

THE UNIVERSITY AS ENLIGHTENMENT AND IDEAL

MICHAEL MERRILL

Mondays starting October 2 through November 20 for eight sessions | 1:30 – 3:30 p.m.
IN-PERSON AT SPB | DISCUSSION | MAXIMUM 20

Overview

Political allegiances in the United States and Europe are increasingly characterized by a division between those who owe their outlooks to what they learn in school and those who owe them to what they learn in church. This is a modern difference of comparatively recent origin. Schools as mass institutions that simultaneously create and serve a “public” are scarcely two centuries old. Before mass schooling, many more people were “churched” than “schooled” and most people lived in a world they thought was not only God-created but also God-guided. This difference has effects. The 17th- and 18th-century radical intellectual movement we know as “the Enlightenment” offered a far-reaching, world-transforming alternative to this pervasively religious worldview, but an animating and agitating belief in a God-created and God-guided universe is with us still.

The purpose of the course is to explore the on-going tension between these points of view. It does not assume that religion per se is irrational or that faith as such is unworthy. Like most Enlightenment thinkers, we will not be looking to condemn religion but imaginatively to reconceive its place in the world. We begin with readings on the philosophical and ethical underpinnings of the Enlightenment and then go on to consider the efforts to institutionalize its secular and scientific worldviews in an comprehensive educational system open and accessible to all.

Weekly Readings

| Week | Topic |
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| WEEK 1 | WHY ARE WE MORAL? IMMANUEL KANT, WHAT IS ENLIGHTENMENT? AND GROUNDWORK OF A METAPHYSICS OF MORALS (EXCERPTS) |
| WEEK 2 | WHAT IS RELIGION? IMMANUEL KANT, RELIGION WITHIN THE BOUNDS OF MERE REASON (EXCERPTS) |

Weekly Readings, Cont.

| Week | Topic |
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| WEEK 3 | HOW DO WE KNOW WHAT WE KNOW? G. W. F. Hegel, Preface, Phenomenology of the Spirit |
| WEEK 4 | WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF A COLLEGE EDUCATION? FRIEDRICH SCHILLER, "WHAT IS UNIVERSAL HISTORY AND WHY STUDY IT;" JOHANN G. FICHTE, "A PLAN ... FOR AN INSTITUTION OF HIGHER LEARNING ... IN BERLIN;" FRIEDRICH W. J. SCHELLING, "LECTURES ON THE METHOD OF ACADEMIC STUDY." |
| WEEK 5 | CAN EVERYONE BE THEIR OWN PHILOSOPHER? WALT WHITMAN, LEAVES OF GRASS (SELECTIONS); HERMAN MELVILLE, "THE ADVOCATE," MOBY-DICK, CHAPTER 24. |
| WEEK 6 | UNIVERSITIES AND DEMOCRACY AMERICAN ADAPTATIONS: THE MORRILL ACT; DANIEL COIT GILMAN, "THE UTILITY OF UNIVERSITIES;" ANDREW D. WHITE, "THE RELATION OF NATIONAL AND STATE GOVERNMENTS TO ADVANCED EDUCATION;" WILLIAM RAINEY HARPER, "THE UNIVERSITY AND DEMOCRACY." |
| WEEK 7 | DEMOCRACY AND EDUCATION EMILE DURKHEIM, "EDUCATION: ITS NATURE AND ITS ROLE" (1911); JOHN DEWEY, DEMOCRACY AND EDUCATION (1916) (EXCERPTS) |
| WEEK 8 | EDUCATION AND SOCIAL PROGRESS R. H. TAWNEY, "EDUCATION AND SOCIAL PROGRESS" (1912); MICHAEL MERRILL, "WORKERS' EDUCATION FROM A TO V: ARISTOTLE TO VAN ARSDALE" (2015); _____ AND SUSAN J. SCHURMAN, "TOWARD A GENERAL HISTORY OF WORKERS' EDUCATION," ILWCH (2016). |

PDF copies of the reading, all of which are either out of copyright or by the instructor, will be provided.