European Thought and Culture in the 20th Century

Part I
Lecture 1: The Origins of 20th-Century European Thought
Lecture 2: Universities, Cities, and the Modern "Culture Industry"
Lecture 3: Naturalism in Fin-de-Siècle Literature
Lecture 4: The New Avant-Garde Literary Culture
Lecture 5: Rethinking the Scientific Tradition
Lecture 6: The Emergence of Modern Art
Lecture 7: Émile Durkheim and French Social Thought
Lecture 8: Max Weber and the New German Sociology
Lecture 9: The Great War and Cultural Pessimism
Lecture 10: Sigmund Freud and Psychoanalytic Theory
Lecture 11: Freud, Jung, and the Constraints of Civilized Life
Lecture 12: Poetry and Surrealism After the Great War

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Scope:

This course of twenty-four lectures examines major intellectual themes and debates in twentieth-century European culture. Our discussion will draw on the methods of intellectual history and refer to the evolving contexts in which leading writers and theorists developed their ideas. 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.

We will interpret twentieth-century European thought as an ongoing dialogue between advocates of different philosophical or theoretical perspectives and as an intellectual response to complex cultural traditions and disturbing European events, including: (1) rationalist scientific forms of knowledge and the optimistic belief in progress; (2) classical realist representations and accounts of the external world; (3) the traumatic violence and massive costs of two destructive world wars; (4) the political history and conflicts of fascism, communism, and liberalism; (5) the social and economic changes that resulted from urbanization, imperialism, warfare, the Great Depression, and late twentieth-century globalization.

The course does not provide detailed descriptions of these contexts, but it suggests that all these historical realities (and others) affected the changing themes of European literature, social science, philosophy, psychology, art, political theories, and intellectual identities. Important texts or artistic creations do not simply reflect the contexts in which they appear, but this course will argue that creative thinkers are always interpreting, redefining, criticizing, and influencing the historical world in which they live.

The lectures look at three general chronological periods or cultural eras in modern European history, and each era is discussed in roughly eight lectures: (1) the cultural innovations during the three decades before 1914, (2) the responses to World War I and the new cultural themes of what historians call the “interwar” era, and (3) the responses to World War II and the new forms of thought that emerged in the decades after 1945.

We begin the first section of the course with two lectures on the dominant ideas and cultural institutions of the late nineteenth century, because modern intellectual movements evolved out of the cultural assumptions and urban “culture industry” of this era. We then devote two lectures to the contrasting literary movements of naturalism and symbolism, noting that both these movements would influence later novels and poetry. The following two lectures look at new departures in philosophy, science, and art that would contribute to a general twentieth-century trend toward relativism and subjectivism in European
thought. We conclude this pre-1914 section of the course with two lectures on the emergence of modern sociology and social theory in France and Germany.

The next section of the course starts with a lecture on how the First World War contributed to a new cultural pessimism and made Europeans more receptive to psychological theories that stressed human irrationality. We examine the ideas and diverging schools of psychoanalysis in the next two lectures before turning to postwar literary themes in three lectures on pessimistic poets, surrealist writers, and influential authors who developed the narrative style and psychological themes of modernist novels. We then conclude the discussion of interwar European culture with two lectures on philosophy and social theory, stressing the new interest in language and the political anxiety about fascism, communism, and the economic crisis of the 1930s.

The final section of the course begins with a lecture on different intellectual responses to Nazism in Germany. We will then look at other responses to the events of World War II in a lecture on postwar existential philosophy and a lecture on literary attempts to remember or interpret the horrors of the Holocaust and totalitarianism. The next four lectures describe new “isms” that gained wide cultural influence in the period between 1950 and 1990, including feminism, structuralism, poststructuralism, and postmodernism. We conclude with a lecture on the revival of various Enlightenment themes among late twentieth-century intellectuals who criticized cultural “isms,” such as postmodernism, and rejected political “isms,” such as fascism and communism.

Our objective throughout this course is to understand the ideas of influential twentieth-century European thinkers, to reflect on the interactions between ideas and historical contexts, and to think critically about how the ideas of creative twentieth-century writers continue to raise questions for our own time. Intellectual history analyzes the evolving dialogues among the people of other places and times, but it also emphasizes the importance of sustaining a critical dialogue between the present and the past. This course seeks to expand our dialogue with the intellectual world of twentieth-century Europe and to show how the challenging ideas of that historical era are still vital components of the world’s contemporary cultural life.

Lecture One

The Origins of Twentieth-Century European Thought

Scope: This lecture introduces the overall themes of the course and summarizes the main trends of intellectual life in late nineteenth-century Europe. The lecture discusses the way in which intellectual history uses interdisciplinary and contextual methods to analyze ideas. It then provides a brief summary of the late nineteenth-century cultural context. To describe this context, the lecture includes a broad overview of Western cultural conceptions of reason and revelation before turning to specific cultural themes of the era: the faith in scientific knowledge, the belief in progress, and the political and economic ideas of classical liberalism. Finally, the lecture notes some critiques of the era’s dominant cultural assumptions and suggests that twentieth-century events would provoke new questions about the meaning of progress in the modern world.

Outline

1. This course will examine the evolution of twentieth-century European thought and cultural debates, using the methods of intellectual history.

   A. Intellectual history differs from most other forms of historical study in that it focuses on the history of ideas, influential writers or artists, and important books or creative work in the arts.

      1. Most historians give more attention to the history of social institutions, politics, economics, wars, diplomacy, or famous events.

      2. Intellectual history emphasizes the shaping role of ideas in all spheres of human history and looks especially at the people who debate ideas.

   B. Intellectual history also differs from philosophy, literary criticism, or political theory in that it usually stresses the historical context in which creative thinkers live and new ideas develop.

      1. Intellectual history often looks at the relation between texts and contexts; this is the approach that we’ll use in this course.

      2. We’ll often note the general cultural context in which influential thinkers were working, and we’ll refer to the influence of major events, such as wars, revolutions, or political and economic conflicts.

   C. Intellectual history is also an interdisciplinary field, which means that it typically analyzes intellectual work in what academics like to call the “disciplines” of knowledge.
I. These different forms of thought or knowledge include social theory, literature, psychology, philosophy, and cultural criticism—all of which we’ll discuss in this course.

II. First, I would like to describe some broad cultural patterns in late nineteenth-century European intellectual life because the cultural debates of this period clearly shaped the context in which early twentieth-century intellectuals worked.

A. Intellectual life in the so-called fin-de-siècle era reflected the latest stage in an ongoing debate between those who believed deeply in science, in modern progress, and in classical liberalism and those who questioned these ideas.

1. The dominant cultural paradigm among most intellectuals and educated people stressed the belief in science and progress.

2. Some skeptical writers and critics, however, challenged this dominant paradigm; their voices would become increasingly influential in the twentieth century.

B. We need to summarize both the confident themes of Europe’s modern scientific, liberal culture and a few themes of this culture’s critics.

III. Before we look specifically at this fin-de-siècle debate, I think it’s helpful to place its themes in a much wider historical framework.

A. In some respects, this debate expressed the tension between the two oldest strands of thought in the Western cultural tradition.

B. Historians have often described Western civilization as a complex fusion of two ancient cultural traditions: the Greek culture that developed especially in Athens and the Hebrew culture that developed in ancient Palestine.

1. The Greeks developed the philosophical understanding of reason, stressed the rational pursuit of knowledge, and (in such thinkers as Aristotle) emphasized the observation or study of nature.

2. Although the Greeks talked about the gods and a higher metaphysical realm, they were fascinated by the human body and the material world.

3. The Hebrews, in contrast, developed the idea of monotheism, stressed the unique human ability to communicate with God, and (in such thinkers as the prophets) emphasized God’s role in human history.

4. Although the Hebrews wrote about political events and real people acting in the world, they gave great attention to spiritual issues and to divine powers or ethical injunctions.

5. To summarize these distinctions in very broad terms, the Greeks saw reason as the path to truth and the Hebrews saw divine revelation as the path to ultimate truth.

C. These two important strands of ancient thought came together in the great theological synthesis of medieval Christianity.

1. The famous medieval works of such thinkers as Saint Thomas Aquinas basically argued that Aristotelian conceptions of reason could be reconciled with the spiritual conceptions of divine revelations.

2. God and ultimate truth could be known through reason and faith; the two forms of human understanding led to the same transcendent point.

D. But this medieval synthesis of reason and revelation gradually broke down during the following centuries of the Protestant Reformation, the Scientific Revolution, and the Enlightenment.

1. Many intellectuals lost the belief that theology or divine revelation could lead to secure truths, especially when the new science offered the appealing model of observable, universal laws of nature.

2. The eighteenth-century Enlightenment embraced the classical belief in reason as the only secure path to truth (though it rejected most of the Aristotelian science and metaphysical dualism in Greek thought).

3. The new faith in reason and science continued to spread in the nineteenth century.

4. It gained more supporters as intellectuals accepted the new evolutionary theories of Charles Darwin and the new scientific positivism of social theorists, such as Auguste Comte.

E. Yet, the other, more spiritual strand of Western thought by no means disappeared; the Romantic critique of the Enlightenment, for example, expressed in more secular terms the ancient faith in revelation.

1. The Romantic poet—like the ancient religious mystic—gained special knowledge of human life or nature through nonrational experiences.

2. Throughout the nineteenth century, such writers as Fyodor Dostoevsky questioned the belief that science offered the best or the only reliable form of human knowledge and understanding.

F. The late nineteenth-century cultural debates can be seen as the modern expression of those long-existing tensions between the “Greek” and “Hebrew” traditions in Western intellectual life.

G. Note, however, that nothing in history ever stays exactly the same; of course, the debate between what we might call “reason” and “revelation” took new forms as society, science, and culture evolved in the late nineteenth century.
IV. As I noted earlier, the dominant cultural belief system at the end of the nineteenth century included a strong faith in science, progress, and classical liberal ideas.

A. The faith in science grew out of the belief that scientists had explained the laws of nature, which could be seen in both the Newtonian descriptions of gravity and motion and the Darwinian descriptions of biological evolution.
   1. Science offered reliable, rational explanations for what happened in the natural world, but it also offered a model for all true knowledge.
   2. It was based on reason and empirical observation; it could be trusted.
   3. Science also led to the great technological advances of the age: new machines, transportation, and communications; better health care; more efficient production of food; and countless other economic advances.
   4. In short, science appealed to most intellectuals (and to many others, too) because it produced material benefits, as well as new knowledge.

B. The confident faith in science contributed also to the pervasive belief in the idea of progress, which had been one of the most characteristic themes of European thought since the late seventeenth century.
   1. The belief in progress rested on the assumption that modern people had surpassed all previous generations in their knowledge, wealth, technology, and social institutions.
   2. Of course, plenty of real-world evidence supported this assumption, and most late nineteenth-century intellectuals confidently believed that progress would inevitably continue in all directions.
   3. Progress seemed to have no limits—an idea that created a sense of superiority toward the past, as well as optimism about the future.
   4. This notion of progress also influenced European beliefs about the superiority of their own culture. In this era of European imperialism, most Europeans assumed that people in other parts of the world could only become "modern" and join in modern progress by adopting European knowledge and ideas.

C. The foundation of modern progress as most intellectuals viewed it, however, went beyond science and technology to include the modern liberal forms of government, legal rights, and economic organization.
   1. The late nineteenth century also saw the spread of faith in democratic governments, the expansion of voting rights, and the extension of rights for individual religious and intellectual freedom.
   2. It was also generally a period of laissez-faire economic policies in which liberal governments allowed and encouraged the rapid growth of capitalist corporations, both in Europe and colonized areas.

3. The ascendency of European civilization was interpreted as evidence of the superiority of European economic and political institutions, as well as a sign of Europe's superior knowledge and cultural values.

D. The dominant ideas in European cultural life at the end of the nineteenth century took for granted the social value of modern science, the inevitability of progress, and the expansion of liberal political and economic institutions.

E. These assumptions could be found in universities, in the press, and in many spheres of political culture, and they influenced religious life.

V. Yet, some critics questioned all these reigning assumptions and, thus, set the terms for intellectual debates that would continue throughout the twentieth century.

A. Some thinkers and creative writers challenged the belief that science provided the only important truths about nature or human beings.

B. At the same time, some thinkers challenged the confident belief in progress; they worried about social relations or traditions that were disappearing.

C. Meanwhile, other thinkers challenged the liberal confidence in modern political and economic institutions.

D. All these critiques, however, remained somewhat marginalized until the traumatic events and wars of the twentieth century provoked a general critique of late nineteenth-century ideas—especially the optimistic belief in human progress.

Supplementary Reading:

Questions to Consider:
1. Does the systematic use of human reason provide the best path to truth, or should humans look to various forms of divine or spiritual revelation to understand the nature of truth?

2. Do the nineteenth-century beliefs in scientific knowledge and human progress still shape the dominant cultural assumptions in our own era?
Lecture Two
Universities, Cities, and the Modern "Culture Industry"

Scope: In this lecture, we examine the institutional and urban context that shaped many of the patterns in modern European thought: the emergence of modern universities and the expansion of "Bohemian" cultural life in modern cities. A tension often existed in modern universities because these institutions were expected to provide professional certifications and to protect or transmit cultural traditions. Intellectuals increasingly worked at universities, which tended to support the social or cultural status quo. Radical, experimental forms of thought and culture were more likely to develop in avant-garde circles that flourished outside universities in large cities. This lecture describes modern intellectual life as an ongoing exchange between universities and avant-garde cultural groups. These patterns of intellectual exchange and conflict were particularly important in cities such as Paris and Vienna.

Outline

I. The history of European thought and culture has always evolved in the context of cultural institutions; cultural life involves a sociological dimension.

A. Every modern society has institutions that shape a dominant culture.
   1. In totalitarian states, the government or governing party usually has final controlling power over all the main cultural institutions.
   2. In the modern democratic nation-states, however, the system of cultural control or cultural organization has been more complex.
   3. The governments in such states are usually much less overt or explicit in controlling cultural institutions, though most major cultural institutions foster identification with the nation-state.

B. At the same time, however, modern culture has become a commodity that is bought and sold; people accumulate forms of cultural capital, much as they accumulate financial capital (as the social theorist Pierre Bourdieu has noted).
   1. People gain their cultural capital in certain institutions and places.
   2. One source of cultural "capital" or influence is the education system, which in modern societies, culminates in the universities.
   3. A second source of cultural capital or influence can be found in the social-cultural networks of modern cities; people gain cultural status through connections with institutions such as museums or orchestras.

II. These cultural patterns developed their typical modern forms during the later decades of the nineteenth century, and they continue today in the institutions of the modern media.

A. The main traits of modern cultural life have, therefore, been shaped by the mutual dependence of universities, cities, the culture industry, and state-supported cultural institutions; this is the context in which intellectuals work.
   1. By the beginning of the twentieth century, cultural life was becoming systematically organized, professionalized, and linked to credentials.
   2. People needed a university degree to work in the culture industry or a Ph.D. to teach in universities, but cultural life flourished and expanded in many different directions outside the universities.

B. Modern intellectual history has often evolved as a dialogue between people in different parts of the culture system.
   1. Debates occur, for example, between people in universities or newspapers and their critics outside those institutions.
   2. The curious paradox here is that the universities have been key institutions for debates about ideas, but the most original writers, artists, and thinkers have often worked outside universities.
   3. The bureaucratization of intellectual life tended to exclude the most unconventional forms of thought from universities.
   4. This dichotomy was never absolute, of course; some original ideas and thinkers emerged from universities and other official institutions.
   5. But avant-garde critical thinkers and artists were often critics of universities; they saw universities as guardians of cultural traditions.

C. In this lecture, I want to discuss a general pattern of modern intellectual history in which universities established the limiting structures or norms of intellectual life—norms that were often challenged by urban cultural outsiders.

4. A third source of cultural capital is the modern culture industry, which consists of newspapers, books, journals, commercial art galleries, and advertising.

5. In the twentieth century, this culture industry expanded to include films, radio, and television; the culture industry is also based in large cities.

C. The culture industry and urban cultural institutions (e.g., museums) are linked to universities because the people who work in these cultural systems are almost always trained in universities.
III. Although universities had been part of European culture since the Middle Ages, they gained new influence as their student enrollments grew in the late nineteenth century.

A. The numbers were still small compared to today’s enrollments (still less than 100,000 in Germany, for example, in 1920), but the steady growth increased the number of faculty and led to the development of research universities.

B. The number of intellectual disciplines grew, and professors became researchers as well as teachers, revealing the influence of science.

C. The model for the modern university came from Germany; disciplines were organized for research, with scientific labs and seminars in the humanities.
   1. There was a new emphasis on “practical” modern subjects.
   2. The older instruction in the classics declined, in part because most new students came from the middle class and sought professional training.

D. The university thus served two major functions in the modern social and cultural system; these dual functions are still at the center of university life.
   1. One of the university’s purposes was to train and certify the credentials of people who were entering modern professions; this social function was closely related to the growth of industrial, bureaucratic societies.
   2. Professional training produced the experts and bureaucrats that all modern economies and nation-states required.
   3. The other function of the university was to protect and explain the cultural traditions of European civilization. This was the traditional humanistic purpose of universities and was linked to aristocratic ideals.
   4. Cultural education had long produced the literate, cultural upper class, but this cultural mission was challenged and even displaced by the demands for complex professional training.

E. Both of these functions, however—professional training and instruction in cultural traditions—carried basically conservative implications.
   1. The goal was to train and acculturate young people so that they could fit into established professions or the traditions of cultural life.
   2. Tension existed between the contrasting functions of the university, which is still present today.
   3. The professional certification process trained students in the latest practices of professional life; the humanistic education taught the classics with little interest in practical uses or consequences.

F. The professionalization of society gave universities a new social purpose because the academic degree offered a ticket to professional careers.
   1. These new links to economic and professional institutions tied universities more closely to the urban industrial economic system.
   2. Yet, many professors also argued that universities must teach about cultural traditions; education must convey great ideas from the past.
   3. These people feared that older subjects and cultural values would be discarded; therefore, they became even more protective of traditions.
   4. These conflicts produced the “culture wars” of the era around 1900; the issue was especially intense in Germany, where professors formed a privileged cultural elite.

G. This academic aristocracy depended on the German state, and it tended to be nationalist; it did not question official ideas, which suggests why late nineteenth-century critics, such as Nietzsche, became so hostile to academic culture.
   1. Universities defended traditional philosophy, but they were also closed to socialist ideas, and they barred Jews from professorships.
   2. They provided cultural capital, however, and gave students the cultural and professional credentials for social advancement.
   3. But the integration of the university into the bureaucratic and professional status system offered little space for true creativity.
   4. Many intellectuals and artists resented the university’s cultural power.

IV. An unofficial alternative cultural life thus developed in cities where large numbers of writers, artists, and journalists lived on the margins of universities.

A. Cultural experimentation and new social critiques emerged outside academic circles in the “Bohemian cultures” of cities such as Paris, Berlin, and Vienna.
   1. All these cities had major universities, but it was not easy for unconventional thinkers to find a place in them.
   2. Such cities were also large enough to support an independent “culture industry” that needed creative writers and artists.

B. Paris and Vienna were especially notable for bringing together people of diverse nationalities and cultural backgrounds.
   1. Paris had a tradition of attracting outsiders and exiles who created an international intellectual community; both Paris and Vienna were filled with cafés and bookstores where people could meet.
   2. Both of these cities supported networks of intellectual life outside the formal academic disciplines; people went to the same cafés or worked for the same journals or newspapers.
3. A Bohemian intellectual and artistic society defined itself by standing against both bourgeois social life and the official universities.
4. Paris had a well-established reputation for political and cultural radicalism that continued to attract creative outsiders.

C. By the beginning of the twentieth century, Vienna had become the cultural rival of Paris in attracting a diverse community of intellectuals.
1. Vienna had a cosmopolitan intellectual life that linked West European and German culture to East European and Slavic cultures.
2. Although the Austro-Hungarian Empire faced a number of political problems, Viennese culture offered a meeting place for intellectuals from all parts of central Europe.
3. In fact, the political problems and diversity of Austria-Hungary may have helped to foster more critical thought there.
4. The Viennese public supported a culture industry that included art galleries, book publishers, newspapers, theaters, and concerts.

D. Viennese cultural life resembled Parisian culture in that many of Vienna’s intellectuals worked outside the university.

V. But the descriptions or defense of traditional cultures in universities helped to create an experimental culture among outsiders in Vienna and elsewhere.

A. This recurring cultural pattern is an example of the interaction between texts and contexts in intellectual history; the intersecting contexts of universities and cities influenced many of Europe’s most influential modern texts.

B. We see a dialectical cultural process in which ideas that emerged outside the university eventually influenced academic life, and the universities defended traditions that all modern critics had to confront.

Lecture Three
Naturalism in Fin-de-Siècle Literature

Scope: European writers developed new forms of literary realism at the end of the nineteenth century, creating both the new genre of “naturalism” and new critical portraits of modern society. After summarizing some characteristics of literary naturalism, the discussion turns to three writers who exemplified this kind of literature or pushed its themes in new directions: Émile Zola, Henrik Ibsen, and Joseph Conrad. Despite important differences in their literary styles, all these authors rejected sentimental, optimistic views of modern society and human beings, thereby calling into question popular liberal assumptions about the progress of modern European culture.

Outline

I. The widespread European confidence in science, progress, and the civilizing benefits of Europe’s enlightened political institutions attracted critical attention from creative writers at the end of the nineteenth century.

A. These writers worked outside the universities, but they were highly aware of Darwinian science and of the general cultural faith in progress, which flourished in both the popular press and academic culture of the era.
1. Like other intellectuals in this period, creative writers often wanted to draw on the knowledge and prestige of science.
2. Novelists and playwrights could not discover new laws of nature, but they frequently sought to show how deep social realities lay beneath the surface of European society, as deep biological realities do in nature.

B. Many of the most influential works of late nineteenth-century European literature extended and revised the earlier traditions of literary realism.
1. A new generation of writers embraced certain aspects of the dominant cultural belief in science, yet they turned aspects of the new science into a social and literary critique of modern Europe.
2. Some later writers would see late nineteenth-century novels or plays as models for how literature could deliver a social critique (often with greater effect than a social treatise).
3. Other writers would condemn this kind of literary social critique as one-dimensional and insufficiently aware of psychological complexity.
4. The late nineteenth-century novel exemplified the kind of “realist” writing that many twentieth-century writers tried to reject by probing the inner psychological world of memory and imagination.

Supplementary Reading:

Questions to Consider:
1. What do you see as the purpose of a university? Is it possible to resolve the tensions in the modern university’s objectives?
2. Do you agree with critics who see the university as a conservative cultural institution? Do universities ever have a radical role in modern societies?
C. It is difficult to understand modern literature, however, without looking first at the evolving realism or "naturalism" of late nineteenth-century writers.

1. We will summarize the themes of literary naturalism, then note how three writers used and transformed these themes to challenge reigning European ideas of the era.

2. These three writers—Émile Zola, Henrik Ibsen, and Joseph Conrad—had many differences and did not belong to a coherent literary movement, but they all tried to portray deep flaws in European culture.

3. Zola's novels showed the class tensions and corruption that spread everywhere beneath the glittering surface of modern European cities.

4. Ibsen used drama to portray the anxieties in middle-class families and the constraints that women still faced in modern marriages.

5. Conrad wrote novels about European encounters with other cultures to show the brutal realities of the imperialism that was supposed to be spreading civilization and enlightenment to non-European peoples.

6. For all these writers, literature offered the linguistic means to use and criticize the assumptions of modern European civilization.

II. Literary historians have often described naturalism as a distinctive approach to literature in the late nineteenth century, but like all such movements, it is not easy to define.

A. Naturalism resembled literary realism in trying to escape Romantic sentimentalism and Romantic images of the isolated, melancholy poet.

1. Naturalist literature attempted to depict the hard realities of life, especially those realities that respectable people didn't like to discuss.

2. In this respect, it went beyond an earlier literary realism in focusing on the most unpleasant aspects of modern life—crime, corruption, disease, poverty, prostitution, mental illness, alcoholism, bad marriages, and so on.

3. Like realists, the naturalists wanted art to represent an external reality, but this reality was often shocking, disturbing, or brutal.

B. Émile Zola developed the most theoretical account of this approach to literature in a commentary called "The Experimental Novel" (1879).

1. For Zola, this new kind of writing "arises out of the scientific advance of our century; it is a continuation and a completion of physiology."

2. Naturalism thus went beyond realism in its claimed relation to biological science—it evinced a kind of post-Darwinian emphasis on nature.

3. Such writing brought science to literature; it stressed the power of biological heredity, the shaping force of the environment, and the influence of a social milieu on people who lived in it.

4. Little emphasis was placed on the autonomous self-creation of the individual (a classic liberal theme); much more emphasis was placed on how people's actions and identities reflected biology or a social place.

C. The scientific themes of European culture thus contributed to literary images of people coping with the decisive power of nature or the external world. Naturalist literature frequently isolated a specific problem and showed how people were forced to deal with it (e.g., poverty or illness).

III. We can see the specific themes of such writing by looking at the influential work of Zola, Ibsen, and Conrad; they represent different national literatures, but they all gained a wide international audience.

A. Émile Zola (1840–1902) grew up in the southern French city of Aix-en-Provence; his father died when Émile was only seven years old, but he was close to his mother.

1. Paul Cézanne, the subsequently famous post-Impressionist artist, was one of his best friends in Aix; in 1858, Zola moved to Paris.

2. Because he failed the baccalauréat exam that was required for admission to the university, his education did not go beyond the lycée.

3. Zola threw himself into the Parisian literary world, working at a publishing house and writing stories and articles for newspapers.

4. He also became an advocate for the new Impressionist painters. The controversial artist Edouard Manet painted a famous portrait of Zola.

B. Zola eventually married, but his life was devoted mostly to writing. He never had children with his wife, though he did have two children with one of his wife's servants, Jeanne Rozerot, with whom he had a long relationship.

1. He also entered decisively into late nineteenth-century political debates when he charged that the French government had wrongly convicted Jewish army officer Alfred Dreyfus of spying for the Germans.

2. Zola became one of the most famous "public intellectuals" in France.

C. His literary theories emerged out of his interest in the early Impressionist attempt to convey the complexity of light and reality without sentiment.
1. As he developed his writing, he sought to follow similar principles, but he became steadily more interested in physiology and in the ways that heredity shaped families and individuals.

2. These themes emerged as central ideas in his famous twenty-novel series about a family living in France during the Second Empire (1851–1870).

3. The novels were called the *Rougon-Macquart* series because all the main characters were descendants of this family, which had a hereditary history of madness and alcoholism.

4. Some of the novels (e.g., *Nana*) showed the corruption of French elites; others (e.g., *L’Assommoir*) showed the debilitating effects of poverty.

D. The famous novel *Germinal* (1885) most memorably showed the misery of workers who labored to make the modern economy possible.

1. This novel tells the story of a young miner named Etienne who joins a strike and struggles against the owners of the mine; the strike fails, but Etienne learns from his difficult environment.

2. A new social movement is growing (germinating) in this miserable social world, and Etienne—despite the hereditary problems of his family—gradually comes to understand it; he learns from his milieu.

3. Zola’s novel isn’t exactly a socialist work, but it suggests that deep social problems lie (like a mine) beneath the wealth of French society.

IV. Henrik Ibsen (1828–1906) also wrote about social problems, but he used drama as the literary form to convey his themes, which included an interest in environments.

A. Ibsen was from a Norwegian merchant family that fell on hard times and moved to a farm; like Zola, Ibsen failed the exam to enter a university.

1. He worked for several years in Norwegian theaters; he was married and had a son but was not happy with his life in Norway.

2. He left Norway in 1864 and lived for the next twenty-seven years in Italy and Germany; his major works were written during this period.

B. Ibsen wrote plays and poetry on many themes, but he became most well known for such plays as *A Doll’s House* (1879) and *Ghosts* (1880), which depicted unhappy middle-class families living in a stifling social milieu.

1. Beneath the surface of bourgeois respectability, Ibsen suggested, were secret problems, denials, and lots of unhappy women.

2. The wife in *A Doll’s House*, Nora Helmer, comes to realize that her marriage is empty and that she must leave to live a more honest, free life; the play ends as she slams the door behind her.

C. The play *Ghosts* comes closer to literary naturalism because the family in this drama is haunted by hereditary “ghosts” from the past, including a disease.

1. The son, Oswald Alving, inherits physical problems from his father, but the mother is haunted after her husband’s death by the “ghosts” of dead beliefs, old lies, and old social conventions.

2. Such works as *Ghosts* provoked vehement cultural opposition.

V. The works of Joseph Conrad (1857–1924) were also unsettling, especially when they depicted the brutality of European imperialism.

A. Conrad was born into a Polish family (called Korzeniowski) in Ukraine; his parents were fervent Polish nationalists who named their son after a character in a famous poem by the Polish nationalist poet Adam Mickiewicz.

B. Under the pen name Joseph Conrad, he wrote a number of stories about Europeans traveling beyond Europe, but his most famous work of this type was *Heart of Darkness* (1899)—a story about European traders in Africa.

1. Some modern critics condemn Conrad for being a racist, but his images of European imperialists (including the power-hungry character Kurtz) in this story suggest that Europeans are brutal, greedy, and barbarous.

2. As Conrad noted, “the conquest of the earth...is not a pretty thing when you look into it”; Europeans ignored a grim reality beneath the imperialist propaganda in their claims to spread “civilization.”

C. Conrad did not view himself as a naturalist like Zola, but his work can be compared to Zola’s and Ibsen’s in its emphasis on ugly, hidden realities.

**Essential Reading:**


Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*.

**Supplementary Reading:**


**Questions to Consider:**

1. What makes literature different from science? Does literature provide a different kind of knowledge about the world?

2. Are human beings ultimately shaped more by their hereditary characteristics and social environments than by their individual will?
Lecture Four

The New Avant-Garde Literary Culture

Scope: A new generation of poets and creative writers rejected much of the scientific philosophy that shaped academic institutions at the end of the nineteenth century. They argued that creative artistic work should portray inner visions and symbolic meanings rather than objective representations of the external world. This lecture discusses the subjective themes in this kind of writing, which would influence writers and artists throughout the twentieth century. The lecture refers specifically to avant-garde authors who shaped the new literary themes: Charles Baudelaire, Stéphane Mallarmé, Arthur Rimbaud, and Villiers de l’Isle-Adam. In contrast to naturalist writers, these authors wrote about personal symbols and artistic imagination instead of the social problems of modern societies.

Outline

I. A wide variety of new cultural movements challenged the popular late nineteenth-century European faith in science, social progress, and rational liberalism.
   A. Philosophical radicals, such as Friedrich Nietzsche, challenged religious and ethical traditions and questioned democratic political assumptions.
      1. Many other writers, including those who wrote the kind of realist or naturalist works that we discussed in the last lecture, developed critical narratives about social problems that affected European civilization.
      2. Most naturalist writers, however, drew on European science to develop their descriptions of the modern social world.
      3. Other literary movements developed more radical cultural critiques of the faith in science, positivism, and rational liberalism.
      4. Such movements also challenged university culture and Enlightenment traditions of rationality and reason that shaped academic cultures.
   B. Avant-garde movements outside the university extended earlier critiques of the Enlightenment and the ideas of writers such as Dostoevsky.
      1. They tended to stress the nonrational components of human experience and aesthetic ideas that made art a kind of religion.
      2. Avant-garde writers expanded on Romantic ideas about the importance of personal imagination; they saw personal visions as sources of artistic truth, and they celebrated inner knowledge or subjectivity.
   C. We can see this new emphasis on subjective insights by looking at its emergence in what became known as symbolist literature and poetry.
      1. This kind of writing suggested that reality is not simply what you see or understand through sensory observation; there’s more to the world than meets the scientific eye.
      2. This was a key theme in “modernism” in literature and the arts, which emerged in a late nineteenth-century rejection of positivism.
      3. The symbolist movement represented an alternative to the literary naturalism of writers such as Emile Zola, but it reached a smaller audience than the novels of Zola and the plays of Ibsen.
      4. The symbolist themes appeared most clearly in the work of Charles Baudelaire, Stéphane Mallarmé, Arthur Rimbaud, and Villiers de L’Isle-Adam, all of whom explored the meaning of internal worlds.

II. The origins of the symbolist movement and the emergence of numerous modernist literary themes can be traced to the work of Charles Baudelaire (1821–1867).
   A. Baudelaire was a poet who suggested that everything we see around us may be taken as a symbol for something else; there are no simple meanings.
      1. To reach the deeper truth of symbolic meanings, Baudelaire said that people must imagine or recognize the fantastic or even grotesque aspects of objects and of the social world.
      2. He complained that people living in respectable bourgeois society were unable to see the complexity of the world around them.
      3. Poets differed from other people because they explored the symbolic meanings of language and personal experience.
      4. Baudelaire admired and translated the works of the American poet Edgar Allan Poe; he viewed Poe as an exemplary poet who knew how to use symbols and avoid the clichés of everyday language.
   B. These themes were picked up and extended after Baudelaire’s early death by Stéphane Mallarmé (1842–1898).
      1. Mallarmé came from a family of conventional, middle-class government officials, but he began writing poetry in his teens.
      2. His mother had died when he was only five years old, and his younger sister died when he was only fifteen. His sister’s death affected him deeply and his memory of her became a theme in his early poems.
      3. After reading the poems of Baudelaire and Poe, he began to develop his own theories about how poems should convey complex experiences.
4. In contrast to Baudelaire and many other poets, Mallarmé did not live an unconventional Bohemian life; he married a German woman (Maria Gerhard) as a young man and had two children (his son died at age eight).
5. He was very close to his daughter, Geniève Mallarmé, and he spent thirty years working as an English teacher in French lycées.

C. Mallarmé’s real passion, however, was poetry and the arts; by the early 1880s, he had become the leading figure in a group of poets and artists in Paris.
1. He hosted a gathering of writers and artists at his home on Tuesday evenings for over twenty years; he did most of the talking at these famous gatherings and often stressed the links between different art forms.
2. Mallarmé was interested in the opera of Richard Wagner, the paintings of the Impressionists (Edouard Manet painted his portrait), modern music, the theater, and ballet.
3. He believed that each of these arts could convey distinctive personal visions; this was his view of poetry as well.
4. Mallarmé wrote complex poems for small audiences; few people understood them because they used intricate language and symbols.

D. But this was the theme of symbolism: Poetry must convey inner sensations and emotions in the poet’s personal language.
1. The goal was to use the imagination and symbols rather than literal representations of external reality, which meant that the poet could not use language in the same ways that most people use it in daily life.
2. Poetic language described the internal reality of experience or desire or imagination, all of which was as “real” as external reality.
3. Mallarmé’s famous poem “L’Après-Midi d’un Faune” (1876), for example, described a faune’s vivid encounter with two nymphs, but it’s never clear if the nymphs were real or something the faune imagined.
4. The issue doesn’t really matter because the imagination is ultimately as real as any other reality, and poems portray all levels of reality.
5. As Mallarmé described it, the goal was “to describe not the thing, but the effect it produces”; this theory was carried into other arts.
6. Claude Debussy’s famous “Prelude à l’après-midi d’un faune” (1894) put Mallarmé’s themes into music. The great choreographer Nijinsky created a modern ballet (1912) for this music and theme.

E. Romantics had stressed personal experience, scientific positivists stressed observable facts, and symbolists stressed imagination or personal symbols.

1. In this view, imagination offers escape from boring, materialist reality and becomes a vehicle for expressing subjective visions.
2. Some poets and artists viewed the inner experience as more real than an illusory external world; the desire to escape modern realities led some artists to a radical escapism from everyday life.
3. Some symbolists turned to hashish or alcohol to stimulate their imaginations—but they often lost their poetry and died young.
4. Others turned back toward the Romantic fascination with exotic places and chose to leave Europe for pre-modern cultures.

III. The most well known example among the poets was Arthur Rimbaud (1854–1891), who wrote brilliant poems before age twenty, defied the conventions of bourgeois life, fell into a passionate affair with the poet Paul Verlaine, and wandered around Europe.

A. Rimbaud wanted to show the poet’s personal vision, which he managed to do in poems such as “The Drunken Boat” (1871). This work tells the story of a boat that breaks free from its crew and sails off freely and beyond all controls.
1. This theme of voyages and personal liberation was a recurring one in Rimbaud’s poetry and life; he grew up with a religious mother in a small town in northeast France (his father abandoned the family).
2. Rimbaud soon fled from both his writing and his life in Europe; he stopped writing poetry after he was about twenty years old.
3. He later went to Africa for mysterious reasons and lived for more than a decade in east Africa, working as a trader and arms dealer; he struggled to make money and survive.
4. He turned his back on Europe, though he still corresponded with his family and sometimes sent money to his mother (despite a long struggle against her throughout his youth).
5. Rimbaud eventually fell ill with gangrene and cancer, returned to France, had his leg amputated, and died in Marseilles.

B. Meanwhile, Rimbaud’s poems had been collected by ex-friends, such as Paul Verlaine, and they began to be published in the 1880s and 1890s.
1. His images of the radical poetic quest for personal visions attracted attention, but his life also became a cultural legend.
2. His search for a reality outside the social and cultural system of modern France suggested the most radical rejection of conventional ideas.
3. Rimbaud represented the alternative to positivism and rational forms of knowledge; his description of poets created a lasting image.

C. “The poet makes himself a visionary,” young Rimbaud wrote in a letter, through a long, difficult, and “rational derangement of all the senses.”
IV. Rimbaud’s flight from Europe and his account of the poet’s personal visions had parallels in the play of Villiers de l’Isle-Adam (1838–1889), *Axel*.

A. Villiers came from an impoverished old noble family in Brittany, but he went to Paris as a young man to become a writer; he was always poor.
   1. He wrote novels, plays, and mysterious stories; he met Baudelaire and became a good friend of Mallarmé.
   2. His stories finally attracted attention in the 1880s, but he was plagued by bad health and died shortly after finishing *Axel* (1886).

B. The play deals with the common symbolist theme, which suggests that reality is less satisfying than what the imagination can create. Villiers’s themes gave dramatic form to the symbolist emphasis on the superiority of internal visions and imagination.

C. Such works did not reach large audiences, but they had a strong influence on modern literature and art. The poet W. B. Yeats admired *Axel*, and the famous American critic Edmund Wilson called his book on modernism *Axel’s Castle*.

D. Avant-garde literary themes also influenced wider critiques of positivism.

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**Lecture Five**

**Rethinking the Scientific Tradition**

**Scope:** The critique of post-Enlightenment scientific thought spread beyond various literary movements into philosophy and even into certain forms of science itself. This lecture explores some influential critiques and revisions of the positivist tradition, noting especially Henri Bergson’s intuitionist philosophy and Albert Einstein’s special theory of relativity. Bergson and Einstein challenged Newtonian scientific accounts of the world, though they worked in the different intellectual cultures of philosophy and theoretical physics. They both questioned Newtonian descriptions of universal laws and stressed the observer’s role in the construction of all knowledge about the world. The lecture concludes with a brief discussion of how the new views of knowledge and science began to undermine the earlier cultural confidence in objective knowledge and truths.

**Outline**

I. The emphasis on individual experiences and inner perceptions that developed in the avant-garde literary movements of the late nineteenth century can be compared to some similar trends in the intellectual spheres of philosophy and scientific theories.

A. Philosophy and science differed from literature, but these fields of study resembled various literary ideas in calling attention to the complex inner world that existed beneath the surface that positivist science had described.
   1. A new philosophical movement, represented most prominently by Henri Bergson in France, stressed the importance of “intuition” in the search for an understanding of reality and human knowledge.
   2. Meanwhile, a new “scientific revolution” altered important aspects of the long-established Newtonian conception of the natural world.
   3. The scientists in this movement, represented most prominently by Albert Einstein, showed that Newtonian laws and conceptions of time and space didn’t work in subatomic and cosmic spheres of nature.

B. Although the new scientific themes were difficult to understand, they became popularized in more general cultural redefinitions of time and space. The concept of “relativity,” like earlier scientific ideas about the law of gravity or biological evolution, helped to reshape European intellectual life, raising questions about the nature of truth and knowledge.

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**Essential Reading:**


**Supplementary Reading:**


**Questions to Consider:**

1. Do you think that poetry should convey personal experiences in languages that defy common sense or ordinary usage?

2. Was Villiers wrong to suggest that the external world and daily life can never match the world that people envision in their personal imagination?
C. These influential developments in philosophy and science further challenged the late nineteenth-century European faith in scientific positivism and stable, universal truths. Relativism began to have the aura of advanced scientific thought.

II. The challenge to positivism in French culture gained philosophical influence through the work of Henri Bergson (1859–1941); Bergson differed from symbolist poets and most of the literary avant-garde in that he had a prestigious academic job.

A. Bergson was appointed to the chair of modern philosophy at the Collège de France in 1900, a position that showed his distinguished academic standing.
1. He was born in Paris, but his father was a musician from Poland and his mother was English; both came from Jewish families.
2. Bergson came into French culture from a somewhat marginal family position, but he excelled in school. He won academic prizes and graduated with high honors from the École Normale Supérieure.
3. He taught philosophy in various provincial lycées and in Paris before his appointment at the Collège de France.
4. He lived a conventional academic life; he married a French woman (Louise Neuburger) in 1891, and they had one daughter.

B. Bergson was a popular lecturer; he spoke without notes, drew large crowds, and raised questions about the positivist orthodoxy of French academic life.
1. His lectures and writings reinforced the symbolist emphasis on inner or intuitive understandings and appealed to nonacademic audiences.
3. In 1927, Bergson won the Nobel Prize for literature, but by that time, he had retired from the Collège de France because of health problems.

C. Bergson was a positivist in his youth, but by 1900, he had become a critic of positivism and the positivist conceptions of truth. He wanted to establish intuition as a form of knowledge that was as valid as science; he wrote with metaphors, somewhat like Nietzsche, and he especially sought to redefine the meaning of time.

D. Bergson's key argument was that the categories of rational conceptual thought do not really describe reality or experience.
1. Reality is a continuum that flows and evolves but never actually exists in the categories that science uses to describe it.

2. According to Bergson, the true meaning of reality comes from inner perceptions or from experience, not from external objects or categories.
3. This was the theme of his most influential works: An Introduction to Metaphysics (1903) and Creative Evolution (1907).
4. He said in Creative Evolution (the title suggests Darwin's continuing influence) that human life depends on an elan vital, which is constantly unfolding and evolving.

E. People come to understand this elan vital through inner perceptions, rather than by the methods of objective science; they learn from their experience.
1. "There is one reality...which we all seize from within, by intuition and not by simple analysis," Bergson explained. "It's our own personality in its flowing through time."
2. But this deep reality is fluid, changing, and accessible only through that "intellectual sympathy which we call intuition."
3. Intuition carries people into the inward realm of life, where the intellect cannot go; it offers a higher form of knowledge.

F. Bergson illustrated the meaning of inward intuition by referring often to the problem and experience of time.
1. Rational thought organizes time into seconds, minutes, hours, and days—all of exactly the same length.
2. Clocks are rational calculating machines that measure time in this way, but this is not the way we experience or remember time.
3. Some minutes go quickly; others drag by very slowly. Breaking all time into the same categories falsifies its nature and meaning.
4. The true meaning of time for humans depends on the unconscious that experiences it; this resembles the poetic conception of time.

G. This conception of time influenced writers such as Marcel Proust, who knew Bergson and drew somewhat indirectly on some of his theories.
2. Bergson's conception of inner realities also contributed to a revival of religious and mystical values among some intellectuals, including Charles Pégyu, who wrote about inner spiritual mysteries.
3. Pégyu went off to die in the First World War (acting on a kind of spiritual identification with France), but Bergson's influence pushed others toward the Catholic Church.
4. Bergson's critics said he undermined reason, but Bergson said that he simply noted the limits of the knowledge reason could provide.
III. Bergson’s notion of deeper realities beneath the surface of external appearances and his redefinitions of time had a curious parallel in the era’s new scientific culture.

A. Physics saw a reevaluation of the relation between external appearances and the inner realities of matter and light.
1. New discoveries showed that atoms, which had long been viewed as solid (like billiard balls), were actually composed of smaller particles: electrons and protons, orbiting an atomic nucleus.
2. This suggested that ultimate reality had more complex levels of fragmentation than people had assumed. Eventually, scientists recognized that Newtonian physics didn’t explain the subatomic world.

B. The limits of Newtonian physics became a particular concern of the early twentieth century’s most well known scientist, Albert Einstein (1879–1955).
1. Einstein was born into a Jewish family in southern Germany; his father ran a plumbing and electrical company in Munich, but it failed.
2. Young Einstein went through school in Munich but dropped out of the gymnasium (high school); he didn’t like school and was “disruptive.”
3. He later finished high school in Switzerland and attended the Swiss Federal Polytechnical School, which trained science teachers.
4. Einstein didn’t get a teaching job after graduation; he was finally hired in a Swiss government patent office.

C. Amid many changes in his personal life, Einstein pursued the scientific research that made him famous and led to various academic appointments; he finally joined the University of Berlin and the Prussian Academy of Sciences (1913).
1. Einstein’s greatest scientific contributions came in 1905, when he wrote a series of famous papers (leading to a Nobel Prize in Physics in 1921).
2. Some of this work described the nature of particles of light, and some described the nature of molecular motion, but his “special theory of relativity” and his accounts of mass and energy became most famous.

D. The theory of relativity appeared in a paper “On the Electrodynamics of Moving Bodies,” which argued that time and space are not absolute but are relative to the observer’s position and movement in space.
1. Einstein explained that time passes more slowly as the speed of an object increases; time on a spaceship moving close to the speed of light passes very slowly compared to the way time passes on earth.
2. This changed the classical Newtonian view of time, as well as the meaning of motion; the motion of all objects is relative to that of other objects—there is no fixed, motionless reference point.

E. Einstein went on to argue in another paper (also in 1905) that mass and energy are not totally different realities; in fact, they are convertible.
1. Mass can be changed into energy; this idea is the point of his famous equation: \( E = mc^2 \)—energy equals mass times the speed of light squared.
2. This showed that a huge amount of energy could be produced from even small amounts of mass; this idea became the starting point for the understanding and creation of atomic energy and weapons.

F. The culture of the twentieth-century world would evolve in the scientific context that Einstein’s theories produced.
1. For scientists and non-scientists who learned about it, the theory of relativity (as elaborated in 1916 in Einstein’s general theory of relativity) seemed to question the possibility of final truths.
2. The implications of both subatomic studies and the theory of relativity soon led to the Heisenberg uncertainty principle (1927).
3. The German scientist Werner Heisenberg showed that one could not determine at the same time the precise speed and position of an electron; one could only describe its “probable” speed or position.
4. Einstein himself wanted to challenge this uncertainty and to show that some objective reality might ultimately be established.

IV. But Einstein couldn’t refute Heisenberg, whose uncertainty principle became linked with relativity in popular twentieth-century ideas about the limits of human knowledge. The arts developed similar ideas about the limits of representation.

Essential Reading:

The Expanded Quotable Einstein, edited by Alice Calaprice, comments about himself and his family, pp. 5–48; comments about science, pp. 225–264.

Supplementary Reading:

Questions to Consider:
1. Would you agree with Bergson’s claim that the fluidity of time must be understood by intuitive, personal insights that go beyond the rational measurements of science?
2. What do you think explains the popular interest in the theory of relativity?
Lecture Six

The Emergence of Modern Art

Scope: The growing cultural emphasis on the unique visions of creative people appeared in the visual arts as it was spreading in literary and philosophical circles. A new "modern" art gained wide influence because its themes overlapped with anti-realist trends in other spheres of cultural life. Artists explored their personal visions, turning away from representations of objective external realities. This new approach to art first became apparent in late nineteenth-century Impressionism, but the most radical new work emerged in early twentieth-century movements, such as Fauvism, Cubism, and abstract expressionism. This lecture discusses these new art forms with specific reference to Henri Matisse, Pablo Picasso, and Wassily Kandinsky, all of whom contributed to the new nonrepresentational artistic style that would both express and shape many of the themes in twentieth-century European culture.

Outline

I. The avant-garde cultural revolt against European positivism and realism in the arts strongly influenced painting and the visual arts in the period between 1870 and 1914.

A. We have seen how the challenge to realism developed in literary movements, such as symbolist poetry, and played a role in modern philosophy.
   1. The different spheres of European culture often overlapped at the beginning of the twentieth century; people working in the different art forms of literature, music, dance, and painting had extensive contacts.
   2. We've noted earlier, for example, that the painter Edouard Manet was close to the novelist Émile Zola and the poet Stéphane Mallarmé. Mallarmé was also a friend of the composer Claude Debussy.
   3. Henri Bergson knew the writers Marcel Proust and Charles Péguy, and everyone in the artistic community was aware of Richard Wagner.

B. The challenge to traditional conceptions of knowledge and representation was a common theme in all avant-garde cultural circles.
   1. The cultural avant-garde included creative adherents in early twentieth-century Italy, Germany, Austria, and England, but Paris remained the center for many of the era's most experimental "isms."

II. Painting in the mid-nineteenth century had expressed some of the same realist tendencies that emerged in the novels of that era.

A. The French artist Gustave Courbet (1819–1877), for example, depicted common people in nonheroic situations or relationships, thus moving away from both the mythological and heroic themes of much Romantic art.
   1. Courbet's famous painting Burial at Ornans (1849–1850) portrayed common people at a graveside funeral, but the painting did not show the formality or the upper classes that usually appeared in such works.
   2. This kind of irreverent realism angered most art critics of the day.

B. Courbet's approach to painting was soon followed by the even more radical work of Edouard Manet (1832–1883), who represents the transition toward Impressionism.
   1. Manet portrayed unconventional scenes, such as a partially nude woman at a picnic with two men (Luncheon on the Grass [1863]), but he also began to experiment with light and brushwork in his paintings.
   2. His portraits (for example, of Mallarmé) had a certain "blurring" in comparison to the traditional delineation of figures in older portraits.

C. Because Manet's work was generally rejected in the annual Salon exhibitions at the official Art Academy, he began to organize a "Salon des refusés" at which excluded artists could exhibit their works.
   1. Critics made fun of this work (the term Impressionism was pejorative), but artists such as Claude Monet and Pierre Auguste Renoir persisted in their attempts to move beyond literal representations of reality.
2. They wanted to portray the subtle play of light that they observed in nature, in people’s faces, on rivers, or in fields of flowers.
3. Monet showed how the same object—a haystack, a church, a person—looked very different in the light of early day or noontime or dusk.
4. The Impressionists were not concerned with realistic images; they assumed that photographs could now provide those images.
5. Painting would portray what artists saw through their own eyes.

D. These themes were expanded further in the so-called post-Impressionist works of such artists as Vincent Van Gogh, Paul Gauguin, and Paul Cézanne.
1. Van Gogh and Cézanne worked in Provence in southern France and Gauguin went off to work in Tahiti, but all these artists gave new attention to colors, shapes, and the play of light on objects.
2. Cézanne worked especially at representing the almost geometric relation between objects in his landscapes, portraits, and still lifes.

III. The work of Cézanne became important for the new artistic “isms” that emerged at the beginning of the twentieth century, especially “Fauvism” and “Cubism.”

A. The term “fauves” (meaning wild beasts) was used by an art critic to ridicule the work of artists who had gathered around Henri Matisse about 1905.
1. Matisse (1869–1954) was from a small town in northern France. He had worked in a law office as a young man, but he became interested in painting as he recuperated from an illness and abandoned law for art.
2. He went to Paris to study art and began producing conventional imitations of classical works; then he encountered the work of more recent artists, including Cézanne (he bought some Cézanne paintings).

B. Matisse married a woman from Toulouse, Amélie Parayre, and settled into a non-Bohemian lifestyle, but his art led the way to the new Fauve style.
1. He lost interest in the literal representation of people or objects; he sought instead to convey meaning with color and shapes.
2. He often juxtaposed colors in strange ways; a portrait of his wife had a long green line running down her nose and showed her hair as blue.
3. Matisse said that art should convey the feeling or instinct of the artist; he showed these feelings with color and distorted shapes.

C. He also described his view of art in an essay, “Notes of a Painter,” which stressed the importance of the painter’s personal vision.

IV. The themes of Matisse’s Fauvism also attracted the attention of other painters, who began pushing their work in new directions.

A. Pablo Picasso and the early Cubists were especially interested in exploring the meaning of forms and space; Wassily Kandinsky and the early abstract expressionists focused on the expression of feelings through the use of color.

B. Picasso (1881–1973) became the most famous artist of the twentieth century; he was the Albert Einstein of the visual arts—a well-known symbol of modern art.
1. He was born in southern Spain but moved to Barcelona in his early teens. His father was an art teacher, and young Pablo learned the skills of classical painting at an early age.
2. After moving around for several years, Picasso settled permanently in Paris in 1904. He was just emerging from his “Blue Period,” during which (facing personal problems) he worked mostly with blue paint.

C. In Paris, however, Picasso found a congenial artistic network in Montmartre, came to know Matisse and Gertrude Stein, had a series of romantic involvements with women, and began to develop the style of Cubist art.
1. He worked closely with his artist friend Georges Braque, who was then trying to depict the shapes of objects in increasingly geometric forms.
2. Braque and Picasso were both influenced by the work of Cézanne and by the example of sculpture from Africa.
3. Picasso’s new Cubism began to appear in such paintings as Les Demoiselles d’Avignon (1907), a reference to women at a brothel in Barcelona; the women were portrayed in distorted angular shapes.
4. Picasso wanted to alter nature to fit the eye of the artist rather than have his art fit the reality of an external world.
Lecture Seven

Émile Durkheim and French Social Thought

Scope: Sociology had emerged as a modern social science among French theorists, such as Auguste Comte, but the older sociological assumptions seemed inadequate to early twentieth-century French theorists who were responding to the disorienting social context of modern industrial cities and bureaucracies. These theorists wanted to understand the dynamic force of nonrational cultural activities, such as religion, crowd behaviors, or social rituals. The key figure in the redefinition of French sociology was Émile Durkheim, whose ideas influenced the social sciences throughout the twentieth century. This lecture discusses Durkheim’s life, his interest in religion, and his analysis of social dislocation in modern societies. It also notes his influence on the emergence of modern anthropology.

Outline

I. The early twentieth-century artistic and scientific desire to move beneath appearances to deeper levels of reality coincided with the emergence of new social sciences in the growing university system.
   A. Although intellectuals in the universities had turned strongly toward the positivist faith in science and the quest for accurate descriptions of the external world, they were also affected by the evolving social context.
      1. New social theorists responded to the growth of cities and industrial capitalism and to the expansion of governments and bureaucracies.
      2. In this changing social world, some academic social theorists (like the poets, artists, and physicists) decided that traditional academic accounts of social life did not really portray the complexity of social experience.
   B. Physicists discovered the particles of atoms and the relation between energy and matter that existed deep within the apparent order of the natural world.
      1. Poets and artists explored the symbolic meanings of language or space or color that existed within the apparent order of words and objects.
      2. Sociologists also tried to explain deep structures and symbols that existed within or beneath the apparent order and disorder of social life.
      3. Sociology became the most dynamic early twentieth-century social science, along with the new field of cultural anthropology.

D. Picasso and Braque did not use as many vivid colors as Matisse, but they went further in exploring the lines and spaces and shapes of material objects.
   1. The same person or object would be represented in a painting from multiple angles or perspectives, suggesting the multiplicity of vision.
   2. Some Cubist paintings became so angular or geometric that the objects in the painting were virtually impossible to discern.

V. But the Cubists still alluded to objects in their work, thus separating themselves from abstract expressionism, which conveyed personal visions with color alone.

A. The abstract expressionists pushed beyond Matisse by stressing the ways in which color could express emotions, even without reference to specific forms. Wassily Kandinsky (1866–1944) was probably the most influential early advocate for this position.
   1. He began to produce completely abstract works with such titles as *Composition VII* (1913); he said that color expressed the artist’s feelings.
   2. He wrote about this in his influential book *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* (1912). He said that painting should be like music in conveying a feeling without representation; painting would be a “color music.”

VI. The artistic emphasis on inner visions, personal experience, and multiple perspectives expressed and helped shape the theme of indeterminacy in twentieth-century culture. The arts set the tone for modern culture, especially outside universities.

Essential Reading:

Supplementary Reading:

Questions to Consider:
1. How does the visual representation of ideas or personal realities differ from the description of ideas or experience in writing?
2. Why did once-radical art movements, such as Impressionism and Cubism, come to be so popular and accepted in twentieth-century European culture?
C. Sociologists examined the impact of urbanization and the new global economic system on social relations and communities.

1. Some of this work expressed nostalgia for an older social world that had disappeared in modern cities; this may explain the new anthropological interest in pre-modern societies (an interest many artists also shared).
2. The older integrated community and the rituals that held it together were breaking down in urban centers and in the crowds of big cities.
3. Social theorists asked why this was happening and how it should be dealt with; they were engaged with their own world and time.

D. We see an element of moral intensity in the sociology of such writers as Émile Durkheim and Max Weber—a moral intensity that carried them beyond positivism—but these theorists went beyond positivism in other ways, too.

1. They stressed the nonrational elements of social life. For example, the sociologist Gustave Le Bon (1841–1931) described the irrational, emotional frenzy of crowd behavior, which defied logic or reason.
2. Le Bon and many others looked beyond Auguste Comte’s positivist account of external behaviors to describe deep beliefs and structures.

E. Sociologists still stressed empirical studies, but they wanted to use empiricism to understand interactions of the rational and nonrational. The social meaning of religion became one of the key themes in their work.

1. We will examine the evolution of French social thought by looking at how Durkheim and his followers analyzed the intricate connection between nonrational cultural forms or behaviors and modern societies.
2. This interest in the deep structures of society led anthropologists (including Durkheim’s nephew Marcel Mauss) to compare the deep structural similarities of modern and pre-modern societies.

II. Émile Durkheim (1858–1917) is often described as the key figure in the emergence of modern sociology. He was born in eastern France, in Lorraine, the son of a rabbi.

A. He was one of the many prominent European thinkers who came from strongly religious families; his Jewish religious heritage was important to him.

1. But Durkheim rethought religious problems in secular terms; he saw society as the source of social meaning (in contrast to God).
2. He studied philosophy as a student, but finished next to last in his class at the École Normale Supérieure. He began his career as a philosophy teacher in provincial lycées.

3. He became increasingly interested in social issues, however, and began to teach sociology at the University of Bordeaux; he read the works of Henri Saint-Simon and Auguste Comte.
4. He lived in Bordeaux for fifteen years (from 1887 to 1902) and married Louise Dreyfus there; they had a son and a daughter.

B. Durkheim was appointed to the first French chair of sociology, which was established at the University of Bordeaux. In 1902, he was offered a position in Paris at the Sorbonne; he spent the rest of his career there.

1. He was a strong supporter of the Third French Republic; his own native region had been taken over by Germany after the Franco-Prussian War, but this seemed only to intensify his identification with France.
2. Durkheim believed that social science supported democracy, and he strongly supported Alfred Dreyfus, the French Jewish army officer who was wrongly convicted of spying for Germany.
3. During the Dreyfus affair, the modern term “intellectual” came into common usage; it referred to pro-Dreyfus writers, like Zola.

C. In Paris, Durkheim became active in the French education system; he also became deeply involved in the French war effort during World War I. His son died in the war (1916), and Durkheim never recovered from this loss. He fell into depression and illnes and died in 1917.

III. Durkheim always thought of himself as a rationalist in the tradition of the French Enlightenment; he identified with the scientific tradition and criticized the abstractions of philosophy and metaphysics. This is the reason he turned to social analysis.

A. To avoid metaphysics, Durkheim stressed the value of empirical research and the need to gain information on actual social conditions.

1. This emphasis on empiricism led Durkheim to condemn socialism; he thought socialism was a theory that lacked sufficient data.
2. He viewed Marxism as a kind of moral value system rather than an objective analysis of social life.
3. “Socialism is not a science,” he wrote, “...it is a cry of pain.” For Durkheim, it was an example of a (secularized) religious impulse in social life.
4. His own goal was to work out a non-Marxist science of science that would be rational and beyond metaphysics.

B. But in pursuing this new science of society, Durkheim focused repeatedly on the nonrational social processes that held society together.

1. He believed that the great problem of modern society was the loss of social community, which was caused by the transition from rural to urban culture and the decline of traditional religious beliefs.
2. In more traditional rural societies, the individual members were integrated into the social order through shared values.
3. This social integration was one of the great functions of religion; it gave coherence and enabled individuals to find meaning outside the self—meaning came from identification with social values.
4. Traditional societies affirmed these values in ritualized religious ceremonies, social punishments, and the collective scapegoating of persons who didn’t conform to the shared religious values.

C. Durkheim sought to explain how religion created integrated social values in his influential book *Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1912).

1. He argued that modern urban societies steadily eroded social integration and the religious values that sustained it.
2. The result of the urbanizing process was that individuals belonged to large groups in cities, factories, and so on, but they were no longer integrated into a community.
3. The typical modern person in cities experienced what he called "anomie"; the individual has little connection to the social authority that guides people in traditional religious societies.
4. People under conditions of urban anomie feel few connections to others or to social communities; they are disconnected or rootless.

D. Durkheim assumed that anomie was the modern urban experience; it was part of the anonymity of modern life, but he thought that sociology might explain the anomie, then find alternative forms of social integration.

1. This may have been part of the appeal of the idea of the “nation”; it offered isolated persons a sense of belonging to a social community.
2. Sociology could analyze social issues by looking objectively at social problems and explaining their social characteristics.

E. Durkheim used the problem of suicide as an example; he analyzed this problem as a kind of social fact in *On Suicide* (1897).

1. Suicide may seem like an individual phenomenon, but Durkheim argued that it was actually a reflection of social issues.
2. High suicide rates reflected either a high level of anomie or excessive levels of social integration; lower suicide rates indicated a more balanced society or an appropriate level of social integration.
3. He said that you can’t predict who will commit suicide, but you can establish and predict rates of suicide in a society.

F. Suicide rates reflected the structural anomie of the modern urban world; well-integrated, smaller communities had fewer suicides.

1. Durkheim’s books used extensive empirical evidence and careful research, but they didn’t explain historical changes, nor did they focus on non-European cultures.
2. His concepts of social facts, social integration, anomie, and other analytical categories became basic themes of modern sociology.

IV. Meanwhile, other theorists began to apply Durkheim’s ideas to other societies and to develop the themes of cultural anthropology.

A. Durkheim founded a journal called the *Année sociologique*, and many of his intellectual allies, including Lucien Lévy-Bruhl (1857-1939), were affiliated with the journal.

B. Other anthropologists were more interested in the structural similarities between pre-modern and modern cultures; they disliked the word “primitive.”

C. One of the analysts of the “social facts” that crossed cultural boundaries was Durkheim’s nephew Marcel Mauss (1872–1950), who also worked in Paris. Mauss shared Durkheim’s interest in religious rituals and ideas, which he saw reappearing in many different forms in modern societies.

D. Mauss extended his analysis to other rituals, including a famous account of how gift giving shapes social life; he described this practice in *The Gift* (1925).

E. This emphasis on the deep structures and symbolic meanings in all human actions and cultures became a recurring theme in much modern social science.

F. Like the poets, social theorists found symbolic meanings everywhere.

**Essential Reading:**


Marcel Mauss, *The Gift*.

**Supplementary Reading:**


**Questions to Consider:**

1. Was Durkheim correct when he argued that modern urban life produces a sense of anomie for most people?
2. Do you think that traditional religious rituals have been secularized in modern societies?
Lecture Eight
Max Weber and the New German Sociology

Scope: Social theorists in Germany attempted to move beyond positivist
descriptions of the social world by stressing the historical development
of modern social consciousness. This concern with human
consciousness appeared in such theorists as Wilhelm Dilthey, but it
became most influential in the sociology of Max Weber. This lecture
discusses Weber’s life and career, examines his interest in the
nonrational aspects of social behavior, and describes his view of
modern bureaucratic societies. Weber tried to explain what he saw as
the links between Protestant Christianity and modern capitalism, thus
providing a famous example of what came to be known as historical
sociology. Other sociologists, including Georg Simmel, shared Weber’s
interest in the impersonal rationalism of modern social life, but they
focused more on current conditions than on history.

Outline

I. Modern social science and social theory emerged in Germany at the same
time it was developing in the French works of Durkheim and his allies at the
Année sociologique.

A. Most German theorists shared in the wider European attempt to rethink
the positivist tradition of social analysis; they argued that human
societies could not be analyzed in the same way that scientists analyzed
nature.

1. They challenged August Comte’s belief that sociology should focus
(like natural science) only on the external behavior of human
beings.

2. They also questioned the extensive use of biological, evolutionary
themes in the English sociology of writers such as Herbert Spencer.

B. In general, German sociology showed more interest in human
consciousness (an old theme in German Idealist philosophy) and in the
historical emergence of modern social life (history had great influence
in German universities).

1. German social theorists resembled Durkheim and most French
writers in that they wanted to understand the distinctive traits of
modernity.

2. The German concern with history, however, created a new kind of
historical sociology, which gained its greatest influence in the work
of Max Weber—another “founding father” of modern social
science.

C. This lecture discusses how Weber’s work grew out of a German interest
in “consciousness,” then summarizes Weber’s career and key ideas. We
also note that Weber’s “historical sociology” was not the only form of
German social theory; the work of Georg Simmel, for example,
alYZed the modern world with less emphasis on the past.

II. The German interest in consciousness (as compared to the positivist stress
on external behavior) can be seen earlier in the influential ideas of Wilhelm
Dilthey (1833–1911).

A. Dilthey was a philosopher and historian who studied Romantic poets
and Hegel, as well as the Enlightenment and early positivism.

1. Dilthey believed that positivism did not recognize the irrational
side of human beings, but this aspect of human culture also
required attention.

2. He argued, therefore, that a distinction should be made between the
human sciences and the natural sciences; he said that human
actions involve freedom, whereas activity in nature expresses
natural laws.

B. Dilthey stressed that humans have a consciousness that is different
from, and more complex than, the instinctual processes of lower
animals.

1. Humans differed from other parts of nature, and their distinctive
consciousness differs in various cultures and historical periods.

2. Dilthey said that the consciousness of each historical era—what he
called the Weltanschauung—changes across time in ways that the
natural world does not change.

C. This emphasis on the changing consciousness of human beings in
different historical cultures became an important theme in much
German thought.

1. It also gave rise to questions about what made modern
consciousness different from the consciousness of earlier eras.

2. Max Weber examined this issue in his accounts of modern
capitalist society.

III. The work of Max Weber (1864–1920) emphasized what Durkheim called
the search for social facts, but Weber developed more historical analysis
than Durkheim did.

A. Weber shared Durkheim’s deep interest in the role of religion in social
life and in the ways that modern rationalism had altered earlier religious
beliefs.

1. Weber himself was divided between the conflicting views of his
parents, which seemed to reflect opposing views of religion.

2. Weber grew up mostly in Berlin as the oldest of eight children, but
his parents had an unhappy marriage.
3. Weber's mother was religious and involved with charitable causes. His father was nonreligious, authoritarian, and active in politics; he was a deputy in the German Reichstag, and he supported Bismarck's policies.

4. Weber seemed closer to his mother, but like his father, he was also interested in politics and did not share his mother's religion.

B. Weber became a university professor, teaching the history of law and economics; he wrote on German economic issues and agriculture.

1. He eventually settled at the University of Heidelberg, where he began to study the relation between rational actions and nonrational beliefs.

2. He read some of Marx's writings, but he did not accept Marx's idea that economic relations were the decisive shaping force in human history.

C. After establishing himself as a professor, Weber suffered a severe nervous collapse in 1898; this collapse took place after a violent argument with his father, who died shortly after this confrontation (without seeing his son again).

1. Weber was so depressed that he essentially stopped working for the next four years; he couldn't write or teach, and he often couldn't read.

2. Most historians trace the crisis to the guilt and anger he felt toward his father, but others note his pattern of grueling work before this crisis.

3. His work dominated his life. He had married a cousin, but the marriage was an intellectual partnership; they had no intimacy and no children.

4. He knew a great deal about what he called "Protestant asceticism."

D. Weber eventually began reading again, but he could not face the stress of a regular teaching schedule; he lived off an inheritance after 1907.

1. He worked outside the university in later years, though he edited an important sociological journal and knew many professors.

2. He became more involved in politics during and after World War I; he generally supported Germany during the war, but he was also a critic of German nationalism by this time. He died of pneumonia in 1920.

IV. Much of Weber's work in the development of historical sociology appeared as essays, because he could not face the strain of writing longer books.

A. He argued repeatedly that modern society despiritualizes the world and causes a process of disenchantment; the mystery goes out of urban industrial life.

1. The most general tendency of the modern world, according to Weber, was the bureaucratization of all aspects of public activity; this reflected the increasing rationalization in Western societies.

2. Other cultures in the pre-modern era or in societies outside the West did not develop rationalization to this extent; they did not try to organize and categorize all spheres of human life.

B. This conception of the rationalizing bureaucracy differed somewhat from Marx's view of alienation as a consequence of modern capitalism.

1. Weber argued that any modern bureaucratic society would be equally alienating or disenchanting; socialist bureaucracies and rational categories would not really differ from those of modern capitalism.

2. In this respect, Weber seemed more pessimistic about the modern world; he called the bureaucratic, rationalizing system an "iron cage."

C. Despite the rationalism of modernity, Weber believed that this modern system of capitalism and bureaucracy could be traced to distinctive religious beliefs.

1. His most famous book, The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism (1905), argued that the religious ideas of Protestantism had created modern cultural patterns of hard work and economic discipline.

2. Weber was not personally religious, but he argued that religious faith showed how nonrational motivations operated in societies.

3. He found what he saw as crucial links (or "elective affinities") between a Protestant work ethic and the capitalist need to accumulate money.

D. He said that Protestants developed the idea of a "calling," in which they viewed their work as an expression of their faith in God, and the reward from their work — their wealth — was viewed as a sign of God's judgment.

1. Wealth replaced poverty (the medieval sign of virtue) as the sign of divine grace; the poor were seen as lazy and, hence, immoral.

2. The original religious aspect of this value system had been secularized in the modern world, but work and wealth remained the signs of virtue.

3. "The spirit of religious asceticism" had been secularized into a pursuit of wealth that used rational means for irrational ends.

E. Weber said that sociology must analyze these kinds of processes objectively and with rigorous scientific categories, many of which he developed himself.

1. He suggested, for example, that such explanations must depend on what he called "Ideal Types"; he wanted to describe the ideal types of Protestants or Catholics or capitalists or bureaucrats.
Lecture Nine
The Great War and Cultural Pessimism

Scope: The Great War of 1914–1918 was one of the greatest catastrophes in European history. Europe never regained the dominant global position that it held before 1914. Government war policies moved away from classical liberalism, and the horrors of the war challenged classical liberal beliefs in progress, science, and the superiority of democratic political institutions. This lecture summarizes the characteristics of World War I and stresses the idea that the war contributed to a crisis in classical liberalism and to a new wave of cultural pessimism—which can be seen in the popular postwar works of such writers as Robert Graves and Oswald Spengler. More generally, this lecture argues that the First World War shaped the context for much of twentieth-century European intellectual life, producing a sense of crisis and disorientation that persisted long after the war had ended.

Outline

I. The two decades before 1914 were an exceptionally creative period in modern thought. New themes in the arts, natural science, and the social sciences created a new cultural context that would influence intellectuals throughout the twentieth century.

A. Much of this new work questioned the positivism, realism, and science that dominated late nineteenth-century cultural life.
   1. It also challenged the belief in stable, universal truths and the idea that human reason and science produced the highest forms of knowledge.
   2. But these ideas did not gain much attention or support beyond the circles of avant-garde artists and elite scientists and social theorists.
   3. The horrors of World War I, however, helped to transform the critical, disorienting ideas of advanced prewar thinkers into a popular, postwar culture of pessimism, relativism, and fascination with irrationality.

B. World War I was one of the biggest catastrophes in European history; it can be compared to the Black Death of the late Middle Ages or to World War II.
   1. A whole generation was profoundly affected by the great loss of life.
   2. The war also destroyed three large empires of Eastern Europe (Russian, Austro-Hungarian, and German), consumed vast amounts of European wealth, and weakened all the European empires.
3. It opened the way for America's economic and political ascendance and stimulated anti-colonial movements in Asia and Africa; Europe never again dominated the world as it had before 1914.

4. The war also led to the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 and the later rise of fascism and Nazism, all of which soon produced World War II.

C. The Great War of 1914–1918 was one of the decisive events in modern world history, but I want to focus on how the war affected intellectual life.

1. This war became one of those experiential contexts that shapes the intellectual life of an entire era—in this case, most of the twentieth century.

2. In most general terms, the war undermined many of the key ideas of classical liberalism, including laissez-faire economic policies, the sanctity of individual rights or freedom, and the belief in progress.

D. I want to discuss how the war challenged these traditions and led especially to a cultural pessimism that emphasized the losses and decline in modern Europe rather than the long-established faith in inevitable progress.

1. The English poet Robert Graves and the German philosopher and historian Oswald Spengler offer notable examples of this pessimism. We'll look at their works to see how these themes reached a large audience.

2. The older Enlightenment, liberal confidence in human reason seemed to lose credibility. Sigmund Freud's description of unconscious, irrational drives (a prewar theory) had its greatest influence after 1918.

II. The dominant characteristic of World War I for many of its European participants was its lack of meaning or purpose; it seemed to become a meaningless war.

A. It was difficult for many people to see why it was being fought, though at first, most Europeans responded to the war with enthusiasm. The most tangible event that people could identify was the murder of Archduke Ferdinand of Austria by a Serbian terrorist in June 1914.

B. Most Europeans knew nothing about this archduke (heir to the Austrian throne), and they cared nothing about the nationalist conflicts that led to his death.

1. Yet, within a month of this assassination, a complex alliance system dragged all the major European powers into a huge, destructive war.

2. The war broke out because no diplomatic solutions were developed to deal with a crisis in the Balkans and because alliances (Germany-Austria and Serbia-Russia-France) pushed governments to mobilize.

3. Britain declared war on Germany after the German army invaded neutral Belgium as part of its massive military attack on France.

C. After the first surge of patriotic excitement, many people couldn't see the purpose; the war took on its own rationale—nobody wanted to admit defeat, and it was seen as a kind of Darwinian struggle for survival.

1. This war was the first modern war in which defensive weapons had superiority over the offense; the machine gun exemplified this development.

2. The Germans launched a major offensive in August 1914, but neither side could achieve a decisive breakthrough in the early weeks of the war. Fighting settled into a pattern of trench warfare that lasted four years.

D. The fighting produced huge numbers of casualties because the generals assumed that they could break through opposing defenses.

1. The battle of Verdun, for example, lasted more than 300 days, from February to December 1916; both the French and Germans lost about a half million men, but neither side gained any military advantage.

2. The British attack in the battle of the Somme in the same year cost about 60,000 casualties on the first day; the attack continued for 140 days, cost 600,000 men, and made an advance of 6 miles.

E. There had never been a European war with violence on this scale; the vast numbers of casualties and a growing sense that the war lacked clear purpose fostered a kind of pervasive cynicism and despair.

1. Germany ultimately lost the war, but no country emerged from the war with a belief in clear victory—except, perhaps, the United States.

2. About 10 million people were killed in the war and almost three times that number were wounded. The war left a generation of maimed men.

3. Germany lost 6 million dead or wounded; France lost 5.5 million; everyone lost family members or friends. The prewar governments collapsed in Russia, Austria, and Germany in 1917 and 1918.

III. One consequence of the war was a crisis in classical liberalism.

A. This crisis appeared in economic life and politics, as well as in intellectual life. Liberalism had always stressed the reason and autonomy of individuals and the rational progress of modern society, but all these ideals seemed to be disappearing.
1. The economic ideal of classical liberalism was a system of laissez-faire policies in which a free market operated without government controls.

2. During the war, however, all national economies were brought under strict government controls. Governments managed both the production and distribution of goods to promote the war effort.

3. Individuals could not pursue their own economic plans. Some government management of the economy also continued after the war.

4. The old laissez-faire policies never fully returned.

B. The war also expanded the political power of national governments and gave the state more power over most aspects of individual lives.

1. Governments told individuals where to work, set wages and prices, and forced millions of men into their armies.

2. Liberal ideals, such as free speech, free press, and freedom to dissent, lost their sanctity; there was little tolerance for individual opinions.

3. The control over soldiers was, in effect, almost absolute control over an individual's life and death (given the mortality rates).

4. Some women gained more economic rights because they were needed in factories and the war may have strengthened support for women's voting rights—a postwar reform in several nations, including the United States.

C. More generally, however, the war seemed to enhance the sense of alienation or anomie that prewar social theorists had already been writing about.

1. It created large groups of alienated soldiers and veterans who felt little connection to civilian society. Many of these men came away from the war with no respect for governments or political institutions.

2. This pattern was most apparent in such places as Germany and Italy (where such persons were attracted to fascism), but the pattern also appeared in other places and in the general cultural attitude of the era.

IV. Almost all intellectuals viewed the war as a symptom of deep problems in modern European societies; it suggested that something in this culture had gone very wrong.

A. The most common theme in postwar writing was a deep pessimism.

1. Intellectuals, like almost everyone else in Europe, were obsessed with the extraordinary loss—the feeling that a generation had disappeared.

2. Survivors wrote about their sense of separation from the past and from a more optimistic time that had vanished from their lives.

B. This was a key theme of Robert Graves's best-selling autobiography, *Good-Bye to All That* (1928), an unsentimental account of lost illusions.

1. Graves (1895–1986) had been educated at an elite school and had begun to write poetry before he went into the army in 1914.

2. He participated in the British offensive at the battle of Somme and was wounded in July 1916; his family was told that he died.

C. But Graves survived and later wrote his account of how he and those in his generation had said "good-bye" to prewar beliefs and social values. His old life of privilege, culture, and order seemed far away after the war; he rejected both patriotism and religion.

D. Graves wrote poetry and successful books but spent most of his later life on the Spanish island of Majorca; he could never really go home. His famous good-bye to all that he had once known was a common theme in postwar writing; the old faith and certitudes were gone.

V. This sense of loss could be found in all postwar national cultures, but it may have been most severe in Germany, which lost so many lives and the war.

A. The idea that Europe had fallen ill—the point made by Nietzsche earlier—was almost a cultural cliché in German society, which may explain why the cultural pessimism of Oswald Spengler (1880–1936) became so popular there.

1. Spengler had studied ancient philosophy as a university student and had taught at a gymnasium after getting his doctorate. By 1914, he was a freelance writer in Munich.

2. His health was too poor for military service, but he was able to write a philosophical history, *Decline of the West* (1918).

B. Spengler's book challenged the liberal view of historical progress by arguing for a cyclical view of history. He said that civilizations go through phases of growth and decay, like organisms, and that Europe had entered its decay; faith in progress became one of the war's many casualties.

Essential Reading:

Supplementary Reading:

Questions to Consider:
1. Did the First World War have a greater effect on intellectuals than most other wars?

2. Why did theories of cultural decline attract so much interest in twentieth-century European culture?
Lecture Ten
Sigmund Freud and Psychoanalytic Theory

Scope: New psychological theories about the unconscious mind and instinctual drives may have had more influence on modern culture than any other specific twentieth-century intellectual theme. The main ideas of psychoanalysis spread widely in popular culture, giving people an intellectual framework to explain their families, anxieties, dreams, sexuality, loves, and hatreds. This lecture discusses Freud's life and the themes of his psychoanalytic theory. It summarizes his description of the human mind, his ideas for the treatment of depression, and his tendency to link science and literature in his theoretical works. It also places Freud in the historical context of early twentieth-century Vienna and suggests the influence of that context on his ideas. The lecture notes the dualities in Freud's work as a clinician and a social theorist and his fusion of science and the arts.

Outline

I. The postwar intellectual generation that sought to understand the irrationality and horrors of the Great War found new psychological explanations for nonrational human behaviors in the theories of psychoanalysis.
   A. We've seen how the prewar literary and artistic avant-garde often tried to portray the complex inner thoughts, fantasies, and symbols of the human mind.
      1. This approach to the mind, however, usually showed little interest in the work of modern science, which was seen as narrow positivism.
      2. Early twentieth-century psychoanalysis, however, set about exploring the inner workings of the mind in a scientific framework; this early exploration occurred in the same years that avant-garde artists were depicting personal visions.
   B. Some intellectual historians have argued that the new psychological emphasis on the unconscious mind and the power of irrational drives may be the most distinctive and influential theme in twentieth-century Western thought.
      1. The other major theme of twentieth-century thought was the new emphasis on the shaping role of language in all spheres of culture and social life.
      2. Both the interest in psychology and the new emphasis on language began to develop in the decades before World War I, but the crisis and horrors of the war gave these ideas wider popularity.

   3. Neither the old belief in human rationality nor the belief that language transparently described reality seemed persuasive after the Great War.
   C. The most influential new psychological theories appeared in the work of Sigmund Freud. This lecture focuses on Freud's life and theories.
      1. Freud always claimed that psychoanalysis was a science that described the human mind; he also claimed direct links to the positivist tradition.
      2. He believed that he was carrying on the tradition of Newtonian physics or Darwinian biology, and he assumed that the laws of psychological development were universal (like gravity or evolution).
      3. Such claims about the deepest reality of the human mind attracted great popular interest after 1918. "Freudianism" soon joined Marxism and Darwinism as a form of thought that reached far beyond cultural elites.
   D. Psychoanalysis took as its object of investigation the unconscious mind, which could never be directly observed, as natural phenomena can.
      1. Because modern science is based on methods of empirical observation, the opponents of psychoanalysis rejected the claim that it was a science; critics said that the unconscious mind could not be observed.
      2. The difficulty in giving scientific accounts of the unconscious led later academic psychology toward studies of observable behaviors.
   E. Psychoanalysis became extremely influential, however, in modern literature, literary criticism, and the study of human societies; some historians also drew on it.
      1. The interest in psychoanalysis grew partly from the fact that its themes repeated some of the oldest themes in Western literature (human desire, family conflicts, anger, aggression); the theory used literary metaphors.
      2. There was often a tension in psychoanalytic thought between the desire for science and the use of literary imagery and speculation.
      3. The tensions in psychoanalysis expressed some of the wider tensions in European culture: positivist and anti-positivist ideas.
      4. These tensions may account for much of its appeal and creativity.

II. The tensions between science and literary imagination were apparent in the work and writings of Freud (1856–1939). Psychoanalysis reflected the imprint of his personality and the range of his intellectual ambitions.
   A. Freud was born into a Jewish family in Moravia (now part of the Czech Republic) but moved to Vienna when he was four years old.
1. His mother was twenty years younger than his father (this was his third marriage), and Freud grew up closer emotionally to his mother.

2. Young Freud was a brilliant student; he first planned to study law but turned to medicine when he entered the University of Vienna.

3. He studied physiology with outstanding professors and wanted to become a scientific researcher, but there were no university posts.

4. He worked in a hospital, then went to Paris in 1885 to work with the famous French psychologist Jean-Martin Charcot.

B. Charcot was known for his work on the problem of hysteria and for his use of hypnosis as a method for treating patients with such mental illnesses.

1. This work pushed Freud toward his emerging interest in psychology. He returned to Vienna and, still unable to get a university position, began a private medical practice, focusing on treatment of hysteria.

2. He also married Martha Bernays (1886); they soon had six children (three sons and three daughters).

C. Most historians have stressed that Freud must be understood in the context of Viennese society around the turn of the twentieth century.

1. Feminist historians have argued that his ideas about gender reflected the dominant gender ideologies of late nineteenth-century Viennese society.

2. Other historians have emphasized that his ambitions to advance in Viennese professional life were blocked because of anti-Semitism.

3. His appointment to a professorship was delayed for years (until he was forty-five), in part because the Culture Ministry wouldn’t act when the faculty at the University of Vienna finally sought to give him a position.

D. Freud encountered the problem of personal and social repression in his personal and professional life. We also see other aspects of Viennese culture in his theoretical work.

1. He was preoccupied with the power of fathers and described his own dreams about his father in some of his first work on dreams.

2. His theories also focused mainly on men—another aspect of his own cultural milieu. Women often functioned in his theories as objects of male psychological dramas and desire, for example, in their role as mothers.

3. Finally, Freud’s cultural origins were reflected in his deep faith in science; although Freud criticized Enlightenment assumptions about human reason, he also strongly identified with the Enlightenment.

4. He wanted to give scientific, rational explanations for irrationality.

E. Perhaps Freud’s long exclusion from official positions helped him to take the intellectual risks that emerged in his creative new account of the human mind.

F. In any case, he lived in Vienna until almost the end of his life; he went to London after the Nazis took control of Vienna in 1938.

III. Freud’s work can be approached as a series of overlapping or sometimes conflicting intellectual tendencies, which might be described as a series of “dual objectives.”

A. He was (1) a clinical therapist and (2) a social theorist; he applied his theories to (1) individuals and (2) broad cultural patterns; and he drew on both (1) scientific evidence and (2) literary examples to support his ideas.

B. Freud’s work as a clinical therapist led him to develop a method that encouraged patients to make free mental associations as they talked with the psychoanalyst about their anxieties or dreams.

1. This method was designed to free individuals from neuroses. It rested on Freud’s great insight that psychological problems are not a simple function of physiological problems (the older view).

2. He argued that psychological problems developed out of unconscious psychological desires, frustrations, and fantasies.

3. These desires, which were blocked in various ways, led to mental illness and unhappiness, but therapy could explain the repression and help free patients from their depression, hysteria, or anxieties.

C. This was the therapeutic component of psychoanalysis, and in his clinical work, Freud tried to help individuals fit into society and function normally.

1. The therapeutic work focused mainly on abnormal persons, though Freud found in such persons the same tendencies that could be found in everyone, such as sexual fantasies and repressed childhood memories.

2. This therapeutic work and the description of individual psychology was the main theme of his early books, *Interpretation of Dreams* (1899) and *Three Essays on Sexuality* (1905). Freud stressed sex drives and symbols.

D. Freud’s second objective led him to the work of a social critic; he sought to explain and analyze social processes, especially after World War I.

1. Freud compared societies to neurotic persons; he said that societies repress certain desires, needs, or memories, much as individuals do.

2. These repressed desires come back to haunt societies much as they come back to haunt individuals; the repressed desire resurfaces.

IV. In addition to Freud’s dual objectives of therapist and social critic, he also developed a dual method that combined scientific positivism and literature.

A. The positivism appeared in his scientific model of causality in the workings of the human mind. This model stressed the primacy of unconscious drives, which he located in the “libido” or “id.”

B. Freud stressed the sexual drive as the most basic force in the unconscious mind, but after World War I, he began to describe a death instinct.

1. He portrayed the psychological battle of Eros (sex) vs. Thanatos (death) within the id itself.

2. Neither the individual nor the society could survive in a civilized form with the id alone; id is driven by a pleasure principle.

3. The “superego” of civilization disciplines and controls the id, and the individual’s ego emerges at the intersection of these two forces.

4. The ego develops a “reality principle” (drawing on cultural training) that moderates, restrains, and represses the pleasure principle of the id.

C. This system can never be completely analyzed in any individual, but the scientific claim suggests that it operates universally, like a natural law.

1. The evidence for the human unconscious and the repression of the id, according to Freud, can be found in our dreams.

2. The images of dreams reveal repressed desires or wishes.

D. To interpret dreams, Freud often drew on literature, such as Sophocles’s *Oedipus Rex*, for examples that would convey his themes.

E. Freud’s theories gained wide attention because they gave people an explanation for irrationality and aggression after World War I.

F. They “made sense” to people because they claimed scientific status and drew on familiar literary themes; they also provoked strong critiques.

Essential Reading:

Supplementary Reading:
Peter Gay, *Freud: A Life for Our Time*, pp. 103–149.


Questions to Consider:
1. Is psychoanalysis a reliable science that is based on observable evidence?
2. Does Freud overstate the importance of sex drives or the “death instinct”?

Lecture Eleven

Freud, Jung, and the Constraints of Civilized Life

Scope: Freud’s description of the human mind expanded from accounts of the individual’s psychological development into a wider analysis of how social institutions and cultural values affect personal happiness. Freud believed that civilized social life requires the repression of human instincts, thus creating both guilt and unhappiness for human beings, who must inevitably deny their own desires. This lecture discusses Freud’s social theories and suggests that the events of World War I deepened Freud’s interest in irrational collective behaviors and the aggressive drives that shape the “death instinct.” Finally, the lecture looks briefly at the psychological theories of Carl Jung, who challenged Freud’s emphasis on sex drives and his accounts of religion. The lecture concludes with a summary of the intellectual differences that separated Jung and Freud.

Outline

I. Freud’s descriptions of the unconscious mind, the irrational or instinctual drives, the symbolic, sexual meaning of dreams, and the processes of repression focused at first on the psychological experiences of individuals.

A. He wanted to explain the origins of psychological neuroses and to show how repressed childhood relationships, memories, or fantasies affected adults.

1. His theories began to attract attention before 1914 in Vienna and in other intellectual communities; in fact, Freud even went to America in 1909 to receive an honorary doctorate at Clark University.

2. He was beginning to achieve recognition as a scientist, but his theories also attracted critiques and strong opposition.

B. Some critics attacked his emphasis on childhood sexuality; others claimed that he denied the importance of human reason or overemphasized deep instincts.

1. He was criticized for allegedly favoring uninhibited sexual activity.

2. None of these criticisms altered Freud’s confidence in the basic truths of his theories. If anything, the critiques seemed to push him to extend his ideas from individuals to social analysis.

C. This was the “dual” tendency in his work (as I noted in the last lecture), which carried his themes from individual cases to the whole culture.

1. He claimed that the “process of human civilization” and the developmental “process of individual human beings” were actually “similar in nature”; both required mechanisms of repression.
2. The social dimension of Freud’s thought became more prominent after World War I. This level of the theory also interested many intellectuals, especially as they tried to make sense of the Great War.

D. Meanwhile, Freud had also begun to organize his medical and intellectual allies in an international psychoanalytic movement. For Freud and his allies, psychoanalysis offered a comprehensive account of human nature and society.

1. In this lecture, I’ll summarize Freud’s key ideas about social life, then note the conflicts between Freud and Carl Jung.
2. The complex relation between science and literature in Freud’s work can be seen more generally in the Freud/Jung disputes.
3. The conflicts among different groups of psychologists, however, did not destroy the influence of psychoanalytical theory.
4. The language of modern psychology became the dominant “paradigm” for understanding human behavior; we still use Freud’s language.

II. Freud began to apply his psychological theories to the whole social order as he explored the implications of that basic psychological triangle, the Oedipus complex.

A. According to Freud, each boy experiences sexual desire for his mother and the frustrating humiliation of not being able to compete with his father; the boy wants what the father has (a pattern Freud analyzed in his own family life).

1. The father has the power, so the son can only fantasize about destroying the father and acting out his desires with his mother.
2. In individuals, this psychological struggle is resolved when the young man displaces desire from the mother to other women.
3. The young man then takes the place of the father in a new relationship and overcomes his frustration by the transfer of desire to a new woman.
4. But Freud said that the young man often maintains a lingering anger or resentment toward the father—or a transfer of this anger toward other “substitute” fathers.

B. This theory was a controversial account of emotionally charged relationships, yet for Freud, it offered a means for understanding all of human society.

1. Freud believed that a similar Oedipal struggle developed in the early stage of human history, as he explained in his book Totem and Taboo (1913).
2. In the earliest human communities, the sons actually killed their father, who (as the chief) had controlled all the women.

3. This primal crime was the origin of civilization, because the sons felt guilt and remorse; they compensated by paying homage to the father.
4. Worshipping the memory of the father became the origin of religion; this was the beginning of the “totem,” or worship of an idealized father.
5. Even advanced religions expressed this relation, as for example in Christianity (“Our father, who art in heaven, hallowed be his name”).

C. To avoid such crimes in the future, the sons created certain taboos about sexual conduct, especially incest taboos that repressed desire in families.

1. These restrictions became the origins of civilized social restraints and the source of both human guilt and human unhappiness.
2. The Oedipal theory gave Freud a conceptual framework to explain both social and individual repression.

D. These ideas were extended further in his well known book, Civilization and Its Discontents (1930), which described an endless psychological struggle.

1. He said that individuals have basic drives for sexual pleasure and aggression (both enhance survival), but neither of these drives can be fully expressed in civilized social life.
2. Civilization “is built upon the renunciation of instinct,” thus setting up a permanent “frustration” in human relationships; therefore, we are all unhappy on some level—we can’t do what our instincts tell us to do.

E. Civilization tells people not to have certain desires, but the desires don’t go away; they are repressed and controlled by “an ever-increasing reinforcement of the sense of guilt,” which makes people unhappy but able to live in society.

1. People find various ways to cope with this unhappiness, including alcohol, romantic love, and sublimation of desire into work or art.
2. Freud said that work was an effective way to channel repressed desires; it offered a way to displace “narcissistic, aggressive or even erotic” drives onto professional activity and “human relations connected with it.”

F. In general, though, Freud was pessimistic about the chances for finding real happiness in modern civilized life; he thought that people could express their drives only in neurotic behaviors or in collective aggressive actions like war.

1. He saw the Great War as a confirmation of his theory that “our intellect is a feeble and dependent thing, a playing and tool of our impulses and emotions”; he also saw religion as an extension of emotions.
2. Freud’s view of religion was another example of his Enlightenment heritage. As he argued in *The Future of an Illusion* (1927), he saw religion as an illusion covering deep psychological processes.

3. He compared religion to a dream—the fulfillment of a wish for a deep reconciliation with the father.

G. Such theories about social and religious life made Freud’s ideas controversial, but they also opened whole new areas of cultural and intellectual debate.

1. His account of individual psychological neuroses and unconscious drives seemed more persuasive to many people than his account of social relations, but his concept of repression had wide influence.

2. His view of civilization and the need for repression of drives also posed a problem for radical advocates of social reform (including socialists).

3. If the unhappy repression of human drives was inevitable in civilized life, even the most radical social reform could not bring happiness.

III. The social implications of Freud’s thought attracted criticism from socialists, religious thinkers, and many other intellectual groups, but his emphasis on sexuality and his views of religion also provoked criticism among other psychologists.

A. Freud tried to develop a coherent psychoanalytic movement, beginning with a Vienna Psychoanalytic Society and moving on to the establishment of an International Psychoanalytic Association, which was founded in 1910.

1. The first president of the International Association was the Swiss psychiatrist Carl Jung (1875–1961), but Jung soon broke with Freud and became his most famous critic among psychologists.

2. Jung grew up in a Protestant Swiss family; his father was a pastor in the Swiss Reformed Church and his mother’s family included many Protestant pastors. His early environment was religious.

3. He decided to study medicine instead of theology and graduated from the University of Basel with a medical degree. He went on to work in a famous psychiatric clinic in Zurich and studied schizophrenia.

B. Jung became interested in Freud’s work and, in 1906, sent Freud an article he had written on schizophrenics; the two men began corresponding and became friends.

1. Jung praised Freud’s theories as a breakthrough in understanding the human mind and the complexities of the unconscious.

2. Jung was also important to Freud, in part because Freud wanted to find supporters outside Vienna and in non-Jewish medical circles.

3. Freud saw Jung as an excellent person to succeed him as the leader of the psychoanalytic movement, which suggests why Jung became the first president of the International Psychoanalytic Association in 1910.

C. The Freud/Jung friendship had its own emotional complexity because Freud viewed Jung as a kind of “son” and Jung saw Freud as a kind of “father.” But by 1914, the two men had a complete falling out. Jung challenged Freud’s theories in an essay, “On the Psychology of the Unconscious.”

D. Basically, Jung decided that Freud overemphasized sexuality as the source of all neuroses, and he claimed that Freud’s mechanistic theories did not really explain religion. Jung put less emphasis on childhood experiences. He began to look for other components of the unconscious mind, focusing increasingly on the history of myths, mysticism, and religions as sources of psychological truths.

E. This focus was not altogether different from Freud’s use of literature as a source of psychological truths, but Freud could not accept Jung’s sympathy for religion. Jung became especially interested in the symbolism of Asian religions; he said that they expressed universal archetypes, which carry the insights of a collective human unconscious.

F. The Freudians and other scientifically oriented psychologists attacked Jung for being unscientific. They said that his theory of the collective unconscious lacked scientific evidence (in contrast to their own theories of sexual drives).

G. The tensions between science and literary imagination that ran throughout psychoanalysis reappeared in the Freud/Jung debate, which continues today.

H. Other psychological critics of Freud also emerged; they contributed to the further development of a psychological language that became the common discourse in much of modern European and American culture.

Essential Reading:

Supplementary Reading:

Questions to Consider:
1. Do you think an Oedipal triangle exists in parent-child relationships? Does this idea have any value for the analysis of human societies?
2. Do you agree with Freud’s account of the origins of religion? Did Jung develop a more convincing account of human religions?
Lecture Twelve

Poetry and Surrealism after the Great War

Scope: This lecture continues the discussion of intellectual responses to World War I by examining postwar poetry and the emergence of the radical, experimental movements that became known as “Dada” and “surrealism.” Such poets as W. B. Yeats and T. S. Eliot expressed a postwar sense of loss or emptiness, which had already begun to appear during the war in the works of Siegfried Sassoon and Wilfred Owen. This poetry differs from the more nonsensical Dada movement and from the significant surrealist movement, both of which were influential on the Continent in the 1920s. The lecture concludes with a discussion of André Breton, the most prominent theorist in the surrealist movement. Surrealism would have a lasting influence in many spheres of twentieth-century literature and art.

Outline

I. We have seen how the Great War of 1914–1918 contributed to a new European cultural pessimism and led to a new interest in Freud’s theories about irrational drives and human aggression; the war seemed to prove the fragility of human reason.
   A. More generally, the war led to a wider cultural acceptance of prewar avant-garde literary and artistic movements that had challenged the belief in science and progress and academic positivism.
      1. The war encouraged a pervasive belief that European society had fallen into a deep political and cultural crisis.
      2. This theme also appeared in the postwar poetry that expressed and shaped the influential ideas of literary modernism.
   B. The pervasive sense of “loss” in postwar culture suggested that the old cultural order had lost its coherence, along with the prewar political and social order.
      1. This was the theme of Robert Graves’s postwar memoir, Good-bye to All That, but it was already the dominant idea in poems that English poets had written during the war.
      2. The poetry of Siegfried Sassoon (1886–1967) and Wilfred Owen (1893–1918) gained a wide audience after the war and helped to produce a postwar skepticism about patriotic or military ideals in Britain.
   C. Owen’s work was particularly poignant because he was killed in France only a week before the war ended in November 1918.

II. The sense of crisis was acute in the postwar poems of T. S. Eliot (1888–1965) and W. B. Yeats (1865–1939), both of whom won the Nobel Prize for Literature.
   A. Eliot was originally from America; he grew up in St. Louis and graduated from Harvard, but he was drawn to Europe.
      1. He spent a year in Paris, where he heard Bergson at the Collège de France.
      2. Eliot went on to receive a doctorate in philosophy at Harvard; he was living in England by the time he finished his graduate work and decided to settle there permanently.
      3. He married an English woman, Vivien Haigh-Wood, and got a job at Lloyd’s Bank in London, but his real passion was writing and poetry.
      4. Eliot became a British citizen in 1927; he felt separated from America.
   B. Eliot identified with European traditions (Dante was one of his favorite authors), and he was, in many respects, a cultural conservative.
      1. He believed that European culture was in a period of transition, crisis, and even collapse. Many readers interpreted his poem The Waste Land (1922) as the expression of this postwar attitude.

1. His poetry challenged all patriotic views of wartime deaths, including his own. The poem “Dulce et Decorum Est,” denied patriotic ideals.
2. “In all my dreams, before my helpless sight/’Owen wrote, “He [a dying man] plunges at me, guttering, choking, drowning.”
3. But Owen says that anyone who sees such a sight cannot “tell with such high zest/To children ardent for some desperate glory./The old Lie: Dulce et Decorum est/Pro patria mori.”
4. In other words, Owen makes the point that it is a lie to say (as Horace did in ancient Rome) that it is sweet and glorious to die for your country.

D. This poetic perspective may have been understandable among writers who had seen the horrors of trench warfare, but the sense of loss and emptiness appeared also among poets who never served in the trenches.
   1. The theme of loss and disorientation can be seen in the poems of W. B. Yeats and T. S. Eliot in postwar Britain, and it emerged clearly in the literary movements of Dadaism and surrealism.
   2. These poets and poetic movements all exemplified pessimistic postwar literary patterns.
   3. The poets resembled the psychologists and the social theorists in seeing diverse forms of irrationality in European culture. This theme remained a prevailing literary perspective throughout the twentieth century.
2. The meaning of the poem is still debated, but the title suggests fragmentation and despair. The poem has multiple voices and perspectives.

3. Eliot’s own intentions were somewhat unclear: the term “waste land” may have referred mainly to his own despair, but it became a poetic metaphor for the postwar world: a waste land of death or loss.

C. The sense of emptiness or of a world gone out of control remained important in Eliot’s poetry through much of the 1920s.

1. This perspective emerged most clearly in his famous poem “The Hollow Men,” which also summarized the feeling of death.

2. “Those who have crossed/With direct eyes, to death’s other Kingdom/Remember us—if at all—not as lost/Violent souls, but only/As the Hollow men/The Stuffed Men.”

3. In this world, Eliot suggested, conversations seemed “quiet and meaningless”: there was nothing to lift people beyond this crisis.

4. As he noted in the poem, “This is the way the world ends/This is the way the world ends/Not with a bang but a whimper.” Such themes gave Eliot his reputation for pessimism.

III. The feeling of postwar loss was perhaps expressed even more memorably, however, in the famous poem of W. B. Yeats, “The Second Coming” (1921).

A. Yeats was from Ireland, but his father was an aspiring artist who took the family to London. Yeats lived much of his life moving between Dublin and London. He was an advocate of Irish culture and political independence.

1. He was also skeptical of modern scientific civilization; he was drawn to various forms of mysticism throughout his life. He fell deeply in love with an Irish woman (Maud Gonne), but she would never marry him.

2. He proposed to her many times and later proposed to her daughter, but he finally married another woman, Georgie Hyde-Lees.

B. Yeats was deeply disturbed by the repression of the Irish national movement during World War I and more generally by the chaos and deaths of the war.

1. He wrote about the tragedy of European civilization in the famous lines of “The Second Coming,” which summarized his postwar despair.

2. “Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold; Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world, The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere/The ceremony of innocence is drowned; The best lack all conviction, While the worst/Are full of passionate intensity.”

C. Yeats did not have a solution for these problems, but he found his consolation in the literary effort to describe a culture that needed a rebirth.

1. His mystical inclinations also led him to a fascination with “automatic writing,” which he worked on with his wife in a book called A Vision.

2. He wanted to convey the thoughts that came spontaneously into the mind through dreams or trance-like visions.

3. Such approaches to writing became popular in the postwar era, though Yeats himself was not really part of the new postwar generation.

IV. Among members of that younger generation, the First World War provoked further development of the most extreme tendencies of the prewar avant-garde.

A. This radical bohemian culture was not exactly the world of Eliot or Yeats, but for many radicals on the Continent, the experimental prewar arts now seemed to convey the most accurate view of human reality.

1. Because the reality of the war experience seemed to be wholly irrational, it could only be known through irrational art forms.

2. This was the theme of the so-called Dada movement that arose in Switzerland during the war and flourished briefly in Paris afterward.

3. The key leader was a poet named Tristan Tzara (1896–1963).

4. Tzara wrote poems by clipping words from newspapers, putting them in a sack, and drawing them out to make a poem.

5. The point was to suggest that modern civilization, art, literature, science, and other endeavors were now absurd; everything had been said and done and the culture itself had led to the horrors of destruction.

B. Typical Dada meetings around 1919 had people giving nonsense speeches or reading poems that lacked meaning. The only response to a world that lacked meaning was to mock all attempts at meaning.

1. The point was to contest the traditional categories of logic, meaning, knowledge, and reality.

2. A typical nonsense Dada poem reads: “At the rendezvous of the coachmen the aperitif is orange/But the locomotive mechanics have blue eyes./The lady has lost her smile in the woods.”

3. Dada was mostly destructive or nihilistic in its effects and its popularity did not last long, but it gave rise to other movements.

C. The most well known of these other movements was surrealism, which also arose partly in response to the horrors of World War I.

1. The most influential leader of surrealism in the 1920s was the French writer André Breton (1896–1966), who was much affected by the war.
2. Breton was a medical student when the war began and served in the French army as a medical assistant in military hospitals; he worked with soldiers who suffered from psychological traumas.

D. From this wartime experience, Breton developed a deep interest in psychology and the unconscious mind; he read Freud and studied the French psychiatrist Pierre Janet, who analyzed the "free associations" of patients. In his ideas of surrealism, Breton emphasized the internal realities of the mind—somewhat like symbolist poets—and tried to convey the unconscious mind in art.

E. This emphasis led Breton to the exploration of dreams and to experiments in "automatic writing," in which the writer simply wrote out whatever came into his head.

1. Breton laid out his theories in two famous "Surrealist Manifestoes" (1924, 1930); he argued that the "reign of logic" was over.

2. Surrealism used "pure psychic automatism" and was concerned with the "omnipotence of the dream" and the "disinterested game of thought."

F. This theory had an important influence on poets and visual artists in the 1920s and 1930s; Freud could not accept it because it seemed to embrace and revel in the irrational mental processes that Freud wanted to analyze scientifically.

G. Breton's "Manifesto" claimed that surrealist art and writing transformed the way that people saw the world: "This summer the roses are red; the wood is made of glass." He was affirming the vision of the artist.

H. Some surrealists embraced communism as an alternative to the bourgeois view of reality, but more generally, surrealism flowed into experimental art.

Essential Reading:


Supplementary Reading:


Questions to Consider:

1. Can poetry convey disillusionment and emotional despair more vividly than other forms of writing? What gives poetry its cultural power?

2. Why did the surrealist interest in dream images and nonrational thought become so influential in twentieth-century culture?

Timeline

1876 .................................................. Stéphane Mallarmé writes "L'Après-Midi d'un Faune," which exemplifies the emerging themes of symbolist poetry.

1879 .................................................. Émile Zola publishes "The Experimental Novel," calling for a new "naturalist" fiction.

1899 .................................................. Joseph Conrad's novel Heart of Darkness portrays the brutal consequences of European imperialism in Africa.

1903 .................................................. Henri Bergson summarizes his intuitionist philosophy in An Introduction to Metaphysics.

1905 .................................................. Albert Einstein publishes a paper on the "Special Theory of Relativity."

1905 .................................................. Max Weber publishes The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism.

1905 .................................................. Sigmund Freud publishes Three Essays on Sexuality.

1907 .................................................. Pablo Picasso paints Les Demoiselles d'Avignon, an early work of Cubist art.

1907 .................................................. Edmund Husserl summarizes his conception of consciousness in The Idea of Phenomenology.

1908 .................................................. Henri Matisse argues in "Notes of a Painter" that modern artists should not paint literal representations of reality.

1912 .................................................. Wassily Kandinsky's publishes Concerning the Spiritual in Art.

1912 .................................................. Émile Durkheim's publishes Elementary Forms of Religious Life.

1913 .................................................. The first volume of Marcel Proust's novel Remembrance of Things Past appears in France.

1914–1918 ............................................ World War I kills 10 million people; causes the collapse of imperial governments in Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Russia; and leads to the Communist Revolution in Russia.

1918 .................................................. Oswald Spengler publishes Decline of the West, an account of European decay and cultural crisis.
1922...........................T. S. Eliot publishes *The Waste Land*

1922...........................The first complete edition of James Joyce's modernist novel *Ulysses* is published in Paris.

1922...........................Ludwig Wittgenstein publishes his philosophical study of the limits of human language, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*.

1922...........................Benito Mussolini seizes power in Italy.

1924...........................André Breton writes the first "Surrealist Manifesto."

1924...........................Thomas Mann publishes *The Magic Mountain*.

1925...........................The posthumous publication of Franz Kafka's nightmarish novel *The Trial*.

1927...........................Werner Heisenberg’s "Uncertainty Principle" shows the limits of knowledge about electrons, thus suggesting that science cannot produce a total knowledge of nature.

1927...........................Martin Heidegger publishes *Being and Time*.

1929...........................Virginia Woolf describes the social and cultural constraints on women in *A Room of One's Own*.

1929...........................Lucien Febvre and Marc Bloch found the historical journal *Annales d'histoire économique et sociale*.

1930...........................Sigmund Freud publishes *Civilization and Its Discontents*.

1930–1937........................Antonio Gramsci writes his *Prison Notebooks* in Italian jails.

1933...........................Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party gain power in Germany and establish the Third Reich.


1938...........................Jean-Paul Sartre summarizes the early themes of his existential philosophy in his novel *Nausea*.

1939–1945........................The Second World War causes roughly 60 million deaths around the world, including the Nazi regime's systematic genocidal murder of 6 million Jews.

1944...........................Friedrich Hayek condemns government interventions in economic life in his book *The Road to Serfdom*.

1945...........................The Nazis execute the theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer for his involvement in a resistance group.

1947...........................Albert Camus publishes *The Plague*, which portrays the human need to take action during times of crisis.

1947...........................Primo Levi describes his experiences as a prisoner in a Nazi death camp, in *Survival in Auschwitz*.

1949...........................George Orwell provides a fictional representation of a totalitarian state and political party in his novel *1984*.

1949...........................Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* contributes influential historical and theoretical arguments to the postwar campaign for women's rights.

1951...........................Hannah Arendt publishes her influential study of authoritarian regimes, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*.


1961...........................Claude Lévi-Strauss publishes *Structural Anthropology*.

1962...........................Jürgen Habermas publishes *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*.


1975...........................Michel Foucault's analysis of power and knowledge appears in his historical study of modern institutions, *Discipline and Punish*.

1985...........................Jürgen Habermas publishes *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*.

1986...........................Jean Baudrillard publishes his account of a postmodern society in a work called *America*.

1989...........................Communist regimes in Eastern European nations collapse in a "velvet revolution."

1992–1999........................The European Union reshapes the context of intellectual life by promoting the political, economic, and cultural integration of European nations.
Biographical Notes

**Adorno, Theodor** (1903–1969). A member of the Frankfurt School of critical theorists in Germany, Adorno tried to reconcile the theories of Freud and Marx as he wrote about the cultural legacy of the Enlightenment, “authoritarian” personalities, music, and Nazism.

**Algren, Nelson** (1909–1981). American writer who lived in Chicago, entered into a relationship with Simone de Beauvoir in the late 1940s, and contributed at least indirectly to some of the themes and American information in Beauvoir’s book *The Second Sex* (which she wrote during the time of her relationship with Algren).


**Barthes, Roland** (1915–1980). French literary and cultural theorist who wrote on semiotics (the study of cultural signs), photography, novels, and popular cultural forms, such as advertising and fashion.

**Baudelaire, Charles** (1821–1867). French poet who lived in the Bohemian culture of Paris and developed the early themes of the symbolist movement. He said that the world is full of symbols that often carry strange meanings and call for imaginative interpretations.

**Baudrillard, Jean** (1929– ). A postmodern French social theorist whose writings discuss the cultural influence of television, simulated images of reality, consumerism, advertising, and the fragmentation of contemporary personal and social identities.

**Beauvoir, Simone de** (1908–1986). Existential philosopher in France who wrote novels, political commentaries, and an influential study of woman’s position in social and cultural life, *The Second Sex*—a book that helped to shape a new wave of modern feminism.

**Bergson, Henri** (1859–1941). French philosopher who lectured at the Collège de France, criticized positivism, favored an “intuitionist” approach to knowledge, and emphasized the interior realities of thought, time, and personal experience rather than scientific approaches to the observable external world.

**Bloch, Marc** (1886–1944). Historian of medieval Europe who co-founded the influential French historical journal *Annales d’histoire économique et sociale*. Bloch examined long-term, deep structures in French social history and was executed by the German Gestapo because of his work for the French Resistance during World War II.

**Bonhoeffer, Dietrich** (1906–1945). German Protestant theologian and staunch opponent of Nazism who criticized German Christians for supporting Hitler and joined the underground anti-Hitler resistance in Germany during the Second World War. He was imprisoned in 1943 and executed in the last month of the war.


**Braudel, Fernand** (1902–1985). Influential historian and leader of the “second generation” of *Annales* historians in France after the Second World War. Braudel argued that history was shaped more by geography and long-developing social structures than by individual actions or political events.

**Breton, André** (1896–1966). The most well known French advocate for the literary and artistic ideas of surrealism. Breton wrote two “Surrealist Manifestos” in the 1920s, calling for new artistic explorations of the unconscious mind, dreams, and fantasies.

**Camus, Albert** (1913–1960). French writer whose novels expressed existential themes, including the importance of taking action in the social world, and whose belief in human freedom led him into the anti-Nazi French Resistance during World War II and into a critique of Eastern Europe’s communist regimes during the Cold War.

**Cézanne, Paul** (1839–1906). A post-Impressionist artist who lived in southern France and developed a distinctive, colorful style in which he painted the shapes he saw in objects, landscapes, and human bodies. Cézanne had a wide influence on twentieth-century art.

**Cixous, Hélène** (1937– ). One of the third-wave feminist writers in France. Cixous urged women to draw on their distinctive physical and reproductive experiences as they developed forms of “feminine writing” that would differ from the writing of men.

**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.

**Conrad, Joseph** (1857–1924). A Polish-born writer who settled in England and wrote about European encounters with non-Western peoples. His descriptions of European imperialists and economic policies were often critical, but he also implied that the evils he described came from human nature, as well as from the nature of imperialism.
Courbet, Gustave (1819–1877). French artist and critic of Romanticism. Courbet developed a new artistic “realism” by painting common people in non-heroic situations and by rejecting the formalism or elite themes that often defined traditional European art.

Darwin, Charles (1809–1882). English scientist who developed the theory of biological evolution after traveling in South America and after many years of research in England.

Debussy, Claude (1863–1918). French composer who wrote music that evoked the poetic themes of the symbolist movement (he was a friend of Stéphane Mallarmé) and the artistic themes of Impressionist art.

Derrida, Jacques (1930– ). A poststructuralist theorist in France whose critique of Western metaphysics and binary oppositions had a wide influence on literary theory and cultural studies.

Dilthey, Wilhelm (1833–1911). German philosopher and historian who stressed that human consciousness makes people different from nature and plays a crucial role in historical change. He said that each era has its own consciousness, or Weltanschauung.

Dostoevsky, Fyodor (1821–1881). Russian novelist whose literary works portrayed the complex desires and irrational drives of the human mind. He defended Russia’s distinctive cultural traditions and criticized the optimistic nineteenth-century faith in science.

Dreyfus, Alfred (1859–1935). The French Jewish army captain who was wrongly convicted of spying for Germany in 1894. Many French intellectuals joined a campaign to overturn this conviction (Dreyfus was exonerated in 1906).

Durkheim, Émile (1858–1917). French sociologist whose method of analyzing religion, urban social life, individual isolation (“anomy”), and suicide helped shape the modern social sciences. Durkheim used “social facts” to support his account of a declining social integration of modern societies.

Eichmann, Adolf (1906–1962). German bureaucrat who organized the deportation of Jews to the death camps during the Second World War. He came to represent the “banality of evil” by claiming at his postwar trial that he was simply doing a job in his government office.

Einstein, Albert (1879–1955). The German scientist whose Special Theory of Relativity (1905) revolutionized modern physics and contributed to a modern cultural emphasis on the “relativity” of knowledge. A Jewish exile from Nazi Germany (1933), he lived the rest of his life in America as the most well known figure in twentieth-century science.

Eliot, T. S. (1888–1965). English writer and poet, originally from the United States, whose poetry after World War I described a crisis or hollowness in modern Western culture.


Fichte, J. G. (1762–1814). Idealist German philosopher who argued that the human mind shapes rather than simply reflects what it encounters in the external world. Fichte contributed to German nationalism by stressing the distinctive traits of German culture.

Foucault, Michel (1926–1984). French social theorist and historian who analyzed the evolving “discourses” of Western knowledge, described scientific or medical truths as expressions of specific cultural systems, emphasized the relation between knowledge and power, and viewed individuals as exemplars of widely diffused structures of thought.

Freud, Sigmund (1856–1939). The physician and scientist who founded psychoanalysis in early twentieth-century Vienna. Freud wrote detailed descriptions of dreams and the unconscious mind (with particular attention to sexual drives), analyzed the conflicting desires and aggressions in human relationships, and extended his theory from the individual mind to the repressive processes that shape civilization.

Gauguin, Paul (1848–1903). French artist who moved to Tahiti, became fascinated with the pre-modern cultures of the South Pacific, and developed a distinctive, colorful style of painting to represent the people and scenes that he encountered there.

Gramsci, Antonio (1891–1937). Italian Marxist journalist and political theorist who spent the last eleven years of his life in fascist prisons. Gramsci’s Prison Notebooks (published after World War II) revised Marxist theory by arguing that ruling groups exercise power through their “cultural hegemony,” as well as their control of economic and political institutions.

Grass, Günther (1927– ). German writer who challenged his compatriots to face the painful meaning and legacy of the Nazi era in novels such as The Tin Drum (1959).

Graves, Robert (1895–1986). English writer whose account of his experiences in the army during World War I (Good-Bye to All That) expressed a typically ironic postwar disillusionment with many of the cultural and political values in British society.

Habermas, Jürgen (1929– ). German philosopher and social theorist who criticized Romantic cultural traditions, praised Enlightenment conceptions of reason, rejected postmodernist accounts of “culturally constructed” truths, and advocated a democratic public sphere in which rational debates would shape enlightened laws and public action.
Harvey, David (1935— ). Geographer and social theorist who has discussed the themes of postmodern thought and the characteristics of postmodern societies in such works as *The Condition of Postmodernity* (1989).

Havel, Václav (1936— ). Czech writer who wrote plays in the 1960s, became a leader of the movement for democracy in communist central Europe during the 1970s and 1980s, and served as president of the post-communist Czech government in the 1990s.

Hayek, Friedrich (1899–1992). Austrian-born economist and political theorist who worked in Britain during the 1930s and 1940s. Hayek defended classical free-market ideas, arguing that government planning undermined both democracy and the economy.

Hegel, G. W. F. (1770–1831). German philosopher who described 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 dialectical conflicts of world history.

Heidegger, Martin (1889–1976). German philosopher whose work examined the nature of Being—the deep, fluid reality that underlies human existence and makes philosophical thought possible.

Heisenberg, Werner (1901–1976). German scientist and author of the “Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle,” which argued that it is impossible to know at the same time both the precise speed and position of an electron. The principle attracted much attention, especially when it was linked to theories of relativity and a general cultural skepticism.

Hitler, Adolf (1889–1945). Leader of Germany’s Nazi Party and dictator in the Nazi regime (1933–1945) that launched the Second World War, conquered most of Europe, and murdered millions of Jews and other European civilians. Hitler’s extreme form of nationalism included a hatred for democratic political traditions, as well as a virulent anti-Semitism, and his policies provoked an enduring intellectual search to understand how such barbarism could appear at the center of modern European civilization.

Horkheimer, Max (1895–1973). One of the leaders of the Frankfurt School of German social theorists. Horkheimer tried to explain why Nazism gained power in Germany, but he also wrote critically about the culture industry in America and Europe.

Husserl, Edmund (1859–1938). German philosopher who developed the key ideas of twentieth-century phenomenology (a philosophy that later influenced existentialism).

Ibsen, Henrik (1828–1906). Norwegian playwright whose portrayals of bourgeois family life exemplified aspects of literary naturalism. Ibsen’s plays suggested that most families were haunted by hidden conflicts and that women still faced difficult constraints in modern societies.

Jaspers, Karl (1883–1969). German philosopher whose emphasis on the disturbing human awareness of one’s own inevitable death, on free will, and on the choices of an active life had an important influence on twentieth-century existential thought.

Joyce, James (1882–1941). Irish novelist who lived most of his life as an exile in European cities and used innovative literary methods, such as indirect interior monologues and stream of consciousness, to convey the complexity of human thoughts and experience.

Jung, Carl (1875–1961). Swiss psychologist and designated successor to Sigmund Freud in the Psychoanalytical Association until the two men fell into conflict over various psychological issues, including the role of sexuality, the nature of religion, and what Jung called a “collective unconscious.” Jung later developed his own “analytical psychology.”

Kafka, Franz (1883–1924). German-language Jewish writer who lived in Prague, worked in an insurance office, and wrote short stories and novels about the alienating, disorienting experiences of modern life. He described a threatening social world and nightmarish limitations on human communications and personal freedom.

Kandinsky, Wassily (1866–1944). Russian-born artist who worked mainly in Germany and France. Kandinsky developed an abstract expressionist style of painting that used vivid colors rather than recognizable objects to convey his personal vision; he said that painting should be viewed as “color music.”

Keynes, John Maynard (1883–1946). English economist and advocate for government spending in times of economic crisis. Keynes argued that the government’s deficit spending could revive a weak economy because it put more money into circulation, thus fueling demand for more goods and services (and for more workers to produce them).

Kristeva, Julia (1941— ). Bulgarian-born literary and cultural theorist who moved to France in 1966. Kristeva called for a new kind of “dialogical” language that would move beyond “phallocentric” linguistic traditions and lead to a more open-ended understanding of all human identities, including the identities of male and female.

Lacan, Jacques (1901–1981). French theorist who sought to unite psychoanalysis and linguistics by describing connections among the body, the unconscious mind, and language.

Le Bon, Gustave (1841–1931). French social psychologist whose analysis of the emotional, violent behavior of crowds exemplified the late nineteenth-century
social scientific attempt to understand the nonrational components of human behavior.

Levi, Primo (1919–1987). Italian chemist and one of the rare Jewish survivors of the Nazi death camp at Auschwitz. Levi wrote about the camp and his own painful memories in postwar books that described the horrors of Auschwitz.

Lévy-Bruhl, Lucien (1857–1939). One of the French “founding fathers” of anthropology. Lévy-Bruhl sought to explain the different ways in which modern and pre-modern people think about nature and human beings.

Mallarmé, Stéphane (1842–1898). French poet whose poems and aesthetic theories conveyed the themes of the symbolist movement.

Manet, Edouard (1832–1883). An early French Impressionist painter, Manet portrayed unconventional scenes, experimented with the representation of light and the “blurring” of human figures, and organized exhibitions of such works with other like-minded artists.

Mann, Thomas (1875–1955). German writer whose novels pointed to various forms of “illness” in European culture. His books, such as The Magic Mountain (1924), suggested that Europeans had embraced death over life—a critique that was confirmed for him by the rise of Nazism (from which he fled into exile in America).

Matisse, Henri (1869–1954). French artist who sought to represent the “inherent truth” rather than the literal images of people and objects. He pursued this idea by juxtaposing colors and shapes in unexpected combinations, portraying the movement of human bodies, and encouraging an innovative group of artists called the “Fauves.”

Mauss, Marcel (1872–1950). French anthropologist who examined structural similarities in European and non-European societies.

Monet, Claude (1840–1920). French painter whose distinctive brushwork and explorations of light and color helped to shape the methods and themes of the influential Impressionist movement in late nineteenth-century French art.

Mussolini, Benito (1883–1945). Leader of the Italian Fascist Party and the first fascist dictator to gain power in Europe (1922).

Niebuhr, Reinhold (1892–1971). American theologian at Union Theological Seminary in New York. Niebuhr wrote on the social and ethical dimensions of Christianity and had close connections with European religious activists, such as Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

Nietzsche, Friedrich (1844–1900). German philosopher and social critic who challenged Western philosophical conceptions of reason and truth and stressed what he called the human “will to power.”

Nijinsky, Vaslav (1889–1950). Russian-born dancer whose interpretations of music, such as Claude Debussy’s “The Afternoon of a Faun,” brought a controversial choreography into modern dance and expressed the unconventional attitudes of modernist art.

Orwell, George (1903–1950). English journalist, novelist, and critic of totalitarian governments. Orwell developed his political arguments in popular fictional works, most notably his post-World War II novels Animal Farm and 1984.

Owen, Wilfred (1893–1918). An English “war poet” during the First World War, Owen became an angry critic of what he saw as a naïve and dangerous patriotism on the British home front. He was killed in France one week before the end of the war.

Pankhurst, Emmeline (1858–1928). English feminist and political activist who led the campaign for women’s voting rights in early twentieth-century Britain.

Péguy, Charles (1873–1914). French poet and writer whose mystical inclinations and intense patriotism led him into the French army and an early death at the beginning of World War I.

Picasso, Pablo (1881–1973). Spanish-born artist who lived mainly in France after 1904. Picasso developed an influential new Cubist style that portrayed the author’s personal vision of angular, geometric shapes and provided multiple perspectives on the objects, people, and scenes that he painted.

Pound, Ezra (1885–1972). American poet and critic who promoted modernist literature, befriended numerous writers in modernist literary circles, wrote influential experimental poems, and gained public notoriety because of his support for the fascist regime in Italy.

Proust, Marcel (1871–1922). French writer whose six-volume novel Remembrance of Things Past explored the meaning of time, memory, love, desire, and solitude. Proust’s work helped to shape the widespread modern literary interest in the psychology and inner experiences of human beings.

Renoir, Pierre-Auguste (1841–1919). French Impressionist painter. Renoir used contrasting colors to represent subtle shadings of light and shadows and to portray the non-heroic everyday lives and leisure activities of middle-class people.

Rimbaud, Arthur (1854–1891). Avant-garde French poet who wrote his famous poems before he was twenty years old, then traveled around Europe and Africa for the rest of his life. Rimbaud’s poetic images of personal liberation and his description of the poet as a lonely visionary influenced cultural “rebels” and writers throughout the twentieth century.

Russell, Bertrand (1872–1970). English philosopher who contributed to the early development of logical positivism. Russell opposed metaphysical thought
and sought a philosophical language that would be as precise and verifiable as mathematics.

Saint-Simon, Henri, Comte de (1760–1825). French social theorist who argued that modern societies should be managed by scientific experts and social planners.

Saussure, Ferdinand de (1858–1913). Swiss linguist who developed structural linguistics. Saussure argued that all linguistic meanings depend on a system of deep grammatical structures and on linguistic processes that link a “signifier” (word or symbol) with a “signified” (the object, idea, or referent that the signifier represents).

Sartre, Jean-Paul (1905–1980). French philosopher and advocate of existentialism. Sartre said that human beings have no fixed essence or eternal spirit, but he insisted that they have the consciousness and freedom to define the meaning of their own existence—if they act on their freedom and refuse to let others define who they are.

Sassoon, Siegfried (1886–1967). English “war poet” and critic of British government policies during the First World War. He wrote about his military experiences and the horrors of trench warfare in numerous postwar poems, memoirs, and novels.

Simmel, Georg (1858–1918). German sociologist who analyzed the impersonal aspects of modern urban life, examined the influence of cities on intellectual work, and described how money mediates the anonymous relations between strangers in modern societies.

Spencer, Herbert (1820–1903). British social theorist and proponent of Social Darwinism. He believed that human progress evolves out of struggles in which the “fittest” people survive (if governments avoid intervention in the process).

Spengler, Oswald (1880–1936). German philosopher and historian whose Decline of the West (1918) expressed a popular cultural pessimism that spread across Germany and much of Western Europe after the First World War.

Stalin, Joseph (1879–1953). Communist leader who gradually gained power in the Soviet Union after the death of Vladimir Lenin, promoted the state-organized “five-year plans” for economic development, and imposed a brutal, repressive dictatorship on the communist party and the people of Soviet society.

Stein, Gertrude (1874–1946). American writer who lived in Paris after 1903. Stein collected the paintings of innovative artists, such as Henri Matisse and Pablo Picasso, and tried to apply the nonlinear or Cubist styles of modern art in her complex prose.

Tzara, Tristan (1896–1963). Romanian-born poet and leader of the Dada movement in Switzerland and Paris after World War I. Tzara claimed that European cultural traditions had lost meaning; he mocked traditional culture by writing nonsense poems and staging strange literary performances in cafés.

Van Gogh, Vincent (1853–1890). Dutch-born artist who spent his later years in France. He used bright colors and distinctive swirling shapes to express strong emotions and a personal vision that would influence the later development of expressionist art.

Verlaine, Paul (1844–1896). French poet who had a turbulent relationship with Arthur Rimbaud, associated with the symbolist writers in Paris, and promoted new forms of poetry (including the poems of Rimbaud) in literary journals.

Villiers de l’Isle-Adam (1838–1889). French author whose work exemplified typical themes of the symbolist literary movement.

Wagner, Richard (1813–1883). German composer whose innovative operas combined music and art to produce all-encompassing dramatic experiences. His aesthetic theories had wide influence, but his strong German nationalism provoked political criticisms.

Weber, Max (1864–1920). German social theorist and historical sociologist who analyzed possible links between religion and economic behavior, complained about the “iron cage” of modern bureaucracies, and warned that people might turn to charismatic leaders as they searched for magical powers in the “despiritualized” modern world.

Wittgenstein, Ludwig (1889–1951). Austrian-born philosopher who lived and worked for many years at Cambridge University in England. He contributed to the modern philosophical interest in language, criticized philosophers for using imprecise language, and claimed that many crucial problems must be passed over in silence because language could not always speak truthfully or precisely about the questions that philosophy raises.

Woolf, Virginia (1882–1941). English writer and novelist. Woolf contributed to modernist literature in novels that explored the complexities of time, personal experience, and human communication.

Yeats, William Butler (1865–1939). Irish poet and playwright who supported literary and political movements for Irish independence. His poems expressed a fascination with various mystical symbols and a pessimistic view of culture and politics in modern European societies.

Zola, Émile (1840–1902). French novelist who tried to apply scientific theories about heredity and the influence of environments in a literary genre called naturalism. Zola wrote popular novels about social problems and social classes in French society.
European Thought and Culture in the 20th Century

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Lecture Thirteen
The Modern Novel: Joyce and Woolf

Scope: New conceptions of psychology and the human mind reshaped twentieth-century novels, as well as poetry and social theories. This lecture looks at the exploration of the “inner life,” time, and art in the modern novel and discusses the influential work of James Joyce and Virginia Woolf. “Modernist” writers emphasized the internal experiences of time and space, thus suggesting that the internal world of psychology and personal experience was more real than the external world of public events. Joyce and Woolf felt separated from their own societies, and both experimented with a stream-of-consciousness style to represent the complexity of human thought, language, and memory. These innovations contributed to a widespread twentieth-century literary interest in the internal workings of human consciousness and emotions.

Outline
I. The pervasive impact of the First World War extended from politics and economics into the cultural spheres of psychology, poetry, art, and social theory. We have seen how poets responded to the horrors of war, but the war also affected novelists.
A. The war did not simply create a new approach to literature; as in other areas of the arts and social theory, it seemed to accelerate trends that emerged earlier.
   1. It made the new experimental forms of fiction more acceptable to a wider audience that had become disillusioned and disoriented.
   2. Like the poetry and art of the era, the postwar novel tended to question the possibility of a stable external reality.
   3. The recurring theme in much postwar fiction suggested that external social and political realities did not conform to traditional languages that described them; reality had to be portrayed in new ways.
B. This literary theme is comparable to the revolt against positivism in social theory; it emphasized internal attempts to make sense of the world.
   1. Most postwar novelists expressed a skepticism about official truths and the whole system of national politics and public life.
   2. Critics of public life in the 1920s argued that the Great War had shown the bankruptcy of the public sphere in European societies.
   3. In this period of political disillusionment, the consolation for creative people came through art rather than public involvement.
II. To challenge or rethink the meaning of the “familiar” world, modern novels redefined time and space. The goal for many novelists was to alter the empirical view of social reality and the logical order of events.

A. Empiricism stresses logical cause-and-effect relations.
1. The classical realist novel usually narrated stories in an empirical mode by using horizontal narratives: beginning, middle, end.
2. This is the classical narrative pattern in Western literature, and it assumes a coherent external reality of time and space.

B. Modernist novels, by contrast, explore events vertically rather than horizontally; events in these novels do not happen in simple sequential order.
1. The characters often encounter an external world of random or repetitious events; their thoughts move backward and forward in time.
2. The most important events usually take place inside the individual and are described with narratives about the internal world.
3. The narrative of external events is fragmented; it also focuses on individual internal experience and develops multiple voices or perspectives—in contrast to earlier novels, such as the work of Balzac.
4. The inner event may not last very long in terms of external time, but an inner event may be so complex that it requires extended narration.

C. Time, therefore, is portrayed as unstable or diverse (as Bergson had suggested in his philosophical arguments); the novelist examines the inner time and space of characters rather than the time and space of classical science.
1. In describing this inner space, many modern novelists also suggest that the human “self” has no stable center or absolute identity.

III. James Joyce (1882–1941) was born into a family of ten children near Dublin; he was educated in Jesuit schools and at University College in Dublin, but he was unhappy in Ireland.

A. After meeting Nora Barnacle in 1904, he and Nora left for the Continent; they lived together in Italy, Switzerland, and after 1920, in Paris. They did not officially marry until 1931.
1. Joyce was determined to be a writer, but he could not get his early works published. He and Nora soon had two children and lived in poverty while he struggled to write.
2. Joyce became a bitter critic of Ireland. He made several trips back to Dublin as he tried to publish his early stories, but after 1912, he never again visited his native country—he was the permanent exile.

B. The image of the struggling exile artist became part of the cultural legend that gradually accumulated around Joyce; he faced great hardships.
1. He had problems with his vision and underwent more than ten operations on his eyes; his daughter was mentally ill and was placed in a sanitarium.
2. Joyce himself was often self-absorbed and obsessed with his own literary reputation, but his work was embraced by literary modernists, such as Eliot and Ezra Pound. He became famous in Paris.
3. Excerpts from Ulysses began to appear in literary journals at the end of World War I; the whole novel was published in 1922 by Sylvia Beach, an American who owned a bookstore in Paris.
4. The book was banned as pornographic in America until 1933. Joyce meanwhile worked for eighteen years on his final book,
Finnegans Wake, which was published in 1939, but generally left readers baffled.

C. Joyce tried to portray the complex connection between interior life and external events in Ulysses. The novel focused on three main characters: Leopold and Molly Bloom and Stephen Dedalus.

1. The meaning of time is transformed in the novel; the book’s 800 pages describe events and thoughts of the three main characters on June 16, 1904 (the date Joyce met Nora).
2. The story has the structure of Homer’s Odyssey, but this is the day-long “odyssey” of unexceptional people in a modern city.
3. Stephen Dedalus is an artist, Leopold Bloom is a Jewish businessman, and Molly is his wife, who is having an extramarital affair.
4. Stephen and Bloom move around Dublin, encounter various random events, meet each other, and talk, but much of the action consists of internal reflections on bodily functions, death, and tedious daily life.

D. There is nothing heroic about the characters, but Joyce tried to portray how people actually think; he used indirect interior monologues and showed how thought processes skip around from subject to subject.

1. As Joyce shows in the style of his novel, thought is neither logical nor chronological; it skips around in time and moves between complex ideas and the most mundane bodily processes.
2. The novel culminates in a long interior monologue in which Molly Bloom’s thoughts flow in a famous “stream of consciousness.”
3. Joyce filled his novel with literary and cultural allusions and various forms of humor that were not easy for readers to understand.

E. But his experiments with stream of consciousness and interior monologues became an innovative, distinctive narrative style in twentieth-century literature. This style had wide influence, because it offered a new way to portray interior life.

IV. This style of writing was also used by Virginia Woolf (1882–1941), who was not an exile. She criticized much of Joyce’s work but felt separated from various aspects of British life and wrote modernist narratives with interior monologues.

A. Woolf was born into an upper-class English family with two strong-willed parents: Leslie and Julia Stephen. Her father was a prominent author and editor, and young Virginia Stephen seemed to have a happy early childhood.

1. But her mother died when she was thirteen, her father went into prolonged mourning, and he died when Virginia was twenty-two.
2. Her older brother died two years later. Virginia began to suffer from manic depression, which caused mental breakdowns and depression at repeated intervals throughout her life.

B. She married Leonard Woolf in 1912; he was part of her brothers’ social and intellectual circle at Cambridge University.

C. She was also part of the famous Bloomsbury circle in London—a term that referred to writers and artists who lived in the Bloomsbury neighborhood; it also attracted political and economic thinkers, such as John Maynard Keynes.

D. In Woolf’s novels, the external events typically receive less attention than the complex inner thought processes; like Proust, Woolf wrote about memory. She said that there are only a few essential hours in life, crucial moments of self-recognition, that are a kind of shock on the mind and emotions. Identities emerge from these rare moments.

E. These themes appear in To the Lighthouse (1927), a novel that explores the meaning of time, memory, and language. It is also a portrait of Woolf’s parents in the fictional characters of Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay.

1. The interior monologues in the novel refer to the rare moments of insight that come amid the long stretches of daily routine.
2. “The great revelation perhaps never did come. Instead there were little...miracles, illuminations, matches struck unexpectedly in the dark.”

F. Woolf often felt inadequate to describe these little “illuminations,” (“words fluttered sideways and struck the object inches too low”), and her own mental anxieties led her finally to commit suicide by drowning in a river.

1. Yet she succeeded in creating a literary style that conveyed the complex thoughts and emotions of the human mind.
2. This kind of writing was one of the great modern literary innovations.

Essential Reading:
Virginia Woolf, To the Lighthouse.

Supplementary Reading:

Questions to Consider:
1. Do you think that your own thought processes could be described as a stream of consciousness?
2. Do you agree with Virginia Woolf’s idea that self-recognition or knowledge comes only at rare moments over a lifetime?
Lecture Fourteen

The Continental Novel: Proust, Kafka, Mann

Scope: The new literary interest in memory, identity, and personal experience could be found in all European cultures. This lecture continues the discussion of the modern novel with examples from French and German literature, focusing specifically on the work of Marcel Proust, Franz Kafka, and Thomas Mann. All these writers sought to portray the complexity of personal lives and desires in modern Europe. Proust explored the isolation of the self, often stressing a personal alienation from the social world and examining the nature of memory and time. Franz Kafka described the anonymity and the nightmarish impersonal experiences of modern society. Thomas Mann portrayed the personal struggle to survive the "illness" of the modern social world. Like most modern writers, these authors all wrote about the individual's separation from other people.

Outline

I. Cultural and intellectual historians often note that literary modernism emerged at about the same time in numerous European cultures; we have seen how "modernist" themes emerged in the English-language works of Joyce, Woolf, and various poets.

A. Meanwhile, the typical modernist ideas—emphasis on inner experiences, memory, time, and the ambiguity of language—were also influencing the work of writers on the Continent, and Freud's ideas spread across Europe.

1. The First World War did not create the literary fascination with the complex inner self, but it suggested that the external world was ill.

2. The writers who gained the greatest cultural influence in the decades after 1920 all analyzed the "self" in relation to a disorienting world.

B. They wanted to portray the psychology of human desire, but they also stressed the "strangeness" of the social world; they had little interest in, or hope for, political solutions to the alienating experiences of modern life.

1. These literary themes can be seen most notably in the influential works of Marcel Proust, Franz Kafka, and Thomas Mann.

2. I want to discuss each of these authors and emphasize their common modernist tendency to "defamiliarize" personal and social experience.

3. This is the modern literary pattern that made twentieth-century European literature both difficult and emblematic of the era in which it appeared.

II. Marcel Proust's novel Remembrance of Things Past has frequently been described as the first great modern novel; it has attracted endless attention from literary critics.

A. Although Proust (1871–1922) wrote his most famous work in the twentieth century, he emerged from the late nineteenth-century context of upper-class French culture; his own family reflected different strands of that culture.

1. His father was a successful doctor from a Catholic family with deep roots around the old cathedral city of Chartres. His mother was from a well-to-do Jewish family in Paris. Marcel grew up in a "mixed" world.

2. He was closer to his mother, who had strong interests in music and literature. He suffered from asthma throughout his life.

B. He began to write as a young man, but he was at first mostly interested in the social life of upper-class Parisian salons; he gradually withdrew from society, especially after his mother died in 1905.

1. He settled into a Parisian apartment in which his bedroom was lined with cork to keep out noise, distractions, and germs.

2. His most intense emotional relations were with men, yet these relationships were stymied in various ways, leaving him emotionally frustrated. The theme of frustrated love appeared often in his novel.

3. He was deeply attracted to a man named Alfred Agostinelli, for example, but Agostinelli was married and refused to stay with Proust. He was killed in a plane crash while learning to fly (1914).

C. Working in his isolated environment (he rarely went out of his apartment during the day) and supported by inherited money, Proust wrote his huge novel, which was translated into English as Remembrance of Things Past.

1. The first volume was published in 1913 at his own expense; by the time of his death in 1922, Proust had written six volumes.

2. While France suffered through the horrors of World War I, Proust sat alone in his cork-lined room, exploring his personal memories and describing the social world that he had known in his youth.

3. Although the novel included long descriptions of social events and even public conflicts, such as the Dreyfus Affair, the book's main theme stressed the isolation of the self and the difficulty of communication.

D. Proust described the mysteries of "involuntary memory"—the experience in which an encounter with some object or place in the
present provokes a vivid memory of a past experience, object, or person.
1. This is the experience of the narrator who remembers his childhood yearning for his mother when he eats a small madeleine biscuit.
2. He describes the way that memories come involuntarily into one’s mind and how this inner experience changes the meaning of time; a brief moment’s encounter in the present carries the mind to the past.
3. This past becomes part of the present; time is not just “here and now.” This was the theme in Proust’s depiction of how time is experienced.

E. Proust also tried to show how human interactions (and love) are blocked by the inability to communicate feelings or share reciprocal feelings.
1. There is a deep loneliness or isolation at the heart of human life; yet this isolation gives art its special role, because only through art can isolated persons recognize some part of themselves in others.
2. “The book is only a sort of optical instrument which the writer offers to the reader to enable the latter to discover in himself what he would not have found but for the aid of the book”; art leads people to themselves.
3. The artist who offers portraits of the self offers a vehicle for human communication and a means for moving beyond solitude. In this view, art is a private act rather than a public or political act.

F. Proust began to be famous in the early 1920s (he did not have to pay for publication of later volumes); however, he died before he could play any kind of public intellectual role, which in any event, he was too reclusive to pursue.
1. His work told the story of inner anxieties, memories, and obsessions, and some critics would always find it too self-referential and obscure.
2. Yet Proust helped to create a new style of modern writing that used first-person narration, “flashbacks” in time, and endless exploration of selfhood, desire, or social disorientation.

III. This sense of disorientation can also be found in the German literature of the postwar era, much of which portrayed a crisis in modern life.

A. Nobody developed this vision of a decentered world more starkly than Franz Kafka (1883–1924), who grew up in a German Jewish family in Prague.
1. Kafka’s father was a merchant whom his son came to view as tyrannical and deeply hostile to Franz’s cultural and literary interests.
2. The young Kafka was part of a small minority (German Jews) in a large Czech city and was aware of his own marginal position.

3. He studied law and, after receiving his law degree, worked in the Prague offices of a large Italian insurance company. He hated the work and began to write novels and short stories in his limited spare time.

B. Kafka felt alienated from his professional life and was unhappy in his relations with women. He became engaged three times (twice to the same woman) but always broke off the relationships.
1. He also developed tuberculosis and died at the early age of forty; later, his three sisters and two of his close women friends died in Nazi camps.
2. Drawing on his personal experiences, his problems with his father, and his social and professional life in Prague, Kafka wrote stories in which the characters seem to be totally alone or in uncontrollable situations.

C. Like Proust, Kafka suggests that solitude is an inescapable part of the human condition, yet Kafka’s social world seems to be even more threatening.
1. Kafka’s name has been turned into an adjective—Kafkaesque—that conveys a specific cultural meaning: people (like the characters in his stories) live in a social world that has lost meaning.
2. People who live in this world experience neither order nor coherence.
3. Everyone has become alienated, and the lifeless, bureaucratic world that Weber described has taken over all of life.
4. Social and political processes seem to operate without meaning; they have no discernable goals or purpose.

D. The official world seems to exist mainly as a mechanism for keeping people permanently frustrated or for turning them into objects to control.
1. Such themes appear in Kafka’s novel The Trial (1925), which tells the story of Joseph K., who is arbitrarily arrested, put on trial, and put to death for no discernable reason—though he feels inner guilt.
2. The theme of guilt might be compared to Freud’s concept of how people feel guilty in their families and in civilized life, but Kafka places this theme in a social context that denies people their humanity.

E. This theme seems to anticipate all kinds of twentieth-century horrors (which is why some view Kafka as a writer who anticipated the worst features of modern history).
1. The nightmare is perhaps best summarized in “The Metamorphosis.”
2. This story (published in 1916) describes a person who wakes up to find himself transformed into a large bug. He has no way to control
or even to understand the external world, including the office where he works.

IV. Kafka’s work had a major influence on twentieth-century literature, but the nightmarish vision was not as extreme in the work of the German writer Thomas Mann (1875–1955). Nonetheless, Mann believed that Europe was in a crisis.

A. His father was a grain merchant and young Thomas was at first destined for this career. The father died when Thomas was fifteen years old and the son moved toward writing.

B. Unlike Proust and Kafka, Mann got married as a young man (to Katia Prinshheim) and had six children; yet Mann was also interested in the problems of frustrated desire and social crisis.

C. His short prewar novella, Death in Venice (1911), suggested that European traditions faced exhaustion and decline.

D. Mann believed that official cultures and governments had stripped away the vital sources of modern Europe’s creativity.
   1. At first, Mann seemed to view World War I as an opportunity to renew German society and culture, but he later changed his mind.
   2. He believed that the war destroyed Europe’s confidence in its past and faith in its future.

E. He analyzed all of these ideas symbolically in his great novel The Magic Mountain (1924), which is set in a sanatorium for tuberculosis patients in Switzerland.

F. Mann himself seemed to believe that the West had embraced death, and some scholars think he wanted to defend aspects of the Enlightenment.

G. Mann did not share the modernist emphasis on the internal mind, but he shared literary pessimism about social relations and clichéd language.

Essential Reading:

Supplementary Reading:
Jean-Yves Tadié, Marcel Proust, translated by Euan Cameron, pp. 563–599.

Questions to Consider:
1. Do you have “involuntary memories” that are set off by encounters with certain smells, sights, objects, or people?
2. What meanings do you associate with the word “Kafkaesque”?

Lecture Fifteen
Language and Reality in Modern Philosophy

Scope: Modern philosophers moved in two new directions. One group focused on the linguistic foundation of human knowledge and developed ideas that became known as logical positivism or analytic philosophy. Another group emphasized human consciousness and the encounter with phenomena in the material world, thus developing a philosophy called phenomenology. This lecture discusses these two trends in European philosophy with special reference to Ludwig Wittgenstein and Edmund Husserl. Wittgenstein influenced the linguistic turn in Austrian and English philosophical circles, though he differed from many of the logical positivists. Husserl, by contrast, influenced German and French philosophers who examined the relation between consciousness and the material world.

Outline

I. Philosophers in twentieth-century Europe generally challenged philosophical traditions; like the writers, poets, artists, and scientists, the philosophers looked for new ways to describe human knowledge and the human mind.

A. In most general terms, philosophers rejected the systems of earlier “metaphysical” philosophers; the metaphysical tradition went back to Plato in ancient Greece and remained important through most of the nineteenth century.
   1. For example, Hegel had developed a comprehensive metaphysical theory about the unfolding Idea in human history.
   2. Metaphysical philosophies often proposed a comprehensive system for explaining human knowledge or existence, and they often assumed that reality existed on dual levels (e.g., body and mind, material and spiritual).

B. Most twentieth-century philosophers, by contrast, wanted to make philosophy more scientific by getting beyond metaphysical dualisms.
   1. They decided that metaphysical systems did not provide a reliable basis for truth, a theme that also appeared in modern social sciences, psychology, historical studies, and even literary studies.
   2. Yet this search for new forms of philosophical knowledge led in two different directions during the first half of the century.

C. Some philosophers argued that language was the foundation for all true statements about the world; therefore, language should be the object of analysis.
1. Language could be studied objectively, in the same way that scientists studied nature.
2. This form of thought evolved into the movements of logical positivism or the related school of analytical philosophy.
3. The Austrian philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein contributed to this new linguistic approach to philosophy, which became influential in both Vienna and England; it analyzed what language could truthfully say.

D. Other philosophers, however, argued that a new scientific philosophy must examine the human consciousness and how it encounters the world.
1. This second trend in philosophy became known as phenomenology.
2. The key early figure in this group was Edmund Husserl, a German philosopher who tried to explain the interaction of consciousness and objects in the world.
3. Husserl’s theories had wide influence in Germany and France and became important for existential philosophers, such as Jean-Paul Sartre.

E. This lecture discusses the themes of logical positivism and phenomenology by summarizing the ideas of Wittgenstein and Husserl.
1. Although their approaches to philosophy differed, they both wanted to give philosophy a more reliable foundation for what might be called post-metaphysical truth claims.
2. But philosophy had less cultural influence than literature or the arts.

II. Intellectual historians have often located the emergence of logical positivism among Viennese philosophers in the 1920s, but the movement also had links to England.

A. One of these links was Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889–1951), who studied with Bertrand Russell in Cambridge before the First World War.
1. Wittgenstein was born into a wealthy Viennese family, the youngest of eight children; his father was an engineer in the steel and iron industry.
2. The elder Wittgenstein was one of the richest people in Vienna, and he put great pressure on his children to pursue similar careers. Young Ludwig at first studied engineering and long had an interest in machines.
3. But the pressures on the children were difficult; three of Ludwig’s brothers committed suicide, and he had to fight his own depressions.

B. He eventually left Vienna to study in Germany, then at Cambridge, where he was influenced by Bertrand Russell’s interest in mathematics and logic.

1. Wittgenstein met a number of creative thinkers at Cambridge (the economist John Maynard Keynes was one of his friends), but he also liked to withdraw from social contacts; he built a hut in Norway.
2. During the First World War, he went back to Austria and served throughout the war in the Austrian army; he also read philosophy.
3. He was captured in the last months of the war and sent to an Italian prison camp. In this camp, he wrote his only philosophical text that was published in his lifetime: Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus (1922).

C. He sent the manuscript to Russell, who arranged for it to be published; then Wittgenstein became a high school teacher in Austria for about six years.
1. During that time, he met occasionally with members of the “Vienna School”—the philosophers who were developing logical positivism.
2. He eventually returned to Cambridge (1929) and lived in England for the rest of his life (with sojourns in Ireland and Norway).
3. He taught small classes at Cambridge University, worked in medical centers during World War II, and wrote numerous texts that were finally published after his death as Philosophical Investigations.

D. Throughout his career, Wittgenstein criticized traditional philosophy; he said that philosophers used language in nonrigorous or imprecise ways.
1. He wanted philosophical language to follow the most precise, logical structure to give logical, truthful pictures of reality.
2. But most philosophical statements did not provide this kind of truth; they expressed opinions or feelings or propositions that lacked meaning because they were not grounded in reality (as true science should be).
3. Wittgenstein, therefore, ended the Tractatus with the sobering claim that philosophers should recognize their clear linguistic limits.
4. “What we cannot speak about,” he said, “we must pass over in silence.”

E. This statement meant that because philosophy did not have the language to speak truthfully about the world, it really could not say much. Wittgenstein thought he proved his case by not publishing more philosophy.
1. He said that his philosophy was like a ladder that carried him up to a truth about philosophical language, then the ladder had to be thrown away. After 1929, however, he began to write philosophy again.
2. He became more interested in the uses of ordinary language; he wanted to show how philosophical meaning was part of a linguistic system.

3. He disliked abstract theorizing, but he also developed an almost mystical interest in how languages and linguistic systems could achieve meaning. He moved away from the theme of verifiable language uses.

III. Meanwhile, the development of logical positivism and analytical philosophy pushed some of Wittgenstein’s earlier themes in even more radical directions.

A. Writers such as A. J. Ayer (1910–1989) argued that philosophy should deal only with issues that can be verified through empirical observation; this theme of nineteenth-century positivism was now carried into philosophy.

1. Such ideas meant that philosophers could not deal with metaphysical questions (e.g., “Do humans have souls?” “Is there a God?”) because there is no meaningful, truthful way to establish truth or falsehood.

2. This view also eliminated all questions about ethics, morality, or aesthetics. For logical positivists, the answers to these kinds of questions simply expressed feelings, not philosophical truths.

B. Ayer said that philosophers who tried to answer these questions went beyond “the limits of all possible sense-experience” and, thus, their work was “devoted to the production of nonsense.”

1. Philosophy for the logical positivists had the task of analyzing precise claims about the world to see if they could be verified.

2. The goal was to clarify linguistic confusions and to support the claims of science; there was no interest in moral questions or “higher truths.”

IV. The linguistic emphasis of logical positivism or analytical philosophy had wide influence on English (and American) academic philosophy.

A. But a number of Continental philosophers took a different, phenomenological approach to the quest for a new scientific philosophy.

1. The key figure in early phenomenology was Edmund Husserl (1859–1938), who was born in Moravia in what is now the Czech Republic.

2. Husserl was from a liberal German Jewish family; he became a Protestant at age twenty-seven and studied mathematics in Germany.

3. Husserl’s real interest, however, was philosophy, especially after he also studied psychology; he wanted to make philosophy scientific.

B. He taught philosophy at several German universities. After 1916, he was at the University of Freiburg, but after 1933, he was barred from the university.

C. Husserl laid out his theory of phenomenology in various works and lectures, including a concise summary in The Idea of Phenomenology (1907). Husserl was more concerned with the structure of human consciousness than with specific problems of language.

D. For Husserl, meaning emerged from the ways in which a conscious subject responded to daily life in what he called the “life-world.” His philosophy emphasized the intentions or the actions of active, conscious persons, as compared to the linguistic structures that analytic philosophers described.

E. Husserl argued that the consciousness and the experience of the knowing human subject makes the world meaningful.

V. The themes of phenomenology, like the main ideas of logical positivism or analytical philosophy, thus contributed to a wider cultural rejection of metaphysical traditions.

A. In this view, human beings had no recourse to a transcendent realm or higher being that would give a secure foundation to knowledge and ethics.

B. Philosophy could examine language or human consciousness, both of which gave meaning to the world, but it could not show any other meaning in knowledge or history (as Hegel found in the Spirit).

C. Linguistic philosophers saw limits on what philosophy could know; phenomenology soon found limits in communicating consciousness.

Essential Reading:

Supplementary Reading:

Questions to Consider:
1. Did the “linguistic turn” in analytical philosophy destroy the classical philosophical aspiration for transcendent wisdom?
2. Do you think consciousness gives meaning to the objects of the world?
Lecture Sixteen

Revisiting Marxism and Liberalism

Scope: The rise of Stalinism, the development of fascism and Nazism, and the worldwide economic depression of the 1930s pushed many writers toward a new engagement with public issues. In this lecture, we look at several theoretical responses to the crises that had become so apparent by the 1930s: the emergence of (1) a revisionist (less economic) Marxist theory in the works of writers such as Theodor Adorno and Antonio Gramsci and (2) a revisionist liberal (less laissez-faire) theory in the works of John Maynard Keynes and his critic Friedrich Hayek. Both the Marxists and the liberals challenged important aspects of their respective theoretical traditions, but they held very different views about how Europeans might best move beyond the crisis of the 1930s.

Outline

I. We have discussed the cultural effects of World War I, especially the war's impact on literature and the arts, but the war also transformed the social and political world.
   A. The Bolshevik Revolution in Russia led, by the early 1930s, to a new kind of Marxist state—the dictatorial communism of Joseph Stalin.
      1. Meanwhile, in response to the war, Russia's communist revolution, and economic problems, the Fascist and Nazi movements gained power in Italy (1922) and Germany (1933).
      2. The dictatorships of Benito Mussolini and Adolph Hitler forced European intellectuals to rethink liberal political and economic ideas.
   B. These political events in Russia, Italy, and Germany coincided also with the great economic crisis that began in 1929 and continued throughout the 1930s.
      1. The political and economic problems of the 1930s pushed many intellectuals toward a new concern with social issues.
      2. The postwar literary and artistic fascination with the internal life did not completely disappear in the 1930s; for example, Joyce was writing *Finnegans Wake* during the 1930s.
      3. But the 1930s have generally been portrayed in intellectual history as a time of intense political engagements; writers chose sides among fascism and communism and liberalism.
   C. Classical liberalism was on the defensive. Liberalism had always stressed the autonomy of individuals and the role of individual rights in modern societies.

II. By the 1930s, these ideas had been widely challenged by World War I and by the rise of communism and fascism.

III. Intellectuals in the 1930s were, thus, concerned with the relation between individuals and society.

IV. Most intellectual critics challenged traditional liberalism, or fascism, or communism—or they supported one of these political doctrines; they felt obliged to take more political positions.

V. Although many intellectuals criticized classical liberalism, they also could not fit easily into fascism or communism; they often stressed individual creativity in ways that challenged fascism and communism.

D. The challenge for intellectuals was to work out a new analysis of the relations between individuals and society in the conditions of the modern world.
   1. This kind of social analysis required a theoretical response to Stalinism, fascism, and the Great Depression.
   2. In many cases, intellectuals had no choice but to make political choices in the 1930s: Would they support or oppose fascism; would they leave Russia or Italy or Germany?
   3. Ideological conflicts of the era forced people to take sides.

E. The influence of this new context appears most notably in the new Marxists and the new liberal theorists of the 1930s.
   1. Although some intellectuals, such as the poet Ezra Pound and the philosopher Martin Heidegger, were attracted to fascism, most writers (outside Italy and Germany) became hostile to fascism.
   2. Fascism tended to be strongly anti-intellectual and to celebrate action over thought and the crowd over the ideas of individuals.

F. Yet many social theorists were also disenchanted with orthodox Marxism, especially as they learned about the Stalinist repression in the Soviet Union.
   1. One common intellectual response was to work out a new kind of Marxism or liberalism that rejected both Stalinism and fascism.
   2. Classical Marxism and liberalism stressed the rationality of human beings and economic knowledge, but this was revised in the 1930s.
   3. Some Marxists wanted to combine Marx and Freud or to rethink the role of culture in social and political life. We can see these themes in the German "Frankfurt School" and in the works of Antonio Gramsci.
   4. At the same time, liberals debated the value of classical laissez-faire economic theory—a debate that divided John Maynard Keynes and Friedrich Hayek in England.

G. We will discuss both of these "revisionist" patterns and emphasize the idea that the revision of "classical" social or economic theories was as
important as the revisions in all other intellectual fields; it was also a response to the context.

II. One important strand of Marxist social theory attempted to revise Marx by analyzing the influence of Hegelianism on Marx’s early work and by linking Freud to Marx.

A. Such themes emerged among theorists at the Frankfurt Institute of Social Research; this group, known in intellectual history as the Frankfurt School, eventually included such theorists as Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer.

1. The Institute was founded in 1923, but it was dissolved after the Nazis came to power in 1933; its members fled into exile (most to the United States).
2. The thinkers wanted to create a new kind of critical Marxism or critical theory that rejected Stalinism and classical liberalism.

B. The leaders of the Frankfurt School often stressed the Hegelian origins of Marxism; they believed that the Hegelian view of historical change was lacking both in Stalinism and liberal political theories.

1. Frankfurt School theorists criticized the excessive positivism of modern communism and criticized Marxists for losing sight of noneconomic aspects of human activity and culture.
2. Adorno (1903–1969), for example, wrote about music and the nonrational aspects of human identity. Marx had not understood the unconscious, and Freud had not understood economics.
3. The goal was to link psychology and economics, and Nazism offered plenty of material to analyze. What was the appeal of such movements?

C. The critical theory of the Frankfurt School drew on the young Marx’s Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts (rediscovered in the early 1930s).

1. These texts were more Hegelian than his later work; they stressed the problem of alienation in mass societies, which seemed as relevant for conditions in the Soviet Union as for conditions in capitalist factories.
2. How could alienation and repression be overcome in both capitalist and communist societies? Freud could be useful for answering this question because he showed how repression shaped civilization itself.

D. For Frankfurt School theorists such as Adorno, social reformers had to deal with economic institutions and with the influence of the unconscious mind.

III. The problem of alienation and the influence of culture were also important to the Italian Marxist theorist Antonio Gramsci (1891–1937); he was a member of the communist party who was jailed by the fascists and died in prison.

A. His most important writings were collected in a work called Prison Notebooks, which was published after World War II.

1. Gramsci criticized fascism and orthodox Marxism; his goal was to develop a nontotalitarian communism based on broad local social movements and on intellectuals who supported the lower classes.
2. He thought the “economism” of most Marxists blinded them to the reciprocal relation between culture and political or economic life.
3. Culture created the “hegemony” of ruling ideas and groups; therefore, Marxists should challenge the cultural hegemony of capitalism—a task that required a cultural movement that differed from Lenin’s Bolshevism.
4. Instead of top-down communism, Gramsci wanted intellectuals and the masses to be “organically” connected in popular social movements.

B. Gramsci’s objective (like the goal of Frankfurt School theorists) was to find a nontotalitarian form of socialism; this would resist new oppressions.

1. It also emphasized an open-ended dialectical process in which individuals would continue a critical analysis of culture and society.
2. These new Marxisms, however, still called for a new socialist system.

IV. The liberals had a different response to the economic and social crisis of the 1930s; the ideas of John Maynard Keynes (1883–1946) revised classical liberalism.

A. Keynes was the son of an economist; he grew up in Cambridge and became a close friend of writers and artists in the Bloomsbury circle.

1. He married a Russian ballerina (Lydia Lopokova) in 1925; he was also well known for his journalism, and his investments made him wealthy.
2. Keynes became famous after writing a short book about the dangers of demanding excessive reparations from Germany in 1919.
3. He said that Germany needed to participate equally in Europe’s economy.

B. Keynes strongly opposed socialism, but he began to argue that the capitalist market system needed to be managed by government interventions.

1. This was his response to the crisis of the 1930s; he explained his ideas in The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money (1936).
2. This book rejected the classical laissez-faire view of the economy and argued that people did not invest enough money during economic downturns; the market could not guarantee employment or stability.

C. Keynes thus revised classical economics by calling for governments to provide the investments that private capital alone would not produce.

D. Keynes’s theory quickly became the dominant approach to economics and government policy; economists at Cambridge promoted these ideas.

E. This theory did not call for government ownership of the means of productive enterprises, but it assumed that government must play an active role in the economy, especially to deal with unemployment.

V. Keynes’s revision of classical liberal economic theory also elicited strong criticism from economists at the London School of Economics.

A. The most important critic was Friedrich Hayek (1899–1992), who was from Vienna. In such works as *Prices and Production* (1931) Hayek argued that the market itself could resolve economic problems; even unemployment would be overcome if the economy were able to “unwind” freely.

B. More generally, Hayek argued that government planning of the economy would lead to the demise of democracy. This was the argument of his famous book *The Road to Serfdom* (1944).

C. Hayek stood apart from the leading social and economic theories of the 1930s; he condemned all forms of Marxism and Keynes’s revised liberalism. He shared the widespread theoretical interest in relations between the individual and society but defended older liberal economic ideas.

Essential Reading:


Supplementary Reading:


Questions to Consider:

1. Can the economic theories of Marx and the psychological theories of Freud be combined in a coherent social theory?

2. Whose economic ideas have greater influence today—those of Keynes or Hayek?

Lecture Seventeen

**Responses to Nazism and the Holocaust**

**Scope:** The rise of Nazism created a new political context for European intellectuals and provoked a wide range of responses in the 1930s and 1940s. This lecture discusses three contrasting examples of the intellectual response to Adolph Hitler and the actions of Germany’s Nazi regime. It first summarizes the ideas of Martin Heidegger and describes his support for the Nazi movement. It then notes the intellectual resistance to the Nazi regime, with special reference to the actions of the philosopher Hannah Arendt and the theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Their lives and writings became eloquent statements of opposition to totalitarianism and to what Arendt called the “banality of evil.” Both these writers described the struggle to resist totalitarian regimes and defend human morality against modern uses of power and technology.

**Outline**

I. We have seen how intellectuals responded to the First World War and to other political and economic problems of the 1930s. Some writers could perhaps ignore these problems, but almost nobody could avoid the consequences of Nazism.

   A. By the early 1940s, every major European nation was at war (except for Spain, and the Spanish had just gone through a devastating civil war).

      1. The question for all intellectuals came down to the issue of Nazism: How should one respond to this new totalitarian regime?

      2. Like other Europeans, the intellectuals were divided. This division offers a remarkable example of how every intellectual’s life and work are connected to the historical context in which he or she lives.

   B. I’ll discuss this relation between intellectuals and the political-military context of the 1930s and 1940s by looking at three notable German intellectuals: Martin Heidegger, Hannah Arendt, and Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

      1. These people represent three different responses to Nazism: affiliation, exile, and internal resistance (leading to death).

      2. Their actions exemplify the modern intellectual’s struggle to deal with powerful, violent political regimes.

II. The history of Nazi Germany is a vast, much debated subject, but the key problems of opposition or support for the regime emerged quickly and
remained in place from 1933 to 1945. Hitler came to power (legally) in late January 1933.

A. He almost immediately gained “emergency powers” and soon launched the persecution of Jews, outlawed all political parties and trade unions (except Nazi organizations), and established police control over the whole society.

1. The Nazis militarized German culture, established concentration camps for people they disliked, and prepared for a new war.
2. The war began in September 1939, and the Nazi conquests led to the systematic genocidal plan to create a “new European order.”
3. The culmination of the Nazi campaign was, of course, the Holocaust, the deadly outcome of Nazism that led to the deaths of at least six million Jews and other so-called “non-Aryan” people.

B. Nazism was the unavoidable issue of the era, and its impact was felt in Europe and elsewhere long after the Nazis were finally defeated.

III. Martin Heidegger became one of the most well known intellectuals to embrace the Nazi regime; his actions remain a major blight on his intellectual reputation.

A. Heidegger (1889–1976) came from a pious lower-middle class Catholic family in southern Germany; he planned to become a priest.

1. He studied philosophy instead and became an assistant of Edmund Husserl at the University of Freiburg (1919–1923). He married Elfriede Petri, who was Protestant, and renounced his Catholicism in 1919.
2. He went to teach at the University of Marburg, where he worked on his most important book, Being and Time (1927). He then succeeded Husserl as a philosophy professor at the University of Freiburg.

B. Heidegger argued that Western philosophy did not give adequate attention to the problem of Being. Even Husserl, whose account of consciousness was important for Heidegger, did not explain how to be conscious of Being.

1. Heidegger referred to the idea of Being as “dasein”; it is the core of human existence—the reality that enables one to say, “I am.”
2. Heidegger said most people do not want to think about Being or about the way in which one’s Being is located in time.
3. If one becomes aware of Being, then it is possible to see how others have imposed on this Being—and one can resist this imposition.

C. Heidegger challenged the Western scientific and positivist tendency to reduce Being to rigid categories or simple identities; he said that Being was more fluid.

1. He became interested in more mystical forms of thought. His critique of Western philosophy, as well as his emphasis on Being, had a great influence on later thinkers, including existentialists, such as Sartre.
2. But Heidegger also came to believe that the German people could find ways to revitalize their organic Being in the Nazi movement.
3. He saw Nazism as an alternative to modern industrial society, which he condemned for its indifference to Being, and he praised the “inner truth and greatness of the [Nazi] movement.”

D. His sympathy for the Nazi movement led to his appointment as rector at the University of Freiburg in April 1933. He revised the curriculum to serve the “organic unity” of the German spirit and linked his philosophy to Nazism.

1. He also supported the removal of Jewish faculty and staff from the university; he joined the Nazi Party, remaining a member until 1945.
2. He resigned as rector of Freiburg University in 1934 (apparently unhappy with the delays in his proposed reforms).
3. He did not play an active role in the Nazi movement after this time, but he never renounced his actions or affiliations, even after 1945.

E. Heidegger’s links with Nazism have been used to discredit his philosophy; others say that his ideas should be separated from those actions, but even those who defend his philosophy see his actions as an intellectual blindness.

IV. At the time Heidegger was promoting the Nazi program of national renewal at Freiburg, one of his most brilliant students, Hannah Arendt, was fleeing into exile.

A. Arendt (1906–1975) was born into a Jewish family in Hanover; her father died when she was only seven, but her mother encouraged her education.

1. She studied philosophy with Heidegger at the University of Marburg; they became lovers when she was eighteen, and she admired his work.
2. He was then thirty-five and played the role of an intellectual “father.”

B. But the affair eventually broke off, Heidegger settled in Freiburg, and Arendt went to Berlin; she began to face the pressure of anti-Semitism.

1. She became active in Zionist political circles. After the Nazis seized power, she was arrested (she was doing research on anti-Semitism).
2. She was released from jail after eight days, but the experience convinced her that she must leave Germany (August 1933); she moved to Paris.
C. Arendt criticized intellectuals, such as her old mentor and lover Heidegger, who were supporting the Nazis; she believed that intellectuals must resist.
1. When the Germans occupied France, Arendt and her husband, Heinrich Blücher, managed to escape; they reached New York in May 1941.
2. From her exile base in New York, Arendt tried to understand why a totalitarian regime had gained absolute power in Germany.

D. This intellectual project led eventually to publication of The Origins of Totalitarianism (1951), an influential analysis of modern totalitarian systems. Arendt tried to explain how these systems held power.
1. Arendt stressed that racism, imperialism, and anti-Semitism prepared the way for totalitarian movements, but she did not see this situation as a specific or unique aspect of German culture.
2. She emphasized that people joined the “crowds” of a nationalist, racist movement because such crowds gave lonely people a place to belong.
3. Totalitarian movements were not simply dictatorships; they had strong support from much of the population, who embraced the “leader.”
4. Such regimes also sustained their power by the use of terror.

E. Where Heidegger had seen Nazism as an expression of revitalized national Being, Arendt saw the movement as a terrorizing form of modernity.
1. She also analyzed the peculiar modernity of the Holocaust in Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil (1963), which discussed the trial of a bureaucratic manager of genocide.
2. This book became controversial because critics said that Arendt ignored Eichmann’s own guilt; she portrayed him as a vacuous cog in a system.
3. This is what she meant by the banality of evil—ordinary people doing murderous work that was simply a job in a modern office building.

F. In this respect, Nazism and the Holocaust were part of a modern, impersonal process in which individuals abdicated moral and political responsibility.
1. In other works, Arendt advocated a commitment to classical (Greek) ideals of a republican public sphere of political life.
2. Her wider theme, however, suggested that intellectuals must act against totalitarian systems.
3. Arendt later reestablished a friendship with Heidegger, but the old friends would never come to a common understanding of Nazism.

V. While Arendt was developing her analysis of totalitarianism in New York, Dietrich Bonhoeffer was working for the German Resistance, then sitting in prison cells.

A. Bonhoeffer (1906–1945) was part of a well-to-do German Protestant family. His father was a professor of psychiatry at the University of Berlin.
1. Despite his father’s objections, the young Bonhoeffer studied theology at the University of Berlin. After receiving a doctorate, he spent a year at Union Theological Seminary in New York.
2. He became a friend of the theologian Reinhold Neibuhr in New York, then returned to teach theology at the University of Berlin.

B. Bonhoeffer’s career was advancing until the Nazis came to power in 1933. He said that Christians must support the Jews and argued that Nazism was completely at odds with Christian teachings.

C. In 1939, Bonhoeffer decided to accept an invitation to return to New York, where he could teach some courses at Union Theological Seminary. After he arrived in America, however, he felt uncomfortable about his separation from Germany; he returned to Berlin in July.

D. Soon after the war began, Bonhoeffer joined a secret resistance group and participated in a plan to get Jews out of Germany.
1. He was arrested in April 1943 and was executed about a month before the end of the war (April 9, 1945).
2. His prison letters and other writings became an eloquent testimony to the modern struggle against totalitarian violence.

Essential Reading:


Supplementary Reading:

Questions to Consider:
1. Why is it difficult for intellectuals to defy their national governments?
2. Do you think a writer’s political actions and personal behavior can discredit his or her writings in other spheres, such as philosophy and literature?
Lecture Eighteen
Existential Philosophy

Scope: The horrifying, disorienting events of the Second World War influenced the postwar philosophical themes of existentialism. The existentialists wrote books that nonspecialist readers could understand, in part because they often used literature to portray their views of human experience, freedom, and personal choices. This lecture discusses existential philosophy in France, focusing on the lives and ideas of Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus. Both these writers were affected by experiences in World War II, both wrote novels about the “absurdity” of existence, and both believed that individuals must use their freedom to take self-defining action in the social world. They took different political positions during the Cold War, however, and their emphasis on individual freedom elicited criticism from those who stressed the social constraints on personal actions.

Outline

I. The ideas and themes of twentieth-century philosophy can never be explained as simply a “reflection” of the era’s terrible military and political events, yet the philosophers (like everyone else) were forced to respond to the world in which they were living.
   A. We’ve seen how German philosophers and social theorists made difficult choices during the Nazi era, but their situation was not unique.
      1. Nazi armies and occupation forces took control of other European nations, forcing intellectuals in France and elsewhere to choose sides.
      2. If flight became impossible, writers (and everyone else) had to decide between collaboration, resistance, or the silence of “internal exile.”
   B. This was the context in which French existential philosophy emerged during the early 1940s. Stressing the absurdity of human existence and the human freedom to make choices, existentialism seemed to fit in the postwar context.
      1. The most important existentialist writers—Jean-Paul Sartre, Albert Camus, Simone de Beauvoir—responded to the German occupation of France and stressed the importance of taking personal action.
      2. This lecture discusses existential thought with reference to this context and suggests why it gained so much attention in the decade after 1945.

C. The broad cultural interest in existential philosophy far exceeded the public interest in the technical linguistic themes of Britain’s logical positivism.

D. The public response to existentialism grew in part from the literary skill of existentialist authors, who often wrote novels, but the philosophy was also popular because it affirmed the value of human action.

II. In contrast to the British linguistic philosophical concern with epistemology, Continental philosophy stressed the problems of being and consciousness.
   A. These ontological issues had gained prominence in the writings of Husserl and Heidegger, both of whom analyzed the nature of existence.
      1. Husserl had explored the ways that a conscious subject becomes aware of the objects and the world around it; Heidegger had said that people must act to define their own Being in the realm of time.
      2. Similar issues emerged in the work of the German philosopher Karl Jaspers (1883–1969), who argued that people must act with free will.
      3. Jaspers said that awareness of death creates anxiety, but it is out of this anxiety that people choose to pursue an active life.
   B. French existentialists, especially Sartre, drew on these ideas to develop their own ideas about free human action.
      1. They explored the phenomenological question of how one becomes conscious of “being” in the world; then they linked consciousness to free actions that would affirm the individual’s existence.
      2. German influences were crucial, both in the realm of thought and in the painful realm of war, repression, and military occupation.

III. Jean-Paul Sartre (1905–1980) was the key figure in French existential philosophy. He was born into a well-to-do, highly educated family, the son of a French naval officer.
   A. Sartre’s father died when Jean-Paul was only fifteen months old. He was raised by his mother and mother’s parents, Protestants from Alsace. The family was the Schweitzers, which included the famous Dr. Albert Schweitzer.
      1. Sartre was a bookish but happy child—at least until his mother remarried when he was eleven (he detested his stepfather).
      2. He was educated at the École Normale Supérieure in Paris, where he studied philosophy, graduated first in his class, and met Simone de Beauvoir, the brilliant fellow student who became his life partner.
      3. Sartre and Beauvoir agreed to live a totally “transparent” relationship, to travel together, and to accept multiple sexual relations with others.
4. This relationship endured to the end of their lives (with tensions); they never married and the friendship survived all their many affairs.

B. After completing his studies, Sartre taught philosophy at a lycée in Le Havre. He began to write fiction and developed a plan to illustrate philosophical themes through literature, which was an unusual approach to philosophy.

1. In 1933–1934, he had a fellowship to work at the French Institute in Berlin; he was in Germany during Hitler’s first year in power.
2. But Sartre was not interested in politics at this time; he studied the philosophy of Husserl and other German authors.
3. His first published novel, Nausea (1938), showed a phenomenological quest for consciousness. The main character, Antoine Roquentin, explores both his physical and mental being, like an object to observe.
4. The pain of this exploration (it induces feelings of nausea) became a literary example of the existential crisis that leads toward the self.

C. Sartre had difficulty getting his work published and remained little known when France went to war with Germany in 1939. He was conscripted into the French army, then captured with his unit in June 1940.

1. He spent nine months in a German prisoner of war camp before being released in March 1941; he remained in France during the occupation.
2. Before the war, he had shown little interest in public action of any kind, but the war and German occupation pushed him in a new direction; he joined (as a writer) in the Resistance and began to write about choices.
3. After the liberation, he made a four-month trip to America (1945), then became an extremely famous public intellectual in Paris—like Voltaire.
4. He wrote in many genres, including fiction, drama, philosophy, and essays; his famous essay “Existentialism Is a Humanism” (1945) was an example of his ability to popularize ideas for a broad public.

D. Sartre argued that the world has no intrinsic meaning because there is no God or higher reality to give meaning or truth to human beings.

1. Sartre was an atheistic existentialist (i.e., closer to Nietzsche than to Kierkegaard on this issue), and he stressed that individuals are both alone and alienated from one another.
2. There is no essence; there is only existence or, as Sartre puts it, “existence precedes essence,” which means that there is no eternal soul.

3. Individuals must pass through an existential crisis in which they recognize the absurdities of existence: inevitable death, solitude, difficulty of communicating with others (Kierkegaard’s theme).

E. Yet the painful confrontation with the absurd, meaningless human condition need not lead to complete despair; the individual can see that human consciousness exists in spite of the absurdity.

1. Human beings have the freedom to act, and the human mind and human acts can give meaning to individual lives and to the social world.
2. The meaning of individual life comes through actions that each person takes; there is no fixed essence, but there is human action.
3. In other words, you are what you do, and you define yourself by your acts. In Sartre’s words, “Man is nothing else but what he makes of himself,” and “full responsibility” for his existence rests on him.

F. Because human beings have no essence, they are always in a process of becoming; they have a radical freedom to become what they choose to be.

1. But most people refuse to act with this freedom; they have “bad faith” because they let others define who they are.
2. To be an authentic human being, Sartre said, you must use your freedom. You are not an artist unless you create or a political person unless you act politically—you cannot just talk in the café.
3. Your actions will always define your existence; you must make choices—and even refusing to make choices is a choice.
4. In the early postwar period, Sartre was critical of communism, but in the early 1950s, he tried to link Marxism and existentialism. This angered many of his friends and allies; it seemed to violate his themes.

G. Sartre became an advocate for anti-colonial revolutions; he stopped writing fiction and gradually lost influence in the later 1950s.

1. Yet his account of how human beings must create meaning through free, decisive actions and choices retained cultural influence.
2. He also had cultural influence through his journal, Le Temps Modernes.

IV. This emphasis on the need to take action in an otherwise absurd world appeared also in the work of Albert Camus (1913–1960), who nevertheless denied that he was an existentialist and eventually had a bitter falling out with Sartre.

A. Camus was born in Algeria; he had a Spanish mother and a French father, but his father was killed at the battle of the Marne in 1914.

1. Like Sartre, he grew up close to his mother; she lived in poverty and supported herself by cleaning houses in Algiers.
2. Camus was an outstanding student who won scholarships and was able to attend the University of Algiers.

3. He married (1934), but the marriage dissolved within two years. He set off on travels and began to write; he later married again (to Francine Faure) and had two children.

B. He suffered from tuberculosis and did not serve in the military, but during the war and German occupation, he was an active journalist.

1. Camus wrote for Resistance publications and eventually became an editor of Combat, a newspaper that continued after the liberation.

2. In the midst of his journalism, however, he was also writing novels and drama. His first novel, The Stranger (1942), portrayed an alienated character, Meursault, who murders an Arab man.

3. Meursault never seems to find anything that is important to him; even his own mother’s death evokes no feeling from him, and he goes to his own death with a strong sense of the absurdity of life.

C. Yet Camus moved on in his work to affirm that human choices could make a difference in the world, as he suggested in The Plague (1947).

1. This novel used the metaphor of a plague in a north African city to evoke the experience of World War II and the Occupation.

2. The main character, Dr. Rieux, struggles to act against forces he cannot control; he must work “to fight the plague.”

D. Camus believed that “plagues” took many forms, but the greatest dangers emerged when human beings could not be free.

V. Despite their differences, Sartre and Camus came out of the Second World War with a shared belief that human freedom could make a difference in an absurd world. This idea of human action in a senseless world was appealing after 1945.

Essential Reading:

Supplementary Reading:

Questions to Consider:
1. Do you agree with Sartre’s claim that “you are what you do”?
2. Is existentialism ultimately an optimistic or pessimistic view of human life?
1. These authors had very different experiences, yet all were determined to make their readers remember and analyze the meaning of the war.
2. They came from different societies (Italy, England, Germany), but their books attracted readers across all national boundaries.
3. They all show how writing was an essential tool for cultural memory.

II. The struggle to make sense of the recent violence was especially painful for those few people who actually survived imprisonment in a Nazi death camp.

A. This was the story of the Jewish Italian writer Primo Levi (1919–1987), who spent ten months in the death camp at Auschwitz.
   1. Levi grew up in a Jewish family in Turin, but he apparently felt little specific awareness of his Jewish identity as a young man.
   2. He studied chemistry at the University of Turin and received a doctorate, though while he was there, the fascists banned Jewish students from future admissions to the university.

B. He began to work as a chemist, then joined an anti-fascist partisan group after the Germans occupied northern Italy to protect Mussolini.
   1. Levi was soon arrested, however, and sent to a prison camp in Italy; he was held with more than 600 other Jewish prisoners who were deported to Auschwitz in February 1944.
   2. Levi was one of the very few deportees to survive Auschwitz. As a chemist, he was put to work in a laboratory that the chemical company I. G. Farben operated at Auschwitz.

C. Levi always described himself as a random survivor; he was in the infirmary as the Russian army approached (in January 1945) and the German guards fled.
   1. After his liberation from the camp, he wandered around Eastern Europe for almost ten months before reaching Turin in October 1945.
   2. He soon began writing about his experiences and produced a book called If This Is a Man (1947); it was later republished and translated into English as Survival in Auschwitz.
   3. He also wrote an account of his long trip home (The Reawakening [1963]) and other important works in the 1970s and 1980s.
   4. He worked for more than thirty years as a chemist for a paint company and struggled with depression until committing suicide in 1987.

D. Levi’s description of what he saw at Auschwitz is one of the most powerful memoirs ever written; he wrote in the dispassionate style of a scientist.

E. Reduced to nothing but a number (174517) that was tattooed on his arm, Levi felt that all human feeling, reason, and solidarity were taken from prisoners.
   1. “Here the struggle to survive is without respite,” he wrote, “because everyone is desperately and ferociously alone.”
   2. The horror of this experience emerged from Levi’s remarkable book, yet he also wanted to show (by the act of writing) that memory and moral judgments could survive, so long as someone told the story.
   3. Levi’s books, along with the memoirs of others, expressed the deep desire to pull human meaning and life from the ruins of the war.

III. Few writers could relate the horrific experiences of a death camp, but George Orwell found other themes and miseries to describe in his postwar novels.

A. Orwell (1903–1950), whose real name was Eric Blair, grew up in southern England and attended the famous “public school” at Eton.
   1. He then went off to serve in the imperial police in Burma, avoiding the typical privileged education at Cambridge or Oxford.
   2. After five years in Asia, he decided to become a writer, returned to England, lived for a time in Paris, and began to worry about politics.
   3. He went to Spain during the Spanish Civil War and joined the anti-fascist troops in Catalonia; he was wounded in the throat in May 1937.
   4. Before leaving Spain, he witnessed a communist crackdown on other anti-fascist groups, including the socialists and anarchists.

B. The encounter with communists in Spain provoked concerns about political ideologies that produce repression. Orwell himself was a firm democratic socialist.
   1. Orwell learned before World War II that he had tuberculosis and was unable to serve in the British army during the war; he wrote about the war for newspapers and found himself deeply involved in events.
2. He was in London during the massive bombing of the city. He and his wife (Eileen O'Shaughnessy) were even bombed out of their home.

3. In February 1945, he went to France as a war correspondent and pushed on to Germany. Meanwhile, his wife died after surgery in England.

C. Orwell emerged from the war with a deep sense of anxiety about the direction of modern society; he worried that totalitarianism would persist in new ways.
1. His satirical novel *Animal Farm* (1945) warned about the dangers of communist dictatorships (he remained a democratic socialist).
2. He wanted to make his warnings about totalitarianism even more pointed in his later novel, *1984* (1949), which gained a large audience.

D. Orwell wrote the book while he was, essentially, dying from tuberculosis; it has been criticized for its lack of artistic subtlety and nuance.
1. Yet the book expressed a deep fear of totalitarianism that Orwell had drawn from his encounters with fascism and communism.
2. The book portrays a society controlled by a single political party, the “Inner Party,” whose leader is known as Big Brother. The party controls all definitions of truth and uses a kind of “doublethink.”
3. Thought Police keep track of everyone and promote such ideas as “War Is Peace,” and “Ignorance Is Truth.” Individuals have no autonomy.
4. The main character, Winston Smith, learns that “Big Brother is watching” all the time and defending the “higher good.”

E. The party also controls all information about the past so that “history” serves only the interest of the ruling group. For Orwell, this was the modern danger.
1. Orwell’s story differed from Levi’s, but he, too, was worried about the loss of reason, judgment, memory, and individual dignity.
2. The end of World War II did not mean that the problem had gone away; Orwell’s book soon joined the Cold War literary canon.

IV. The literary attempt to represent the experience and memory of totalitarianism and war could also be found in the postwar German writing of Günter Grass.

A. Grass (1927— ) grew up in a Catholic family in the German city of Danzig, which is now the city of Gdansk in Poland. He was five years old when Hitler came to power and his education was strongly affected by Nazism.
1. Danzig became part of the Third Reich in September 1939, and young Grass soon enrolled in the Hitler Youth.
2. He entered the German army in the last phase of the war and was wounded in late fighting; he ended up in an American POW camp.

B. Out of this disorienting experience, he began to reevaluate all his earlier life; he learned about the death camps and heard stories that he disbelieved at first. But he later reported that his whole view of Germany was altered.

C. He decided that he must keep the memory of what Germans had done (and not done) during the Nazi years in view of the German public.
1. Grass became active in a new association of writers, the Group 47, which had been founded in 1947 to revive German literature after the war and to defend the traditions of Enlightenment tolerance.
2. He settled in West Germany, married a Swiss woman (Anna Schwarz), and started to write a novel that would become *The Tin Drum* (1959).

D. This novel told the story of a boy named Oskar who, at age three, stopped growing, but played a drum and watched his society during the rise of Nazism, World War II, and the postwar era.
1. He is not exactly a hero, but unlike the adults, he refuses to join the frenzy for Nazism. His best friend is a Jewish toy merchant who kills himself because of Nazi anti-Semitism.
2. Oskar (and Grass) rejects dogmatic language and actions.
3. The novel shows the danger of conformity, simple clichés, and refusal to take responsible actions; the style is somewhat surreal.

E. Grass wrote other novels on these issues (*The Tin Drum* was part of a Danzig Trilogy), but he also threw himself into political action in the Socialist Party.

F. But Grass’s postwar works are not about democratic socialism; they are, like the books of Levi and Orwell, part of the literary response to modern horrors.

G. Grass wanted Germans to remember what they had done and to defend reason, tolerance, and patient reformism in a world that must be rebuilt.

**Essential Reading:**


**Supplementary Reading:**


**Questions to Consider:**

1. Were the events of the Holocaust unique in human history?
2. Does Orwell’s *1984* portray dangers that exist only in totalitarian states?
Lecture Twenty
Redefining Modern Feminism

Scope: Intellectual and political interest in human freedom and personal choices contributed to a new wave of feminist thought that sought to describe and change traditional restrictions on the rights of women. As women gradually gained the right to vote, feminists developed a more general assessment of other social, cultural, and economic constraints that women faced in both their private and public lives. This lecture notes three "waves" of twentieth-century feminist thought, giving particular attention to the ideas of Virginia Woolf and Simone de Beauvoir. European feminism drew many of its subsequent cultural themes from Beauvoir's influential book *The Second Sex* (1949), but her existential account of human identity also provoked criticisms from theorists who argued that language and the unconscious mind shape gender identities.

Outline

I. The struggle to define and defend human dignity and autonomy amid constraining or destructive modern social contexts extended also to movements for women's rights.

A. Feminism became one of the most successful modern "isms" in that many of the traditional restrictions on women's voting rights, economic rights, education, and personal freedom disappeared in the twentieth century.
   1. But changes in some spheres of political and economic life also created new awareness of the cultural limits that still shaped women's lives.
   2. The movement for women's rights evolved through what are often called three "waves" of modern feminist thought.

B. The first wave was the (generally) successful campaign for voting rights; it was led by feminist activists, such as Emmeline Pankhurst (1858–1928).
   1. Pankhurst was one of the English suffragists who participated in a sometimes violent campaign for women's voting rights before World War I. English women got the right to vote at the end of that war.
   2. Women also gained voting rights in Germany at that time, but they could not vote in France and Italy until the end of World War II.

C. The acquisition of voting rights did not end the debate about women's role in public life; it was a long time before they began to hold government offices.
   1. In the aftermath of the successful campaign for voting rights, however, some women started to develop a second wave of feminist writing that stressed the social, economic, and cultural constraints on women.
   2. This new phase of feminism developed in various national contexts, but it gained particular influence in England and France through the work of such writers as Virginia Woolf and Simone de Beauvoir.
   3. This lecture focuses on this second phase of twentieth-century feminist thought and emphasizes the wide influence of Beauvoir's book *The Second Sex*.
   4. Both Woolf and Beauvoir urged women to pursue a new cultural liberation that would extend beyond the realm of political rights.

D. By the late twentieth century, however, a third wave of feminist thought criticized Beauvoir for ignoring the deeper structures of language and unconscious thought that continued to impede women's liberation. This third wave of feminist thought has splintered in many directions, but it also builds on earlier feminist themes.

II. We have seen how Virginia Woolf (1882–1941) made important contributions to the literary style and themes of the modern English novel.

A. She tried to represent the complexity of women in her fictional works, but she developed her most notable commentary on women and society in her short book *A Room of One's Own* (1929).
   1. Published soon after women gained the right to vote, Woolf's book turned to the question of why women's cultural productions in art, literature, and scholarship had never matched the productions of men.
   2. She said that women never had enough money to support artistic work, nor enough time away from family obligations to write books.
   3. The independent, creative woman needed "a room of one's own" and some financial autonomy; she also needed to resist the deep cultural message that said "women cannot create as well as men."

B. No wonder that women had not yet written plays like those of Shakespeare; if Shakespeare had had a sister, she could never have pursued literary work.
   1. Women were blocked from the personal freedom (e.g., travel, love affairs, risk taking) and education that made creative work possible.
   2. Woolf argued that this situation was changing in the modern era, though women should not write or create exactly like men.
3. Women must find their own cultural voices to represent their own experiences, friendships, and views of reality.
4. Women must also recover the history of women—a history that remained invisible in history books and official cultural memory.

III. Woolf's imaginative, concise description of the quest for a woman's voice and an independent "selfhood" offered a starting point for the work of Simone de Beauvoir.

A. Beauvoir (1908–1986) was an important existentialist philosopher in France whose early published works were mostly novels and short stories.
   1. She grew up in a bourgeois Catholic family and went to Catholic schools until she entered the Sorbonne, where she studied philosophy.
   2. Although few women at that time had ever taught philosophy, she decided to become a philosophy teacher. In studying for the qualifying exam, she met Jean-Paul Sartre.
   3. They took the exam in the same year (1929); he placed first, and she placed second, but she was the youngest person ever to pass the exam.

B. The relationship with Sartre, as we've noted earlier, became an enduring, complex emotional component of Beauvoir's life. They struggled to have a completely "honest" relationship, but this carried emotional costs.
   1. Beauvoir taught philosophy in provincial lycées, then settled in Paris during the Second World War.
   2. She wrote novels (e.g., *She Came to Stay* [1943] and *The Blood of Others* [1945]) that explored relationships and personal choices.
   3. Beauvoir used literature to portray her existential philosophical ideas; she also wrote philosophical essays.

C. After the war, she traveled in America, where she began a long affair with the American writer Nelson Algren, but she would not marry him, in large part because of her deep link with Sartre (who was involved with others).
   1. In the late 1940s, Beauvoir became more interested in politics and social issues; this influenced her decision to write on gender relations.
   2. She also became an activist who opposed the continued French occupation of Algeria.
   3. Meanwhile, her writing moved from fiction and philosophy into a four-volume autobiographical work that also illustrated her ideas.
   4. She was one of the editors of the journal *Les Temps Modernes*. This position was part of the relationship with Sartre, though she also lived for a number of years with another writer, Claude Lanzmann.

D. Beauvoir's life became as important as her writings for younger generations of women; she represented the woman who had created her own life as a writer and independent intellectual.

1. Later feminists often criticized her uncritical allegiance to and apparent emotional dependence on Sartre.
2. But her book *The Second Sex* (1949) remains one of the foundational works of modern feminist thought. Beauvoir did not call herself a feminist until the 1970s and kept her distance from women activists.
3. In later years, though, she was active in campaigns for abortion rights, contraception, and the defense of women who faced domestic violence.

IV. *The Second Sex* is a long book (over 700 pages in the English translation), and it ranges very widely in its description of patriarchal societies.

A. The overall point of the book is to show how women have been defined and restricted by the history and myths that place them in an inferior position.
   1. This long cultural history has prevented women from understanding and acting on their freedom, but women can begin to act freely when they reject the prevailing cultural myths and redefine themselves.
   2. The argument built on the ideas of existential philosophy. It stressed that there is no "essence" or "woman's nature" that sets limits to what women might do; they can define themselves by their actions.

B. Yet women cannot act freely because they allow men and cultural traditions to define who they are. Beauvoir rejects biological, psychological, and materialist arguments about the traits of women that are beyond cultural control.
   1. The culture views women as the "other" of men, and women take this perception into their own identities. Men are active; women are passive.
   2. As Beauvoir described it, "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman." From earliest childhood, girls are given their cultural roles.
   3. Men are better able to act on their freedom ("the male is called upon for action"), but a woman is enclosed "within the circle of herself."

C. Given these cultural structures, Beauvoir argues that women have no chance for freedom or equality in the reigning structures of marriage, motherhood, and male-female relationships; the structures deny her freedom.
   1. But Beauvoir remained an optimist; she assumed that women could find the means to liberate themselves.
2. They could challenge the cultural myths; they would find ways to gain more economic autonomy (the point Woolf had also developed) and could overcome their sense of inferiority in the arts and literature.
3. Most important, they could insist on equality in relations with men—an equal relation between two independent consciousnesses.
4. “On the day when it will be possible for woman to love not in her weakness but in her strength,” she wrote, “…love will become for her, as for man, a source of life and not of mortal danger.”

V. Beauvoir’s vision of women’s identity and modern social position built on a classical Enlightenment-style definition of the self.
A. The free woman (like the free man) could recognize her social position, define her opposition to oppressive forces outside herself, and claim her freedom as she rejected the ways in which others described her.
1. These assumptions led to the criticisms of a third wave of feminists.
2. In France, this critique emerged in writers such as Luce Irigaray (1932–), Hélène Cixous (1937–), and Julia Kristeva (1941–).
B. These writers placed more emphasis on the distinctiveness of the female body, suggesting that people like Beauvoir still wanted women to be like men. Beauvoir had not gone far enough in analyzing masculine language. She had not seen how language limits freedom.
C. Other critics claimed that Beauvoir did not grasp the complexity of motherhood; she devalued women’s distinctive experiences.
D. Amid these critiques, other feminists praised Beauvoir for showing how woman’s social position is culturally constructed rather than natural.
E. This emphasis on the redefinition of the self offered alternatives to other theories about cultural structures that limit and define everyone.

Essential Reading:
Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One’s Own*.

Supplementary Reading:

Questions to Consider:
1. Do the experiences of women and men differ in ways that require different literary voices?
2. Was Beauvoir naïve when she argued that women could reject traditional cultural definitions of womanhood?

Lecture Twenty-One
History, Anthropology, and Structuralism

Scope: Although the existential account of human freedom attracted wide interest among postwar intellectuals, the social sciences tended to stress the controlling power of historical systems and cultural traditions that limit the individual’s ideas and actions. This lecture examines the emphasis on social “structures” and cultural “systems” that reshaped historical studies and anthropology after the Second World War. It discusses the so-called “Annales School” of historians in France, noting the role of its early leaders, Lucien Febvre, Marc Bloch, and Fernand Braudel. Meanwhile, anthropology also took a “structural” turn in the work of Claude Lévi-Strauss, who developed influential theories about the deep structures and rituals that give cultural meaning to all forms of social life.

Outline

I. Descriptions of the “human condition” in the twentieth century often moved in contrasting directions.
   A. Some intellectuals, including the existentialists, stressed the autonomy of individual consciousness and action and emphasized the reality of human freedom.
   B. Many others, however, stressed that individuals inevitably live in social and cultural structures that limit their thought and actions.
   C. This emphasis on the structures that define what people can think or do became a common theme in the social sciences, including history, sociology, and anthropology. It drew on earlier thinkers, such as Durkheim.
      1. Among the “limiting structures” of human thought, the social scientists noted the importance of cultural traditions, language, and religion.
      2. People learn how to think and act within these structures; therefore, as many theorists argued, most individuals are only “free” within narrow limits.
   D. These themes became especially influential in structural anthropology, which emerged most notably in works by the French theorist Claude Lévi-Strauss.
      1. Similar structural themes had appeared earlier in the new social history of writers such as Lucien Febvre and Marc Bloch.
      2. Febvre and Bloch founded a famous historical journal in the late 1920s; their approach to history led to the work of Fernand Braudel.
3. In this lecture, we’ll look at the new social history in France, then note how its themes also evolved into structural anthropology.

4. The themes in all this work challenged the existential belief in free individual consciousness and shaped a powerful critique of traditional (liberal) ideas about the autonomy of the individual subject.

E. Such ideas gained wide influence in postwar European intellectual life, especially among intellectuals who worked in the universities.

II. The new attempt to understand the constraining social and cultural components of human action and thought showed up in the study of history during the 1930s.

A. Modern professional historical studies had developed in Germany during the nineteenth century in the works of historians such as Leopold von Ranke.

   1. Ranke (1795–1886) and his followers generally saw state institutions or leaders as the decisive actors in human history; they used government documents as the key sources for historical narratives.

   2. These research methods gave political elites and government policies the greatest significance in the whole narrative of human history.

B. By the 1930s, however, there was a growing dissatisfaction with historical work that focused mainly on government leaders or political events.

   1. Younger historians, who were influenced by sociology, preferred to emphasize social processes and the cultural aspects of human history.

   2. Individuals were seen as the products of long-term social forces that they do not control and often do not fully recognize.

   3. This conception of historical experience became important in the work of the so-called “Annales” historians in France.

C. The key figures in this historical “school” were Lucien Febvre (1878–1956) and Marc Bloch (1886–1944); they were co-founders of the Annales d’histoire économique et sociale, which began publication in 1929.

   1. Both Febvre and Bloch studied sociology and geography at the École Normale Supérieure before World War I; they served throughout that war in the French army.

   2. They met in 1920 in Strasbourg, where they were both appointed to teach history at the University of Strasbourg.

D. Febvre worked on sixteenth-century French history and Bloch studied the Middle Ages. They were close friends, but their lives differed in important ways.

   1. Febvre was from a French Catholic family, he was older than Bloch, and he moved up the academic hierarchy more quickly, becoming a professor at the Collège de France in 1933.

   2. Bloch was from an Alsatian Jewish family; he lagged behind Febvre in academic appointments, finally reaching Paris in 1936 with a position at the Sorbonne. Bloch joined the French army again in 1939; after the Germans occupied France, he could not resume his academic work.

E. Bloch tried to go to America with his wife and six children, but he was unable to get visas for his family; he later joined the French Resistance.

   1. In 1944, Bloch was arrested by the Gestapo and, after several months in jail, was executed near Lyon (June 1944).

   2. His life story, as well as his work, made him one of the most important historians in twentieth-century France.

III. The main objective of the Annales historians was to analyze the enduring structures of social life and thought across long periods of time.

A. Febvre wrote, for example, about the structures of religious thought in sixteenth-century culture, showing how it was then impossible for one to be an atheist.

B. Bloch wrote about the social relations and ideas in medieval feudal society; he described the layout of fields, conceptions of time, and social relations.

   1. Bloch’s most famous book, Feudal Society (1939–1940), examined the “collective consciousness” of people in that culture.

   2. He did not write about the kings fighting heroic battles; he discussed the social experience of everyday life in villages or fields.

   3. He showed social and cultural structures that defined what a person could do or think in the “mentality” of the medieval world.

C. This approach to history emphasized that social processes evolve slowly over time and suggested that the natural and social world limit human action.

   1. Bloch himself (as we’ve seen) tried to act within the limiting structures of his world, but his emphasis on structures influenced later historians.

   2. The books of Fernand Braudel became the most well known examples of later works in the Annales tradition.

D. Braudel (1902–1985) became an editor of the Annales journal after World War II and a professor at the Collège de France. He lived in Algeria and Brazil before the war and spent most of World War II in a German POW camp.

   1. Isolated in that camp, Braudel wrote a first draft of his famous book The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age
of Philip II (1949). He drew only on his memory of his prewar research.

2. Perhaps influenced by the sense that events were beyond his control, Braudel portrayed history on three levels: geographic time, social time, and the time of events—and the events are the least significant.

E. Braudel devoted most of his book to descriptions of natural environments and impersonal social structures; these seem to be the decisive historical forces.

1. He described specific historical events as “surface disturbances, crests of foam that the tides of history carry on their strong backs.”

2. The individual is like foam on the waters of a vast sea, tossed about by great waves of history that a person can never control.

3. Following this perspective, the new social history in France set out to describe enduring structures rather than specific persons or events.

IV. A similar interest in the deep, shaping structures of human culture appeared also in the new structural anthropology of Claude Lévi-Strauss (1908–).

A. Lévi-Strauss came from a family of artists. He was born in Belgium but grew up in France and attended the Sorbonne, where he studied philosophy.

1. Simone de Beauvoir was one of his classmates at the university.

2. His interests shifted to anthropology, however, when he moved to Brazil in 1934. He taught at the University of São Paulo (1934–1939).

3. During these years, he traveled into the interior of Brazil and met remote Indian tribes; these people lived entirely pre-modern lives.

4. He studied ethnology and went back to France to pursue this subject.

B. He served in the French army in 1940, but after the Germans occupied France, he escaped to America (Lévi-Strauss was Jewish and at great risk).

1. He made his way to New York, where he lived among exiles, worked at the New School for Social Research, and studied linguistics.

2. He became a good friend of the Czech linguist Roman Jakobson; this connection led him to a new linguistic understanding of culture.

3. Lévi-Strauss remained in the United States until 1947; he taught at Barnard College and served after 1945 as a French cultural attaché.

4. But his intellectual roots were in France, and he returned there to publish numerous anthropological works. He later became a professor of social anthropology at the Collège de France (1960–1982).

C. Lévi-Strauss was influenced by Durkheim’s influential successor, Marcel Mauss, and wrote a long introduction to an edition of Mauss’s writings. He also described his Brazilian experiences in a famous book called Tristes Tropiques (1955) and later published Structural Anthropology (1961) and The Raw and the Cooked (1964).

D. Lévi-Strauss understood culture in terms he borrowed from structural linguistics. He said that cultures are like languages in that they are built on underlying structures, which are invariable and create meaning.

1. Structural linguistics had been developed earlier in the century by Ferdinand de Saussure, who emphasized the unchanging deep structure or grammar of language.

2. He noted that individual words can be arranged into an infinite combination of specific sentences, but all these sentences (to make sense) will use a common underlying grammar.

E. Lévi-Strauss drew on this idea to argue that a primitive Brazilian society and an advanced urban society share various underlying structures.

F. The meaning of these structures, according to Lévi-Strauss, depends on dichotomies, or binary oppositions. These oppositions include such categories as nature and culture, raw and cooked, spoken and written, male and female, and so on.

G. Lévi-Strauss’s structuralist theory thus carried a strong relativist element. It said that cultures are not good or bad; they simply differ in their rituals. The theory also carried a strong sympathy for pre-modern cultures; they were seen as less alienated from nature.

H. Lévi-Strauss’s emphasis on the value of pre-modern cultures and the influence of cultural structures had wide influence in the 1960s.

I. Like most social historians, structuralists assumed that individuals cannot free themselves from deep cultural systems.

Essential Reading:
Marc Bloch, The Historian’s Craft, pp. 3–47.

Supplementary Reading:

Questions to Consider:
1. Do cultures, languages and historical contexts define the limits of what any individual can think, say, or do?
2. Do all cultures have the same deep structures and rituals?
Lecture Twenty-Two

Poststructuralist Thought: Foucault and Derrida

Scope: In the 1960s, a new generation of French social and cultural theorists developed an important critique of both the existential philosophical tradition and the structuralist ideas that had become important in cultural anthropology. This new critical movement became known as poststructuralism—a term that suggests the attempt to move beyond structuralist ideas. This lecture examines the lives and poststructuralist theories of Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida, both of whom had wide international influence. Foucault was especially concerned with the relation between power and knowledge. Derrida was more concerned with the metaphysical philosophical traditions that remain embedded in all forms of language. This lecture summarizes the main themes of these complex authors and notes their international influence.

Outline

I. The key ideas of post-World War II social history and structural anthropology portrayed individuals as embodiments of cultural discourses that they could neither transform nor escape; these themes rejected the belief in radical existential freedom.
   A. Structuralist views of language and culture also challenged the idea that an artist or author expresses a distinctive personal vision.
      1. There was, instead, a tendency to describe the “death of the author” or the “death of the subject”; everyone simply expresses a cultural system.
      2. Such views seemed to suggest that social or cultural change would be unlikely; at the very least, such change would be very slow because the structures of language, culture, and social life endure for long periods of time.
   B. Critics began to complain, however, that this view would foster a passivity or an abandonment of social critique; structures would simply be accepted.
      1. Meanwhile, there was a growing disillusionment with Marxism, in part because of Stalinism and in part because economic analysis alone did not seem to account for the realities of social and cultural life.
      2. Both Marxism and structuralism suggested rigid views of social life; they defined social relations in terms of binary oppositions.
   C. In this cultural and political context, a new group of poststructuralists began to challenge the “binary” thinking of structuralism, Marxism, and philosophy.

II. Foucault (1926–1984) was from the French city of Poitiers, where his father was a prominent surgeon; he wanted his son Michel to be a surgeon, too.
   A. The young Foucault attended Catholic schools, then moved away from the idea of studying medicine. He entered the École Normale Supérieure in Paris and studied philosophy; he became skeptical of Sartre’s existentialism.
      1. He turned from philosophy to the history of medicine, psychiatry, and hospitals and worked in a psychiatric hospital.
      2. He later taught French for six years in Sweden, Poland, and Germany. He then became a professor of philosophy at the University of Clermont-Ferrand (1960), though his research dealt with medicine.
      3. He began to publish widely acclaimed books in the 1960s, but he still worked abroad often (he taught in Tunisia between 1966 and 1968).
      4. His writings on medicine and on the nature of scientific knowledge attracted public attention. He was appointed professor of the “History of Systems of Thought” at the Collège de France in 1970.
   B. Foucault also became a public intellectual; he was active in campaigns for prison reform and a critic of various government health care policies.
      1. His lectures at the Collège de France drew large crowds. He had a dramatic personal appearance; he was bald, wore glasses, and spoke in complex and even lyrical language.
      2. He was an unconventional philosopher, historian, and literary critic.
3. He was also a homosexual who was drawn to gay culture in San Francisco. He lived in California at various times in the 1970s and 1980s while lecturing at Berkeley; he died of AIDS.

4. Some historians have stressed these personal and contextual aspects of Foucault’s life. This experience may have intensified his concern with repression, cultural discourses, and the language of scientific experts.

C. Foucault’s work is difficult to categorize, but in most general terms, he repeatedly emphasized the relation between power and knowledge.
2. Similar issues emerge in a three-volume history of sexuality, which was his last major work.
3. In these books, Foucault argued that modern society relies on structures of dominance, control, and surveillance.
4. Power is diffused throughout society through institutions of social control, such as schools, prisons, hospitals, and armies. What Foucault called the “discourse” of control expressed the authority of experts.

D. The knowledge of scientists, doctors, and teachers is, thus, linked to power; therefore, knowledge is neither neutral nor benign—it is a method of social management.
1. Foucault said that this connection between power and knowledge has shaped modern rationalizing societies since the Enlightenment.
2. His work examined historical issues, such as modern reforms in asylums, prisons, and schools—the culture of rational humanitarians.
3. He argued that the late Enlightenment created “man” as an object of analysis, much as an earlier era had created “nature.”
4. His book *Madness and Civilization*, for example, claimed that modern experts created “madness” as a category of knowledge, then took control of the “mad” by placing them in asylums.

E. In other books, such as *Discipline and Punish* and *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault stressed that experts transformed individuals into objects whose behavior could be categorized and brought under the gaze of science.
1. He took the example for this from Jeremy Bentham’s dream of a perfect prison that would have a system of constant surveillance.
2. Guards watch the prisoners from a tower (a “panopticon”), but the prisoners can’t see the guards; this is Foucault’s image of modernity.

F. For Foucault, power does not come from an economic class or from specific government officials, as Marxists or political historians argue.
1. Instead, power is diffuse and internalized. Power “doesn’t only weigh on us as a force that says no,” he argues; “it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse.”
2. Foucault’s ideas on such subjects were influenced by Nietzsche, who had argued that thought is linked to the will to power.
3. Nietzsche had also described truth as a cultural construction and as a concept that is linked to relations of power.
4. Nietzsche’s claim that healthy instincts and drives were condemned and distorted by civilization was also important to Foucault.

G. Foucault’s response to the historical patterns he described also drew on Nietzsche’s precedent. He wanted to “think outside the tradition,” to explore transgressions, challenge values, and move beyond limits.
1. He also argued that it was impossible ever to achieve a complete escape from traditions, though he wrote in unconventional ways.
2. Foucault offered a new critique of the Enlightenment, and he may have offered theoretical justification for spontaneous acts of rebellion.
3. Yet his thought also contributed to a more general pessimism about what individuals can actually do in modern societies.

H. Like Lévi-Strauss and many other theorists, he suggested that the constraints of culture are everywhere; the autonomous “self” seems to be a myth. The “self” is a construction of multiple discourses.

III. A similar emphasis on the multiplicity of language and the cultural construction of the “self” appears in the poststructuralist theories of Jacques Derrida (1930–).

A. Derrida was born in Algeria and lived there until he went to Paris to study philosophy at the École Normale Supérieure in the early 1950s.
1. He came to French culture from the margins, a position that was intensified because his family was Jewish.
2. Perhaps this influenced his interest in questions about the relation between the center and margins of culture, thought, and language.

B. Derrida eventually became a philosophy professor at the École Normale (1964–1984) and at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales. He often visited American universities and especially influenced literary criticism.
1. His important early books included *Of Grammatology* (1967) and *Writing and Difference* (1967); he developed ideas of “deconstruction.”
Lecture Twenty-Three
European Postmodernism

Scope: “Postmodernism” is difficult to define, but it has deeply affected contemporary art, literature, architecture, and social theory. This lecture notes how postmodern thinkers describe the fragmentation and contingency of social life and personal experience. Postmodernism questions universalisms and the belief in “objective reality,” thus developing a new critique of Enlightenment traditions. This lecture discusses three authors who have contributed to postmodernist thought: Jean Baudrillard, Jacques Lacan, and Julia Kristeva. These French theorists—especially Lacan—revised Freud’s psychoanalytic theory and claimed that it is impossible to achieve a fully coherent or unified identity.

Outline

I. A wide range of influential tendencies in European intellectual life over the last thirty or forty years are often lumped together under the general term “postmodernism.”

A. The term is vague and people disagree about both its meaning and significance. It has been important in the arts, advertising, and the study of cultures.

1. The term suggests that we have moved beyond modernity, which is usually linked to the legacy of the Enlightenment and the Scientific Revolution; this tradition assumed the existence of an objective reality.

2. The modern Enlightenment tradition also assumed that we can know this reality through the use of science and reason.

B. We’ve seen how modernism in literature and the arts reacted against these Enlightenment ideas. “Modernist” literature appeared most notably in the works of writers such as Proust, Joyce, and Woolf.

1. Modernism questioned and rejected the idea that there is simply a reality “out there” that can be known and described.

2. Yet modernist artists and writers often stressed the specific visions or insights of creative persons; the artist has a unique vision.

3. Modernism tended to emphasize the unique language, memory, and internal life of the individual artist (an old Romantic theme).

C. Postmodernism has moved beyond both Enlightenment modernity and literary modernism. It claims that objects are never simply “there” as the Enlightenment assumed; objects are “constructed” by cultural discourses.

Essential Reading:
Michel Foucault, The History of Sexuality, vol. 1.
Jacques Derrida, Of Grammatology, pp. 6–26, 101–164.

Supplementary Reading:
Didier Eribon, Michel Foucault, pp. 212–332.

Questions to Consider:
1. Does the language or “discourse” of experts define people’s identities in the modern world?
2. Do you think all ideas need “supplements” to acquire meaning?
1. Foucault's accounts of sexuality or madness, for example, showed how these "realities" were created by modern scientific experts.

2. Postmodernism also challenges the belief in a distinctive vision of authors or artists; it sees authors as exemplars of cultural discourses.

D. In place of the Enlightenment's unified, coherent world and modernist art's autonomous creative work, postmodernism stresses fragmentation.

1. Postmodernist culture is said to lack unity or coherence; it's a world of constant movement, change, contingency, and flux.

2. One analyst of postmodernism, David Harvey, says, "Postmodernism swims, even wallows, in the fragmentary and the chaotic currents of change, as if that is all there is."

3. This view assumes there are no stable identities or truths, only shifting cultural constructions that evolve through the dialogic interaction of different languages, cultures, and discourses.

E. Postmodernism rejects the desire for a systematic master narrative or universalizing theory, such as Enlightenment rationalism, Marxism, or religion.

1. Unlike Enlightenment thinkers (e.g., Voltaire), the postmodern writer cannot claim to defend social or legal reforms in the name of reason.

2. The postmodern writer can only interpret cultures or discourses in relation to other cultures because there are no fully coherent cultures or persons.

3. This theory accepts and promotes the idea of fragmentation as an alternative to the hierarchies and unities of inherited cultural truths.

F. Postmodernist themes can be found in the works of the French theorists Jean Baudrillard, Jacques Lacan, and Julia Kristeva.

1. Each of these authors pointed to the contingency of ideas, the fluidity of identities, and the relational nature of truth.

2. But their ideas, like the work of all other theorists, has evolved out of a particular historical and cultural context; what is this context?

II. Baudrillard (1929– ) described the contemporary world as a fragmented cultural and economic system that produces what Durkheim had described as anomie.

A. Baudrillard studied German philosophy and literature in the 1950s and began his career as a sociology teacher, but even his earliest works showed a deep interest in the characteristics of modern consumer culture.

1. Like many late twentieth-century European intellectuals, he spent time in America, lectured in American universities, and interpreted American culture as the advanced example of a postmodern social world.

2. He discussed American culture in such works as Simulacra and Simulation (1981) and America (1986).

3. America represents the culmination of a social process in which consumerism, anonymity, and visual images define social experience.

B. For Baudrillard, the postmodern world is a "simulation" of reality; it is constructed in television images or imitations of reality (e.g., Disneyland).

1. It is also a world of "virtual reality" or what Baudrillard calls "hyperreality," in which the simulation becomes what we know best.

2. This is a world of public and personal fragmentation into subcultures. The freeways of big cities are examples of this world of vast movement in all directions by anonymous people in cars.

3. Economic life is dominated by consumer culture and massive advertising. In this world, you are what you buy.

4. Consumption rather than production is the theme of postmodern economies. Television and visual culture are the media for our time; people consume images with little interest in deeper complexities.

C. In this kind of world, we can have no faith in master narratives of political progress or political action; people watch TV and shop till they drop.

1. Baudrillard's themes build on the assumption that there is no unified or coherent self; the person (like other realities) is fragmented.

2. This idea was also one of the key themes of Jacques Lacan.

III. Lacan (1901–1981) was born into a prosperous family of vinegar merchants in Paris. He attended a Jesuit school and lived virtually his entire life in Parisian culture.

A. He renounced Catholicism, studied medicine, and became a practicing psychiatrist with a special interest in criminality and paranoia.

1. He was active in various Freudian psychoanalytic groups, but he was eventually expelled from all orthodox psychoanalytic associations.

2. He became closely connected to surrealism (André Breton was a good friend) and studied the linguistic theories of Saussure.

3. He was always something of a "rebel," but he also married twice and had four children. He wanted intellectual acclaim.

4. In his later years, he taught famous seminars in such places as the École des Hautes Études and the École Normale Supérieure.

5. He hesitated to publish his ideas (fearing misinterpretation), and his writings were often almost impossible to understand.
B. Lacan’s most well known book was a collection of essays called simply *Ecrits (Writings, 1966)*, but his seminar lectures were also transcribed and published.

1. Lacan gained great influence by developing several key themes; he especially wanted to bring together linguistics and psychoanalysis.

2. He sought to revise psychoanalysis by stressing the role of language in the unconscious (“the unconscious is structured like a language”).

3. He also sought to revise linguistics by stressing the role of desire, the body, sexuality, and pleasure in the workings of all language.

C. Lacan also argued that both the language and the unconscious prevent people from achieving a fully coherent self; everyone has multiple selves.

1. People often deny this multiplicity, however, and pathologies emerge when people fail to understand the multiple levels of the ego or the self.

2. The problem evolves from what Lacan called “The Mirror Stage of Development” that each child goes through between the ages of six and eighteen months, when people begin seeing themselves as coherent beings.

D. This discovery of the self occurs literally when we see ourselves reflected in a mirror, but more generally, this mirror experience occurs for all people in our relations with other people.

1. Parents and others respond to the child and confirm his or her identity as an autonomous being.

2. But Lacan argued that this sense of coherence cannot last as we grow older because we learn through symbolic languages and interactions that we are really many different people; we have no single self.

3. Each of us is a set of multiple selves, depending on contexts, relations, and interactions with others. Lacan called this process the “splitting of the ego” and said that you must see your multiple selves in order to mature.

E. If you go on believing in or yearning for that sense of full unity or presence that you had at the mirror stage of development, you will be unhappy.

1. This unity cannot be achieved; yet the desire for this complete unity can lead to anger or violence if people demand full recognition of their unity or coherence.

2. People need to learn symbolic languages that enable them to see themselves and others as people with multiple identities.

F. For the child, the strongest desire for unity comes in the desire to be united with the mother, but the healthy person learns to see the mother as “other.”

1. This identity—this separation from the mother—is described with language that comes from the father because that is also his relation to the child’s mother: She is “other” to him.

2. The language of identity is, therefore, “gendered” male. Woman is the other of language and identity, and language is “phallocentric.”

G. Lacan’s work has two crucial themes: People must give up the desire for full unity or coherence, and they should recognize the connection between (phallocentric) language and the body.

IV. Lacan’s arguments had a wide influence on postmodernist thought, which has stressed the importance of language and the fragmentation of identities.

A. These themes were picked up and revised by Julia Kristeva (1941—), who came from Bulgaria to study in France in 1966.

B. She was interested in the relations between margins and the “center” of language and culture; this issue was part of her own experience as a Bulgarian and a woman in French society (she married the writer Philippe Sollers).

1. Kristeva accepted Lacan’s idea that the self comes to identity through reflections of others. She agreed that the language people use to define their identities comes from fathers (for whom women are “others”).

2. Unlike Lacan, Kristeva thought that one did not have to go on repeating the language of the father. It is possible to find the voice of the mother and move beyond gendered male language.

C. Kristeva argued that pure identities cannot exist; the mother and father are already interdependent, and identities are “dialogic.”

D. French theorists led the cultural challenge to (French) Enlightenment conceptions of identity and knowledge; they influenced postmodern thought everywhere by showing the fluid interrelations of all identities and ideas.

**Essential Reading:**

Jean Baudrillard, *America.*


**Supplementary Reading:**


**Questions to Consider:**

1. Do you think that “virtual reality,” images, and simulations have become the dominant shaping forces in contemporary social and cultural life?

2. Do you agree with Lacan’s claim that all people have multiple selves?
Lecture Twenty-Four

Changes and Traditions at Century’s End

Scope: European societies were deeply affected by late twentieth-century events, including the Cold War, the “Americanization” of cultural life, the arrival of large immigrant populations, the demise of communist regimes, and the expansion of the new global economy. Although Europe was uniting in a new “European Union,” no single European intellectual culture existed at the end of the twentieth century. Yet there was a renewed interest in Enlightenment conceptions of reason and the critically engaged intellectual, and elements of classical liberalism reappeared in new intellectual support for “neo-liberal” ideas. This lecture summarizes these cultural patterns, with specific reference to the German thinker Jürgen Habermas and the Czech writer Václav Havel. It also notes that European intellectual life remained a center of lively debate at the end of the twentieth century.

Outline

I. We are coming to the end of a survey of twentieth-century European intellectual history, but there is no simple way to summarize European thought in the late twentieth century.

A. The fragmentation of European cultural life in the modern era precludes the possibility of final synthesis; there is rarely a closure to historical processes.

B. There were, however, a number of important changes in the late twentieth-century historical context, and this changing context (as always) affected intellectuals.

C. During more than four decades (1947–1989), Europe was deeply affected by the Cold War and the growing influence of the United States in European economic, political, and cultural life.

1. The American economic and cultural influence appeared in fashion, films, television, music, politics, and even universities.

2. European intellectuals often expressed concern about the impact of “Americanization” on Europe’s cultural traditions and social life.

D. At the same time, those traditions seemed to be changing as millions of new immigrants streamed into Europe from Africa, Asia, and the Middle East.

1. A new debate about “multiculturalism” emerged in all the major European nations. How would the languages, religions, and cultural values of non-European peoples be assimilated into European life?

2. Such questions redefined the meaning of European nations; the creation of the European Union was also redefining nation-states.

E. Finally, the end of the Cold War, the collapse of communist regimes in central Europe, and the new global economy all changed the context for intellectual debate in Europe, as in all other parts of the world.

1. Such changes surely contributed to the popularity of postmodernism, the emphasis on fragmented identities, and the decline of Marxism.

2. Marxism seemed an inadequate social theory in this context, as did the national belief in coherent, unique national identities.

3. As we’ve seen, modern capitalist advertising, consumerism, entertainment, and travel all suggested a breakdown of older traditions.

F. Late twentieth-century European intellectual life did not, however, turn entirely to postmodernism. In fact, postmodernist critiques of the autonomous “subject” and liberal definitions of reason provoked new defenses of the Enlightenment.

1. This lecture concludes our survey of twentieth-century thought with a discussion of what might be called the challenges to postmodernism.

2. These challenges include a new affirmation of two key Enlightenment ideas: the critical importance of reason in public life and the critical role of intellectuals in political and cultural debates.

3. These trends can be seen in two representative intellectual figures, the German social theorist Jürgen Habermas and the Czech writer Václav Havel; both of these intellectuals have reaffirmed Enlightenment ideas.

G. Critics have attacked postmodernist thought for promoting an excessive emphasis on the shaping power of language. Habermas and Havel recognize the importance of language, but they argue that language is not just arbitrary.

1. They come back to the Enlightenment belief that language can convey general and even universal truths that can be defended in public life.

2. They also argue (like most Enlightenment intellectuals) that personal freedom requires an engagement with public life and public issues.
II. The challenge to poststructuralism and postmodernism has been particularly notable in Germany; this is perhaps ironic because postmodernist thought in France and elsewhere drew on German thinkers, such as Nietzsche, Husserl, and Heidegger.

A. Many intellectuals in post-Nazi Germany, however, wanted to recover the positive aspects of the Enlightenment and worried about the nonrational themes of Romanticism and anti-Enlightenment thought.

1. A skeptical view of Romanticism was particularly evident in the work of Jürgen Habermas (1929– ). Habermas grew up near Cologne in western Germany; his father directed a local chamber of commerce.

2. Habermas was too young to be in the German army during World War II, but he was much affected by postwar revelations of Nazi atrocities.

3. He studied philosophy and sociology and became affiliated with the reorganized Frankfurt School of critical theory in the 1950s.

4. He spent most of his later career as a professor in Frankfurt but also participated widely in public debates; he wrote often in newspapers.

B. Habermas was disturbed by the failure of German intellectuals and political leaders to come to terms with the Nazi past.

1. He believed that intellectuals in Germany had wrongly turned away from reason and Enlightenment ideals of public debate. (Heidegger was, for Habermas, a prominent example of this error.)

2. Habermas sought to revise aspects of Kantian philosophy, to warn against the dangers of Romanticism; he favored democratic socialism.

C. He developed many of his major themes in his first book, The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere (1962).

1. This book argued that the Enlightenment had created a model for a public sphere in which debates flourished on the basis of reason.

2. He admired the Enlightenment but argued that the Enlightenment ideal of a rational public sphere had declined in the modern world.

D. Habermas argued that intellectuals and everyone else who cared about democratic public life should defend the use of reason and rational criticism.

1. This defense of Enlightenment reason led to his strong critique of such thinkers as Foucault and Derrida, whom he saw as too hostile to the values of reason.

2. He laid out his critique of postmodern theories in The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity (1985) and other works.

3. Habermas argued repeatedly that it was impossible to fight the residue of Nazism or the distortions of radical ethnic, national, and religious movements by using philosophies that challenge rationalism.

4. He said that various forms of "instrumental" reason were dangerous or insufficiently critical, but "communicative" reason offered essential tools for critical judgment, analysis, and debate.

E. He criticized the philosophical legacy of Nietzsche and insisted that postmodernism had abandoned the all-important belief in rational criticism.

1. Habermas resembled Kant in arguing that the critical use of reason could bring about cross-cultural agreements on truth and public actions.

2. His own goal was to develop a democratic public life in which communication could take place without coercion or domination.

3. Arguments would develop through clear speech, and rational debaters would reach agreement on reasonable, just forms of action.

F. Habermas shared the common modern concern with language but rejected the postmodern emphasis on the indeterminacy of linguistic meaning.

G. His critique of postmodernism has been influential in historical studies, philosophy, and political theory; it also promotes Enlightenment ideas about the public role of intellectual work.

III. Habermas defended aspects of the Marxist intellectual tradition in his work on the flaws of the modern "public sphere." Other intellectuals shared his sympathy for the Enlightenment but moved much further away from Marxist ideas.

A. This other pattern of the non-Marxist public intellectual can be seen in the life and career of Václav Havel (1936– ).

1. Havel was born in Prague; his father was an architect and building contractor. Young Václav grew up during the Nazi occupation and was later excluded from a university education during the communist era.

2. His family was deemed too bourgeois, so Havel made his own way on the margins of Czech cultural and intellectual life.

3. He became a writer and, by the early 1960s, was producing absurdist plays for theaters in Prague.

B. Havel became much more concerned with political issues after the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968.

1. He wrote a series of dissenting political commentaries, including a famous essay called "The Power of the Powerless" (1978).

2. He also became a founding leader of a human rights group called Charter 77, which demanded protection for democratic civil rights.
3. In his writings, Havel argued that the people could reshape public life, even if they appeared to be “powerless” under dictatorial regimes.

C. Havel argued that “people power” could, in effect, overcome the dead hand of authoritarianism. Intellectuals had a crucial role to play in this process. Havel was arrested and imprisoned for his writings; he spent four years in prison (1979–1983) but did not turn away from his ideas.

D. When the nonviolent, “velvet revolution” overthrew the communist regime in Czechoslovakia (1989), it seemed that Havel’s ideas had been confirmed. He was, in fact, chosen to be president of the new Czech government and went on to a prominent, sometimes controversial political career.

IV. Did European thought at the end of the twentieth century come back to the point where modern intellectual life began: the rationalist themes of the Enlightenment?

A. Many intellectuals clearly expressed a renewed appreciation for classical Enlightenment beliefs in tolerance, reason, and human rights. The horrors of twentieth-century history pushed many writers to reaffirm the important eighteenth-century roots of modern cultural life.

B. These same events also made it impossible to return to any simple faith in the absolute virtues of science, rationality, progress, or technology.

C. Yet the dialogue with the Enlightenment will surely continue, and modern European art, literature, social theory, philosophy, and intellectuals will continue to influence people around the world.

Essential Reading:
Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, pp. 1–88, 141–180.

Supplementary Reading:
Craig Calhoun, “Introduction: Habermas and the Public Sphere,” and Jürgen Habermas, “Further Reflections on the Public Sphere,” both in Calhoun, editor, *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, pp. 1–42, 421–457.

Questions to Consider:
1. Does the “public sphere” in contemporary democratic nations consist of rational public debate or manipulation by powerful private interests?
2. Are the ideas of the European Enlightenment the best foundation for cultural and political life in an age of multicultural and global exchanges?

Glossary

Abstract expressionism: A form of early twentieth-century art that used color rather than recognizable forms to convey personal visions of the artist. Wassily Kandinsky and others argued that the colors of nonrepresentational art could express spiritual and emotional truths.

Analytical psychology: The term used by Carl Jung to separate his psychological work from the psychoanalytical theories of Sigmund Freud. Breaking with Freud’s emphasis on sexual drives and the Freudian views of religion, Jung stressed the importance of adult experiences and a “collective unconscious.”

Annales historians: A group of French historians associated with the journal *Annales d’histoire économique et sociale* (founded in 1929). Under the early leadership of Lucien Febvre and Marc Bloch, the Annales historians emphasized long-term social processes, collective mentalities, and deep structures rather than political events or individuals.

Anomie: The sociological term that Emile Durkheim used to describe the modern urban social experience in which persons feel disconnected from social communities or any sense of shared social values (in contrast to the integrated social life of small villages).

Bloomsbury circle: The writers, artists, and intellectuals who congregated in the London neighborhood of Bloomsbury during the 1920s. They shared a commitment to modern cultural and literary innovations, thus forming a “circle” that included prominent English authors, such as Virginia Woolf and John Maynard Keynes.

Bohemian culture: An imprecise term that refers to unconventional artists, writers, café performers, and others who lived in modern cities but criticized the orderly, routine life of modern workers and bourgeois professionals. Bohemian culture tended to mock respectable behaviors, yet its art and writing could also fascinate the people it criticized.

Bolsheviks: The communists who took power in the Russian Revolution of 1917. They followed Vladimir Lenin in advocating a centralized communist party, state control of the economy, a single-party government, and international opposition to capitalism.

Cubism: An influential approach to art that emerged in early twentieth-century Paris among such painters as Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque. The Cubists portrayed objects or people from multiple perspectives that revealed geometric shapes and relations rather than literal images—thus emphasizing subjective visions over objective truth.
Cultural hegemony: The Italian Marxist theorist Antonio Gramsci developed this term to describe the process by which dominant social groups control the education, media, and leading ideas of a society. According to this theory, "hegemonic" cultural power becomes as important as economic power in sustaining the position of ruling groups.

Cultural pessimism: A widespread intellectual response to twentieth-century events, such as the two world wars, economic crises, and political upheavals, all of which led many writers and artists to believe that European civilization was in decline and that the earlier confidence in human progress was naïve.

Culture industry: This "industry" consists of the institutions that produce and sell cultural products in modern societies, including publishing houses, newspapers, advertising media, theaters, art galleries, film studios, and even universities. Artists and intellectuals depend on the culture industry rather than the patronage system of older aristocratic societies to support themselves in modern cities.

Dadaism: A radical avant-garde movement that developed in Switzerland and France at the end of World War I. It claimed that Western civilization had lost all rational meaning and that absurd, nonsense literature and art were the only appropriate cultural responses to modern European society.

Empiricism: The philosophical and scientific approach to knowledge that stresses the crucial importance of observable evidence and argues that all reliable truths are based on the collection, analysis, or measurement of such evidence.

Enlightenment: An intellectual and cultural movement in eighteenth-century Europe led by writers called philosophes. The main themes of Enlightenment thought included optimistic beliefs in reason, science, natural laws, or natural rights; religious tolerance; the free exchange of ideas; 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 "How do we know what we know?" This question appears implicitly or explicitly in most intellectual debates (and defies simple answers).

Existentialism: The philosophical movement associated with Jean-Paul Sartre and other twentieth-century thinkers who argued that human life has no inherent meaning or essence (except consciousness), that human beings are free to act as they choose, and that the meaning of each individual's "existence" is defined by his or her actions in the world.

Fascism: A right-wing political philosophy that rejects democratic political processes, celebrates the authoritarianism of a powerful leader or political party, praises a mythic national past, represses free speech, endorses violence or warfare as essential expressions of national life, and promotes economic or social hierarchies rather than personal freedom or equality.

Fauves: The term meaning "wild beasts" that critics used to describe early twentieth-century Parisian artists who juxtaposed colors and shapes in unconventional images to represent the personal vision of the painter and the fluidity of human movement. Henri Matisse became the most well known member of the Fauves.

Feminism: The political, social, and cultural movement that challenges traditional male privileges, advocates equal legal and political rights for women, and attempts to improve the position of women in education, family relationships, and economic life.

Frankfurt School: Revisionist Marxist social theorists who attempted to link Marx's ideas with other theorists, such as Hegel and Freud. They were affiliated with the "Frankfurt Institute of Social Research" in Germany during the 1920s and early 1930s, but they all went into exile after the Nazis gained power in 1933.

Heisenberg "Uncertainty Principle": The German scientist Werner Heisenberg showed in 1927 that it was impossible to know both the position and speed of an electron at the same time, thus pointing to the limits of scientific knowledge.

Historical sociology: A method of studying society that examines historical patterns and long-developing social values to explain modern social institutions or values. Max Weber and other Germans led the way in developing this sociological method.

Holocaust: The term now used to describe the Nazis' systematic genocidal murder of approximately 6 million Jews and other "non-Aryan" people during the Second World War. Many of these people died in specially constructed death camps, such as Auschwitz.

"Ideal Type": A sociological concept that Max Weber used to designate the traits of persons who shared certain recognizable values (e.g., a typical "capitalist" or "bureaucrat"), even though no single person would embody all these characteristics.

Imperialism: The political, military, economic, and cultural process by which European nations gained control over people in other regions of the world. All major European nations pursued imperialist policies in Africa and Asia during the early twentieth century, thereby spreading European institutions and ideas but also provoking anti-imperialist movements that later challenged and displaced the European ascendency.

Impressionism: The influential artistic movement in late nineteenth-century France that sought to convey the painter's own vision of people or landscapes or the subtle shadings of light. Artists such as Claude Monet turned away from
literal images of reality and used new brushwork and colors to depict their distinctive impressions of what they painted.

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

**Intellectual history:** A branch of historical studies that examines systematic statements of human ideas and 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 intellectual themes of popular culture or daily life.

**Intuitionism:** The philosophical theory of Henri Bergson and others who argued that science alone cannot provide a complete understanding of the fluid realities of personal experience or time. Such realities must be approached through an “intellectual sympathy” or intuition that exists in the human mind.

**Involuntary memory:** The experience that Marcel Proust described when he wrote about the ways in which an encounter with a specific smell, taste, sight, or person can provoke a sudden, unexpected remembrance of past experiences or people.

**Liberalism:** A nineteenth-century political theory that stressed individual rights, constitutional government, rational legal reforms, religious tolerance, and a free-market economy. Liberals generally favored institutional reforms to protect or enhance equal civil rights and personal freedom—themes that reappeared in twentieth-century European “neo-liberalism.”

**Logical positivism:** The twentieth-century philosophical movement (centered in England) that attempted to make philosophy more scientific by ignoring metaphysical or ethical questions and focusing instead on the rigorous clarification of language and empirically verifiable truths.

**Medieval synthesis:** A term used to describe the thirteenth-century theological fusion of Aristotle’s conception of reason with the Christian theological belief in divine revelation. This synthesis argued that there was no conflict between faith and reason.

**Metaphysics:** The philosophical term used to describe the study of realities or ideas that go beyond the physical world. The metaphysical tradition, which emerged in ancient Greek philosophy, seeks to show the higher meaning of material existence or being.

**Modernism:** A movement in early twentieth-century literature and art that emphasized the inner vision of individual writers or artists; challenged older Enlightenment-era beliefs in a stable, objective external world; experimented with nonlinear narratives or artistic representations; and explored multiple perspectives on time and thought.

**Naturalism:** A late nineteenth-century approach to literature that depicted the hard realities of life (e.g., poverty, disease, corruption, bad marriages) through an almost scientific emphasis on the biological heredities and social environments that shaped human actions.

**Newtonian science:** The late seventeenth-century scientific theories of Isaac Newton that explained the universal law of gravitation and led to confident modern European beliefs in scientific knowledge, universal truths, and human progress.

**Oedipus complex:** Sigmund Freud’s term for what he described as a psychological triangle in which sons yearn to displace their fathers and love their mothers. Freud used this theory to explain the origin of general social taboos (e.g., the incest taboo), as well as the unconscious tensions in families.

**Ontology:** A philosophical term that refers to the nature or theory of “being.” Such beliefs in a reality or grounding that underlies human existence and thought are often not made explicit in language and daily life, but they shape our understanding of the world.

**Phenomenology:** The twentieth-century philosophical “school” that emphasized the complex relation between human consciousness and objects, phenomena, or experiences in the world. It is the interaction of consciousness and the world around it that creates meaning and human understanding (which are not intrinsic in the world itself).

**Positivism:** An intellectual movement that developed in nineteenth-century France and spread across modern Europe. Positivism viewed science as the only “positive” form of knowledge and as the stable foundation for human progress.

**Postmodernism:** A late twentieth-century view of the contemporary world that stresses the fragmentation of social and political life, the relativism or cultural contingency of truth, the multiplicity rather than the unity of human identities and cultures, and the flaws of universal social theories. Postmodernism influenced both the arts and cultural studies.

**Poststructuralism:** A critical approach to literature, philosophy, and the social sciences that stresses the powerful role of language or discourse in the construction of cultural truths and questions concepts of “unity” in Western thought.

**Psychoanalysis:** The psychological theory and clinical practice that emphasizes the decisive importance of the unconscious mind and drives in all forms of human activity and conflict. Emerging primarily in the works of Sigmund Freud, psychoanalysis widely influenced twentieth-century views of human identities, relationships, and creativity.
Realism: A mid-nineteenth-century cultural trend that rejected the sentimentality of Romantic literature and the arts. It sought to portray life as it is rather than life as it should be, and its critique of the greed and clichés in modern social life continued to influence modern literature.

Relativism: The belief that truth can never be absolute or universal, because all human knowledge emerges in specific cultures, languages, and historical contexts that shape its meaning.

Relativity: The scientific theory that explains why time and space are relative to an observer's position and movement in space. Albert Einstein developed this theory, which stressed that there is no fixed reference point for the study of motion, changed Newtonian physics, and contributed to new cultural beliefs in the relativity of all knowledge.

Romanticism: An influential movement in the arts and philosophy (developing between 1780–1840) that challenged Enlightenment beliefs in reason and science. Romanticism praised human feelings, the mysteries of nature, and the unique creativity of artists, thus contributing to modern beliefs in art as a source of personal or cultural salvation.

Stalinism: The dictatorial form of communist rule that Joseph Stalin (1879–1953) used to control the Soviet Union from the late 1920s until his death. More generally, the term refers to any highly authoritarian or rigid form of communist thought or party.

Stream of consciousness: A literary innovation in the early twentieth-century novels of James Joyce and others, who tried to convey the different thoughts, memories, and anxieties that flow almost unconnectedly through the human mind during even the briefest periods of time.

Structural linguistics: An approach to human language that was developed by the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure in the early twentieth century. It examines the grammatical systems that enable speakers to make meaningful statements, and it stresses that infinitely diverse, specific sentences always rely on the same underlying structures.

Structuralism: An influential theory in post-World War II social sciences and literary studies. It drew on structural linguistics to describe human cultures as systems of deep structures that organize human relationships, shape the limits of human thought or action, and create social meaning through binary oppositions.

Surrealism: The literary and artistic movement that emphasized the often disjointed images of dreams, mental "free associations," and automatic writing.

Symbolism: A late nineteenth-century literary movement that explored the complex symbols in cultures, languages, literatures, and human minds.

Weltanschaung: The German word that refers to the distinctive consciousness of a historical era or culture.

Works by Influential Figures in Modern European Thought


Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *Writings*. Selected and with an introduction by Robert Coles. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1998. This concise collection brings together Bonhoeffer's commentaries on Christian ethical commitments and the nature of evil with some of the letters he wrote from prison before he was executed by the Nazis in 1945.


European “dictator” (the general problem of human evil?), as well as the exploitative policies of a European trading company.


Durkheim, Émile. *Emile Durkheim: Selected Writings*. Edited, translated, and introduced by Anthony Giddens. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972. A valuable collection of excerpts from Durkheim’s sociological work on social relations, anomie, and religious rituals in various cultural contexts; these writings helped to shape the themes and methods of twentieth-century sociology.


Habermas, Jürgen. *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*. Translated by Thomas Burger, with the assistance of Frederick Lawrence. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989. This historical study describes the emergence and decline of an Enlightenment-era public sphere (based on reason and free debate). The Enlightenment provided a partial model for the rational democratic political and cultural systems that Habermas promoted in late twentieth-century Europe.


Hayek, Friedrich A. *The Road to Serfdom*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1944. This influential book became Hayek’s most well known account of his views on the political dangers of government economic planning and the value of classic liberal conceptions of individual rights and the free market.


Ibsen, Henrik. *A Doll’s House*. Translated by R. Rarquharson Sharp and Eleanor Marx-Aveling, revised by Torgrim and Linda Hannas. London and Rutland, VT: J. M. Dent and Charles E. Tuttle, 1993 (volume in the Everyman Library). This play is Ibsen’s famous depiction of a woman’s struggle to define her own identity, resist social expectations, and declare her personal independence from conventional social roles.


Levi, Primo. *Survival in Auschwitz: The Nazi Assault on Humanity.* Translated by Stuart Woolf. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996. This moving memoir by one of the rare survivors of the Nazi death camp at Auschwitz is a remarkable description of how the Holocaust was organized and how people responded to the brutal, dehumanizing conditions in which they were confined.

Lévi-Strauss, Claude. *Tristes Tropiques.* Translated by John and Doreen Weightman. New York: Washington Square Press, 1977. Lévi-Strauss often wrote technical anthropological works, but this popular book on his travels in Brazil combined the style of a personal memoir with the research notes of an ethnographer to make his themes accessible to a general audience outside the university.


*Matisse on Art.* Edited by Jack Flam. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995. This collection, which includes the essay “Notes of a Painter,” brings together Matisse’s reflections on painting and art from all periods of his long artistic career.


Orwell, George. 1984. New York: New American Library, 1983. This fictional portrayal of totalitarian political parties, governments, and language usage (e.g., “War Is Peace”) reflected Orwell’s political concerns as he wrote about the dangers of totalitarianism after World War II (when he was most concerned about communist regimes).


Rimbaud, Arthur. *Complete Works, Selected Letters.* Edited and translated by Wallace Fowlie. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966. This translation of Rimbaud’s poetry and prose by a distinguished American expert on French literature has long been the best English edition of the poet’s complex works; it includes Rimbaud’s famous letters on poetic vision.


Villiers de l’Isle-Adam, Jean Marie Mathias. *Axel.* Translated by Marilyn Gadders Rose. Dublin: Dolmen Press, 1970. This translation conveys the mysterious mood and themes of a strange play that expressed symbolist disenchantment with the material realities of modern social life.

Weber, Max. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism.* Translated by Talcott Parsons, introduction by Anthony Giddens. London: Counterpoint, 1985. This study of the relation between religious values and the transition to modernity became one of the most influential examples of Weber’s historical sociology, and (despite numerous critiques of its thesis) it is still an intriguing, provocative book.


———. *To the Lighthouse.* Foreword by Eudora Welty. San Diego and New York: Harcourt Brace Janovich, 1981. This remarkable novel explores the nature of human relationships, the meaning of time, the struggle to create, and the complex flow of thought in the human mind.

**Supplementary Reading**


Calhoun, Craig, ed. *Habermas and the Public Sphere.* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992. This collection of essays includes diverse commentaries on Habermas's conception of the modern European public sphere and concludes with his own reflections on the theories and history of the Enlightenment that he originally proposed in 1962.


Ellmann, Richard. *James Joyce.* Revised edition. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982. This comprehensive study by the leading twentieth-century expert on Joyce's life and writing is both informative and a pleasure to read.

Eribon, Didier. *Michel Foucault.* Translated by Betsy Wing. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991. One of the numerous studies of Foucault to appear in the decade after his death, Eribon's biographical account is balanced, knowledgeable, and a good introduction to Foucault's evolving intellectual concerns.


Fussell, Paul. *The Great War and Modern Memory.* Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2000. This is a fascinating study of how English soldiers entered World War I with certain literary expectations about the noble meaning of war, then responded to the horrors of trench warfare in ironic poems or memoirs that expressed the pervasive ironic sensibility of modern European culture.


Ringer, Fritz K. *The Decline of the German Mandarins: The German Academic Community, 1890–1933*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969. This older work of intellectual history remains one of the best accounts of the elite academic culture in early twentieth-century Germany, with particular attention to the ways in which professors responded to challenges to their cultural position.


Winders, James A. *European Culture since 1848: From Modern to Postmodern and Beyond*. New York: Palgrave, 2001. This survey of modern European culture provides an excellent overview of general trends and specific intellectuals, including a helpful account of both the faith in science and the modern critiques of scientific thought.