

2. In France, there was a strong sense that the older aristocracy had lost its significance and a new bourgeois social system had emerged.

3. Many people decided that the age of political heroism was over.
D. A new kind of novel gradually displaced the Romantic genre; where Romanticism stressed the exotic, the mysterious, and the world of nature, a new realist literature focused on the everyday life of everyday people.

1. The problems of realistic fiction (as it has often been called) concerned the social world, social mores, and social relations.
2. In fact, realist fiction often portrayed the boredom of everyday life rather than intense emotional life; this challenged Romanticism.
3. The twentieth-century French theorist Roland Barthes described this literary portrait of daily life as an attempt to create a “Reality Effect.”
4. The “reality effect” is produced through detailed descriptions in the novel, which create illusions of reality and hide the work’s fictionality.

II. The “reality” that appeared in such works was the daily struggle to get ahead in bourgeois society; in this world, wealth became the main sign of social status.

A. The nineteenth-century French realist novel was partly a literary critique of post-revolutionary bourgeois society.

1. The new novel began as a description and critique of a social world that the new social theorists were also examining, but some novelists also saw their literature as an artistic alternative to urban money-grubbing.
2. In this sense, an important Romantic theme reappeared in the belief that art can be better than bourgeois society.

B. The progression toward the view of “art as an alternative to society” evolved in France from Stendhal to Balzac to Flaubert (and many others).

1. Stendhal and Balzac portrayed a world in which everyone is on the make, trying to carve out a place for themselves and their ambitions.
2. All three novelists developed critiques of the social world, even as they saw little chance that it would change in any significant way.
3. Flaubert was the most extreme example of this view; he came closest to making art and the quest for pure language into a substitute for social reform or political action.

III. Stendhal (1783–1842), whose real name was Henri Beyle, came originally from Grenoble, but he went to live in Paris at the beginning of the Napoleonic regime.

A. He got a job in the government, then in the diplomatic corps; he rose rapidly in his career until he lost his job with the fall of Napoleon.

1. Unlike many intellectuals of the era, Stendhal retained a fascination with, and respect for, Napoleon. After 1815, he lived for many years in poverty until he finally got a minor diplomatic post in Italy.
2. He was in his forties before he settled down to serious writing, using the literary name of Stendhal; he also wrote essays on the nature of love.
3. He said he felt like a stranger in his own time and in modern society, and he thought he was born too early for his writing to be understood.
4. He assumed that it might be one hundred years before people understood him.

B. Stendhal identified more with the aristocracy than with the bourgeoisie; he felt contempt for bourgeois society, because he said it ended the possibility for heroism, as well as the elegance and wit of the salons of the old regime.

1. Stendhal said that the salons of the bourgeois age were boring; people went into society to advance their self-interest or to gossip.
2. He said that great ideas weren’t discussed in nineteenth-century salons: “There’s no more wit,” Stendhal explained, “everyone saves all his energy for a job that will give him standing in the world.”

C. This conception of calculated self-interest forms a major theme in Stendhal’s famous novel The Red and the Black (1831).

1. The Red refers to Napoleon’s soldiers; the Black refers to the clergy.
2. The leading character is a young man named Julian Sorel; he’s a modern man on the make who learns to say the right lines.
3. He’s a calculating careerist who makes his way in the social world and courts the daughter of an aristocratic family, though his career is in the Church.

D. But Julian is not a Romantic hero. He does not live by passionate emotion and he has no deep commitments; he is a hollow man (he admires Napoleon).

1. Julian claims to have ideals, but he is hypocritical; ultimately, Julian realizes that his life is hollow and empty after he attempts to kill a woman who blocked his ambitions.
2. He’s executed in the end, as a hero should be, but his story is not the story of a superior Romantic hero; his ambitions are stymied.
3. Stendhal wrote the story of a society that has gone hollow; this world is a pale imitation of a more authentic world and authentic people.
IV. Somewhat similar concerns emerged in the work of Balzac (1799–1850). Like Stendhal, Balzac came from the provinces to Paris as a young man (from Tours).

A. He tried to study law but soon took up writing, hoping to make a fortune by writing sensationalist novels; he did this for several years.
   1. Eventually, Balzac decided to write serious novels under his own name. He settled down to hard work and ultimately wrote about ninety novels in a series of books called *The Human Comedy*.
   2. He never had much money, but he often worked up to sixteen hours a day. He wrote all night to avoid disturbances and drank huge amounts of coffee (about thirty cups) each night to stay awake.
   3. He died at age fifty after developing severe stomach problems.

B. In his many novels, Balzac developed the portrait of a society that had become obsessed with money. He portrayed a world that had lost its balance in the mad pursuit of wealth and status—the only things that city people cared about.

   1. Balzac compared his literary project to the work of a natural scientist, except he described types of people rather than species of birds or bugs.
   2. All his descriptions came back always to a story of moral decline and corruption; honest moral values have disappeared.

C. These themes appear, for example, in *Père Goriot* (1834), one of his best novels, which tells the story of an old man who gives away all his money to his two ungrateful daughters, who waste it in their quest for social status.

   1. The daughters are typical of the whole society, as Goriot finally realizes: “Money is life itself,” old Goriot says in despair; “it’s the mainspring of everything.”
   2. Such themes appear throughout Balzac’s novels, in which everyone is striving to get ahead by suspicious or reckless means.
   3. Balzac was conservative in his politics, but his novels suggest a need for radical social changes. He complained that stock certificates now provided what had once come from birth certificates: social status.

V. The problems of the bourgeois era also appear as a major theme in the works of Gustave Flaubert (1821–1880).

A. Flaubert was also from the French provinces (Rouen in Normandy) and went to Paris to study law.

   1. Flaubert’s father was a successful doctor who wanted his son to be in a stable profession, but young Flaubert did not like the law.
   2. In early 1844, Flaubert had a nervous collapse and never returned to the study of law; his only interest was literature.
   3. He also lost interest in politics, especially after 1848.

B. Like Stendhal and Balzac, Flaubert thought modern society had fallen into a crisis, but he focused on something other than boring salons or destructive economic speculations.

   1. Flaubert was appalled by the mediocrity and clichés of modern bourgeois cultures, and he was obsessed with the problem of language.
   2. He was convinced that most conversation consisted of thoughtless clichés; these were inescapable, but they had lost all true meaning.
   3. Flaubert wanted to publish a *Dictionary of Received Ideas*, which would consist of nothing but banal clichés.

C. The attack on clichéd uses of language is an important aspect of his famous novel *Madame Bovary* (1857), which portrays the problem of stupidity and the clichés of adultery.

   1. Such characters as Charles Bovary (a doctor) and his wife, Emma, rely on clichéd forms of language.
   2. Flaubert suggests that language is essential for meaning, but it’s also inadequate; it says too much or too little about human experience.
   3. “The human tongue,” he wrote, “is like a cracked cauldron on which we beat out tunes to set a bear dancing when we would make the stars weep with our melodies.”

D. Flaubert was put on trial for “offending public morals” in *Madame Bovary*, but he was acquitted; modern critics argue that it was his language rather than his portrait of adultery that was truly subversive.

E. By stressing the creative act of the writer, Flaubert offered art as an alternative to the corrupt world; the artist must struggle against clichés and the banal mediocrity of bourgeois society—language could create another world.

**Essential Reading:**
Honoré de Balzac, *Père Goriot*.

**Supplementary Reading:**


**Questions to Consider:**
1. Do you think that literature can provide a more persuasive account of social and cultural realities than historical studies or social theory?
2. In what ways did Stendhal, Balzac, and Flaubert want to change modern views of the world? Can literary language change the social world?
Lecture Twenty
Science and Its Literary Critics

Scope: The growing influence of science in European cultural life can be seen in the popularity of nineteenth-century Positivism, an intellectual movement that sought to apply the principles of scientific knowledge to the study of human societies. This lecture discusses a leading advocate of Positivism, the French sociologist Auguste Comte, to illustrate how new conceptions of “positive” knowledge focused on the external behavior of human beings. Positivism also promoted a vision of society in which scientific experts and sociologists would have great influence on governments and legal systems. But Positivism generated vehement criticisms from some intellectuals who questioned its view of human beings and human rationality. We can see forceful examples of such criticisms in the literary work of the Russian novelist Fyodor Dostoevsky, who developed imaginative critiques of Positivism and its intellectual advocates.

Outline

I. The desire to explain and interpret modern social life, which (as we’ve seen) became a major theme of nineteenth-century novels, also shaped a new scientific study of society.
   A. Science had acquired great intellectual prestige during the Enlightenment, and science remained the most important model for knowledge in the nineteenth century.
      1. Despite the political and cultural critiques of the Enlightenment, many nineteenth-century intellectuals continued the search for a reliable knowledge that could explain the social world as the sciences explained nature.
      2. These theorists believed that scientific knowledge could improve the social world—a belief they shared with the philosophes.
   B. This faith in the constructive power of science reached its fullest expression in the intellectual movement called Positivism.
      1. Positivism became most popular in France after about 1850, and its most famous advocate was Auguste Comte.
      2. Positivism spread widely across Europe (also reaching Russia) as part of the nineteenth-century belief in science, technology, and progress.
   C. Yet this spreading creed of Positivism also elicited strong attacks from critics in other parts of Europe, including people in Germany and Eastern Europe.

II. The most optimistic advocate of the use of science for social analysis may have been Auguste Comte (1798–1857), who began his career as a follower of Saint-Simon.
   A. Comte resembled many nineteenth-century conservatives in believing that post-Revolutionary society was characterized by chaos rather than order.
      1. He assumed that the old order couldn’t be restored; he wanted to establish a new basis for social order and social beliefs.
      2. Instead of a return to Catholicism (De Maistre’s position), Comte believed that science could provide social harmony and truth.
      3. The new priests of this scientific society would be the scientists, among whom he included himself.
   B. Comte had two main goals for his intellectual project.
      1. He wanted to describe the nature of scientific knowledge and the creation of a society with laws and institutions that would be based on good science.
      2. Comte argued that scientific knowledge was the one true form of knowledge, or what he called the only positive form of knowledge.
   C. Positivism came from this concept of science as positive knowledge; it referred to a method of observing specific facts about the external world.
1. This science is only descriptive; we can't speak of ultimate or higher causes, because they can't be observed or described.
2. The goal was to avoid any claims that could not be positively known. Good Positivists avoided references to the irrational or spiritual aspects of human life; they dealt only with external descriptions.

D. Comte laid out his theories in a series of important books, but the key work was the *Course of Positive Philosophy* (1830–1842).
1. He said that positive knowledge was the characteristic of a new era in human history; there had been three eras in human history.
2. The theological age came first, then the metaphysical age; now human history had entered the Positive Age, which expressed the growth of empirical science and the decline of religion.

E. Among the various forms of science, Comte said that the most important new scientific field was sociology (he created this term), because the scientific study of society had become possible only in the Positive Age.
1. Comte saw himself as the incarnation of this new scientific sociology, which would explain all the categories of human social life.
2. As sociologists learned the laws of social development, they would pass on the information to the government, which would create new laws and policies.
3. Comte's theory had a strong authoritarian dimension because elite specialists would simply decide what the government should do.

F. Comte's ideas became popular in France during the authoritarian era of Napoleon III, who thought that science could bring happiness to the masses.
1. Positivism was somewhat like Utilitarianism in stressing the external conditions of happiness without concern for complex human emotions.
2. The political application of Positivism showed little interest in individual freedom, but the philosophical assumptions became popular among people who made science a kind of new religion.
3. More generally, Positivism stimulated the scholarly development of the modern social sciences and the systematic study of human societies.

III. The Positivist emphasis on the description of external behaviors and its faith in the social and even personal value of scientific knowledge provoked a cultural response.

A. Among the many writers who responded to Positivist theories, I think Dostoevsky (1821–1881) represents the most interesting literary critique.

1. For Dostoevsky, the internal form of knowledge is the only kind that is really important or significant; he suggests this in many of his novels.
2. Dostoevsky stressed the internal human experiences and the irrational human thoughts that Positivist knowledge did not describe.
3. His novel *Notes from Underground* (1864) exemplifies this theme.

B. Dostoevsky once said about himself: "Always and in everything I go to the extreme limit"; this was a pattern in his life and in his books.
1. His father was an alcoholic with an extremely unstable and brutal personality; he belonged to the upper class and owned a lot of property.
2. He treated the people who worked on his lands with great brutality, and his serfs eventually murdered him.
3. This murder occurred when Dostoevsky was sixteen years old; it was one of the early traumatic events in his life.
4. He later went off to a university in St. Petersburg, where he loved to read novels; he avoided social life and began to write.

C. Dostoevsky also became interested in politics. In 1849, he was arrested and sentenced to death because of his connections with a socialist political group.
1. On the morning of his scheduled execution, he and about twenty other young men were lined up in the prison yard to be shot, but at the last moment, a messenger from the Tsar arrived to stop the executions.
2. The prisoners would instead be sent to Siberia; several later went insane, but Dostoevsky survived eight years in a Siberian prison.
3. He lived with the most desperate elements of society and became more religious; he developed a new interest in Christianity.

D. Dostoevsky was finally freed from Siberia and soon married an older woman, but the marriage was unhappy and characterized by numerous marital conflicts.
1. He set off to travel extensively in Western Europe, where he became addicted to gambling, lost great sums of money, and lived in poverty.
2. He had a brother whom he liked, but the brother died. After his wife died, he had several unhappy love affairs.
3. Writing became his creative activity, but he wrote in great poverty.

IV. These various aspects of Dostoevsky's life are important because they may help to explain his critique of rationalism and Positivism.

A. He was convinced that many parts of human life are mysterious, irrational, and beyond the reach of science.
Lecture Twenty-One: Charles Darwin and the New Biology

Scope: The prestige of science in the later nineteenth century reflected in part the great popularity of the new biology, which achieved cultural acclaim and notoriety in the famous theories of Charles Darwin. In this lecture, we examine the development of Darwin's theory of evolution and show how it fit into a wider cultural tendency to think about nature and culture in terms of evolutionary change. Darwin's thought grew out of his studies of geology and Malthusian population theories, as well as his own travel experiences in South America. His view of "natural selection" challenged Enlightenment conceptions of the harmonious natural world and Christian beliefs about divine meaning or purpose in the processes of nature.

Outline

I. European culture after 1850 remained very much drawn to the intellectual prestige of science; this was part of the appeal of Positivism—it carried science from nature into the study and organization of human societies.

A. Science had, of course, been a key component of European thought since at least the seventeenth century, but it reached a larger part of the population after the mid-nineteenth century.
   1. The term scientist did not enter the English language until about 1840, but the status of scientific study was by then well established.
   2. The creation of new schools and newspapers brought science to more people, and scientific thought tended to displace Romanticism.
   3. It also posed a challenge to Christianity and other religions, in part because science was seen as the basis of true knowledge and progress.

B. The most influential science of the late nineteenth century was biology; this differed from the early eighteenth century, when physics had been the most influential science in intellectual culture.
   1. Biology was applied more directly to human society than physics had been; this new science posed questions about human nature.
   2. The idea of evolution in biology overlapped with comparable themes in history and philosophy; theories of evolutionary social development had long shaped the concept of human progress.

C. In this lecture, I will discuss the cultural context in which Charles Darwin developed his theory of evolution, then note a few of his key ideas. In the next lecture, we'll discuss how his theories entered into social thought.

Essential Reading:
Fyodor Dostoevsky, Notes from Underground.

Supplementary Reading:
Mikhail Bakhtin, Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics, pp. 5–43.

Questions to Consider:
1. Do most people believe that science can solve the social or environmental problems of modern societies?
2. Do you think people will always find reasons to be unhappy in even the most advanced conditions of scientific progress?
1. Darwinian ideas transformed the ways in which many people viewed both nature and human societies.

2. Darwin’s impact on European culture has sometimes been compared to the impact of Marx because Darwin’s ideas (like those of Marx) moved far beyond intellectual circles and shaped widely held political ideas.

3. Darwin’s work offers another striking example of the influence of ideas in social life; the debate about Darwin’s theories has continued from his lifetime down to the present.

II. The concept of evolutionary change was by no means invented by Darwin. We’ve seen that the eighteenth-century philosophers believed in the progressive evolution of reason and that Hegel and Marx developed famous theories about the evolution of history.

A. The traditional concept of evolution, however, generally emphasized the evolution of human societies and history; nature was seen as more permanent.

1. There had, of course, been a dramatic moment of change when the world was created, but since that moment, the world of nature seemed to stand as a kind of static backdrop to the changes of human history.

2. This notion of a static natural world was present in both religious views of the world and in most forms of modern physical science.

B. The classical Christian view described nature as a “Great Chain of Being” in which each species occupied a God-given place in the natural order.

1. Nature was seen as a hierarchical system whose natural order led more or less harmoniously from lower to higher forms of life.

2. The great “chain” led from the lowest plants and animals to human beings and, finally, to God; this was the medieval view, which drew clear distinctions between animals and human beings.

C. The scientific view as developed in Newtonian science described nature in terms of universal laws, but the laws did not change across time.

1. In this view, the natural world seemed to resemble a great clock that ticked in a steady, predictable manner, and there was a comfortable, rational harmony in the universal laws of gravity.

2. The great innovation of Darwinian evolution was to stress the dynamic, changing aspects of nature and to emphasize the conflicts, rather than the harmony, in the natural world.

D. This emphasis on the dynamic elements of nature did not simply emerge full-blown in the mind of Charles Darwin.

1. His science, like all other forms of thought, emerged out of a social and cultural context that enabled him to develop his new ideas; this context also explains why his ideas attracted so much early attention.

2. Two major intellectual components of this cultural context were the new geological theories of Charles Lyell and the older economic and population theories of Thomas Malthus.

E. Geology made great advances in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries; its key advance came in new knowledge about the great age of the earth.

1. Drawing on Biblical narratives, Europeans had long believed that the earth was a little over 6,000 years old, but the study of fossils and rocks radically altered this view.

2. Also, geologists came to believe that the natural processes we now see in the world—climate, winds, oceans, rivers, fire, and so on—had always been changing the earth’s surface.

3. There had been no dramatic change in these geological processes and no outside interventions that suddenly changed the earth’s surface.

F. These arguments were brought together in the theory of “Uniformitarianism,” which Charles Lyell described in his influential book Principles of Geology (1830). Lyell said that the earth’s surface changed in a uniform way.

1. Darwin read Lyell’s work while he was traveling around the coast of South America in the early 1830s.

2. He drew from Lyell a new understanding of how the earth changed slowly over long periods of time. (Lyell became one of Darwin’s closest friends in the late 1830s.)

G. The other important theoretical influence on Darwin’s thought came through his reading of Thomas Malthus, who had written on population growth and the limits of the food supply.

1. Darwin later described how reading Malthus affected his views of natural history.

2. “It at once struck me that under these circumstances favorable variations [of animals] would tend to be preserved and unfavorable variations would be destroyed. The result of this would be new species.”

3. A limited supply of resources (the theme of classical economists) would result in a struggle for existence, and the fittest—as Darwin later explained the process—would survive through natural selection.

III. Darwin (1809–1882) brought all of this together in his famous book The Origin of Species (1859), which became an immediate bestseller.

A. Darwin wrote this book after many years of collecting evidence through his study of natural history and after many years of reflection.
nature would determine which species were successful and which were not.

E. Although Darwin had developed these ideas by about 1840, he spent twenty more years gathering specific evidence from the natural world.
1. He finally published The Origin of Species when he learned that a younger scientist (Alfred Russel Wallace) had developed similar theories and was about to publish these ideas.
3. The book provoked immediate criticism from readers who said it denied a divine order or plan for nature, but Darwin also attracted strong support from readers who welcomed his comprehensive theory.
4. The scientific theory appeared in a culture that was familiar with concepts of evolution, but for many people, Darwin's theory also enhanced the prestige of science.

IV. Darwin's theory coincided with various cultural assumptions of the era, but it became controversial because it also challenged and altered these assumptions.

A. According to Darwin, the evolutionary processes of nature developed through chance, rather than through any purposeful activity or divine will.
1. There was no teleology or sense of direction in Darwin's theory; this aspect of the theory contrasted strongly with Hegel's ideas and with Christianity.
2. There was constant change in nature, but this change did not lead toward any specific outcome; even human beings were not the goal.

B. The philosophical implications of the theory became even more controversial when other thinkers began applying evolutionary theories to society.

Essential Reading:

Supplementary Reading:

Questions to Consider:
1. In what ways did Darwin's ideas express the cultural assumptions of his era?
   In what ways did his ideas upset the dominant assumptions of post-revolutionary European culture?
2. Why do you think Darwin's theory of evolution remains controversial?
Lecture Twenty-Two
The Controversies of Social Darwinism

Scope: Darwin's ideas carried major implications for many of the traditional ideas in Western culture, including biblical accounts of creation, Christian morality, and the belief in the uniqueness of human beings. Although Darwin hesitated to draw social conclusions from his biological theories, other writers quickly began to debate the possible significance for human social life. Many late nineteenth-century authors believed in Social Darwinism, or the theory that individual human beings and human cultures faced a constant struggle for survival (like animals in the natural world). This lecture examines the Social Darwinists' emphasis on the "survival of the fittest," with special reference to the ideas of the English writer Herbert Spencer. It also notes how such theories contributed to new forms of racism and helped to justify the expansion of European imperialism.

Outline

I. The scientific theories that emerged in the scientific revolution of the seventeenth century circulated among a very small elite; only a few people understood the complexities of Newtonian physics, and the social implications did not emerge until much later.

   A. The aspiration to create a rational society that might resemble the rational order of Newtonian physics did not really develop until the eighteenth century.

   B. The social and cultural implications of Darwinian science, however, became apparent to some people almost immediately after Darwin published The Origin of Species (1859).
      1. For many late nineteenth-century theorists, Darwin's account of evolution and natural selection suggested that the struggles in human societies were comparable to the struggle for survival in nature.
      2. Only the "fittest" could survive or could be successful in social and economic life; therefore (as the "Social Darwinists" argued), the government should not intervene to help or protect the poor.

   C. The social implication of Darwinian thought can be seen in the evolutionary theories of the English writer Herbert Spencer (1820-1903).
      1. Spencer's embrace of a Social Darwinian political theory was only part of the philosophical response to Darwin.

   2. Before turning to Spencer, we need to look more generally at the ways in which Darwin's work challenged Western intellectual traditions.

II. As its more astute critics recognized, Darwinian science challenged traditional aspects of Western thought in at least four broad thematic areas.

   A. First, the theory of evolution clearly rejected the biblical account of God's creation of human beings; this was its first challenge to religion because Darwin showed that creation took millions of years rather than six days.
      1. He also argued that there had never been any form of divine intervention in the processes of natural evolution.
      2. This challenge was the easiest for religious people to counter.
      3. Many Christians began to argue that evolution was simply God's method for creating human beings, and the biblical account was interpreted as a kind of parable.
      4. The "six days" in the biblical account of creation didn't literally mean six days; this was simply a metaphor for God's work as Prime Mover.
      5. Darwin did not say this, but many religious people took this view.

   B. The second implication of Darwin's theory was more threatening because it seemed to challenge the assumptions of religious morality.
      1. If evolutionary progress came through a struggle for resources and the survival of the fittest organisms, why should people help the weak?
      2. It would be better—or more natural—to support an unrestrained struggle rather than to practice a Christian morality that sought to lift up or support the weak and the "unfit" persons of the world.
      3. This was the radical ethical implication that some drew from Darwin.

   C. The third implication of Darwin's theory was also unsettling, because it stressed that humans were part of nature and not linked to a higher sphere.
      1. Evolutionary theory argued that humans were simply another kind of animal whose main distinction was a larger brain or a good thumb or an unusual ear formation.
      2. Darwin presented a strictly materialist view of human beings and offered no reasons to assume that human beings had souls.
      3. This materialism also challenged traditional religious conceptions of human beings because it seemed to deny all ideas of a human spiritual essence or identity.

   D. The fourth implication of Darwin's theories challenged the optimistic Enlightenment views of nature itself.
1. Darwinian theories denied that a purposeful God could have any role in the random operations of natural selection; there seemed to be no purposeful “watchmaker,” as eighteenth-century deists had suggested.

2. Also, nature no longer appeared to be a stable, harmonious system, because it was in constant change and transformation.

3. Competition, rather than harmony, was its most notable trait; nature was not such a comfortable, predictable place after all.

4. This Darwinian view of nature challenged both the Enlightenment and Christian theology, and it made conflict the most salient natural reality.

III. Darwin himself was not inclined to explore the philosophical or social consequences of his evolutionary theories. He did not want controversies, and his health problems made him hesitant to enter public debates or even attend scientific meetings.

A. He did write numerous letters, however, and speculated on the specific evolutionary history of human beings in *The Descent of Man* (1871).

1. In this book, Darwin argued that humans had evolved from the higher animals and noted that all human beings shared the same descent.

2. He explicitly denied the existence of any significant physical or mental differences between the various human “races.”

3. The different races, he explained, “resemble each other closely in a multitude of points,” and he stressed that this fact held “with equal or greater force with respect to the...points of mental similarity between the most distinct races of man.”

B. In short, Darwin did not draw racist conclusions from his own data or evolutionary theories.

1. He suggested that the qualities that brought survival in nature were not the same as the qualities that brought success in society.

2. Social success depended on cooperation rather than constant competition; social life was not just a struggle for survival.

C. Despite Darwin’s own views on both race and competition, many writers used his theories to portray human life as an endless struggle for survival.

1. New intellectual debate developed over the question of how Darwin’s biological theories might be applied to human societies.

2. At first, though, the biological theory itself was hotly debated.

D. The most famous early debate occurred at Oxford in 1860 between the scientist T. H. Huxley and Bishop Samuel Wilberforce of the Anglican Church.

1. Huxley defended Darwin’s theories as a major advance for scientific knowledge, but Wilberforce attacked Darwin for demeaning humans.

2. Wilberforce asserted that Darwin’s theory took away the dignity of human beings, saying that he did not want to claim a monkey as his ancestor.

3. Huxley said he would rather be descended from an honest ape than from a man who had a brain but refused to use it.

4. Although the issue was never resolved, Huxley’s view gradually prevailed in science and in most spheres of popular culture.

5. Darwin’s concept of evolution became the new intellectual paradigm.

IV. The more difficult theoretical question for most intellectuals emerged in assessing the value or relevance of Darwinian theories for human social life.

A. Many late nineteenth-century authors argued for the position that came to be called *Social Darwinism*; Herbert Spencer was one of the most influential Social Darwinists.

1. Like Darwin, Spencer had enough money to write and pursue his research without taking a job as a teacher or journalist.

2. Although he worried constantly about his health (also like Darwin) and lived a rather solitary life (unlike Darwin, he never married or had children), Spencer was a prolific writer.

3. He had already developed an idea of “social evolution” even before Darwin published *The Origin of Species*, but he soon began using Darwin’s scientific insights to extend his own social theories.

4. It was Spencer who actually first used the phrase “survival of the fittest,” which became the key idea for Social Darwinian writers.

B. Spencer believed that the evolutionary principle and such concepts as natural selection could be applied to all of social life.

1. He said that everything in society, as well as in nature, evolved from simple forms to more complex forms.

2. Spencer saw the evolutionary principle as the key to human history, because the “survival of the fittest” leads to human progress.

3. Yet he saw a great danger in his own culture because many people in government and in socialist political groups wanted the state to provide more support to the weakest members of society.

4. He wrote a book called *The Man versus the State* (1884) in which he complained about the “sins of the legislator.”

C. According to Spencer, science had shown the “beneficial results of the survival of the fittest,” but legislators in modern England were trying to undermine this truth of nature through their social legislation.

1. “Now more than ever before in history...,” he complained, they were “doing all they can to further survival of the unfittest!”
Lecture Twenty-Three
The Heroic Critic in Mass Society

Scope: By the middle and later decades of the nineteenth century, there was a growing belief in the value of majority rule and in the decisive shaping power of collective identities, such as nationality, class, or race. Responding to the social and cultural tendencies in modern democratic societies, some intellectuals promoted a new belief in the importance of the heroic, isolated individual—though this new heroic individual lacked the sentiment or youthful virtues of earlier Romantic heroes. This lecture looks at the emergence of new conceptions of the “heroic” in history and culture by examining the ideas of the historian Thomas Carlyle and the religious philosopher Søren Kierkegaard. Both of these thinkers sought to define the meaning of independent and even heroic individual action as they wrote about history and modern culture. Similar themes also appeared in the work of Matthew Arnold, who advocated a kind of heroic quest for high cultural ideals amid the leveling cultural patterns of modern mass society.

Outline

I. By the latter decades of the nineteenth century, the political and social tendencies of the post-revolutionary era had become well established in European society.

A. The older aristocratic European order had been challenged and radically altered by the expanding middle classes and working classes and by the spread of liberal democratic values.
   1. The development of industry, cities, government bureaucracies, and other modern institutions was creating a modern mass society.
   2. These patterns were most advanced in northern European nations, such as Britain, Germany, France, and the Scandinavian countries.
   3. Despite the liberal theories of individualism, the new mass societies seemed to embody cultural patterns that Tocqueville had discussed when he warned about a “tyranny of the majority.”
   4. Although many intellectuals supported the development of modern social equality, there was also a growing critique of middle-class conformity or the cultural mediocrity of modern bourgeois life.

B. This emphasis on the decisive political or social legitimacy of majority opinions entered most forms of political theory.
   1. Among liberals, the idea of “majority rule” was used to support the gradual expansion of voting rights (moving toward universal manhood suffrage) and the importance of constitutional government.

Essential Reading:

Herbert Spencer, The Man versus The State, in Spencer, Political Writings, pp. 106–139, 170–175.

Supplementary Reading:

Questions to Consider:
1. Do you think the theory of natural selection can be applied to social life or to human institutions?
2. Do you think that the history of modern wars and European imperialism has discredited Social Darwinian ideas?
2. Liberalism generally advocated individual rights, but the social goal was basically utilitarian: the greatest good for the greatest number.

C. Conservatism after the mid-nineteenth century also developed a new collective emphasis, though many conservatives continued to favor elite rule.
1. Conservatives also took up the cause of nationalism and argued that the individual's interests were represented by the whole nation.
2. Many conservatives also drew on Social Darwinism to embrace new forms of racism that defined individuals by their racial groups.

D. Socialism also stressed collective identities, though the socialists focused on class identities rather than on nation or race. Socialists argued that individual identities reflected one's position in an economic class; each person was either bourgeois or proletarian.

E. All these popular ideologies—majority rule, nationalism, socialism—contributed to what might be called the new mass society, but this new society was also increasingly shaped by a modern culture industry.
1. Popular cultural publications and entertainment (e.g., newspapers, magazines, theaters, concerts) now catered to the middle class.
2. The middle class replaced the aristocracy as consumers of culture, and culture itself became another component of the market system.

II. This nineteenth-century movement toward the democratization of both politics and culture provoked discomfort among many intellectuals (Tocqueville was one example) and elicited a new philosophical defense of the exceptional or the heroic individual.

A. The concept of the heroic individual was, of course, an old Romantic theme, but the new idea of cultural heroism lost its earlier Romantic sentiment.
1. The new heroic individual in bourgeois society did not affirm the beauty of nature, frustrated love, or an early poetic death.
2. Instead, the new heroic figure was seen as someone who recognized the crisis and mediocrity of the modern age or the emptiness of its culture.
3. The new heroic figure (as depicted in philosophical writings) would see the dangers of modern politics and culture but also create a new higher "self" through personal will or a rejection of bourgeois culture.
4. Such persons did not flee, as Romantic heroes had done, into nature or exotic cultures; they affirmed their heroism in modern mass society.

B. To analyze this idea of the heroic individual, we'll look at three writers who promoted it in different ways in mid-nineteenth-century Europe: Thomas Carlyle, Søren Kierkegaard, and Matthew Arnold.

1. Despite their differences, each of these writers argued that modern societies needed persons who would affirm their cultural independence or defend exceptional cultural values against a leveling mass society.
2. This affirmation of the exceptional person's essential cultural role reached a philosophical culmination in Friedrich Nietzsche, whom we will discuss in the next lecture.
3. The heroic, struggling individual was an old Protestant theme (it should, perhaps, be noted that all these writers, including Nietzsche, came from pious Protestant families), but the theme was now more secular.
4. All these thinkers shared a horror of what modern society did to the heroic, exceptional individual; they called modern times 'the age of mediocrity.'

III. The search for heroic figures in human history can be seen most clearly in the work of Thomas Carlyle (1795–1881), who grew up in rural Scotland.

A. Carlyle was raised in a strict Presbyterian family. His family hoped that he would become a minister, but he found another way to preach in his writings.
1. Although he wrote a novel (Sartor Resartus) in his youth, Carlyle was best known as a historian after he wrote a history of the French Revolution; he did not like the Revolution's egalitarianism.
2. Carlyle believed in the "Great Man" interpretation of history and argued that all great historical developments occurred because of exceptional, forceful leaders.
3. He developed these themes in a series of famous lectures in London, which were soon published as a book, On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History (1841).
4. Carlyle assumed that the mass of people were lazy or weak; they acted creatively only when mobilized by heroic or great individuals.
5. The proper subjects for historical study were the great men who moved history forward; great events reflect their leadership.

B. The great men in Carlyle's view of history included writers (e.g., Dante) and religious leaders (e.g., Luther), as well as political leaders (e.g., Cromwell).
1. His theory of history looked only at cultural or political elites, and it could be used to justify rule by elites—the people who make history.
2. In England, this historical theory offered an alternative to the demand for more democratic voting rights, which was a major political issue in Carlyle's era.
3. Historical examples seemed to show that great men should rule the masses because most people were either lazy or lacking creativity.
C. The more general point in Carlyle's theory, however (apart from its contemporary political implications), emerged in his claim that only a few exceptional people made the decisive contributions to history or culture.

D. This was a historical argument for ignoring the masses or for believing that exceptional persons must always stand apart from the masses.

IV. Somewhat similar views of the heroic individual emerged in the religious themes of the Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard (1813–1855).

A. Kierkegaard believed that modern society had become hostile to all expressions of true individuality and true ethical action.
   1. At least, this was the conclusion he drew from observing the people of Copenhagen, where he lived virtually his entire life.
   2. His mother and five of his siblings died while he was young, and he lived alone after he broke his engagement with a woman he had wanted to marry.

B. In such works as *The Sickness unto Death* (1849), Kierkegaard argued that the modern age was profoundly anti-Christian, though Europe's political leaders called themselves Christians. European Christians did not live like Christ.
   1. Business dominated social relations, and the values of individuals simply reflected public opinion or external social codes.
   2. Individuals had to conform to the political and social majorities in this modern era, but the conformity denied a true inner life.

C. Kierkegaard said that this flight from inner life to public conformity resulted from modern attempts to live without God.
   1. He argued that the true inner life must cultivate a connection to the infinite, which means it must transcend the material world.
   2. Confronting the inner life, however, means that one must confront the absurdity of existence—an absurdity that comes from the conflict between individual aspirations for life and the inevitability of death.
   3. When people look honestly at this inner dilemma, they feel great anxiety and despair; therefore, they prefer to ignore it.
   4. They ignore the despair by public conformity or by public displays of religion, but they try to avoid the dreadful truth of their lives.

D. Kierkegaard said that the true Christian does not conform; he or she looks at the absurdity with honesty, then takes a leap of faith toward the infinity of God. This leap of faith, however, doesn't occur simply by going to church.
   1. True Christians will not be understood in the modern world; they'll be ridiculed, ignored, or persecuted—as Kierkegaard was—for challenging the clichés of the so-called Christian culture.

2. Kierkegaard said that only the solitary Christian could recognize the emptiness of modern European culture and take the heroic leap of faith that led away from modern conformity (but toward God).

V. Matthew Arnold (1822–1888) shared much of Kierkegaard's concern about the numbing mediocrity of cultural life in modern middle-class societies.

A. Arnold did not live an isolated life of existential angst; he worked for the British government as an inspector of schools, held a position at Oxford, and was married (three of his children died young).

B. He became a major cultural critic, especially after publishing *Culture and Anarchy* (1869)—a book that condemned middle-class "Philistines."
   1. Arnold wanted people to draw from great cultural achievements "the best which has been thought and said in the world." Then use such cultural insights to rethink all "stock notions and habits."
   2. According to Arnold, Victorian British society was dominated by a passive middle class that accepted conventional, conformist ideas.

C. Condemning this dull conformity, Arnold called for a kind of heroic pursuit of high cultural traditions.
   1. Arnold has often been criticized for defending canonical traditions, yet he clearly viewed his own project as a call for critical thinking against the received opinions and conformity of his own day.
   2. But he believed that critical thought required knowledge of a common culture—but of high literature rather than the daily press.

VI. The call for an intellectual resistance to modern mass society thus appeared in literary critics, such as Arnold, as well as in the history of Carlyle or in the cultural critiques of Kierkegaard, and it vehemently reappeared in Friedrich Nietzsche.

**Essential Reading:**

**Supplementary Reading:**

**Questions to Consider:**
1. Is the middle class more prone to cultural conformity than traditional aristocracies or the modern working class?
2. Does history really move forward through the actions of exceptional individuals (as Carlyle suggested)?
Lecture Twenty-Four
Nietzsche’s Critique of European Culture

Scope: This lecture discusses the influential work of a thinker whose critique of the Western philosophical tradition and the Enlightenment anticipated major themes in twentieth-century thought. Nietzsche challenged the scientific confidence in reason, the expanding modern belief in democratic political institutions, and traditional Christian conceptions of morality. We thus come to another transitional moment in a long cycle of intellectual history, which began in the optimism of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution and ended for some radical late nineteenth-century thinkers in a post-Positivist, post-Darwinian skepticism about both the nature of truth and the democratic values of modern liberal political cultures. In this lecture, we look at Nietzsche’s main themes and note his intellectual role in the transition from nineteenth- to twentieth-century European thought.

Outline

I. The philosophical quest for a critical or even heroic position outside the European middle class reached its culmination in the work of Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900).

A. Nietzsche’s death in 1900 may be taken as a symbolic ending point for nineteenth-century European intellectual history, but his significance as a transitional figure goes well beyond the date of his death (he stopped writing in 1889).

1. Nietzsche’s work marks a transition from the nineteenth century into a series of intellectual concerns that dominated many twentieth-century cultural debates: the importance of language, the nature of power, the relativism of truth, the meaning of ethics, and the critique of democracy.

2. In these respects, Nietzsche represents an exceptionally influential example of the modern critique of Enlightenment thought.

B. I began these lectures by suggesting that modern European intellectual history can be described as a recurring debate about the cultural meaning and legacy of the Enlightenment; Nietzsche was an eager participant in this debate.

1. On the one hand, he accepted a number of Enlightenment assumptions about the flaws of traditional religion, and he shared the eighteenth-century confidence in the great potential and power of human creativity.

2. On the other hand, however, Nietzsche rejected the philosophes’ faith in reason, denied the existence of universal truths, and described the will to power (rather than the use of reason) as the key human trait.

3. Nietzsche’s critique of reason and his epistemology would be embraced by many twentieth-century philosophers who sought alternatives to Enlightenment conceptions of reason and truth.

4. His fascination with the “will to power,” his critique of democracy, and his praise for the “noble few” would be embraced and distorted by twentieth-century fascist political movements.

C. In this concluding lecture, I summarize some key themes of Nietzsche’s life and thought, then suggest how his critique of nineteenth-century European culture brings us back to questions about the Enlightenment.

1. Nietzsche leads intellectual historians back into dialogue with the eighteenth century and the entire Western philosophical tradition.

2. At the same time, he marks a starting point for the intellectual history of the twentieth century.

II. Nietzsche shared much of Kierkegaard’s view of modern human societies and religion, but he pushed his analysis of modernity in another direction.

A. Although Nietzsche agreed with critics who condemned the emptiness and mediocrity of modern European culture, he decided that the individual must make a heroic leap toward the self rather than toward God or high culture.

1. Nietzsche said that God was dead and that an excessive respect for high cultural traditions destroyed creativity and life itself.

2. Writing in a post-Darwinian age, Nietzsche stressed that human beings were biological creatures (not part of a divine order) and that the human will was the only real force in personal and cultural life.

3. As Nietzsche described it, only human drives and human will could overcome the hollowness or emptiness of modern life.

4. Neither religion, nor traditional philosophy, nor modern democracy, nor German nationalism could destroy the empty, mediocre conditions of nineteenth-century culture.

5. Only a few, strong, lonely new thinkers could move beyond the mediocrity of the times; they would have to think “with a hammer” to smash the reigning pieties of the day.

B. Nietzsche’s rejection of traditional religion, morality, and German nationalism was at radical odds with his own background because he was born into an extremely pious and patriotic family.

1. His father was a Lutheran minister (as was his mother’s father); young Friedrich was named for Friedrich Wilhelm IV, the king of Prussia.

2. Nietzsche’s father had a mental breakdown and died when the young Nietzsche was only four years old. He was raised by his mother, grandmother, and two aunts; he also had a younger sister.
3. Some scholars have argued that this upbringing contributed to the hostility for women that appears in his later writings.
4. He never married, and he never really lived in close relationships with women later in life, though he had some close male friends.

C. Nietzsche studied philology and the history of ancient languages; he was named professor at the University of Basel in Switzerland at age twenty-four.
1. He was considered a brilliant young philologist, but he had constant health problems and eventually resigned when he was only thirty-four.
2. Some historians think that he was infected with syphilis when he visited a brothel as a young man, but nobody can prove this; his health problems included stomach disorders and severe headaches.

D. After resigning from the University of Basel, Nietzsche wandered about southern Europe, living alone, and writing books about the crisis in European civilization; he said that the European tradition was basically exhausted.
1. He tried to develop both a critique of the tradition and a new philosophy of heroic individual morality.
2. Nietzsche went insane in 1889, perhaps because of syphilis, perhaps because of the physical and mental problems that struck his father.
3. He spent his last eleven years in asylums and never wrote another page.

E. Apart from the question of syphilis or an inherited physical problem, some scholars have argued that the sheer intensity of Nietzsche's philosophical struggle could have pushed him over the psychological edge.
1. He sought to analyze the whole foundation of European ethics and philosophy, but he sought a writing style that would differ from other philosophical works; he resisted systems and used humor.
2. He also wrote in aphorisms to make his points and claimed he would like to rank philosophers on the basis of their laughter—"all the way up to those capable of golden laughter."

III. Nietzsche argued that modern European culture was filled with social masses who followed what he called a "herd culture"; material comforts were the main priority.

A. He also said that this culture suppressed challenges to mediocrity.
1. In contrast to this culture, he described the cultural ideal of a few, heroic, life-affirming individuals who created their own values.
2. He said that the ancient Greek ideal of independent, strong-willed persons had been destroyed by bourgeois materialism and post-revolutionary democratic culture.

3. More generally, this democratic celebration of the common person was a secular version of Christian concepts of charity and humility.
4. He thought that such Christian values had impoverished life and dehumanized individuals by denying their healthy will to power.

B. Nietzsche sought to understand this cultural process by analyzing the two major sources of the Western tradition: Greek and Judeo-Christian thought.
1. He argued in his first book, *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872), that early Greek culture was heroic in affirming the human condition and the deep instinctual drives of human beings.
2. The Greeks had accepted that part of life that was passionate, or what he called Dionysian; this was the genius of pre-Socratic philosophy.
3. But with Socrates and Plato, that instinctual side of life was repressed; the Dionysian gave way to the calculating Apollonian approach to life.
4. European culture turned to abstraction and metaphysics, thereby fleeing the conditions of a healthy life.

C. Nietzsche went on to explain this "flight" from human life in later works, such as *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886) and *The Genealogy of Morals* (1887).
1. He claimed that the rejection of a healthy, instinctual life culminated in Christianity, which fused Judaism with Platonic metaphysics.
2. The Judeo-Christian ethical system, as Nietzsche described it, favored the weak over the strong or the healthy.
3. According to Nietzsche, Christian philosophy's view of human instincts was anti-human and escapist.

D. Although Nietzsche assumed that Christianity expressed a deep, healthy instinct—a "will to power"—he said that the instinct was distorted.
1. Christianity became the triumph of weak people's will to power over the strong and noble; therefore, Western culture turned to God over humans.
2. Modern science, however, had destroyed the classical explanations for God, and modern people no longer really believed in God.
3. This was why Nietzsche said God was dead. Yet most people refused to accept this fact; they denied it with their formal religion and with moral clichés that they didn't really believe.

E. Modern Europe had entered an age of nihilism because it no longer really believed in its older foundations for truth or morality.
1. This was the European crisis, but few people would face it directly.
2. Instead, the masses turned to nationalism or democracy or socialism or liberalism or anti-Semitism (none of which Nietzsche liked).
3. These ideologies prevented people from seeing their true situation.

F. To achieve cultural or personal health in the face of this illness, Nietzsche thought that people must accept that the old truths were dying.

1. The world lacks inherent meaning and it lacks God, but there are still strong human beings who can heroically affirm their lives.

2. These people must create a new morality—beyond the categories of good and evil and religious truth as we have understood them.

3. They must define truth for themselves.

G. Very few people can face these realities or take the heroic steps to create their own morality and truths—only the elite, strong thinkers, whom Nietzsche called the Overmen or the "happy few," can create their own morality.

1. The Overman creates his own values, lives heroically, and ignores the ideas of the masses or the democratic "herd."

2. He is lonely, but he lives honestly and strongly; he returns to the heroic affirmation of life that existed in pre-Socratic Greece.

3. The key point for all such heroic persons was that they must move beyond the clichés, values, and assumptions of the modern European culture that had descended from the French Revolution.

IV. In Nietzsche, we can see themes that will emerge in twentieth-century psychology and in later critiques of reason and classical philosophy.

A. At the same time, we see the end of a cycle in intellectual history that began in the optimism and aspirations of the Enlightenment and French Revolution.

B. Nietzsche argued that this tradition was deeply flawed, but the debate would continue because many others saw this tradition as Europe's most valuable political and cultural inheritance and as the starting point for a better future.

**Essential Reading:**


**Supplementary Reading:**


**Questions to Consider:**

1. What would be examples of the "will to power" in human relationships and human societies?

2. Do you think that Nietzsche's ideas have contributed to a general cultural relativism in the modern era?

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**Timeline**

1637 .................................. René Descartes publishes *Discourse on Method*, describing the new scientific approach to knowledge.

1687 .................................. Isaac Newton publishes *Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy*, the text that shaped much of the modern belief in scientific truth and progress.

1690 .................................. John Locke publishes *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* to explain how the environment shapes human knowledge.

1734 .................................. Voltaire's *Letters on England* appears in France, promoting the Enlightenment ideas of tolerance and reason.

1748 .................................. Montesquieu's *The Spirit of the Laws* argues against absolutist government and calls for a division of government powers.

1754 .................................. Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality* launches the Enlightenment interest in political and social equality.

1784 .................................. J. G. Herder publishes his *Ideas on the Philosophy of the History of Mankind*, which challenges Enlightenment universalism by stressing the distinctive culture of each nation.

1789 .................................. The French Revolution begins with a strong defense of the universal "Rights of Man and Citizen"; the revolutionary ideas begin to spread across Europe.

1790 .................................. Edmund Burke publishes his *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, the founding text of modern conservatism.

1792 .................................. Mary Wollstonecraft develops early feminist arguments in her book *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*.

1792–1794 .............................. Creation of the French Republic and the year of the Terror.
1799–1814  Napoleon controls France and Napoleonic wars stimulate the development of nationalism.


1802  René Chateaubriand publishes René, an influential early text of French Romanticism.

1807  J. G. Fichte delivers his “Addresses to the German Nation” in Berlin and lays out the philosophical argument for German nationalism.

1810  Napoleon orders the suppression of Germaine de Staël’s book On Germany, which described the ideas of German Romanticism.

1812  Lord Byron publishes cantos one and two of the poem Childe Harold, an influential statement of liberal Romantic ideas.

1817  David Ricardo publishes The Principles of Political Economy, which describes the “Iron Law of Wages” in economic life.

1819  Benjamin Constant writes his essay “The Liberty of the Ancients Compared to That of the Moderns,” an important summary of post-revolutionary liberalism.

1820–1830  Robert Owen, Henri-Saint-Simon, and Charles Fourier develop the ideas of what will become known as “utopian socialism.”

1822–1823  Hegel delivers his first series of lectures on the “Philosophy of History” in Berlin.

1830  Production of Victor Hugo’s play Hernani sparks a near-riot by critics of Romanticism.

1830  New revolution in France overthrows the last Bourbon king, Charles X, and leads to renewed European debate about the legacy of the French Revolution.

1830–1842  Auguste Comte develops his theories of “Positive Knowledge” in his Course of Positive Philosophy.

1831  Stendhal publishes The Red and the Black, a novel that portrays ambition and superficiality in nineteenth-century culture.

1834  Honoré de Balzac publishes Père Goriot, his portrait of the modern obsession with money and social status.

1837  George Sand publishes Lettres d’un Voyageur, which includes a call for “reciprocal duties” and equality in marriages.

1840–1844  Jules Michelet and Adam Mickiewicz, both at the Collège de France in Paris, develop theories of messianic nationalism.

1841  Ludwig Feuerbach publishes The Essence of Christianity, an important contribution to “Left Hegelian” humanistic theory.

1841  Thomas Carlyle publishes his lectures on the “Great Man” theory of history, On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History.

1844  Karl Marx works on his Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts in Paris.

1845  Marx and Friedrich Engels write The German Ideology, which describes the materialist view of history and early communism.

1848  Revolutions erupt in much of Europe—France, Germany, Austria, Hungary, Italy—reaffirming liberal conceptions of the “Rights of Man”; the revolutions are all soon suppressed.

1849  Sören Kierkegaard publishes The Sickness unto Death, part of his critique of modern Christianity’s flight from Christian truths.

1851  Louis Napoleon overthrows the French Republic and soon creates the Second Empire; he will become Napoleon III.

1856  Alexis de Tocqueville publishes The Old Regime and the Revolution, a work that
warns about dangers to liberty in the modern quest for equality.

1857 .............................. Gustave Flaubert publishes Madame Bovary, a novel about adultery that explores the meaning and limits of language.


1859 .............................. Charles Darwin publishes The Origin of Species, describing "natural selection" and the processes of biological evolution.

1864 .............................. Fyodor Dostoevsky's novel Notes from Underground portrays the nonrational aspects of the human mind and human actions, thus challenging the themes of Positivism.

1869 .............................. John Stuart Mill publishes The Subjection of Women, which argues that women should have equal political, legal, and social rights with men in modern societies.

1869 .............................. Matthew Arnold's book Culture and Anarchy condemns the superficiality of modern middle-class cultural life.

1871 .............................. Otto von Bismarck establishes the new German Empire, thus realizing nationalist aspirations for a united Germany.

1871 .............................. Darwin's book The Descent of Man uses evolutionary theory to describe the development of human beings.

1880–1900 ........................ New wave of European imperialism brings most of Africa and much of Asia into the growing empires of European nations; Social Darwinism is used to justify the new imperialism.

1884 .............................. Herbert Spencer publishes The Man versus the State.

1886 .............................. Friedrich Nietzsche publishes Beyond Good and Evil.

1900 .............................. The death of Nietzsche.

Bibliography

Works by Influential Figures in Modern European Thought:


Comte, Auguste. Early Political Writings. Edited and translated by H. S. Jones. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998. An excellent recent translation of Comte's most important writings on history and society; this collection provides a good introduction to all the main themes of early Positivism.

Constant, Benjamin. Political Writings. Translated and edited by Biancamaria Fontana. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1988. Constant has recently been rediscovered as both a political theorist and imaginative writer; this volume offers the best English-language collection of his liberal ideas and theoretical concerns.

Darwin, Charles. The Portable Darwin (includes excerpts from On the Origin of Species and The Descent of Man). Edited with an introduction by Duncan M. Porter and Peter W. Graham. London and New York: Penguin Books, 1993. Darwin was an unusually clear scientific writer. This useful book includes excerpts from all his main works, including The Origin of Species and The
Descent of Man, and its texts show why non-scientists could read, understand, and argue about Darwin’s work.

Descartes, René. Discourse on the Method for Rightly Conducting One’s Reason and Seeking Truth in the Sciences. Translated by Donald A. Cress. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1980. This brief book (only 42 pages in this edition) became the enduring philosophical summary of a systematic doubt that led to critical analysis and new forms of reliable knowledge; this was the method of modern science.


Fichte, Johann Gottlieb. Addresses to the German Nation. Edited with an introduction by George A. Kelly. New York: Harper and Row, 1968. This book has gone out of print, but it is the most accessible edition of Fichte’s important work on German cultural identity; it should be available in most good libraries.

German Socialist Philosophy: Ludwig Feuerbach, Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels. Edited by Wolfgang Schirrmacher. New York: Continuum Press, 1997. This collection is especially useful in showing the development of “Left Hegelian” themes from Feuerbach to Marx and Engels—who transformed these ideas into new forms of socialism. The sections on Feuerbach introduce excerpts from his writings that are not easy to find in English.

Goethe, J. W. von. Selected Works. Introduced by Nicholas Boyle. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2000. This collection includes a translation of Goethe’s fascinating novel The Sorrows of Young Werther, as well as other writings about his travels in Italy. Excellent paperback editions of Young Werther are available, but this volume includes an introductory essay by the distinguished Goethe scholar Nicholas Boyle.


Kierkegaard, Søren. Papers and Journals: A Selection. Translated with introduction and notes by Alastair Hannay. London and New York: Penguin Books, 1996. Kierkegaard kept remarkable journals in which he reflected on his life and ideas; this recent translation is an excellent introduction to many of Kierkegaard’s responses to the cultural conflicts of his time.

Locke, John, An Essay Concerning Human Understanding. Edited by Roger Woolhouse. London and New York: Penguin Books, 1997. Locke’s account of how people learn from their environment is long and too detailed for most non-specialist readers, but the first two sections of the book introduce all the most important epistemological themes.


Marx, Karl. Selected Writings. 2nd ed. Edited by David McLellan. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2000. An outstanding collection of excerpts from Marx’s most important writings, including such early texts as the Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts and The German Ideology. The editor is a distinguished expert on Marx’s life and ideas; his concise introductions provide helpful information and perspectives on each text.


Nietzsche, Friedrich. Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future. Translated, with commentary, by Walter Kaufmann. New York: Vintage Books, 1966. This book provides one of the best examples of Nietzsche’s ideas and literary style; its critique of the philosophical tradition and Christian morality summarizes his main intellectual themes and the aphorisms exemplify his break from classical philosophical prose. Kaufmann’s commentaries express the insights of a major Nietzsche scholar.

Owen, Robert. A New View of Society and Other Writings. Edited with an introduction by Gregory Claeys. London and New York: Penguin Books, 1991. Owen was not a great systematic thinker, but the essays and speeches in this volume show the range of his interests and his lively engagement with the problems and people of his time.


Smith, Adam. An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations. Edited and with an introduction by Kathryn Sutherland. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993. This is the most influential work of the classical economic tradition; it may be too long for most readers, but the key themes can be found in the first of the five "books" (or sections). This edition has helpful notes on Smith's eighteenth-century terms and context.

Spencer, Herbert. Political Writings. Edited by John Offer. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994. Spencer is best known as a "Social Darwinist," but this collection of his writings shows the range of his political thought; it includes The Man versus the State, Spencer's critique of government intervention in social and economic life.

Staël, Madame de. Ten Years of Exile. Translated by Avriel H. Goldberger. Dekalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2000. This excellent new translation of Staël's autobiographical book includes helpful notes and an informative introduction; this work conveys the passion of Staël's opposition to Napoleon and her quest for personal freedom.

Tocqueville, Alexis de. The Old Regime and the Revolution. Edited and with an introduction by François Furet and Françoise Mélonio. Translated by Alan S. Kahan. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998. A recent translation of Tocqueville's account of how the centralizing government of the old regime prepared the way for the French Revolution; the introduction by Furet and Mélonio summarizes the views of leading French scholars whose own important works have been influenced by Tocqueville.


Wollstonecraft, Mary. A Vindication of the Rights of Woman. Edited by Mary Warnock. London and Rutland, Vermont: J.M. Dent, Ltd., and Charles E. Tuttle Co., 1986. The early feminist work that summarized the case for women's rights in the polemical context of the French Revolution; numerous editions of this work are available, but this one offers a useful perspective on the evolution of feminist themes by pairing Wollstonecraft's work with Mill's The Subjection of Women.

Supplementary Reading:


Auerbach, Erich. Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature. Translated by Willard R. Trask. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953. This classic work of literary criticism by a German scholar who fled Nazi Germany surveys Western literature from antiquity to the early twentieth century, describing the diverse ways that writers have portrayed reality. Chapter 18 discusses Stendhal, Balzac, and Flaubert.


(1909–1997) was a leading intellectual historian of his generation. This work includes three long essays on eighteenth-century authors who became early critics of Enlightenment rationalism and universalism.


Fontana, Bincamaria. *Benjamin Constant and the Post-Revolutionary Mind*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991. One of the most insightful studies in the "new wave" of books on Constant. Fontana has edited a volume of Constant’s texts and makes interesting connections between Constant’s political theories and his other writings on religion and literature. Another useful book that has recently gone out of print.

Frank, Joseph. *Dostoevsky: The Stir of Liberation*, 1860–1865. Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1986. This book (which covers the period in which Dostoevsky wrote *Notes from Underground*) is part of a multi-volume biography that has become the definitive modern study of Dostoevsky. Frank is a distinguished scholar and an expert on all aspects of Dostoevsky’s life and work.


Hawkins, Mike. *Social Darwinism in European and American Thought, 1860–1945: Nature as Model and Nature as Threat*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997. Hawkins provides a well-informed survey of both the theories of Social Darwinian thinkers and the use of these theories in various political movements. This book analyzes the nuances and diverse forms of Social Darwinism (noting also its relation to later ideologies, such as fascism and Nazism).

Heilbroner, Robert L. *The Worldly Philosophers*. 7th ed. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1999. This book was first published in the early 1950s, but Heilbroner has updated his work in later editions. A lively, engaging study of modern economists, it discusses the lives and thought of nineteenth-century economic theorists, such as Ricardo, Malthus, Saint-Simon, and Marx.


Hunt, Lynn. *Politics, Culture and Class in the French Revolution*. Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1984. An important account of how the French revolutionaries set about constructing a new political language and culture in the years after 1789. Hunt describes the process by which a new political consciousness developed in the French Revolution, creating a political legacy for the following century.


deals mainly with the earlier years of Sand's life—up to age forty-five—and the process of “becoming Sand” (one of the chapter titles).


Kirk, Bruce H. Kierkegaard in Golden Age Denmark. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990. A valuable study of the cultural and social world in which Kierkegaard developed his radical critique of conventional Christianity and the new commercial culture. It includes perceptive accounts of the themes in Kierkegaard’s works; the book has gone out of print but can be found in libraries.


Kramnick, Isaac. The Rage of Edmund Burke: Portrait of an Ambivalent Conservative. New York: Basic Books, 1977. An intriguing, controversial biographical account of Burke, which draws on psychological theories to explain the complexity of his ideas. Kramnick sees Burke as a transitional figure between aristocratic and bourgeois cultures and as a more “ambivalent” conservative than most modern interpretations suggest. The book is now out of print but readily available in libraries.

Kuhn, Thomas. The Structure of Scientific Revolutions. 3rd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996. Originally published in 1962, this immensely influential study of the history of science describes the processes by which scientific theories (e.g., theories about gravity or evolution) become “paradigms” for scientific knowledge and research. This book has shaped a wide-ranging modern interest in the nature of scientific cultures.


Nisbet, Robert. History of the Idea of Progress. Revised edition. New York, Basic Books, 1994. A comprehensive survey of how this idea has developed across Western history. Nisbet links the modern idea of progress to a very old belief in the unfolding sacred direction of history (secularized in modern times); he includes long discussions of both the Enlightenment and the nineteenth century.

Pinkard, Terry. Hegel: A Biography. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000. An excellent recent biography that places the development of Hegel's thought in the revolutionary upheavals of his era and argues that Hegel was by no means a simple apologist for the Prussian state.


Scott, Joan Wallach. Only Paradoxes to Offer: French Feminists and the Rights of Man. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996. This work by an influential contributor to the rapidly expanding field of women’s history describes the “paradoxical” struggle of women who argued for women’s rights in a political culture that was based on the rights of man. It includes perceptive chapters on Olympe de Gouges and Jeanne Deroin.

Todd, Janet. Mary Wollstonecraft: A Revolutionary Life. New York, Columbia University Press, 2000. A well-researched, well-written biography that discusses the complex personal relationships in Wollstonecraft's life and analyzes her important writings. This book is a good introduction to the recent scholarship on Wollstonecraft, but it is especially strong on the details of her short life.

Toews, John Edward. Hegelianism: The Path toward Dialectical Humanism, 1805–1841. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980. The best historical study of the debates that emerged among younger German philosophers in the 1820s and 1830s. Toews describes the ideas of Hegelian writers and stresses the importance of their life experiences and generational identity. A fine example of how intellectual history examines the links between social contexts and influential texts. This book has recently gone out of print but is readily available in libraries.