

Brown University
Fall 2014

Religious Studies 0830
Religion, Reason, and Ethics from Kant to Nietzsche

11:00-11:50 MWF
Salomon Center 203

Thomas A. Lewis
Department of Religious Studies
59 George Street, Office 202
Phone: 401-863-3571
Email: Thomas_Lewis@brown.edu
Office Hours: TBD and by appointment

The period from Kant to Nietzsche framed many of the concerns and questions that dominate religious and philosophical reflection even today: Is faith rational or the antithesis of reason? Is religion necessary for people to be moral? Can politics stand independently of religion? Do humans create religion?

This period, roughly the nineteenth century, ranks as one of the most dynamic periods in the history of Western thought. Within a short period of time, it witnessed revolutionary transformations in thinking about human reason, religiosity, morality, the meaning of history, and other fundamental philosophical and religious issues. Religion was frequently at the center of these discussions. New challenges to accepted religious doctrines spurred tremendous creativity in thinking about religion—by its defenders as well as its critics.

This course examines the most significant developments in Western religious thought during this period by focusing on seven of its most influential thinkers: Mendelssohn, Kant, Schleiermacher, Hegel, Feuerbach, Kierkegaard, and Nietzsche. All of these authors probed the power and limits of human reason, the relation between reason and religion, revelation, the role of humanity in creating religion, morality and religion, the significance of history, and religious diversity.

Assigned readings are from primary texts. In addition to the general secondary literature listed below, I will recommend additional reading throughout the semester. Additional materials will be available through the course website.

Texts

Please use the translations available at the Brown University Bookstore.

Ludwig Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*.

G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion (One-Volume Edition)*.

Immanuel Kant, *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*.

Søren Kierkegaard, *The Sickness Unto Death*.

Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Genealogy of Morals (in Basic Writings of Nietzsche)*.

Moses Mendelssohn, *Jerusalem: Or on Religious Power and Judaism*.

Friedrich Schleiermacher, *On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers*.

Requirements

Lecture and Discussion Participation: You are expected to come to lectures having read the assigned reading carefully and prepared to discuss the material by both asking and responding to questions.

Discussion Sections: The Friday class meetings will usually (note the exceptions below) take the form of discussion sections. Note that your Friday discussion section may not meet at 11:00, but we will arrange these sections to fit your schedule. You will likely be required to complete short assignments in preparation for the discussion sections. Attendance and participation at the lecture and discussion sections are worth approximately 20% of the final grade.

Two Short Papers: The topics for these papers will be distributed in class. The papers must be turned in on October 15 and November 24. They should be approximately 5 pages in length. The first paper is worth approximately 15% of the final grade. The second is worth approximately 20% of the final grade.

Final Paper: Suggested topics will be distributed in advance. You are also welcome to write on your own topic but must have it approved in advance. Papers should be approximately 12 pages in length. The paper is worth approximately 45% of the final grade.

Tentative Schedule and Readings

Introduction: Faith and Reason in a Time of Change

W 9/3

Moses Mendelssohn

F 9/5

Kant, "What Is Enlightenment?", first four paragraphs.
available online at

<http://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/ethics/kant/enlightenment.htm>

Jerusalem, 70-75.

Recommended: *Jerusalem*, 33-70.

M 9/8 *Jerusalem*, 84-104.
Recommended: *Jerusalem*, 77-84.

W 9/10 *Jerusalem*, 104-139.

Immanuel Kant

F 9/12 *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, 33-73.

M 9/15 *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, 75-102.

W 9/17 *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, 103-147.

F 9/19 discussion

M 9/22 *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, 149-191.

W 9/24 *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason* [catch up and review].

F 9/26 discussion

Friedrich Schleiermacher

M 9/29 *On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers*, first speech.

W 10/1 *On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers*, second speech.

F 10/3 discussion

M 10/6 *On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers*, third and fourth speeches.

W 10/8 *On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers*, fifth speech.

F 10/10 discussion

M 10/13 holiday – no class

G. W. F. Hegel

W 10/15 **First paper due at the beginning of class.**

Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion, introduction, 75-110.

F 10/17 *Lectures*, “The Concept of Religion,” 113-151.

M 10/20 *Lectures*, “The Concept of Religion,” 151-197 and “Determinate Religion,”
201-209.

Recommended: pp. 209-228 and 328-375.

- W 10/22 *Lectures*, “The Consummate Religion,” 389-452.
- F 10/24 *Lectures*, “The Consummate Religion,” 452-489.
[the Friday 12:00 section may meet on this day as well]
- M 10/27 discussion

Young Hegelians: Introduction

- W 10/29 Recommended: Karl Löwith, *From Hegel to Nietzsche: The Revolution in Nineteenth-Century Thought*, chapter 2 (on reserve).
- F 10/31 discussion

Ludwig Feuerbach

- M 11/3 *The Essence of Christianity*, preface and chapters 1-5.
Recommended: chapter 6.
- W 11/5 *The Essence of Christianity*, chapters 8, 12-13, 15, 19-23, and 26-27.
Recommended: chapter 9.
- F 11/7 discussion

Søren Kierkegaard

- M 11/10 *The Sickness unto Death*, preface, introduction, and Part I, A-B.
- W 11/12 *The Sickness unto Death*, Part I, C and Part II, A.
- F 11/14 discussion
- M 11/17 *The Sickness unto Death*, Part II, B.

Friedrich Nietzsche

- W 11/19 *The Genealogy of Morals*, preface and first essay.
- F 11/21 discussion
- M 11/24 **Second paper due at the beginning of class.**

The Genealogy of Morals, second essay.
- W 11/26 Thanksgiving Holiday – no class
F 11/28
- M 12/1 *The Genealogy of Morals*, third essay.

Conclusions

| | |
|--------|---|
| W 12/3 | conclusion 1 |
| F 12/5 | conclusion 2 |
| M 12/8 | Reading Period – no class currently scheduled |

Final paper due in the Department of Religious Studies, 59 George Street, by 2:00 p. m., December 18.

Suggested Secondary Literature

Livingston, James C., and Francis Fiorenza. *Modern Christian Thought*. 2d ed. 2 vols. Upper Saddle River, N. J.: Prentice Hall, 1997-2000.

Löwith, Karl. *From Hegel to Nietzsche: The Revolution in Nineteenth-Century Thought*. Translated by David E. Green. New York: Columbia University Press, 1991.

Pinkard, Terry. *German Philosophy, 1760-1860: The Legacy of Idealism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

Smart, Ninian, John Clayton, Steven Katz, and Patrick Sherry, eds. *Nineteenth Century Religious Thought in the West*. 3 vols. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985.

Taylor, Charles. *Hegel*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980. [Chapter one provides an excellent overview of the intellectual background of Hegel's thought.]

Welch, Claude. *Protestant Thought in the Nineteenth Century*. 2 vols. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972-1985.