

211.265 – Fall 2023  
**Panorama of German Thought**  
Peter Jelavich

This course examines three themes in German thought between the 1770s and the 1940s, as reflected in theoretical texts and dramas. The first section concerns the enlightenment and its emphasis on reason, with a focus on two classical works: the appeal for toleration (and the critique of religious fanaticism) in Lessing's *Nathan the Wise*, and the dramatization of the limits of reason in Goethe's *Faust*. The second part covers competing theories of history that arose in the nineteenth century: Hegel's theologically-based concept of historical progress; Marx's materialist critique and inversion of Hegel; and Nietzsche's radically unsystematic and elitist counter-vision. The third and last part concerns aggression and war in the 20<sup>th</sup> century: Freud's theory of the innate aggressive impulses in human beings; and expressionist responses to the two world wars in the works of Kaiser, Toller, and Lasker-Schüler.

This course will give students an opportunity to study a variety of theoretical and theatrical texts. Skills to be gained include: How to analyze theoretical texts dealing with philosophical, aesthetic, social, economic, and political issues; how to interpret dramas in terms of both content and aesthetic style; how to orally discuss and debate these ideas; and how to present such topics in writing.

Your final grade for the course will be determined by three 8-page essays on assigned topics (25% each) and participation in class discussion (25%). No extensions or incompletes will be granted, except for medical reasons. All three essays must be submitted in order to pass the course.

The four books labeled "purchase" are available at the campus bookstore; they have also been placed on reserve at the Library. You must use these editions/translations of those four works.

My office hours are Wednesdays from 2:00 to 3:00, and by appointment, in Gilman 370.

## **PART I: ENLIGHTENMENT AND ITS LIMITS**

### **Aug 30**

Immanuel Kant, "An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?," trans. Ted Humphrey, in: Kant, *Perpetual Peace and other essays* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1983), 41-48.

### **Sept 6**

Wilhelm von Humboldt, "On the Spirit and the Organisational Framework of Intellectual Institutions in Berlin," in: *Minerva* 8 (1970): 242-247.

Friedrich Schiller, "The Stage Considered as a Moral Institution," trans. Jane Narrard Greene, in: Margaret Herzfeld-Sander, ed., *Essays on German Theater* (New York: Continuum, 1985), 24-33.

### **Sept 11**

Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Nathan the Wise*, trans. Ronald Schechter (New York: Bedford, 2004), 23-62 [purchase].

### **Sept 13**

Lessing, *Nathan the Wise*, 62-115.

### **Sept 18**

Johann Wolfgang Goethe, *Faust Part I*, trans. David Luke (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008), 1-62 [purchase].

### **Sept 20**

Goethe, *Faust Part I*, 62-112.

### **Sept 25**

Goethe, *Faust Part I*, 112-148.

### **Sept 27**

Goethe, *Faust Part II*, Act 5, trans. David Luke (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008), 207-239.

### **Oct 2 – FIRST ESSAY DUE**

## PART II: PHILOSOPHIES OF HISTORY

### Oct 4

Immanuel Kant, "Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Intent," in: Kant, *Perpetual Peace*, 29-40.

### Oct 9

Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Introduction to the Philosophy of History*, trans. Leo Rauch (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1988), 12-56 [purchase].

### Oct 11

Hegel, *Introduction to the Philosophy of History*, 57-98.

### Oct 16

Karl Marx, "Introduction" to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (= "Marx on the History of His Opinions"), in: Robert Tucker, ed., *The Marx-Engels Reader*, second edition (New York: Norton, 1978), 3-6.

Marx, "The German Ideology," in: *Marx-Engels Reader*, 146-163.

### Oct 18

Marx and Friedrich Engels, "Manifesto of the Communist Party," in: *Marx-Engels Reader*, 469-491.

Marx, "Wage Labour and Capital," in: *Marx-Engels Reader*, 203-217.

### Oct 23

Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Advantage and Disadvantage of History for Life*, trans. Peter Preuss (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1980), 7-22, 43-64 [purchase].

### Oct 25

Nietzsche, "Zarathustra's Prologue," in: Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Modern Library, 1995), 9-20.

Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, sections 199-203, 257-260, in: Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale (London: Penguin, 1990), 120-128, 192-198.

### Oct 30 – SECOND ESSAY DUE

### **PART III: WAR**

#### **Nov. 1**

Sigmund Freud, "Thoughts for the Times on War and Death," in: *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. James Strachey, vol. 14 (London: Hogarth Press, 1957), 273-288.

#### **Nov 6**

Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, ch. 5-6, in: *Standard Edition*, vol. 21 (1961), 108-122.

-----, "Why War?," in: *Standard Edition*, vol. 22 (1964), 195-215.

#### **Nov 8**

Georg Kaiser, "Gas I," trans. B.J. Kenworthy, in: Kaiser, *Five Plays* (London: Calder and Boyars, 1971), 193-241.

#### **Nov 13**

Kaiser, "Gas II," trans. B.J. Kenworthy, in: *Five Plays*, 243-272.

#### **Nov 15**

Ernst Toller, "Hinkemann," trans. J.M. Ritchie, in: *Vision and Aftermath: Four Expressionist War Plays* (London: Calder and Boyars, 1969), 161-208.

#### **Nov 27**

Else Lasker-Schüler, "IandI," trans. Beate Hein Bennett, in: Sue-Ellen Case, ed., *The Divided Home/Land: Contemporary German Women's Plays* (Ann Arbor: U of Michigan Press, 1992), 137-157.

#### **Nov 29**

Lasker-Schüler, "IandI," 157-179.

#### **Dec 4 – final discussion**

#### **Dec 6 – THIRD ESSAY DUE**