Course title: Great Ideas that Have Shaped our World: from the Axial Age to the Robot Revolution

Language of instruction: English
Professor: Camil Ungureanu / https://www.upf.edu/web/camil-ungureanu
Professor’s contact and office hours: camil.ungureanu@upf.edu
Course contact hours: 45
Recommended credit: 6 ECTS credits
Course prerequisites: There are no prerequisites for this course.

Language requirements: Recommended level in the European Framework B2 (or equivalent: Cambridge Certificate if the teaching language is English, DELE or 3 semesters in the case of Spanish). Upon request, the exam can be taken in Catalan or Spanish as well.

Course focus and approach:

The course is useful for students in humanities, social sciences, and sciences. This course focuses on moral-political, philosophical and scientific ideas that have revolutionized and shaped the world we live in. The approaches of this course is interdisciplinary.

Course description:

This course starts from the premise of the crucial importance of moral, philosophical and scientific imagination in the development of human societies. It focuses on key moral, philosophical and scientific innovative ideas that have revolutionized and shaped society from Antiquity to nowadays. The course deals not only with understanding the context of emergence of these ideas, but also their impact on the contemporary world and mentality. We begin with the “Axial Age” (Karl Jaspers) characterized by a series of ethical-religious, scientific and philosophical innovations from China to Ancient Greece, and move chronologically to Renaissance, Enlightenment, and the current digital and robot revolution. The substantive and methodological approach is not Euro-centric and reductionist, but global and interdisciplinary. We adopt a problem-solving approach based on understanding why and how new and creative ideas - from Buddhism and monotheism to Marxist materialism, genetical engineering and quantum physics - answer different types of challenges and queries - existential, epistemic, or ethical-political.

Learning objectives:

- Deeper understanding of global history and contemporary world
- Critical assessment of fundamental ideas that have revolutionized the world (genetics, environmentalism, liberalism, etc).
- Creative use of ideas in building autonomous research and collaborative projects
Course workload:
The workload is made of readings (generally one 20-page reading per lecture), and exams. Video materials will be also used. The lectures and seminars support the better understanding of the readings.

Teaching methodology:
The course is structured in both lecture and on-site classes.

The classes are structured in lectures (1 hour) and open discussions based on texts and videos/documentaries. The emphasis is on discussing primary sources (e.g. texts by Confucius, I. Newton, Ch. Darwin, S. Freud, A. Einstein) and relevant videos/documentaries with the aim of understanding revolutionary ideas, their relevance, and their long-standing influence on current practices and societies.

We adopt a problem-solving approach based on understanding why and how new and creative ideas - from Buddhism and monotheism to Marxist materialism, genetical engineering and quantum physics - answer different types of challenges and queries - existential, epistemic, or moral-political.

The methodology is comparative and global (Edward Said 1978; Amartya Sen 2009), and not parochial or Eurocentric; to illustrate, we will explore comparatively the ideas of human excellence in Aristotle and Confucius, or the notions of salvation in Buddhism and Christianity.

Second, the methodological approach is based on the importance of interdisciplinarity, i.e. in approach societal phenomena from the pluralist perspective of different disciplines – scientific and humanistic (R. Sapolsky, 2017).

Assessment criteria:

Projects: 30% Students will be encouraged to propose projects that are original in substance and form by using creatively the background knowledge their passions and interests and the knowledge acquired in the class. The project can be individual or involve 2 or 3 students (the latter case entails a proportional increase in the amount of work). The project can take a written, video, or other form.

Exams: 50% (10% mid-term, 40% final exam). The format of the exam will not be oriented toward the passive reproduction of the class materials, but towards solving problems.

Participation: 20% Students will be encouraged to raise questions and participate in the class.
BaPIS absence policy

Attending class is mandatory and will be monitored daily by professors. Missing classes will impact on the student’s final grade as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Absences</th>
<th>Penalization</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Up to two (2) absences</td>
<td>No penalization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three (3) absences</td>
<td>1 point subtracted from final grade (on a 10-point scale)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Four (4) absences</td>
<td>2 points subtracted from final grade (on a 10-point scale)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Five (5) absences or more</td>
<td>The student receives an INCOMPLETE (“NO PRESENTADO”) for the course</td>
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The BaPIS attendance policy does not distinguish between justified or unjustified absences. The student is deemed responsible to manage his/her absences.

Only absences for medical reasons will be considered justified absences. The student is deemed responsible to provide the necessary documentation. Other emergency situations will be analyzed on a case by case basis by the Academic Director of the BaPIS.

The Instructor, the Academic Director and the Study Abroad Office should be informed by email without any delay.

INTRODUCTION: The role of ideas and imagination in the development of human societies

Compulsory:
R. Sapolsky, Behave. The Biology of Humans at their Best and their worst, Penguin, 2017, Introduction
R. Sapolsky, “The Uniqueness of Humans”, available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GYIx8k79bZE

Optional:

PART I. The Axial Age: Religious-Philosophical Universalism and the Invention of Democracy
1. The rise of the idea of one God the faces of monotheism

Compulsory:

Optional:
M. Scorsese, The Last Temptation of Christ (1988)
The Story of God with Morgan Freeman, available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GwL57ZP873Q

2. The democratic idea and the invention of philosophy

Compulsory:
Plato, The Apology of Socrates (excerpts)
Aristotle, Politics (excerpts)

Optional:

3. The Hindu tradition and the challenge of Buddha

Compulsory:

Optional:
The Buddha, documentary, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EDgd8LT9AL4

4. Confucius and the Hundred Schools of Thought

Compulsory:

Optional:
Confucian Philosophy on World Affairs, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ff7OB_QRiag
Confucius, 2010 (film)

PART II. From Renaissance and the Scientific Revolution to the Crisis of Enlightenment
1. The Renaissance: artistic, political, and scientific

**Compulsory:**
Galileo Galilei, 1638, *Dialogues Concerning Two New Sciences*, 1974, 1-10

**Optional:**
*The Renaissance - the Age of Michelangelo and Leonardo da Vinci,*
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BmHTQsxxkP8 (documentary)
Shakespeare, *Hamlet*

2. The Invention of Individualism: Th. Hobbes’s and J. Locke’s liberal revolution

**Compulsory:**

**Optional:**

3. The Industrial Revolution and the Emergence of Capitalism


**Optional:**
M. Friedman, *Capitalism and Liberty*, University of Chicago Press 1958, ch. 1
M. Friedman, *Capitalism and the future of freedom*, available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YfKqhxAJGgE (video)

4. Human rights, the American and French Revolutions: a genealogical and comparative view

**Compulsory:**
The Federalist (10, 17)
“The American Declaration of Independence”
Olympe de Gouges, “Declaration of the Rights of Woman and of Female Citizen” (1971)

**Optional:**
S. Schama, *David*, 2015 (documentary)
S. Spielberg, *Lincoln*, 2012 (film)

5. The Darwinian Revolution

**Compulsory:**
Ch. Darwin *On the Origin of Species*, Penguin, 1999, ch. 1, 2

**Optional:**

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6. The Revolution of the Unconscious: from Sigmund Freud to cognitive science and brain research

Compulsory:

Optional:
S. Freud, *The Father of Psychoanalysis*, available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C8k-lrJrldw (documentary)

7. Socialism and communism: Karl Marx

Compulsory:
K. Marx & Fr. Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*

Optional:

8. The Crisis of the Enlightenment and Modernity: from Nietzsche to the Rise of Totalitarianism

Compulsory:

Optional:

PART III. The Contemporary World: from the Theory of Relativity to the Robot Revolution

1. Albert Einstein, the Theory of Relativity, and Beyond

Compulsory:
A. Einstein, *How I see the world*, Penguin, 1956, ch. 4 and 6
W. Heisenberg, “The Principle of Indeterminacy”

Optional:
*Albert Einstein, How I see the world,* [https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x1tgws5](https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x1tgws5) (Documentary)
*Quantum Theory,* available at: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CBrsWPCp_rs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CBrsWPCp_rs)
*Interstellar* (2018, Ch. Nolan, movie)

2. **Anticolonialism, orientalism, and the paradoxes of postcolonialism.**

Compulsory:
*F. Fanon, The wretched of the earth,* Penguin, 2007, ch. 1
*E. Said, Orientalism,*

Optional:
*O. Sembene, The Black Girl,* (1966, movie)
*J. Conrad, The Heart of Darkness* (novel)

3. **The unfinished feminist revolution**

4. **Genetical engineering: beyond humanism?**

Compulsory:

Optional:
*Gattaca* (1997, A. Niccol, movie)

5. **Artificial intelligence, artificial ignorance and the robot revolution**

Compulsory:


Optional:

6. **Environmental justice, alternative economics, and the future of earth**

Compulsory:

Optional: