



# PHIL704

## Research Topics in Modern European Philosophy

S2 Day 2015

*Dept of Philosophy*

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#### **Disclaimer**

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## General Information

Unit convenor and teaching staff

Michael Olson

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W6A Room 723

Credit points

4

Prerequisites

Admission to MRes

Corequisites

Co-badged status

Unit description

The unit will examine contemporary research in the field of Modern European Philosophy. Examples of areas to be explored include recent developments in the Frankfurt School tradition of Critical Theory (especially the 'recognition' paradigm), theories of subjectivity and intersubjectivity, and recent developments in French Philosophy (especially aesthetics). The unit will revolve around a current 'hot' topic of research in this area. Students will be brought up to speed on this topic so that they are in a position to begin to pursue their own research project.

## Important Academic Dates

Information about important academic dates including deadlines for withdrawing from units are available at <https://www.mq.edu.au/study/calendar-of-dates>

## Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of this unit, you will be able to:

Acquire a coherent and advanced knowledge of the history of modern philosophical materialism.

Synthesise and analyse key concepts, arguments, and intellectual contexts the history of modern materialism.

Articulate clearly and coherently philosophical arguments in written and oral form.

Analyse and critically evaluate philosophical arguments and their application to contemporary social issues.

Apply acquired knowledge and skills in the context of philosophical scholarship.

Work in cooperation with others and reflect on individual and group performance to identify opportunities for improvement.

## Assessment Tasks

Name	Weighting	Due
<u>Research essay</u>	75%	Week 13
<u>Class presentation</u>	10%	throughout semester
<u>Seminar attendance</u>	15%	throughout semester

### Research essay

Due: **Week 13**

Weighting: **75%**

3000-5000 word research essay

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Acquire a coherent and advanced knowledge of the history of modern philosophical materialism.
- Synthesise and analyse key concepts, arguments, and intellectual contexts the history of modern materialism.
- Articulate clearly and coherently philosophical arguments in written and oral form.
- Analyse and critically evaluate philosophical arguments and their application to contemporary social issues.
- Apply acquired knowledge and skills in the context of philosophical scholarship.

### Class presentation

Due: **throughout semester**

Weighting: **10%**

Oral presentation on a given topic

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Articulate clearly and coherently philosophical arguments in written and oral form.
- Apply acquired knowledge and skills in the context of philosophical scholarship.
- Work in cooperation with others and reflect on individual and group performance to identify opportunities for improvement.

## Seminar attendance

Due: **throughout semester**

Weighting: **15%**

weekly attendance and participation in seminar discussion

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Acquire a coherent and advanced knowledge of the history of modern philosophical materialism.
- Articulate clearly and coherently philosophical arguments in written and oral form.
- Work in cooperation with others and reflect on individual and group performance to identify opportunities for improvement.

## Delivery and Resources

In the nineteenth century, materialism both came into its own and became particularly interesting. ‘Materialism’ and ‘materialist’—rhetorical slurs deployed alongside ‘atheist,’ ‘fatalist,’ and ‘heretic,’ and ‘Spinozist’—were terms of abuse in early modern philosophy. A new attitude emerged in the nineteenth century, however. In certain quarters of German intellectual life during this period, we find sharp criticisms of authors and texts for *not being materialist enough*. In addition to marking an important shift in the broader anxieties concerning materialist, naturalist, and empiricist explanations, debates about whether someone’s position is sufficiently or properly materialist indicates a multiplication of conceptions of what materialism is or should be.

When criticizing a thinker for being insufficiently materialist becomes a proxy for criticizing her for her philosophical errors, the nature of materialism itself becomes a philosophical question.

Two areas of contemporary philosophical work suggest that reflection on the history of materialism in modern European philosophy is timely. First, materialism is the order of the day among philosophers who study the nature and functions of the mind. Beneath this broad consensus, however, there is a profusion of competing materialisms: reductive, non-reductive, eliminative, anomalous, etc. Second, as the credibility of Marxist dialectical materialism eroded in the second half of the twentieth century, a number of European philosophers have revisited the question of how to articulate the contours of a materialist philosophy that recognizes the weaknesses of its historical forebears. Though many of us agree that materialism is in one way or another true, it’s less than clear what makes materialism materialist in the first place.

This unit approaches this contemporary confusion obliquely, through an engagement with some of the defining moments of the modern history of European materialism. More specifically, we will consider three moments in the history of early modern European materialism: eighteenth-century *medical materialism*, which attempted to reduce the soul to the material structures and functions of the body, Feuerbach’s *anthropological materialism*, which proposes a more humane and comprehensive account of human life rooted in sensation, and the Marxian *socio-historical materialism*, which brings the historical contingency and development of the socio-political

features of human life to the fore.

The unit will be delivered by way of weekly seminars.

The main texts will be provided through the unit's iLearn space.

Further references and sources will be provided during the semester.

## Unit Schedule

<b>Week 1</b>	<b>Introduction</b>  Aims of the unit: What is materialism? Why an historical approach to materialism? Wh  Unit structure and content: the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries  Assignments; allocation of seminar presentations
<b>Week 2</b>	<b>17th Century Background</b>  <u>Readings:</u>  Descartes, <i>Discourse on Method</i>  Descartes, from <i>The Treatise on Man</i>
<b>Week 3</b>	<b>17th Century Background</b>  <u>Reading:</u>  La Mettrie, <i>Man Machine</i>
<b>Week 4</b>	<b>17th Century Background</b>  <u>Reading:</u>  Diderot, "D'Alembert's Dream"
<b>Week 5</b>	<b>Feuerbach</b>  <u>Reading:</u>  Feuerbach, from <i>The Essence of Christianity</i>
<b>Week 6</b>	<b>Feuerbach</b>  <u>Readings:</u>  Feuerbach, "On 'The Beginning of Philosophy'"  Feuerbach, "The Necessity of a Reform of Philosophy"  Feuerbach, "Preliminary Theses on the Reform of Philosophy"
<b>Week 7</b>	<b>Feuerbach</b>  <u>Reading:</u>  Feuerbach, <i>Principles of the Philosophy of the Future</i>
	<b>Mid-semester Break</b>

Week 8	<b>Feuerbach</b> <u>Reading:</u> Feuerbach, <i>Principles of the Philosophy of the Future</i>
Week 9	<b>Marx</b> <u>Reading:</u> Marx, "Theses on Feuerbach" Marx, from <i>Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts</i>
Week 10	<b>Marx</b> <u>Reading:</u> Marx, from <i>The German Ideology</i>
Week 11	<b>Marx</b> <u>Reading:</u> Marx, from <i>The Holy Family</i>
Week 12	<b>Engels</b> <u>Reading:</u> Engels, <i>Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy</i>
Week 13	Review

## Policies and Procedures

Macquarie University policies and procedures are accessible from [Policy Central](#). Students should be aware of the following policies in particular with regard to Learning and Teaching:

Academic Honesty Policy [http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/academic\\_honesty/policy.html](http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/academic_honesty/policy.html)

Assessment Policy <http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/assessment/policy.html>

Grading Policy <http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/grading/policy.html>

Grade Appeal Policy <http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/gradeappeal/policy.html>

Grievance Management Policy [http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/grievance\\_management/policy.html](http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/grievance_management/policy.html)

Disruption to Studies Policy [http://www.mq.edu.au/policy/docs/disruption\\_studies/policy.html](http://www.mq.edu.au/policy/docs/disruption_studies/policy.html) *The Disruption to Studies Policy is effective from March 3 2014 and replaces the Special Consideration Policy.*

In addition, a number of other policies can be found in the [Learning and Teaching Category](#) of Policy Central.

## Student Code of Conduct

Macquarie University students have a responsibility to be familiar with the Student Code of

Conduct: [https://students.mq.edu.au/support/student\\_conduct/](https://students.mq.edu.au/support/student_conduct/)

## Results

Results shown in *iLearn*, or released directly by your Unit Convenor, are not confirmed as they are subject to final approval by the University. Once approved, final results will be sent to your student email address and will be made available in [eStudent](#). For more information visit [ask.mq.edu.au](#).

### Extensions and special consideration

#### Extensions and Penalties

All work must be submitted on time unless an extension has been granted. Requests for extensions must be made in writing (including email) BEFORE the due date and will only be considered on serious grounds. Extensions will not be given unless good reasons and appropriate evidence (e.g., medical certificates, counsellor's letters) are presented at the earliest opportunity. Please note that work due concurrently in other subjects is NOT an exceptional circumstance and does not constitute a legitimate reason for an extension.

If the assessment is submitted after the due date and an extension has not been granted then the work will be graded normally (out of 100). For each day the work is late 5% will be deducted from the grade. For example, if the work was graded as 70/100 and was handed in 2 days late, the work would receive a mark of 60/100. If the work is not submitted within ten days after the due date then the work will receive a mark of 0 for that assessment item. Weekends, but not public holidays, count in the calculation of late penalties.

#### Special Consideration Policy

[http://www.mq.edu.au/policy/docs/special\\_consideration/policy.html](http://www.mq.edu.au/policy/docs/special_consideration/policy.html)

#### Applying for Special Consideration

Students applying for Special Consideration circumstances of three (3) consecutive days duration, within a study period, and/or prevent completion of a formal examination must submit an on-line application with the Faculty of Arts. For an application to be valid, it must include a completed Application for Special Consideration form and all supporting documentation.

The online Special Consideration application is found at:

[http://www.arts.mq.edu.au/current\\_students/undergraduate/admin\\_central/special\\_consideration](http://www.arts.mq.edu.au/current_students/undergraduate/admin_central/special_consideration).

## Student Support

Macquarie University provides a range of support services for students. For details, visit <http://students.mq.edu.au/support/>

## Learning Skills

Learning Skills ([mq.edu.au/learningskills](http://mq.edu.au/learningskills)) provides academic writing resources and study strategies to improve your marks and take control of your study.

- [Workshops](#)
- [StudyWise](#)
- [Academic Integrity Module for Students](#)
- [Ask a Learning Adviser](#)

## Student Services and Support

Students with a disability are encouraged to contact the [Disability Service](#) who can provide appropriate help with any issues that arise during their studies.

## Student Enquiries

For all student enquiries, visit Student Connect at [ask.mq.edu.au](http://ask.mq.edu.au)

## IT Help

For help with University computer systems and technology, visit <http://informatics.mq.edu.au/help/>.

When using the University's IT, you must adhere to the [Acceptable Use Policy](#). The policy applies to all who connect to the MQ network including students.

## Graduate Capabilities

### PG - Capable of Professional and Personal Judgment and Initiative

Our postgraduates will demonstrate a high standard of discernment and common sense in their professional and personal judgment. They will have the ability to make informed choices and decisions that reflect both the nature of their professional work and their personal perspectives.

This graduate capability is supported by:

### Learning outcomes

- Articulate clearly and coherently philosophical arguments in written and oral form.
- Analyse and critically evaluate philosophical arguments and their application to contemporary social issues.
- Work in cooperation with others and reflect on individual and group performance to identify opportunities for improvement.

### Assessment task

- Seminar attendance



## PG - Discipline Knowledge and Skills

Our postgraduates will be able to demonstrate a significantly enhanced depth and breadth of knowledge, scholarly understanding, and specific subject content knowledge in their chosen fields.

This graduate capability is supported by:

### Learning outcomes

- Acquire a coherent and advanced knowledge of the history of modern philosophical materialism.
- Apply acquired knowledge and skills in the context of philosophical scholarship.

### Assessment task

- Research essay

## PG - Critical, Analytical and Integrative Thinking

Our postgraduates will be capable of utilising and reflecting on prior knowledge and experience, of applying higher level critical thinking skills, and of integrating and synthesising learning and knowledge from a range of sources and environments. A characteristic of this form of thinking is the generation of new, professionally oriented knowledge through personal or group-based critique of practice and theory.

This graduate capability is supported by:

### Learning outcomes

- Acquire a coherent and advanced knowledge of the history of modern philosophical materialism.
- Synthesise and analyse key concepts, arguments, and intellectual contexts the history of modern materialism.
- Apply acquired knowledge and skills in the context of philosophical scholarship.

### Assessment task

- Research essay

## PG - Research and Problem Solving Capability

Our postgraduates will be capable of systematic enquiry; able to use research skills to create new knowledge that can be applied to real world issues, or contribute to a field of study or practice to enhance society. They will be capable of creative questioning, problem finding and problem solving.

This graduate capability is supported by:

## Learning outcomes

- Acquire a coherent and advanced knowledge of the history of modern philosophical materialism.
- Synthesise and analyse key concepts, arguments, and intellectual contexts the history of modern materialism.

## Assessment task

- Research essay

## PG - Effective Communication

Our postgraduates will be able to communicate effectively and convey their views to different social, cultural, and professional audiences. They will be able to use a variety of technologically supported media to communicate with empathy using a range of written, spoken or visual formats.

This graduate capability is supported by:

## Learning outcomes

- Synthesise and analyse key concepts, arguments, and intellectual contexts the history of modern materialism.
- Articulate clearly and coherently philosophical arguments in written and oral form.
- Work in cooperation with others and reflect on individual and group performance to identify opportunities for improvement.

## Assessment tasks

- Class presentation
- Seminar attendance

## PG - Engaged and Responsible, Active and Ethical Citizens

Our postgraduates will be ethically aware and capable of confident transformative action in relation to their professional responsibilities and the wider community. They will have a sense of connectedness with others and country and have a sense of mutual obligation. They will be able to appreciate the impact of their professional roles for social justice and inclusion related to national and global issues

This graduate capability is supported by:

## Learning outcomes

- Analyse and critically evaluate philosophical arguments and their application to contemporary social issues.
- Work in cooperation with others and reflect on individual and group performance to

identify opportunities for improvement.

## **Changes from Previous Offering**

The topic of the unit has changed from the critical theory of Honneth and Rancière to the history of modern philosophical materialism (with a particular focus on 19th century German philosophy).