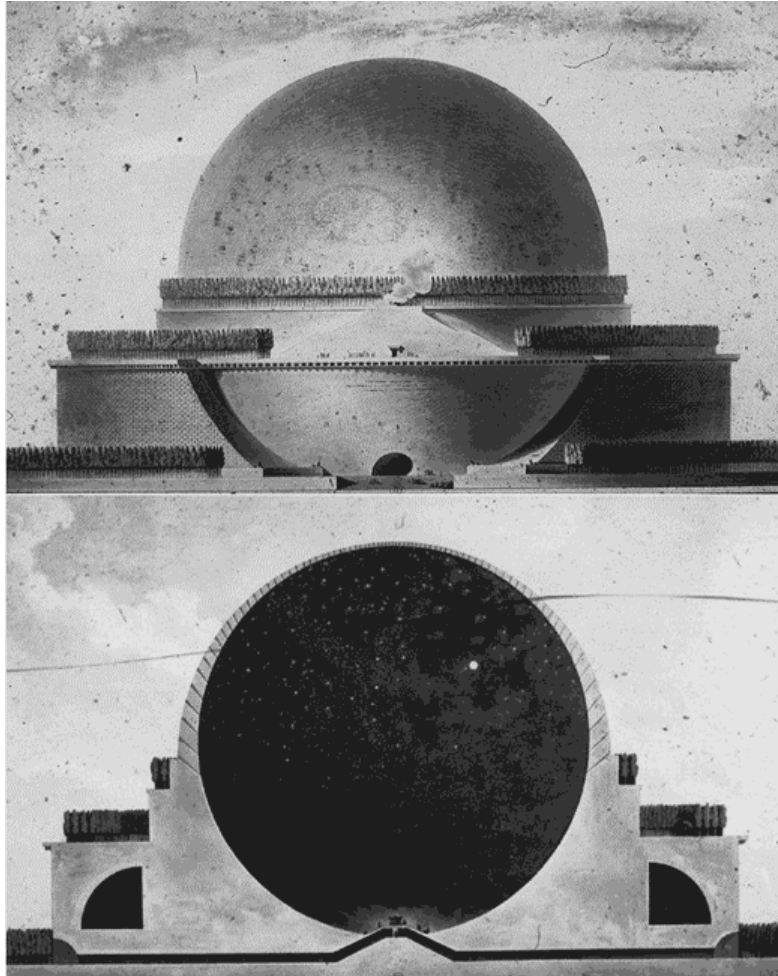


□ A **Syllabus** for □
a course on
the
FOUNDATIONS OF THE WEST
IHST 208-IH101



Etienne-Louis Boullée, Diagram of Isaac Newton's Cenotaph

held at the Maryland Institute College of Art in
BALTIMORE, MARYLAND
in the Autumn of 2008

taught by DR. MICHAEL SIZER

on Wednesdays, 7:00-9:45 PM
in Bunting 480

Instructor Data

Office: Bunting 413
Phone (home): 202-667-5409

Office Hours: T 11:45-12:45; T 2-3
Email: msizer@mica.edu

Course Objectives

This course will introduce students to some of the intellectual trends and documents that were key to the construction of the concept of the modern West, starting from the Middle Ages to the period just before the First World War. The goal of this inquiry will be to **create historically-grounded definitions for the West and for Modernity** that will be continually revised as the semester goes on and as our critical tools and knowledge of the historical background are improved. While the emphasis will be on primary sources and methods of reading them critically, the arguments and theories of current scholars analyzing the period will also be discussed.

An underlying argument of the class is that **the creation of the West - and its twin concept Modernity - was a claim more than a concrete evolutionary historical process**, and our investigation of texts will be organized around the interrogation of how this claim was made in various ways by various historical actors. In short, we will be **deconstructing modernity**. While this inevitably (and intentionally) results in a **critique** of the West and the Modern, at the same time we will be reading texts and making arguments that entail a certain **celebration** of these concepts as well, and in the end it is quite possible that you may embrace the intellectual heritage of the West even as you acknowledge its historically contingent nature.

Course Organization

The course is divided into three thematic sections, rather than merely organized chronologically. In this small way, the class is structured to run counter to the ideology of the modern, which claims that history operates in an evolution from simplicity to complexity as time progresses, as instead we will be moving forward and then back in history. The thematic divisions are somewhat arbitrary - as we will see the categories are in fact inseparable and even awkward - but the hope is that this organizational schema allows for a concentrated look at specific major issues in relative isolation and will hopefully de-clutter the dense history of the period under study.

The themes are: 1) Intellectual Thought, in which we will discuss the Scientific Revolution, Enlightenment, and later trends; 2) From Community to Society, which concerns political and social organization; and 3) The West and the Rest, in which we will discuss how the encounters between the “civilized” West and those regions deemed outside that world were fundamental in the creation of the Western identity.

By the end of the class we will all be experts on the discussion (even if we do not have answers!) The course will culminate in a last class in which people present the conclusions of their final paper after which we have a great final debate on the merits of the concept of modernity/the West, and what is precious about the idea and what is dangerous about it. We will ask what reading over the semester is best at helping us arrive at the question. We will also wonder whether we live in an era that operates according to the claims of modernity, or whether we have moved to a new (postmodern) consciousness. Is this a good or a bad thing? Do we need a Modernity Revival?

Course Format, Grading and Assignments

This course will emphasize class and small group discussion. Your participation will be evaluated not only based on the quality of your comments in open discussion, but also on alertness, energy, and preparedness. Various organized activities will also provide an opportunity to participate in class ways other than in large- or small-group discussion. **Class participation is crucial to this course, constituting 30% of your grade.**

The **readings** are vital, as they will form the basis of our discussions and activities. There will be about 50-100 pages of reading per week. It is important not only that you do the readings thoroughly, but that you **bring them with you to class** to use as a basis for discussion. **Failure to do so will result in a grade of 'F' for your class participation for that day.**

There will be **2-3 pop quizzes** during the semester to evaluate reading comprehension. **They are worth 10% of your grade.**

There will be a **short paper** (2-3 pages) due in Week 7 of the semester, **This short paper represents 20% of your grade.**

The **final paper assignment** (6-9 pages), due on the final day of class, will be to **discuss the modern using a specific rite or object from Western civilization of your choosing.** You may select a consumer object, a food, an art piece, a short piece of writing or literature, a place, a social activity... anything that strikes you as suitable for a meaty discussion of some of the issues you have confronted this semester. **Topic choices must be made by week 9 at the latest,** and must be cleared with the instructor. Your paper should discuss how the object or rite you have chosen embodies and does not embody the modern, and should lay out a detailed argument why, citing some of the ideas we have encountered over the course of the semester, as well as a small amount of outside research. The paper will be graded according to creativity, expression, argument, use of class material, and research. This paper project will be explained in more detail later in the semester. **This final project represents 30% of your final grade.**

The **last class meeting** will be a culmination of the semester-long investigation of the meaning of the West and the Modern. In the refined manner of an **Enlightenment Salon**, we will have a discussion on the pros and cons of modernity, with each student discussing briefly the conclusions derived from his paper. This constitutes a special class meeting, evaluated separately from others, and student participation is expected to be vigorous. **This last meeting represents 10% of your course grade.**

Late Assignment Policy

Computer submissions of paper assignments are not allowed. The first (short) paper will be marked down a grade for each day late (A to A-, B- to C+, etc.) The final paper will not be accepted late - **NO EXCEPTIONS!**

Attendance Policy

There are only 15 meetings in the semester and so we have to make the most of them. Any unexcused absence beyond 1 will result in a decrease of two grades from class participation (A to B+, B- to C, etc.). 2 late arrivals (> 10 minutes) equals 1 absence.

ADA Compliance Statement

In order to provide the highest quality educational experience for every student, MICA is committed to compliance with the ADA and Section 504. Any student who has (or suspects he or she may have) a physical, cognitive, or psychological disability and who wants to request accommodations must immediately schedule an appointment to meet with the Director of the Learning Resource Center, Dr. Kathryn Smith, by calling the LRC at 410-225-2416. The LRC is MICA's designated department for determining reasonable accommodations based on legal requirements and will provide the eligible student with an official Accommodation Verification letter to the instructor. Each semester the student must formally request accommodations from the LRC each semester, and format of the Verification letters change each semester to ensure currency. NOTE: Students with disabilities who want assistance during emergency evacuations must register with the LRC within the first week of each semester.

Health and Safety Compliance

MICA has developed policies and practices to ensure a healthful environment and safe approaches to the use of equipment, materials, and processes. It is the mutual responsibility of faculty and students to review health and safety standards relevant to each class at the beginning of each semester. Students should be aware of general fire, health, and safety regulations posted in each area and course specific policies, practices, and cautions. Students who have concerns related to health and safety should contact the Environmental Health and Safety Coordinator. The Environmental Health and Safety Coordinator, Quentin Moseley, may be reached at 410-462-7593 by email at qmoseley@mica.edu

Readings

- Stephen Toulmin, *Cosmopolis: the Hidden Agenda of Modernity* (University of Chicago Press, 1990).
- Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness and the Congo Diary* (Penguin, 2007).
- Supplementary texts on Blackboard class site, online, or handed out in class.

Course Schedule (Topics and Assignments) - Subject to change if necessary.

Assignments are listed the day they are due, not the day they are assigned.

Week 1 - 9/3: Introduction to course

- Introduction to course syllabus, and each other. What is the West? Where is Europe?

PART 1: INTELLECTUAL THOUGHT

Week 2 - 9/10: The History of Western Civ in American Universities; Medieval Science and Attitudes towards Nature

Readings (approx. 70 pp.):

- 2 short readings on Western Civ. in America: William O. Swinton, "Outlines of General History" (1874) and Lawrence Levine, "Looking Eastward: the Career of Western Civ" (on Blackboard site)
- David Christian, *Maps of Time* (excerpt on Modernity & technology - on Blackboard)
- Peter Abelard, *Sic et Non* (excerpt):
<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/1120abelard.html>
- M.-D. Chenu, *Nature, Man, and Society in the 12th Century* (excerpt - on Blackboard site)
- Alan de Lille, *Plaint of Nature* (short excerpts - on Blackboard site)

Week 3 - 9/17: The Scientific Revolution and Modernity

Readings (approx. 140 pp.):

- Stephen Toulmin, *Cosmopolis*, pp. 1-137.
- René Descartes, *Discourse on Method* (excerpts):
http://www.wsu.edu:8080/~wldciv/world_civ_reader/world_civ_reader_2/descartes.html

Week 4 - 9/24: Scientific Revolution and Modernity, cont.

Readings (approx. 100 pp.)

- Stephen Toulmin, *Cosmopolis*, pp. 138-end.
- Michel de Montaigne, *Essays*: "Our feelings reach out beyond us", and "On Moderation" (on Blackboard).
- Immanuel Kant, *What is Enlightenment?*: <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/kant-what.html>

Week 5 - 10/1: Darwin and his Followers

Readings (approx. 20 pp.):

- Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man* (excerpt):
<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1871darwin.html>
- Thomas Henry Huxley, *The Struggle for Existence* (excerpt):
<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1888thhuxley-struggle.html>
- Daniel Mason, "The Ecstasy of Alfred Russel Wallace" (a short story taken from the March 2008 issue of *Harper's*, on Blackboard).
- Students will be divided into 5 groups, with separate reading for each group:
 1. Creationism and the Creation Museum
... go to Creation Museum website: www.creationmuseum.org and also look at 1 of the

following:

- Pictures of museum: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/scalzi/sets/72157603091357751/>

- Reviews of museum:

http://www.nytimes.com/2007/05/24/arts/24crea.html?_r=1&oref=slogin

- Scientists' statement on creationism:
<http://www.interacademies.net/Object.File/Master/6/150/Evolution%20statement.pdf>

- Article on Kansas school board's decision to require creationist teaching:
<http://www.nytimes.com/2005/11/09/national/09kansas.html>

- Creationist pamphlet approved by Parks Service for distribution at Grand Canyon:
<http://www.harpers.org/archive/2004/04/0079987>

2. 1925 Scopes Monkey Trial

... Read the wiki site for background, and read HL Mencken's articles on it:

- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scopes_trial

- <http://www.positiveatheism.org/hist/menck04.htm> and you may also consult the following:

- Transcripts of opposing lawyers' statements: <http://www.csudh.edu/oliver/smt310-handouts/wjb-last/wjb-last.htm>

<http://personal.uncc.edu/jmarks/Darrow.html>

- Popular songs from the 1920's about the trial:

http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/monkeytrial/sfeature/sf_music.html#

3. Social Darwinism

Week 6 - 10/8: Scientific Thought and God

Readings (approx. 25 pp.):

- Friedrich Nietzsche, "Madman Parable":
<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/nietzsche-madman.html>
- David Berlinski, *The Devil's Delusion: Atheism and its Scientific Pretensions* (excerpt - taken from April 2008 issue of *Harper's*, on Blackboard).
- Werner Heisenberg, *Physics and Philosophy* (excerpt on Blackboard).
- Margaret Wertheim, "The Medieval Return of Cyberspace" (on Blackboard)

PART 2: FROM COMMUNITY TO SOCIETY

Week 7 - 10/15: The Suppression of Local Communities and Culture

Readings (approx. 25 pp.):

- Short excerpt from Ferdinand Tönnies, *Community and Civil Society* (on Blackboard)
- Excerpt from Robert Muchembled, *Popular Culture and Elite Culture in France, 1400-1750* (on Blackboard site)
- Jacques LeGoff, "Labor Time and the 'Crisis' of the Fourteenth Century: from Medieval to Modern Time" (on Blackboard site)

***** ASSIGNMENT: FIRST PAPER DUE IN CLASS TODAY *****

Week 8 - 10/22: Medieval Persecution and Community

Readings (approx. 50 pp.):

- John of Salisbury, excerpts from *Policraticus*

<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/salisbury-poli6-24.html>

- R.I. Moore, excerpt from *The Formation of a Persecuting Society* (on Blackboard site)
- Excerpts from Pamiers Inquisition - read Bernard Gui Inquisitor techniques:
<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/heresy2.html>

... and then go to this website <http://www.sjsu.edu/depts/english/Fournier/jfournhm.htm>

... and read the short intro and 1 of the following villagers' Inquisition transcripts:

1. testimony of Agnes Francou
2. testimony of Arnaud Gélis
3. testimony of Baruch
4. testimony of Grazide Lizier

Week 9 - 10/29: Society Domesticated

Readings (approx. 100 pp.):

- Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process* (excerpts - on Blackboard site).
- Hobbes, *Leviathan* (excerpts): <http://www.thenagain.info/Classes/Sources/Hobbes.html>
- Thomas More, *Utopia* (excerpts - on Blackboard site).

**** ASSIGNMENT: FINAL PAPER TOPIC DUE IN CLASS TODAY ****

Week 10 - 11/5: Enlightenment and Revolution

Readings (approx. 75 pp.):

- Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract* (excerpts):
<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/Rousseau-soccon.html>
- Lynn Hunt, *Inventing Human Rights: a History* (excerpt - on Blackboard site)
- Abbé Sieyès, *What is the 3rd Estate?* (excerpts):
<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/sieyes.html>
- Olympe de Gouges, *Declaration of the Rights of Women* (excerpts):
<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1791degouge1.html>
- Maximilien Robespierre, *Justification for the Reign of Terror*:
<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/robspierre-terror.html>

Week 11 - 11/12: Critiques of Enlightenment Political Society and Ideology

Readings (approx. 60 pp.):

- Karl Marx & Friedrich Engels, *Communist Manifesto* (any version is fine):
<http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1848/communist-manifesto/index.htm>
- Theodor Adorno & Max Horkheimer, *The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception*: <http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/adorno/1944/culture-industry.htm>

PART 3: THE WEST AND THE REST

Week 12 - 11/19: Early Colonialism

Readings (approx. 65 pages):

- Jean de Lery, *History of a Voyage to the Land of Brazil* (excerpts - on Blackboard).
- Testimony from Investigation of Christopher Columbus (1500) (from April 2007 edition of *Harper's* magazine - on Blackboard).

- “The Reception of the First English Ambassador to China (1792)”: <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1792macartney.html>
- Anthony Pagden, “The Immobility of China: Orientalism and Occidentalism in the Enlightenment” from *The Anthropology of the Enlightenment* (Stanford, 2007) (on Blackboard).

*** THANKSGIVING BREAK - No class 11/26 ***

Week 13 - 12/3: Heart of Darkness

Readings (approx. 100 pp.):

- Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*
- Listen to some Imperialist British Songs: <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/rulebritannia.html>

Week 14 - 12/10: Critiques/Defenses of Imperialism

Readings (approx. 30 pp.):

- Vladimir Lenin, *Imperialism* (short excerpts - on Blackboard)
- “The Little-read Book”: a very short humorous piece concerning Lenin’s *Imperialism* from *Harper’s Magazine* January 2008
- Rudyard Kipling, “White Man’s Burden”: <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/Kipling.html>
- Roger Sandall, “Why Cultures Succeed or Fail” from *Culture Cult* (on Blackboard)

Week 15 - 12/17: Closing Salon/Debate: the Meaning and Merits of Modernity

*** FINAL PAPERS DUE IN CLASS TODAY ***