

The German Philosophical Discourse of Modernity (20th-Century)

Purpose

In his *Modernism as a Philosophical Problem*, Robert Pippin lists some of the prominent themes that have agitated philosophical discourse for some 200 or more years now, and these will be among the themes to be advanced and critiqued in the texts we read. They include: “a view of nature as to be mastered, not contemplated; a ‘mathematizable’ and materialistic view of nature; a rejection of final causes in explanation; compared with antiquity, a much more realistic view of ends to be achieved by knowledge, ends such as health, pleasure, freedom from pain, and not, say, ‘wisdom’; an expectation of great social benefits from the free and unimpeded pursuit of scientific knowledge, and a corresponding assumption that the fundamental cause of human injustice was scarcity, that this problem could be corrected; and a great belief in the progressive and politically ever more enlightened course of human history” (p. 20). These themes, often first developed in the 18th century, continue until our day, but in the twentieth century they often took on a decidedly darker hue as disappointment lent its colors to hope. The aim of the course is to give an overview of the 20th-century German discussion. The primary task will be to read the assigned texts carefully (and repeatedly, if necessary), to come to class prepared with short, written summaries, analyses, critiques, and informed questions, and to participate *actively* in discussions. The emphasis will be on continuous weekly engagement in written and oral form with the ideas articulated in the texts. There will be no final seminar paper.

Texts (Please order German texts through ibiservice.com; please order English books through amazon.com or book seller of your choice.)

Books:

- Freud: *Das Unbehagen in der Kultur*
(Eng. trans.: *Civilization and its Discontents*)
- Gehlen: *Urmensch und Spätkultur*
(Alternate Eng. text: *Man in the Age of Technology*)
- Habermas: *Der philosophische Diskurs der Moderne*
(Eng. trans.: *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*)
- Horkheimer/Adorno: *Dialektik der Aufklärung*
(Eng. trans.: *Dialectic of Enlightenment*)
- Luhmann: *Theories of Distinction*
- Nietzsche: *Zur Genealogie der Moral*
(Eng. trans.: *On the Genealogy of Morality*)
- Weber: *Die Protestantische Ethik*
(Eng. trans.: *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*)

E-reserves:

- Heidegger: “Das Zeitalter des Weltbildes”
(Eng. trans.: “The Age of the World Picture”)

