

**Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences**

Name minor: **Minor Great Thinkers: Leading Paradigms of Western Culture**

Name coordinator: M. Kardaun

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Course code: n/a

Full period of this minor: 1- 3

ECTS credits in total of this minor: 30

Language of instruction: English

Teaching methods: PBL, Lectures

Assessment methods: Assignment, Written exam, Participation

Number of available places: 60 students

**Keywords:**

*History of ideas, Rationalisation Processes, Demythologisation, History of Logic, Raison d'état, Individualism, Cultural Pessimism, democracy, Enlightenment, Romanticism, Egalitarianism, the Death of God, Psychoanalysis, (Post)modernism, Political Ideologies, Marxism, Darwinism, Religion, Atheism, Imperialism, Orientalism, Western versus Eastern World Views*

**Full course description**

The minor 'Great Thinkers' is an interdisciplinary programme that focuses on the roots of Western culture. The courses will familiarise you with turning points in the history of Western Ideas, such as the birth of rational thinking, the invention of individuality, the political plea for the separation of powers, and the notion of the so-called unconscious. You will study the world views of a range of thinkers, such as Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, Ockham, Machiavelli, Rousseau, Kant, Nietzsche, Marx, Darwin, Freud, Arendt, and Said. As such, the minor is meant for ambitious students who are looking for an intellectually challenging programme and are willing to invest in their Bildung.

**Course objectives**

The minor will enable you

- \* to gain insight into the fundamental characteristics of Western culture by studying the views of important thinkers within their social and historical context;
- \* to train yourself in critical thinking and analytic skills;
- \* to reflect upon the underlying philosophical assumptions of the discipline(s) you are studying at your own faculty;
- \* to reflect upon the Western canon and its supposed superiority.

**Prerequisites:**

N/a

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**Course period 1: The Birth of Reason**

Course code: MGT3000

Course Period: 1 (30 Aug 2021 - 22 Oct 2021)

ECTS credits of this course: 12

Instruction language: English

Coordinator: M. Kardaun

Teaching methods: PBL, Lecture(s)

Assessment methods: Assignment, Written exam, Participation

**Keywords**

History of ideas, Rationalisation Processes, Demythologisation, History of Logic, Raison d'état

**Full course description**

The first course will take you on a journey of discovery from Antiquity to early Modernity. You will study and contextualize the amazing world views of leading thinkers of Antiquity (the Pre-Socratics, Sophocles, and 'the big three', viz. Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle), the Middle Ages (among others Augustine, Thomas Aquinas and William of Ockham) and Early Modernity (featuring Machiavelli). Emphasis will be on what triggered their ideas and how these ideas contributed to today's rationalised, disenchanted and anthropocentric world view. Finally, we will discuss some conspicuous aspects of the Western intellectual inheritance with regard to environment, human rights, political (non-)inclusivity, (in)equality, animals' rights.

**Course objectives**

You will

- learn to recognise the theoretical assumptions underlying the dominant paradigms of today's global society;
- be able to analyse, evaluate, and reflect upon the complex arguments brought forward by the great thinkers studied in this course;
- enhance your critical thinking and flexibility of mind.

**Prerequisites**

N/a

**Course period 2: Modernity and Its Discontents**

Course code: MGT3001

Course Period: 2 (25 Oct 2021 - 17 Dec 2021)

ECTS credits of this course: 12

Instruction language: English

Coordinator: F.M. Doorman: [doorman@maastrichtuniversity.nl](mailto:doorman@maastrichtuniversity.nl)

Teaching methods: PBL, Lecture(s)

Assessment methods: Assignment, Written exam, Participation

**Keywords**

Individualism, Cultural Pessimism, democracy, Enlightenment, Romanticism, Egalitarianism, the Death of God, Psychoanalysis, (Post)modernism, Political Ideologies

**Full course description**

The second course will cover the emergence of new ideas that structured modern life and society up to today. Many leading ideas and principles from the political, social, and cultural world (such as political ideologies, naturalised world views, and optimism about the potential of science) as well as opposition against them can be traced to Enlightenment thinkers and Romantic views. This course will present major Western thinkers (Descartes, Locke, Voltaire, Rousseau, Kant, Tocqueville, Hegel, Marx, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Freud, Weber, Arendt) who shaped modern society and culture from the eighteenth to the twentieth century. Themes will include the rise of individualism, belief in progress, cultural pessimism, the death of God, the emergence of democratic movements, psychoanalysis, and the opposition between Western and Eastern philosophy.

**Course objectives**

You will learn about

- the intensifying processes of rationalisation that emerged during the Enlightenment;
- the opposition to these developments in the nineteenth and twentieth century, discussing such values as freedom, justice, and authenticity;
- the processes underlying the emergence of political ideologies and alternative perspectives on Western culture.

Furthermore, you will learn to analyse, evaluate, and reflect upon the complex arguments brought forward by the great thinkers studied in this course.

**Prerequisites**

N/a

**Course period 3: Great Books and Debates**

Course code: MGT3002

Course Period: 3 (3 Jan 2022 - 28 Jan 2022)

ECTS credits of this course: 6

Instruction language: English

Coordinator: M. Kardaun

Teaching methods: PBL, Lecture(s)

Assessment methods: Participation, Assignment

**Keywords**

Marxism, Darwinism, Religion, Atheism, Imperialism, Orientalism, Western versus Eastern World Views

**Full course description**

'Great Books and Debates' comprises a series of sessions in which key readings of Western culture will be read, thoroughly contextualised, and discussed in depth. You will read (excerpts from) highly influential books, such as Karl Marx's Capital, Darwin's Origin of Species, Nietzsche's Antichrist, and Edward Said's Orientalism.

**Course objectives**

You will

- recognise the background of some of the major controversies in contemporary Western culture, such as inequality versus social justice, darwinism versus religion, vitalism versus nihilism, orientalism versus occidentalism.
- learn how to analyse, evaluate, and reflect upon the complex arguments featuring in the controversies studied in this course.

**Prerequisites**

N/a