



ST. JEROME'S UNIVERSITY

St. Jerome's University in the University of Waterloo

Department of Philosophy

PHIL 204J - FALL 2021

Philosophy and Culture

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Instructor: Professor Nikolaj Zunic
Office: SH 2003 [Sweeney Hall]
Phone: 519-884-8111 ext. 28229
Office Hours: By appointment only. Contact the professor to schedule a personal meeting.
Email: nzunic@uwaterloo.ca

The best and most effective way of contacting the professor is by e-mail.

E-mail messages will normally be answered within 24 hours.

Due to the extraordinary circumstances regarding the COVID-19 preventative measures in place at the university, the professor will not have regular access to his office or to his office phone. Therefore, please do not leave messages by phone at the number given above.

All office hours will be conducted remotely by means of Zoom or Microsoft Teams.

COURSE FORMAT

As everyone is undoubtedly aware, the COVID-19 pandemic has upset the normal routines of life over the last year and a half. Unfortunately, we are not yet back to normal. For the Fall Term 2021, the University has decided to open up its operations slightly, but is still keeping most of the precautions and restrictions in place that have dominated academic life over the last year. This course will, therefore, in accordance with these official regulations, be delivered entirely remotely, that is, by means of the Internet. To be clear, there will be no in-person or in-class component to this course.

We will be relying on LEARN (D2L or Desire to Learn) as the primary means in the delivery of the course. Everything to do with this course will be conducted through LEARN. Therefore, students must have access to LEARN. Visit the following website to sign in to LEARN:

<https://learn.uwaterloo.ca>

The professor will post all relevant course material – e.g. the course outline, assignments, links, announcements – to the LEARN site. However, e-mail will also be a mode of communication between the professor and students.

The course will be divided into four components:

1. **Lectures**
 2. **Readings**
 3. **Discussions**
 4. **Assignments**
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1. *Lectures*

All lectures will be recorded by the professor and posted to LEARN in the **Content** section.

The mode of content delivery in this course will be entirely asynchronous (= there is no scheduled time to listen to and view lectures) instead of synchronous (= when a scheduled time is set for live instruction). All the lectures will be recorded, and students will have the opportunity to listen to the lectures on their own time.

Each recorded lecture will be a narrated PowerPoint presentation.

Each lecture will be 30-40 minutes in duration.

There will be two MP4 files posted regularly each week, one on Mondays and the second on Wednesdays, by noon at the latest. If for some reason the professor will be late in posting a lecture on a Monday or Wednesday, he will announce this in LEARN.

The lectures will focus on the important concepts from the prescribed readings and as such will be concise and targeted.

2. *Readings*

Students are required to read the prescribed books/texts/readings in accordance with the schedule contained in this course outline.

The readings for which students are responsible for studying are given in a weekly schedule.

The required books/texts/readings may be purchased at the University of Waterloo Bookstore or

through some other bookseller, such as Amazon. In some cases, online versions of the readings are available in the public domain. The professor will inform students of acceptable online versions of the readings.

The readings play a pivotal part of this course, as all the lectures and assignments will deal with them centrally.

It is advisable that students follow the readings schedule and diligently do the prescribed readings.

3. *Discussions*

Each week forums for discussion on the week's main topics will be open for student engagement on LEARN.

- In LEARN go to **Connect → Discussions**.

The professor will participate in the discussions on Friday mornings from 10:00 am to 12:00 pm. What this means is that the professor will answer any questions once per week on Friday mornings. To be clear, this is not a "live" event.

If you wish the professor to address any concerns or questions please make your posts to this site by Friday morning at 10 am. Posts that are made after 12 pm on Friday will be answered the following Friday morning.

These discussions are not intended to be solely a forum between students and the professor. Instead, they are mainly to be a site where students can discuss course material among themselves. The professor's involvement here is marginal.

The purpose of the discussion forums is to allow students to dialogue with each other, to pose and answer questions related to the week's topics, and to facilitate the comprehension of course material. In short, it is an opportunity for students to ask questions and to offer and receive responses.

Participation in the discussions is optional and will not constitute any part of the student's final grade.

Please be aware that if you have a question or problem that requires an immediate reply from the professor, it is best to send him an email, instead of posing a question on the Discussion boards. This is especially the case if the issue is specific to you instead of being something that applies generically to all students in the course.

The professor checks his emails daily and will reply to emails promptly, whereas he checks the Discussion boards once or twice per week. Questions or concerns posed in the Discussion boards will take longer to be answered by the professor.

4. Assignments

There are three assignments in this course. The entirety of each student's final grade will be based on these three assignments.

Each assignment will be an argumentative essay. For an explanation of how to compose an argumentative essay in philosophy please see the following website:

<https://philosophy.utoronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/Writing-a-Philosophy-Paper-Paul-Raymont-utoronto.pdf>

A very good resource to consult in order to understand how to write an effective philosophy paper is the following website from Harvard University:

https://philosophy.fas.harvard.edu/files/phildept/files/brief_guide_to_writing_philosophy_paper.pdf

**Please read through these documents on how to write a philosophy paper before the first essay is assigned.*

The first two essays should be 4-6 double-spaced pages (1200-1800 words). The essays will be based on topics corresponding to relevant sections of the course and thus will be specific to the readings that we are covering.

The third, final essay will be longer in length and will be more encompassing of the course content and will be between 6-9 double-spaced pages (1800-2700 words)

Detailed instructions and topics for each essay assignment will be posted to LEARN approximately 3 weeks before the respective due dates.

All essay assignments must be submitted electronically to LEARN in the Dropbox section.

- In LEARN go to **Submit → Dropbox**.

Each essay will also be checked by Turnitin, a program that scans essays for academic integrity infractions.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

PHIL 204J: Philosophy and Culture will explore human culture from a philosophical point of view. There are two overarching foci in this course. First, we will philosophically examine what culture is and how it should be understood. Second, we will reflect on aspects of our contemporary culture in the west.

The course is divided into six parts.

The first two parts will look at the nature of culture and how it relates to philosophy. Part 1 is entitled “Culture: The Classical View” in which we will read Josef Pieper’s book *Leisure: The Basis of Culture*. Pieper examines culture from the ancient Greek and medieval philosophical perspectives. He emphasizes the foundation of culture in leisure and connects leisure to festivity and ritual. A major preoccupation of Pieper’s is the danger that a society that is consumed by work has for the proper life of a culture. In Part 2, “Culture: The Modern View,” we will follow Roger Scruton’s discussion of culture as it pertains to the modern world. Scruton anchors his meditations on the Enlightenment and Romantic periods. Furthermore, Scruton argues for a distinction between high and low culture.

Part 3, “Thought and Rationality,” will discuss how different modes of thinking and reasoning affect and are affected by culture. The key idea in this section of the course is that there is a reciprocal relationship between culture and thought. In other words, how we think influences and shapes culture, and conversely, culture reinforces ways of thinking. We will read excerpts from books written by Iain McGilchrist, Peter J. Kreeft, and G. K. Chesterton.

Part 4, “Media and Technology,” will focus on the roles that media and technology have played in determining our contemporary culture. We will read several essays and excerpts from the renowned Canadian philosopher and cultural theorist, Marshall McLuhan. Not only do different media shape the culture in which we live, but they also affect human modes of thinking and acting. In this way, Part 4 extends the insights of Part 3 into the domain of media and technology.

Part 5, “The Consumer Society,” will involve a close reading of the post-modern philosopher, Jean Baudrillard’s text *The Consumer Society*. Our contemporary culture is absorbed in the economic forces of production and consumption. We cannot understand our world if we do not take into account the role that consumption plays in it. Baudrillard emphasizes the symbolic aspect of consumption and discusses a host of related topics, such as the body, advertising, mass media, leisure and anomie.

Finally, Part 6, “Modern Social Imaginaries,” deals with the Canadian philosopher, Charles Taylor’s views of the modern social imaginary. A social imaginary is a collective way of imagining the structure and identity of a society. Taylor is investigating the foundations of our modern world. He emphasizes ideas such as the moral order, the distinction between the private and public spheres, the Great Disembedding, the economy, the direct-access society and secularism.

This course will not only be describing culture, but will also involve evaluations of culture. Where it is warranted, we will carry out assessments of the strengths and weaknesses, merits and demerits, and positive and negative aspects of culture. This is particularly the case in our examinations of our contemporary western culture.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

This course aims to fulfill the following pedagogical objectives:

- To understand the nature of culture
- To examine the essence of modern and contemporary cultures
- To discern the link between thought and culture
- To investigate the relationship between philosophy and culture
- To judge the value of contemporary culture

REQUIRED TEXTS

The following 5 books are required for this course. They may be purchased at the University of Waterloo bookstore or through some other bookseller, such as on Amazon.

Josef Pieper. *Leisure: The Basis of Culture*. Translated by Gerald Malsbary. South Bend, Indiana: St. Augustine's Press, 1998.
ISBN: 1-890318-35-3

Roger Scruton. *Modern Culture*. London: Bloomsbury Continuum, 2018.
ISBN: 978-1-4729-6903-3

Marshall McLuhan. *Essential McLuhan*. Edited by Eric McLuhan and Frank Zingrone. Toronto: Anansi, 1995.
ISBN: 978-0-88784-565-9

Jean Baudrillard. *The Consumer Society: Myths and Structures*. Revised Edition. London: SAGE, 2017.
ISBN: 1-4739-8238-3

Charles Taylor. *Modern Social Imaginaries*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2004.
ISBN: 0-8223-3293-0

In addition to these books, three readings will be provided through Course Reserves. These readings are as follows:

Iain McGilchrist. "What do the Two Hemispheres 'Do'?" In *The Master and His Emissary. The Divided Brain and the Making of the Western World*. New Expanded Edition, 32-93. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019.

Peter J. Kreeft. "The Social, Moral, and Sexual Effects of Symbolic Logic." In *How to Destroy Western Civilization and Other Ideas from the Cultural Abyss*, 48-62. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2021.

G. K. Chesterton. "The Maniac." In *Orthodoxy*, 20-49. London: The Bodley Head, 1909.

RECOMMENDED ADDITIONAL READING:

The following is a list of books which are relevant to the themes of this course and may be of interest to students.

These books are by no means required reading for this course. They are provided here simply to give students ideas for further reading, if one so desires.

Louis Dupré. *Metaphysics and Culture*. Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1994.

Iain McGilchrist. *Ways of Attending: How our Divided Brain Constructs the World*. London: Routledge, 2019.

C. P. Snow. *The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991.

Ernst Cassirer. *The Logic of the Cultural Sciences*. Translated by S. G. Lofts. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000.

Ernst Cassirer. *An Essay on Man: An Introduction to a Philosophy of Human Culture*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1944.

Roger Scruton. *Culture Counts: Faith and Feeling in a World Besieged*. New York: Encounter Books, 2018.

Philippe Nemo. *What is the West?* Translated by Kenneth Casler. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2006.

Jacques Ellul, *The Technological Society*. Translated by John Wilkinson. New York: Vintage Books, 1964.

Neil Postman. *Technopoly: The Surrender of Culture to Technology*. New York: Vintage Books, 1993.

Neil Postman. *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business*. New York: Penguin, 1985.

T. S. Eliot. *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture*. London: Faber and Faber, 1968.

Jean Baudrillard. *Symbolic Exchange and Death*. Translated by Iain Hamilton Grant. London: SAGE, 1993.

Charles Taylor. *A Secular Age*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press, 2007.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND ASSESSMENT

There are three written assignments for this course.

The first two essays will be 4-6 pages in length. The first essay will deal with Parts 1 and 2 of the course and the second essay will deal with Parts 2 and 3 of the course.

The third essay will be longer and more extensive than the first two essays, namely, 6-9 pages in length. It will deal principally with Parts 5 and 6, but will also involve the other parts of the course as well (i.e., Parts 1-4). As such, the third essay will be more comprehensive in scope.

The nature of each essay will be argumentative. What this means is that the professor will provide a selection of questions or topics to choose from and students will have to argue or defend a position by using logical reasoning and evidence from the texts and lectures. It is crucial that students learn philosophy by learning how to reason and argue their positions. Therefore, the essay assignments will aim to foster such argumentative and logical reasoning skills.

The detailed instructions for each assignment as well as the essay topics will be posted to LEARN approximately 3 weeks before the respective due dates.

This course uses the Turnitin software, so all essays will be checked for plagiarism.

There is no final exam in this course.

The breakdown of the assignments with their corresponding due dates and weightings is given in the table below:

ASSIGNMENT	DUE DATE	VALUE
1. Essay #1	October 6 at 9:00 pm	30%
2. Essay #2	November 10 at 9:00 pm	30%
3. Essay #3	December 8 at 9:00 pm	40%

COURSE SCHEDULE

The following is a weekly schedule for this course. It lists the readings that students are responsible to study each week. The lectures, which will be posted to LEARN, will relate to the readings as they are presented in this schedule.

Please consult this schedule throughout the fall term.

WEEK 1: September 8

Introduction to the course
Watch the introduction video

1. CULTURE: THE CLASSICAL VIEW

WEEK 2: September 13-17

Required Reading: Josef Pieper, *Leisure: The Basis of Culture*, pp. 1-60
Topics: Leisure, Work, Festivity

WEEK 3: September 20-24

Required Reading: Josef Pieper, *Leisure: The Basis of Culture*, pp. 61-134
Topics: The Philosophical Act

2. CULTURE: THE MODERN VIEW

WEEK 4: September 27-October 1

Required Reading: Roger Scruton, *Modern Culture*, Chapters 1-6, pp. 1-67
Topics: Defining Culture, the Enlightenment, Romanticism

WEEK 5: October 4-8

Required Reading: Roger Scruton, *Modern Culture*, Chapters 7-13, pp. 68-158

Topic: High Culture and Popular Culture

ESSAY #1 is due on Wednesday, October 6 at 9:00 pm EST.

WEEK 6: October 11-15

READING WEEK

**There is no course activity from October 9 to October 17.*

3. THOUGHT AND RATIONALITY

WEEK 7: October 18-22

Required Reading: Iain McGilchrist, "What do the Two Hemispheres 'Do'", excerpt from *The Master and His Emissary*

Topic: The functions of the two hemispheres of the brain and how they determine our culture

The reading is available in Course Reserves

WEEK 8: October 25-29

Required Reading: Peter J. Kreeft, "The Social, Moral, and Sexual Effects of Symbolic Logic", excerpt from *How to Destroy Western Civilization*;

G. K. Chesterton, "The Maniac", excerpt from *Orthodoxy*

Topics: Modern and contemporary modes of thought and rationality

The readings are available in Course Reserves

4. MEDIA AND TECHNOLOGY

WEEK 9: November 1-5

Required Reading: Marshall McLuhan, *Essential McLuhan*:

- Chapter 3, "Culture is Our Business," pp. 35-59
- Chapter 7, "Media and Cultural Change," pp. 89-96
- Chapter 9, "Understanding Media," pp. 149-179
- Chapter 11, "Explorations," pp. 189-216

Topics: The nature of media, advertising, thinking, the senses

WEEK 10: November 8-12

Required Reading: Marshall McLuhan, *Essential McLuhan*:

- Chapter 13, "Playboy Interview," pp. 233-269
- Chapter 14, "A McLuhan Sourcebook," pp. 270-297
- Chapter 19, "Laws of Media," pp. 366-388

Topics: The impact of media and technology on human beings and culture

ESSAY #2 is due on Wednesday, November 10 at 9:00 pm EST.

5. THE CONSUMER SOCIETY

WEEK 11: November 15-19

Required Reading: Jean Baudrillard, *The Consumer Society*, Parts 1 and 2, pp. 41-115

Topics: The formal liturgy of the object; the theory of consumption

WEEK 12: November 22-26

Required Reading: Jean Baudrillard, *The Consumer Society*, Part 3, pp. 117-213

Topics: Mass media, sex and leisure

6. MODERN SOCIAL IMAGINARIES

WEEK 13: November 29 – December 3

Required Reading: Charles Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries*, Chapters 1-7, pp. 3-107
Topics: Modern moral order; the social imaginary; public vs private spheres

WEEK 14: December 6

Required Reading: Charles Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries*, Chapters 8-13, pp. 109-194
Topics: The meaning of secularity

The last day of lectures for the fall term is December 7.

For the week of December 6-10 there will be only one lecture.

Essay #3 is due on Wednesday, December 8 at 9:00 pm EST.

IMPORTANT DATES TO REMEMBER

September 8: Beginning of classes

October 9-17: Reading Week: No lectures or course activity

December 7: End of classes

December 9-23: Exam period [Please note that this course does not have a final exam]

COURSE POLICIES

Lateness Penalty: The penalty for late assignments is 3% deducted from the grade of the paper for each day that the paper is late.

Absolute Deadline: The maximum allowable amount of time for submitting essays beyond the due date is one week. For example, if the paper is due on October 6, the last possible date on which it will be accepted is October 13. Please bear in mind that late penalties are still applied for papers submitted past the due date—in this example between October 6 and 13.

Illness: If a student is unable to participate in the course because of an illness, the student must complete a Verification of Illness form and report the illness to the instructor so that appropriate measures may be taken or accommodations made. For more information, please visit the following webpage: <https://uwaterloo.ca/registrar/current-students/accommodation-due-to-illness>

Assignment Feedback: Essays will normally be returned to students graded and with feedback two weeks after the submission deadline.

CORRESPONDENCE

As indicated at the beginning of this document, the best way to contact the professor is by e-mail at nzunic@uwaterloo.ca.

If you have any questions or concerns about any aspect of this course feel free to contact the professor.

The professor is more than happy to answer any questions or to address any concerns that are relevant to the course.

When you write to the professor please be sure to indicate your name and the course that you are enrolled in.

Use formal language and proper grammar in your correspondence.

Please be aware that rude, impolite, or uncivil communication, whether in emails or other media, will not be answered and may be reported to the Associate Dean for disciplinary action under Policy 71- *Student Discipline*.

(<https://uwaterloo.ca/secretariat/policies-procedures-guidelines/policy-71>)

OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Academic Integrity: In order to maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo community are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility. [Check www.uwaterloo.ca/academicintegrity/ for more information.]

Grievance: A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of their university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. Read the St. Jerome's University Policy on Student Petitions and Grievances, www.sju.ca/sites/default/files/upload_file/PLCY_AOM_Student-Petitions-and-Grievances_20151211-SJUSCapproved.pdf. When in doubt, please be certain to contact the St. Jerome's Advising Specialist, Student Affairs Office, who will provide further assistance.

Discipline: A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity, to avoid committing an academic offence, and to take responsibility for their actions. [Check www.uwaterloo.ca/academicintegrity/ for more information.] A student who is unsure whether an action constitutes an offence, or who needs help in learning how to avoid offences (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) or about "rules" for group work/collaboration should seek guidance from the course instructor, academic advisor, or the Associate Dean. When misconduct has been found to have occurred, disciplinary penalties will be imposed under the St. Jerome's University Policy on Student Discipline, www.sju.ca/sites/default/files/PLCY_AOM_Student-Discipline_20131122-SJUSCapproved.pdf. For information on categories of offences and types of penalties, students should refer to University of Waterloo Policy 71, Student Discipline, www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy71.htm. For typical penalties, check the Guidelines for the Assessment of Penalties, www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/guidelines/penaltyguidelines.htm.

Appeals: A decision made or penalty imposed under the St. Jerome's University Policy on Student Petitions and Grievances (other than a petition) or the St. Jerome's University Policy on Student Discipline may be appealed if there is a ground. A student who believes they have a ground for an appeal should refer to the St. Jerome's University Policy on Student Appeals, www.sju.ca/sites/default/files/PLCY_AOM_Student-Appeals_20131122-SJUSCapproved.pdf.

Note for students with disabilities: AccessAbility Services, located in Needles Hall (Room 1401) at the University of Waterloo, collaborates with all academic departments to arrange appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities without compromising the academic integrity of the curriculum. If you require academic accommodations to lessen the impact of your disability, please register with AccessAbility Services at the beginning of each academic term, www.uwaterloo.ca/accessability-services/.

Turnitin.com: Text matching software (Turnitin®) may be used to screen assignments in this course. Turnitin® is used to verify that all materials and sources in assignments are documented. Students' submissions are stored on a U.S. server, therefore students must be given an alternative (e.g., scaffolded assignment or annotated bibliography), if they are concerned about

their privacy and/or security. Students will be given due notice, in the first week of the term and/or at the time assignment details are provided, about arrangements and alternatives for the use of Turnitin® in this course. It is the responsibility of the student to notify the instructor if they, in the first week of term or at the time assignment details are provided, wish to submit the alternate assignment.