



**University of Tehran**

**Faculty of Literature & Human Science**  
(School of Letters & Humanities)

**Department of Philosophy**

*The Unfinished Project of Modernity and the Problem of Multiple Modernities*

**Course Syllabus**

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**Readings**

## Course Descriptions:

The main aims of this course are: 1. To draw a realistic, comprehensive and methodologically appropriate picture of both modernity and Multiple modernities 2. To provide students with an understanding of modernity and its problems 3. To enable students to gain critical perspective on how Multiple modernities can respond to the philosophical, political and social problems of modernity; 4. To enable students to think about the role Multiple modernities might (or might not) be able to play as a cultural resource in the modern world.

This course has been structured in two interrelated parts: Modernity and Multiple modernities, will examine some of the philosophical, political and social relationships between Modernity as an unfinished project and Multiple modernities as a phenomenon. The course will begin with some methodological issues: What is Modernity? What is "Multiple modernities"? How can these phenomena be studied? It will be suggested that few concepts have come to dominate the human sciences as much as modernity, yet there is very little agreement over what the term actually means. Modernity is a controversial concept, involved in numerous and frequently inconsistent understandings. Although modernity may variously be associated with the Renaissance, the European discovery of the New World, the Reformation, the Industrial Revolution, and many other significant ruptures with primitive or premodern society, modernity fails as an idea if it only defines itself against what it replaced.

By referring to the time frame (historical approach), causes and effects (sociological approach), and hallmarks of modern thought such as humanism, individualism, rationalism, secular moralism and progressive history, we will reach the historical conclusion that modernity can not be reduced to any of its philosophical, political and social aspects; rather, it can be said that the formation of freedom of subjectivity, the construction of the liberal state and democratic institutions, and the advent of modern economic and technological progress, comprise the three aspects of modernity. Furthermore, in its origin, modernity had two antagonistic sides: emancipatory and hegemonic. The emancipatory aspect of modernity is its aim toward civil and individual liberty, and the freedom of human subjectivity in its interpretation of the World and our place in it. The hegemonic aspect of modernity focused on colonization, economic exploitation, domination, and moral disruption. The question, therefore, is how it is possible to eliminate the hegemonic aspect of modernity within the tradition of modernity itself. Are there any sufficient potentialities or possibilities in the nature of modernity to overcome this problem? After submitting modernity to the phenomenological approach and dividing it into three aspects, the course will address the question of whether the project of Enlightenment is fundamentally flawed and historically finished, or if it is a universal message and as yet incomplete project, a still viable horizon for modern reason and historical experience.

In a similar way that we scrutinized modernity during the first half of the course, the second will examine Multiple modernities and its place in the Modern world. This section will argue that the perspective of a “plurality of modernities” is able to show that modernity may no longer be considered an unfailing progress towards final integration. Modernity should be understood as a phenomenon open to interpretations and definitions. Once modernity is viewed to be unable to unify a single society, the “universalization” of human societies under conditions of modernity must be distrusted.

In the final stage of the course, some of the most essential aspects of the concept of a “plurality of modernities” will be considered. First, a “plurality of modernities”, challenges the universalistic perspectives of history, most significantly by referring to the plurality of histories. Most philosophers and theorists of modernity have been Westerners, simply because social theory is a product of the Western experience of modernity. For the same reason, modernity has been linked with the advent of “Reason.” Viewing modernity as identical with Reason gave rise to exclusively Western-based ethnocentric social theorizings. Rationality, as an essential foundation of modernity, was seen as exceptional to the West; therefore, what seemed to be assumed was the weakness of the East in giving shape to history. In brief, a study of the “plurality of modernities” is essentially a comparative-historical investigation of modernity with a rejection of universalistic presuppositions of history. Second, the concept of a “plurality of modernities” is able to consider modernity as a civilizational phenomenon. “The civilizational perspective necessarily questions the idea of civilization in the (singouler) singular, so it is also necessary to argue for a plurality of civilizations.”

Combining resources from central texts, recent essays, and a variety of significant online resources, the course will draw from thinkers from both the non western world and the West. Throughout, the ways that non westerners have responded to modernity are considered in their historical and political contexts, to show that these are not isolated, arbitrary, disconnected or inexplicable developments. Goals for students enrolled in this course are to develop the ability to interpret texts and to think both empathetically and critically about conflicting historical claims. This course can be classified as “writing intensive”. Classes will consist of traditional lecture format, class discussion and question periods, guest lectures, and the screening of a video. Although the outline of the course and the selected materials may seem somewhat abstract, student shouldn’t be daunted. All topics will be clearly explained during the lectures and the instructor will be available during office hours and/or by arrangement to make clear any questions which may arise.

## Required Texts: Print Packets

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### Suggested Texts: (ordered by date of publication – in **bold**)

Jurgen Habermas, *The Postnational Constellation: Political Essays*. Cambridge: MIT Press, **2001**.

Venn, Couze. *Occidentalism: Modernity and Subjectivity*. Newbury Park: Sage Publications, **2001**.

Tariq Ali. *The Clash of Fundamentalisms: Crusades, Jihads and Modernity*, NYC, Verso. **2002**.

Mohammed Arkoun, *The Unthought in Contemporary Islamic Thought*, London, **2002**.  
Jurgen Habermas, *Religion and Rationality: Essays on Reason, God, and Modernity*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, **2002**.

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### Evaluation Method:

This course requires daily reading, weekly journal reflection, a short mid term paper and a final research paper. Every week except the first and the last two, students will be expected to turn in a 1-2 page summary and critical reflections of the readings they have done. On some occasions the instructor will give specific guidance as to how the students should write about the readings (e.g., compare texts a and b); otherwise, he expects straightforward summarization of the texts. Information on the mid term paper, proposal and final research paper (which will be on a topic of the student's choice, in consultation with the instructor) will be provided separately during the course.

The students are also required to turn in a statement evaluating their work along with the grade that they think is appropriate. Their self-evaluation must be submitted no later than December 6. This type-written statement should include the following:

- a. the goals they set for themselves in the course;
- b. the criteria by which they are judging their work;
- c. a description of the way in which they have achieved their goals;
- d. the grade they think appropriately rates their performance.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The idea and criteria of the self evaluation has been taken from Dr. Tavakoli's course description on Modernity and Islam

Students are expected to put together all their writing in a portfolio consisting of their weekly critical journals, mid term paper, proposal and bibliography, the final research paper and the self evaluation. The portfolio should be submitted to instructor no later than December 6, 2005.

Grades will be determined as follows:

**Grading**

10 Weekly Journals	35%
Mid Term Paper (due Oct 11)	15%
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Proposal and bibliography ( due Oct25)	10%
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Final Paper ( due Nov 29)	40%
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Self-Evaluation ( due Dec6)	5%

**Weekly schedule of classes:**

**1<sup>st</sup> Week, Sep13: Introductory meeting: Methodological issues in this course.**

**2<sup>nd</sup> Week, Sep 20: Towards a Historical Comprehensive Characterization of Modernity: Three aspect of Modernity**

Jurgen Habermas, "The Conception of Modernity" in *The Postnational Constellation: Political Essays*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2001

Agnes Heller, "The three logics of modernity and the double bind of modern imagination," <http://hi.rutgers.edu/szelenyi60/heller.html>

Jurgen Habermas, "Modernity--An Incomplete Project," in *The Anti- Aesthetic*, ed. Hal Foster, Port Townsend, WA: Bay Press, 1983

Fred W. Riggs, "The Malody of Modernity: Some Remedies", in *Asian Peace: Security and Governance in the Asia Pacific Region*, Edited by Majid Tehranian. London: I. B. Tauris, 1999.

**3<sup>rd</sup> Week, Sep 27: The philosophical pillar of Modernity: The notion of Subjectivity and its paradoxical nature**

Thelma Z. Lavine, "Philosophy and the Dialectic of Modernity" paper presentation at the *Twentieth World Congress of Philosophy*, Boston, MA, August 10-15, 1998.

Jurgen Habermas, "Modernity's consciousness of time and its need for self-reassurance," in *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures*, Tr. by Frederick Lawrence. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1987.

Seyla Benhabib, "Autonomy, Modernity, and Community: Communitarian and Critical Social Theory in Dialogues", in Axel Honneth et al. (eds), *Cultural-Political Interventions in the Unfinished Project of Enlightenment* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, Studies in Contemporary German Social Thought, 1992), pp.39-59.

**4<sup>th</sup> Week, Oct 4: The Political aspect of Modernity (Co-Originality of liberalism and democracy): is there anything beyond liberal democracy?**

Craig Browne "Deliberative democracy and late Modernity" paper presented to the Jubilee conference of the Australasian Political Studies Association Australian National University, Canberra, October 2002

Robert Taylor "Liberalism and Democracy in Habermas, Rawls, and Constant", *Humane Studies Review* Vol. 13, No. 1

Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd , " Modernity, Democracy are only for the Privileged", 2003. [http://www.qantara.de/webcom/show\\_article.php/\\_c-327/\\_nr-6/\\_p-1/i.html](http://www.qantara.de/webcom/show_article.php/_c-327/_nr-6/_p-1/i.html)

**5<sup>th</sup> Week, Oct 11: The social-economic features of Modernity: Is there any reasonable exit-option left to us from a capitalist world society today?**

Paul Harrison, "Models of modernity: capitalism, democracy and the nation-state", *TASA 2001 Conference, The University of Sydney, 13-15 December 2001*

Peter Wagner, "Modernity, capitalism and critique". Background paper to presentation at the 2002 Conference of Europeanists, Chicago, 14-16 March 2002

**6<sup>th</sup> Week, Oct 18: Can and/or should western modernity, be universalized? Or have metanarratives of "rationality", "freedom" and "progress" come to an end?**

Jason L. Powell, "Understanding Habermas: Modern solutions, Postmodern problems". [Sincronía](#). Spring, 2002.

Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar, "On Alternative Modernities", *Public Culture, Vol 11, No1*, 1999.

Charles Taylor, "Two Theories of Modernity", *Public Culture*, Vol. 11, No 1. 1999.

**7<sup>th</sup> Week, Oct 25: What is Multiple modernities ?**

Mohammed Arkoun. "The State, the Individual, and Human Rights: A Contemporary View of Muslims in a Global Context". *The Muslim Almanac: The Reference Work on History, Faith and Culture, and Peoples of Islam*. Detroit: Gale Research Inc. (1995).

Elizabeth Shakman Hurd. "Appropriating Islam: The Islamic Other in the Consolidation of Western Modernity" in *Critique: Critical Middle Eastern Studies*, Spring 2003.

[Lawrence Auster](#). "**The Search for Moderate Islam**", [FrontPageMagazine.com](#). **January 28, 2005**

Daniel Pipes. "The Search for Moderate Islam: A Reply to Lawrence Auster" *FrontPageMagazine.com*, January 28, 2005.

Asghar Ali Engineer, "ISLAM AND MODERNITY"

[http://www.dawoodi-bohras.com/perspective/isla\\_mod.htm](http://www.dawoodi-bohras.com/perspective/isla_mod.htm)

### **8<sup>th</sup> Week, Nov 8: The meaning of Human Liberation in Multiple modernities**

Muhammed Arkoun, "Democracy: A Challenge to Islamic Thought", Seminar at the CSD, University of Westminster, June 1st 1999.

Abd al-Karim Soroush, "Reason & Freedom in Islamic Thought," The CSID 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Conference. <<http://www.islam-democracy.org/SoroushAddress.shtml>>

O. Voll and John L. Esposito, "Islam's Democratic Essence," *The Middle East Quarterly* 1:3 (September 1994).

S Parvez Manzoor, "Moral Community? Islamic Political Theory and the Challenges of Modernity," Association of Muslim Social Scientists: PROCEEDINGS, Twenty First Annual Conference, Ed. by Mona M. Abul-Fadl, IIIT, Herndon, Virginia, USA, 1993.

Charles Kurzman, "[Liberal Islam: Prospects and Challenges](#)", *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, Vol. 3, No. 3, Sept. 1999.

### **10<sup>th</sup> Week, Nov 15: Multiple modernities and the Social Justice**

Nasr Abu Zayd , "The Qur'anic Concept of Justice", <http://them.polylog.org/3/fan-en.htm>

Heiner Bielefeldt, Mohammad Saeed Bahmanpour "The politics of social justice: religion versus human rights?" *Nov* 7, 2002.  
<http://www.opendemocracy.net/xml/xhtml/articles/689.html>

### **11<sup>th</sup> Week, Nov 22: Multiple modernities and Gender Issues**

Ali Shariati, "Expectations from the Muslim Woman."  
<http://www.umsl.edu/studentlife/msa/shariati/woman.html>

An interview with Dr Abdol-Karim Soroush, Contraction and Expansion of Womens Rights. <http://www.seraj.org/zanan.htm>

Camelia Entekhabi-Fard, "Behind the Veil Westerners," *Mother Jones* (May/June 2001).  
< <http://www.motherjones.com/magazine/JA01/iran.html> >  
Farhad Kazimi, "Gender, Islam, and Politics.(Iran," *Social Research* (Summer, 2000).  
[http://www.findarticles.com/cf\\_dls/m2267/2\\_67/63787339/p1/article.jhtml](http://www.findarticles.com/cf_dls/m2267/2_67/63787339/p1/article.jhtml)

Reza Afshari, "Egalitarian Islam and Misogynist Islamic Tradition: A Critique of the Feminist Reinterpretation of Islamic History and Heritage."  
<http://www.secularislam.org/women/afshari.htm>

### **12<sup>th</sup> Week, Nov 29: Iranian Revolution of 1979 and Modernity: Focus on Michel Foucault's perspective**

Janet Afary and Kevin B. Anderson, "The Seductions of Islamism: Revisiting Foucault and the Iranian Revolution", *New Politics*, vol. 10, no. 1, whole no. 37, Summer 2004.  
Mahmoud Alinejad "Coming to Terms with Modernity: Iranian intellectuals and the emerging public sphere", in *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, Vol. 13, No. 1, 2002.

Ali Rizvi "Foucault, Iran and Revolution",  
<http://foucauldians.blogspot.com/2004/10/foucault-iran-and-revolution.html>

Ian Almond "The madness of Islam: *Foucault's Occident and the Revolution in Iran*"  
[http://www.radicalphilosophy.com/default.asp?channel\\_id=2188&editorial\\_id=16578](http://www.radicalphilosophy.com/default.asp?channel_id=2188&editorial_id=16578),  
2004.

**13<sup>th</sup> Week, Habermas and His Others: The Problem of Multiple Enlightenments and the Quest for the Plurality of Modernities**

**14<sup>th</sup> Week, Dec 6: Final and Concluding Meeting; Multiple modernities and the Unfinished Project of Modernity: Contradictions and Agreements**



Asghar Ali Engineer, Muslims, Modernity, and Change, (June 1-15, 2000).  
<[http://www.csss-islam.com/archive/2000/june1\\_15.htm](http://www.csss-islam.com/archive/2000/june1_15.htm)>

Mohamad Tavakoli-Targhi, "The Homeless Texts of Persianate Modernity", *Cultural Dynamics* 13(3): 263-291.  
<http://www.history.ilstu.edu/mtavakol/academic/courses/378/Homeless-texts.htm>

Seyyed Hossein Nasr, "Reflections on Islam and Modern Life," *Al-Serat* Vol. 4, No. 1  
<http://www.al-islam.org/al-serat/reflect-nasr.htm>

Parvez Manzoor, "Islam and the Crisis of Modernity"  
<<http://www.algonet.se/~pmanzoor/Isl-Cris-Mod-PM.htm>>

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## Quotes

- . . .it is not just a surface matter of nomenclature whether we look at the present age as the end of modern times, or whether we discern that today the perhaps protracted process of the consummation of modern times is *just starting*.

Martin Heidegger, 'What is Called Thinking?' (1968)

- . . . the passing of the Modern Age and the recognition of its passing are . . .at times so close as to be almost simultaneous.

John Lucas, *The Passing of the Modern Age* (1970)

- . . .modernity is for us an unsurpassable horizon in a cognitive, moral and aesthetic sense. . .the critique of modernity has been part of the modern spirit since its very inception.

Albrecht Wellmer, *The Persistence of Modernity* (1991)

- . . .the risk is . . .that pronouncements of the end of the modern period will prove to be further symptoms of modernity, and so self-refuting.

John Gray, 'Enlightenment's Wake' (1996)

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**Additional references** (Note: this list is provided for information only.)

**Part A: Modernity** (on the persistence/survival or end of modernity)

Agnes Heller, *Can Modernity Survive?*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990.

Albrecht Wellmer, *The Persistence of Modernity: Essays on Aesthetics, Ethics, and Postmodernism*, trans. by David Midgley, Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, Studies in Contemporary German Social Thought, 1991.

Bauman, Z (1989) *Modernity and the Holocaust*, Cambridge: Polity.

Benhabib, S (1986), *Critique, Norm, and Utopia: A Study of the Foundations of Critical Theory*, New York: Columbia University Press.

Bernstein, R (1985) (Ed.) *Habermas and Modernity*, Cambridge: Polity.

Brand, A (1990) *The Force of Reason*, London: Allen Unwin.

Brenner, W.H (1989) *Elements in Modern Philosophy*, London: Prentice Hall.

Carr, D. (1999). *The Paradox of Subjectivity: The Self in the Transcendental Tradition*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Chaoone, L.E. (1987). *The Dilemma of Modernity: Philosophy, Culture and Anti Culture*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Dallmayer, F. (1993). *G.W.F Hegel: Modernity and Politics*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Dworkin, G.(1990). *The Theory and Practice of Autonomy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ferguson, H. (2000). *Modernity and Subjectivity: Body, Soul, Spirit*. Virginia: The University Press of Virginia.

Foucault, M (1977) *Discipline and Punish*, London: Tavistok.

Gane, M. (1981) *Baudrillard*, London: Routledge.

Gilroy, P (1992) *Black Atlantic*, London: Hutchinson.

Habermas, J (1992) *Postmetaphysical Thinking*, Cambridge: Polity.

Habermas, J. (1981). *The Theory of Communicative Action. Vol.1. Reason and the Rationalization of the Society*. Boston: Boston Press.

Habermas, J. (1987). *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures*. Cambridge: MIT Press.

Habermas, J. 'Modernity: An Incomplete Project', in Hal Foster (ed.), *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture* (Port Townsend, Wash.: Bay Press, 1983), pp. 3-15.

Hegel, G.W.F. (1967). *Philosophy of Right*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Horkheimer, M and Adorno, T (1949). *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Allen Unwin

Jameson, F. *Singular Modernity*. (London: Verso, 2002).

Lucas, J. *The Passing of the Modern Age*. (New York: Harper & Row, 1970).

Kellner, D. (1989) *Critical Theory, Marxism, and Modernity*, Cambridge: Polity.

Kolb, D. (1986). *The Critique of Pure Modernity: Hegel, Heidegger and after*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Lee, R. D. (1997). *Overcoming Tradition and Modernity: The Search for Islamic Authenticity*. Boulder: Westview Press.

Leszek Kolakowski, 'Modernity on Endless Trial', in *Modernity on Endless Trial* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1990), pp. 3-13.

Levin, D (1993) (Ed.) *Modernity and Hegemony of Vision*, California: University of California Press.

Lyotard, J-F. (1984) *The Postmodern Condition*, Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Martin Albrow, *The Global Age: State and Society Beyond Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996).

McCarthy, T (1978) *The Critical Theory of Jurgen Habermas*, London: Hutchinson

Mestrovic, S (1993) *The Barbarian Temperament*, London: Routledge.

Oliver, K. (1998). *Subjectivity without Subjects. From Abject Fathers to Desiring Mothers*. Boston: Rowman and Littlefield,

Powell, J.L (2001) 'Aging and Social Theory: A Sociological Review', *Social Science Paper Publisher*, 4, 2, pp.1-13 (available on-line at [sspp.net](http://sspp.net)).

Rasmussen, D (1990) *Reading Habermas*, London: Blackwell.

Roderick, R (1986) *Habermas and the Foundations of Critical Theory*, London: Macmillan.

Stanley, L and Pateman, C (1991) *Feminist Interpretations and Political Theory*, Cambridge: Polity.

Taylor, C.H. (1979). *Hegel and Modern Society*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Vattimo, Gianni. *The End of Modernity: Nihilism and Hermeneutics in Postmodern Culture* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988).

Venn, C. (2001). *Occidentalism: Modernity and Subjectivity*. Newbury Park: Sage Publications.

### **Part 2: On Multiple Modernities**

Ali, Tariq, *The Clash of Fundamentalisms: Crusades, Jihads and Modernity*, NYC, Verso, 2002.

Cole, Juan R.I. and Nikki R. Keddie (ed.), *Shiism and Social Protest*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1986.

Esposito, John L. *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Multiple modernities ic World*, 4 Vols. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1995.

Geertz, Clifford, *Islam Observed. New Haven*, 1968.

Keddie, Nikki R., *Roots of revolution : an interpretive history of modern Iran*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1981.

Lee, R.D. *Overcoming Tradition and Modernity: The Search for Islamic Authenticity*. Boulder: West view Press. 1997.

Levin, D (1993) (Ed.) *Modernity and Hegemony of Vision*, California: University of California Press.

Lewis, Bernard, *The Multiple Identities of the Middle East*, NYC, Schocken Books, 2001.

Lewis, Bernard, *What Went Wrong, Western Impact and Middle Eastern Response*, NYC, Oxford Univ. Press, 2001.

Tibi, Bassam, *The Challenge of Fundamentalism: Political Islam and the New World Disorder*, University of California Press, 2002.