Smith, Rousseau and Kant: Moral and Political Philosophy
Prof. C. Wilson
CUNY GC Fall 2016
6:30-8:30 Tuesdays
Rm. 7314
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Phone: 301-747-5975 (from 21 August)
Office hours: Tuesday 4:30-6:30 and other times by arrangement.

Description
This is a seminar in 18th century Enlightenment moral and political philosophy. The main foci will be: (1) Adam Smith’s attempt to understand morality from a psychological and social perspective; (2) the anthropological approach to human nature and human culture and Rousseau’s civilisation critique; and (3) Kant’s resistance to both movements, as seen in his return to metaphysical foundations for morality, his belief in an inherent teleology to nature; and his commitment to a European ‘civilising’ mission. Finally, for comparison between the German ‘moderate’ Enlightenment and the Franco-Scottish ‘radical’ Enlightenment, we will look at just two representatives of the latter, the Marquis de Condorcet and Charles Fourier.

Readings
Here are the main primary texts we will use:


As we will read substantial portions of these texts, you are encouraged to purchase them outright and bring them to the seminar. They should be available used. If you find them for free on the Internet, be sure to print them out, as I ask you not to bring laptops, phones, iPads, etc. into the seminar room. If you use other editions you may want to repaginate them according to the above, so as to be able to find passages under discussion quickly.

I will also email you pdfs as needed of excerpts from the following:

Bernard Mandeville, *The Grumbling Hive*, Liberty Fund, Indianapolis,
Jean-Antoine-Nicolas de Caritat, Marquis de Condorcet, ‘The Future Progress of Mankind,’ from the *Sketch for a Historical Picture of the Progress of the Human Mind* (Paris, 1795)
Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*; ‘What is Enlightenment;’ and ‘Perpetual Peace,’

I will also email, most weeks, articles from the secondary literature. You are not expected to read all of everything, but they are there as a resource and it is good practice to engage with as many as you can of them and bring them up in discussion.

**Format**
20- minutes of overview followed by general discussion.

**Requirements**
1) Please bring a short (maximum 500 words) piece of writing on the text to be discussed to each meeting starting in the 2nd week. It should pick out a claim made explicitly or implicitly made by the philosopher and identify the position being argued against. Then, give some preliminary thoughts as to the tenability of the philosopher’s position. This will be read and commented upon but not marked.
2) Oct. 25th: Brief seminar discussion of one of your short pieces (amended as you like) which you circulate to everyone the week before.
3) Final Paper. 5,000 words maximum on any relevant theme—should involve original research. Topic to be checked with me if at all doubtful.

**TIMETABLE (Provisional)**

**Week 1—Aug. 30th**
Background Concepts and Movements: Stoicism, Epicureanism, Virtue, Utility
Reading: Mandeville, ‘The Grumbling Hive’

**Week 2—Sept 6th**
Adam Smith, *Theory of Moral Sentiments*: Sympathy
Reading: PART I: Sects. I and II, pp. 13-54
Secondary: Sayre-McCord – ‘Sentiments and Spectators’

**Week 3—Sept. 13th**
Reading: PART I: Sect. III; pp. 55-78 and PART II: Sects I-III; pp. 81-129
Secondary: Shaver—‘Virtues, Utility and Rules’

**Week 4—Sept. 20th**
Smith, *Theory of Moral Sentiments*: Impartial Spectator
Secondary: Broadie –‘Sympathy and the Impartial Spectator’

**Week 5—Sept. 27 NO CLASS (POSTPONED)**

**Week 6—Oct. 4th NO CLASS (OFFICIAL HOLIDAY)**

**Week 7—Oct. 11th—MAKE UP CLASS**
Adam Smith, Civil Society, Division of Labour and Comparative Advantage
Secondary: Rothschild and Sen— ‘Adam Smith’s Economics’

--- Oct. 14th – RESCHEDULED HOLIDAY CLASS

Rousseau, The Civilised Animal
Reading: *Discourse on the Origins of Inequality*, Epistle Dedicatory; Preface, Part I (with Notes); Buffon, ‘Natural History of Man,’ from the *Histoire Naturelle*; Ch. V. pp. 53-84

**Week 8—Oct. 18th**
Rousseau, The Civilised Animal
Reading: *Discourse on the Origins of Inequality*, Part II (with Notes); Lucretius, *On the Nature of Things* - Book V
Secondary: West— ‘Adam Smith and Rousseau’

**Week 9—Oct. 25th**
Reserved for Short Presentations followed by Drinks

**Week 10—Nov 1st**
Kant, Critique of Herder and Rousseau
Secondary: Wilson- ‘Leibniz’s Reputation Kant and Herder’

**Week 11—Nov. 8th**
Kant, Critique of Herder and Rousseau and Theory of ‘Race’
Reading: ‘Conjectural Beginnings of Human History,’ and ‘Determination of the Concept of a Human Race;’ *Anthropology*, pp. 160-175 and 143-159
Secondary: Wilson – ‘Kant on Civilisation, Culture and Moralisation’

**Week 12—Nov. 15th**
Kant’s Teleology
Secondary: Kleingeld- ‘Kant’s Second Thoughts on Colonialism’

**Week 13—Nov. 22nd**
Kant on the Metaphysics of Morals
Reading: *Groundwork* Bk I: Chs. I and II.
Herman – ‘The Motive of Duty’

**Week 14—Nov. 29th**
Kant on Social Progress: The Moderate Enlightenment
Reading: ‘What is Enlightenment,’ and ‘Perpetual Peace,’
Habermas— ‘Kant’s Idea of Perpetual Peace’

**Week 15—Dec. 6th**
Condorcet and Fourier: The Radical Enlightenment
Reading: ‘The Future Progress of Mankind,’ and ‘Domestic Morality’.

Saturday December 10th – Miniconference of 20-minute Presentations