

The University of Shanghai

Shanghai Jiao-Tong Joint Institute

**VR 275: THE WESTERN MIND IN REVOLUTION:**

**SIX REINTERPRETATIONS OF THE HUMAN CONDITION  
(Copernicus, Luther, Darwin, Marx, Freud, Einstein)**

May 11- July 28., 2015

Tuesday, Thursday (12:10 – 13:50 pm))

Frederick Peters

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will treat six major ^interpretations of the human condition from the 16th to the 20th centuries generated by intellectual revolutions in astronomy (Copernicus: the heliocentric theory) theology (Luther: the Reformation), biology (Darwin: evolution of the species), sociology (Marx: Communism), psychology (Freud: psychoanalysis), and physics (Einstein: the theory of relativity).

All six reinterpretations initiated a profound reevaluation of Western man's concept of the self as well as a reassessment of the nature and function of his/her political and social institutions. Since each of these revolutions arose in direct opposition to some of the most central and firmly accepted doctrines of their respective ages, we will study:

- 1) how each thinker perceived the particular "truth" he sought to communicate;
- 2) the problems entailed in expressing and communicating these truths; and
- 3) the traumatic nature of the psychological upheaval caused by these cataclysmic transitions from the past to the future—both on the personal and cultural level.

If the function of humanistic education is to enable the individual to see where he/she stands in today's maelstrom of conflicting intellectual and cultural currents, it is first necessary to see where others have stood and what positions were abandoned. The emphasis of this course will not be upon truths finally revealed or upon problems forever abandoned, but rather upon certain quite definite perspectives that, arising out of specific historical contexts, at once solved a few often technical problems within a specialized discipline while unexpectedly creating many new ones for Western culture as a whole.

Texts: COPERNICUS, On the Revolution of the Heavenly Bodies (1543); LUTHER, The Freedom of a Christian (1520); DARWIN, The Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection (1859); MARX, Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts (1844), The Manifesto of the Communist Party (1848), Hegel's Philosophy of Right (1842), The German Ideology (1845); FREUD, Five Lectures on Psychoanalysis (1909); The Future of an Illusion (1927) Civilization and Its Discontents (1930); EINSTEIN, Relativity: the Special and the General Theory (1905-1916) Science and Religion (1950)

# **THE BOOK LIST**

## **ONE**

### **Medieval Astronomy to Modern Physics**

1. Theories of the Universe, ed. Milton K. Munitz (The Free Press)
2. Man and the Universe, (University Press of America)

## **TWO**

### **Religious and Political Revolutions**

3. Martin Luther, ed. John Dillenberger (Doubleday Anchor)
4. The Marx-Engels Reader, ed. R. Tucker (Norton)

## **THREE**

### **Redefinitions of the Human Body and Mind**

5. Darwin, The Origin of Species (Signet)
6. Freud, Five Lectures on Psychoanalysis (Norton)  
The Future of an Illusion (Norton)  
Civilization and Its Discontents (Norton)

# **THE READINGS SCHEDULE**

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## **ONE**

### ***PRE-COPERNICUS***

(The following 5 selections are from Theories of the Universe)

1. General Introduction, pp. 1-2
2. First Steps in Cosmological Speculation: Introduction, pp. 5-7
3. The Classic View of a Geocentric Finite Universe, Introduction, pp.61-66

### ***COPERNICUS***

1. Introduction, pp. 141-145
2. On the Revolutions of the Heavenly Spheres, pp. 149-173

(The following 6 selections are from Man and the Universe)

3. Sketch of His Hypotheses for the Heavenly Motions, pp 94-96
4. The Conservatism of Copernicus, Herbert Butterfield, pp. 41-55
5. The Downfall of Aristotle and Ptolemy, Herbert Butterfield, pp. 56-69

### ***GALILEO***

1. The Starry Messenger, pp. 129-165

### ***EINSTEIN***

1. The Special and General Theory of Relativity, pp. 295-314
2. Science and Religion, pp. 323-332

# **TWO**

## *LUTHER*

### **I. The Freedom of a Christian (1520)**

*MARX*

- I. Working-Class Manchester (Engels) (1844)**
- Manifesto of the Communist Party (1848)**
- Marx on the History of His Opinions (1859)**
- For a Ruthless Criticism of Everything Existing (1844)**
- Hegel's Philosophy of Right (1843)**

### **II. The German Ideology**

- Theses on Feuerbach (1845), pp. 143-145**
- On Morality (Engels), (1878) pp.725 – 727**
- Socialism: Utopian and Scientific (Engels)**

### **III. Economic and Philosophic Ms. (1844)**

**Speech at the Graveside of Karl Marx (Engels) (1883), pp. 681-682**

**Robert Tucker, The Marx–Engels Reader, Introduction xix - xxxviii**

# **THREE**

## *DARWIN*

### **The Origin of Species by Means of Natural (1859)**

**Introduction**

**Chapter One: Variation under Domestication**

**Chapter Two: Variation under Nature**

**Chapter Three: Struggle for Existence**

**Chapter Four: Natural Selection**

**Chapter Six: Difficulties on Theory**

**Chapter Fourteen: Recapitulation and Conclusion**

*FREUD*

- 1. Five Lectures on Psychoanalysis (1909)**
- 2. The Future of an Illusion (1927)**
- 3. Civilization and Its Discontents, (1930) Chapters 1-5 (pp. 11- 63)**



## Lecture and Class Schedule

- 1. May 12: Introduction**
- 2. May 14: The Pre-Socratic Philosophers; Plato/Aristotle**
- 3. May 19: Ptolemy/Dante and the Medieval Christian Cosmology**
- 4. May 21: Copernicus and the Cultural Reaction**
- 5. May 26: Galileo**
- 6. May 28: Einstein (1)**
- 7. June 2: Einstein (2)**
- 8. June 4: Luther (1)**
- 9. June 9: Luther (2)**
  
- 10. June 11: Intern's Review(Copernicus, Galileo, Einstein, Luther)**
- 11. June 16: Midterm Examination**
  
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- 12. June 18: Marx (1)**
- 13. June 23: Marx (2)**
- 14. June 25: Marx (3)**
  
- 15. June 30: Darwin (1)**
- 16. July 2: Darwin (2)**
- 17. July 7: Darwin (3); Creationism and Intelligent Design**
  
- 18. July 9: Freud (1)**
- 19. July 14: Freud (2)**
- 20. July 16: Freud (3)**
  
- 21. July 21: Intern's review (Marx, Darwin and Freud)**
- 22. July 23: Marx vs. Freud**
  
- 23. July 28: Final Examination**