Professor Ronald K. Richardson  
School of Theology 618  
MT 4-5:30  
rrichard@bu.edu  
617 353 2796

HI514  
The Enlightenment and Its Critics

This course explores the intellectual heritage of the Enlightenment in Europe and America. Our temporal focus is on the 20th and 21 centuries. Our substantive focus is on theoretical formulations critical of central Enlightenment assumptions about self and nature and attempts to reformulate the Enlightenment’s ‘concept’ of universalism to address some of the racial, cultural and ‘philosophical’ limitations of that notion. More specifically, we will be concerned with emergent notions of self (including human nature and mind), world and cosmos. All three categories are to be understood as carrying ontological implications of the utmost importance for the future of humanity.

Requirements

I envision this course as a laboratory of ideas. We shall regard ourselves as working towards deeper understandings of self, world and cosmos that are relevant to the welfare of the several and unified worlds in which we live. The principle requirement for this course is that you carefully read and critically engage with assigned texts, your colleagues in the colloquium and the ideas that we shall produce. I take our work very seriously. I regard it as of the utmost importance to the practical work we will undertake in ‘the wider-world.’ I expect each of you to take the work seriously as well. Therefore, I expect that you will come to class prepared to actively engage in discussion of the texts and issues under review for each class session. I am interested in encouraging you-no, us-to push beyond the bounds of our current ways of thinking and feeling and to imagine new ways of seeing the world and being human. To facilitate your work it may be helpful for you to keep a journal of your reading notes that can serve as a basis for your class participation.
Each student will make a ten to fifteen minute oral presentation during the course of the semester on one of the assigned readings.

In addition each of you will prepare a fifteen to twenty page paper that critically evaluates the work of one of the thinkers studied in this course. The paper will be due in class on the last class session for this course (April 30, 2012).

Grading

Your grade will be calculated as follows:

Class Participation (including your oral presentation): 50%.

Final Paper: 50%.

Required Texts

The following texts are required for this course. You can obtain them from the university bookstore. You may be able to find them online at a cheaper price.

Max Horkheimer and Theodore Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*.


Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*.

Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*.


Jurgen Habermas, *Moral Consciousness And Communicative Action*.

Antonio Damasio, *Descartes' Error. Emotion, Reason, And The Human Brain*.


Session I. Orientation: Course goals and approaches. “The Rise of the Modern World” from the inside out and from the outside in.

Session II. Enlightenment Universalism: ‘World’, ‘Self’ morality?
   Reading: Kant, Critique of Practical Reason.

Session III. The Bridge Over the Abyss.
   Reading: Thus Spoke Zarathustra. Part One

Session IV. The Bridge Over the Abyss
   Reading: Thus Spoke Zarathustra. Complete the book.

Session V. The Limitations of rationality pure or otherwise.
   Readings: Dialectic of Enlightenment, to page 93.
   Hugo Darodius, Parts One and Two.

Session VI. Race Community and Being (there, here and everywhere).
   Reading: Hugo Darodius, Part Three.

Session VII. Race And Modernity.
   Reading: Dialectic of Enlightenment, p.94-214.

Session VIII. New Model Cosmoses.
   Reading: Greene, The Hidden Reality.

Session IX. New Model Selves.
   Readings: Damasio, Descartes’ Error.

Session X. New Model Selves.
   Reading: Hauser, Moral Minds (Chapters to be assigned).
Session XI. New Model Community
   Reading: *Hugo Darodius*, Parts Four and Five.

Session XII. New Model Community.
   Reading: Habermas, *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action* (Chapters to be assigned).

Session XIII. The Future of the Species.
   Reading: Brooks, *Flesh and Machines*.

Session XIV. The Future of the Species.
   Reading: Habermas, *The Future of Human Nature*. 