

GERM/PWAD 283

Spring 2018

Freedom and Terror:

Modern Philosophy from Kant to Arendt

What can I know? What ought I to do? What might I hope?

In the face of the challenges of modernity and the catastrophes of history—a history indelibly stained with terror, violence, and genocide—human beings often appear woefully incapable of answering these questions. This course will examine philosophical texts from the 18th- to the 20th-century that outline possibilities for human agency. We will particularly examine conceptions of agency as they unfold in states of danger, when human beings are faced with terror, oppressed by totalitarian or problematic political structures, or continually confronted with the threat of violence. Some of the questions we will be asking include: what is freedom, how is it possible, and why is it valuable? What is the nature of commitment, and how do we evaluate commitments that give us identities? How do we confront evil? What is political action and what intellectual and cultural resources do we have to prevent lapses into political and ethical barbarism? We will read texts by Immanuel Kant, G. W. F. Hegel, Søren Kierkegaard, and Hannah Arendt as well as a novel by Hans Fallada.

Gen Eds: PH, NA . No background in philosophy is necessary. Readings and Lectures in English. Lectures M/W 2:30 - 3:20; Recitations on Friday. Dr Gabriel Trop

