Protesters, Paris 1968
Introduction

The second part of Contemporary Civilization will explore some of the most important ideas and debates on social theory, revolutionary politics, civil rights and individualism from Rousseau to Hannah Arendt. We will discuss different definitions of social organization, equality and political representation. The course will reconstruct the rise of revolutionary thought, the evolution of collective consciousness and some foundational texts dealing with postwar political thought. We will examine issues and ongoing questions relevant to modern democracy, different manifestations of social dissidence, feminism and anti-colonialism.

The texts are dense and challenging, yet fascinating and thought provoking. Your goal is to read beyond the text: not merely to understand what each author is exposing, but to engage in a debate with the ideas exposed in each work. Be patient: some books may require that you read certain passages two or three times. Invest time in each reading and come prepared for discussion. Avoid leaving the reading and writing assignments to the last minute. Develop your thoughts through active class discussion and writing assignments. Read closely, ask questions, be curious and think for yourself.

Course Requirements

Two video productions and accompanying papers, one oral presentation, a final reflection and your reading responses posted on the discussion forum (one per session plus “Current Affairs Thursdays”). Posting on the discussion forum and on “Current Affairs” is mandatory. The final grade is the average of these four assignments plus participation. Details on each requirement will be posted on our course website. Stay tuned for announcements.

Textbooks

Refer to the textbooks section in Courseworks. Readings marked with * will be posted online.

Absences, Tardiness, Late Submission, Computer Use

Any form of absence, tardiness and late submission of assignments will affect your final grade. Computers are only permitted for the use of our course materials and discussions. No chatting, web surfing or laughing at your computers. Late or missed submissions receive an automatic grade of F.
Reading & Discussion Schedule

January 20 Rousseau, Discourse on the Origin of Inequality

January 22 Rousseau, On the Social Contract (Books I and II)

January 27 Sièyes/ Declaration of the Rights of Man/ Declaration of Independence*

January 29 Smith, Wealth of Nations (Book I, 1-4, 9)

February 3 Hume, Principles of Morals (I-IV) & Kant, Groundwork (Section II)

February 5 Mary Wollstonecraft, Vindication

February 10 Proudhon, What is Property? *

February 12 Karl Marx, Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, Theses on Feuerbach

February 17 Karl Marx, Communist Manifesto

February 19 Friedrich Nietzsche, Genealogy of Morals, Why I am so Wise, Why I am so Clever, Why I Write Such Good Books

February 24 Du Bois, Souls of Black Folk
February 26 Sigmund Freud, Josef Breuer, Anna O, On Dreams

March 3 Sigmund Freud, Repression, The Unconscious, Civilization and its Discontents

March 5 Breton, The Surrealist Manifesto*

March 10 Simone de Beauvoir, The Second Sex (Destiny, The Formative Years)

March 12 Simone de Beauvoir, The Second Sex (Situation)

March 24 Frantz Fanon, The Wretched of the Earth

March 26 Herbert Marcuse, One Dimensional Man (One Dimensional Society)

March 31 Herbert Marcuse, One Dimensional Man (One Dimensional Thought)

April 2 Gandhi, Satyagraha (Introduction- Civil Disobedience, 30-75)

April 7 Gandhi, Idea of Freedom (Introduction-Economic Equality, 97-135)

April 9 Malcolm X, The Black Revolution (1963) *


April 21 Raoul Vaneigem, The Revolution of Everyday Life (1, 5, 14, 21)*

April 23 Guy Debord, Society of the Spectacle *

April 28 Film & Politics: Carlos (Olivier Assayas)

April 30 Film & Politics: The Baader Meinhof Complex (Uli Edel)