

OLLI COURSE: UC-BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA
WINTER 2019- January 28th to March 11th, 2019

FRENCH THINKERS

Time: **Monday 1:00-3:00pm**

Room: **41B University Hall, 2199 Addison St, Berkeley**

Instructors: **Dr. Zehlia Babaci-Wilhite**

Guest Lectures: **Professors Harold Wilhite and Claire Kramsch**

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Course description:

This course provides a stimulating and accessible introduction to France's extremely rich philosophical tradition *beyond Descartes'* s investigation of the bases and possible limits of human knowledge, which constitutes a key text in shifting the emphasis towards the power of human reason. France has an extremely rich philosophical tradition, and French thinkers have played a crucial role in the formulation and development of modern Western thought. In the 18th century, the century of the Enlightenment, all forms of culture and writing bear witness to an extraordinarily fertile period, when human knowledge, reason, society and politics are all rethought in the light of authority being vested in humanity itself. Later 19th century thinkers develop this in the direction of founding scientific studies of society and humanity's place within it. In the 20th century, existentialism, structuralism, post-structuralism and post-modernism have been internationally influential on the development of contemporary thought. The aim of this course is to offer an introduction to this body of literature, and to enable you to make connections across theories of culture, and theories of politics and society, as well as gaining an insight into some of the key philosophical questions: how do we live, what do we live for, how do we justify our values, how do we argue for change? All teaching is in English.

The specific objectives of the course are as follows:

- Interpret and analyze critically the main thinkers of modern France
- Understand the nature of philosophical thinking
- Evaluate the importance of French philosophy in the evolution of French culture and society in the evolution of French culture and society
- Appreciate the significance of the philosophical background for twentieth century thought.

Reading literature:

Readings are included in the syllabus below. ***Please note that some of the links must be cut and paste into your browser.***

Topics covered week-by-week during the 6 weeks of study. The schedule is subject to change with fair notice and the notice will be made available to you in class.

Week 1 (January 28th):

Pierre Bourdieu: The Cultural Capital

French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1930–2002), developed the concepts of ‘habitus’ and cultural capital to explain the ways in which relationships of social inequality were reproduced through the education system. ‘Habitus’ is similar to Husserl’s concept of ‘lifeworld’, describing the dispositions or forms of subjectivity connected with a person’s material, corporeal and symbolic attributes. Here, Bourdieu analyses the role of cultural capital in determining educational outcomes:

1. <http://neamathisi.com/new-learning/chapter-5-learning-personalities/pierre-bourdieu-on-cultural-capital>
2. <https://faculty.georgetown.edu/irvinem/theory/Bourdieu-Forms-of-Capital.pdf>
3. <https://www.thoughtco.com/what-is-cultural-capital-do-i-have-it-3026374>

Week 2 (February 4th):

Edouard Louis: The History of Violence

Edouard Louis is a writer. His autobiographical novel *En finir avec Eddy Bellegueule*, published in 2014, was the subject of extensive media attention and was hailed for its literary merit and compelling story. It was a bestseller in France and has been translated to over 20 languages. In September 2015, Edouard Louis penned a *Manifesto for an Intellectual and Political Counteroffensive*. In the letter, which ran on the front page of *Le Monde*, and was later reprinted in English by the *Los Angeles Review of Books*, Louis and Lagasnerie denounce the legitimization of right-wing agendas in public discourse and establish principles by which leftist intellectuals should reengage in public debate. In 2016, Louis published his second novel, *History of Violence*.

1. <https://www.fantasticman.com/men/edouard-louis>
2. <https://www.theparisreview.org/blog/2018/07/02/we-speak-about-violence-abdellah-taia-and-edouard-louis-in-conversation/>
3. <https://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/to-exist-in-the-eyes-of-others-an-interview-with-the-novelist-edouard-louis-on-the-gilets-jaunes-movement>
4. <http://frenchculture.org/events/8923-edouard-louis-litquake-festival>

Week 3 (February 11th):

Michel Foucault: Power and Knowledge

Michel Foucault (1926-1984), French philosopher and historian is one of the most influential and controversial scholars of the post-World War II period. Foucault claims that “It is not a matter of emancipating truth from every system of power (which would be a chimera, for truth is already power) but of detaching the power of truth from the forms of hegemony, social, economic and cultural, with which it operates at the present time” (Foucault 1980, p.133).

1. https://monoskop.org/images/5/5d/Foucault_Michel_Power_Knowledge_Selected_Interviews_and_Other_Writings_1972-1977.pdf
2. <https://www.powercube.net/other-forms-of-power/foucault-power-is-everywhere/>
3. http://web.msu.ac.zw/elearning/material/1318066502wandel_Michel%20Foucault%20and%20Critical%20Theory.pdf
4. <http://home.ku.edu.tr/~mbaker/CSHS503/FoucaultHistorySex.pdf>

Week 4 (February 25th):

Simone de Beauvoir: The Second Sex

Simone de Beauvoir (1908-1986). She became in 1929 the youngest person ever to obtain the agrégation in philosophy at the Sorbonne, placing second to Jean-Paul Sartre. After the war, she emerged as one of the leaders of the existentialist movement, working with Sartre on *Les Temps Modernes*. The author of many books, including the novel *Beauvoir* was one of the most influential thinkers of her generation.

1. <https://www.nytimes.com/2010/05/30/books/excerpt-introduction-second-sex.html>
2. https://uberty.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/1949_simone-de-beauvoir-the-second-sex.pdf
3. <https://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/ethics/de-beauvoir/2nd-sex/introduction.htm>
4. https://archive.org/stream/1949SimoneDeBeauvoirTheSecondSex/1949_simone-de-beauvoir-the-second-sex_djvu.txt

Week 5 (March 4th):

Bruno Latour: Bruno Latour is now emeritus professor associated with the médialab and the program in political arts (SPEAP) of Sciences Po Paris. After field studies in Africa and California he specialized in the analysis of scientists and engineers at work. In addition to work in philosophy, history, sociology and anthropology of science, he has collaborated into many studies in science policy and research management. After having directed several thesis on various environmental crisis, he published a book on the political philosophy of the environment Politics of Nature (all of those books are with Harvard University Press and have been translated in many languages).

1. <https://www.firstthings.com/web-exclusives/2014/12/we-have-never-been-modern>
2. <https://theparliamentofthings.org/into-latour/>
3. <http://www.sciencemag.org/news/2017/10/bruno-latour-veteran-science-wars-has-new-mission>

Week 6 (March 11th):

Franz Fanon: Cultural Discrimination

Frantz Omar Fanon (1925-1961) a psychiatrist, philosopher, revolutionary, and writer from the French colony of Martinique, whose works are influential in the fields of post-colonial studies, critical theory argues political alienation and cultural discrimination. As an Algerian political theorist, he analyzed the nature of racism and colonialism and developed a theory of violent anticolonialist struggle claiming that “I think it would be good if certain things were said”.

1. http://abahlali.org/files/_Black_Skin_White_Masks_Pluto_Classics_.pdf
2. <http://www.buala.org/en/to-read/does-racism-begin-where-culture-ends>
3. <http://www.frantzfanoninternational.org/Fanon-and-the-Epidemiology-of-Oppression>
4. <https://qz.com/africa/694858/the-influence-of-revolutionary-frantz-fanon-endures-with-africas-intellectuals/>