PHL 254
Freedom and Domination
S1 External 2016
Dept of Philosophy

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General Information

Unit convenor and teaching staff
Convenor
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Contact via Email
To be advised
To be advised

Dr Michael Olson
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Credit points
3

Prerequisites
12cp or admission to GDipArts

Corequisites

Co-badged status

Unit description
The term 'freedom' is frequently used today, but what does the concept of freedom really mean? Is there more freedom in modern liberal societies than in other forms of society? If so, does this make them better? Is it always a good thing to increase individual freedom? Or does the pursuit of freedom in the modern world have individual and social costs that outweigh the benefits? In a world that often deploys the concept of 'freedom' for various political or ideological ends, should we rethink the meaning of the value of freedom? This unit explores these questions by investigating the modern conception of freedom and its 'dark' or other side, the experience of alienation. We begin by examining the emergence of the Enlightenment conception of freedom as moral and individual autonomy (Kant), exploring important criticisms of individualist notions of autonomy and analyses of the social and political conditions of freedom (Hegel). We then examine various radical critiques of modern society that challenge the claim that modern individuals are genuinely free, focussing on the problem of alienation in modern social, economic, and political life (Marx). Finally, we explore the crisis of meaning in modern culture, asking whether modernity can provide adequate forms of social and cultural meaning in response to the crises afflicting the value of freedom (Nietzsche).
Important Academic Dates

Information about important academic dates including deadlines for withdrawing from units are available at [http://students.mq.edu.au/student_admin/enrolmentguide/academicdates/](http://students.mq.edu.au/student_admin/enrolmentguide/academicdates/)

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**Learning Outcomes**

1. By the end of this unit, you will possess a well-developed understanding of philosophical problems of "freedom" and it's opposite, "domination" (or "alienation"). This understanding will be integrated with broader social, cultural and political debates.

2. In completing this unit, you will have obtained advanced skills in the analysis, evaluation and reconstruction of arguments and theories, particularly those that concern "social-political" and "moral" life.

3. By the end of this unit, you will also have honed and developed your "interpersonal skills" of clear communication, collaboration with peers, time-management, and making and receiving constructive feedback. These skills will approach a professional level of expectation.

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**Assessment Tasks**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Weighting</th>
<th>Due</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What do you already know?</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>Weeks 3 and 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly Learning Activities</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>Weeks 5-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Research Report</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>Tuesday June 14, 9am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Community</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>Throughout semester</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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**What do you already know?**

**Due:** **Weeks 3 and 4**  
**Weighting:** **10%**

In the first two weeks, we will evaluate what you already know about freedom, domination, and other related ideas. We will connect your existing knowledge to our topic of freedom through two short reports concerned with the concepts and arguments that have been introduced following the first two tutorials. You will receive feedback within a few days on each report.

This Assessment Task relates to the following Learning Outcomes:

- By the end of this unit, you will also have honed and developed your "interpersonal skills" of clear communication, collaboration with peers, time-management, and making
and receiving constructive feedback. These skills will approach a professional level of expectation.

Weekly Learning Activities

Due: **Weeks 5-12**
Weighting: **30%**

Each week for weeks 5-12, small activities on the key concepts, theories, and texts concerning freedom will be set. Lectures and tutorials will be designed around preparing for each of these activities in a collaborative environment, providing you with a chance to road-test your ideas and learn from each other, as well as mastering the reading material and arguments being presented. **Types of activities** may include: blog posts, argument outlines, conceptual definitions, essay plans, library reports and more. **Feedback** will be given weekly on every completed activity. **Lecture and tutorial engagement** are expected as a part of your preparation. **External students** will complete the same activities, with the preparation activity adjusted to suit the demands of engaging with learning online.

This Assessment Task relates to the following Learning Outcomes:

- By the end of this unit, you will possess a well-developed understanding of philosophical problems of "freedom" and it's opposite, "domination" (or "alienation"). This understanding will be integrated with broader social, cultural and political debates.
- In completing this unit, you will have obtained advanced skills in the analysis, evaluation and reconstruction of arguments and theories, particularly those that concern "social-political" and "moral" life.

Final Research Report

Due: **Tuesday June 14, 9am**
Weighting: **35%**

The final report measures what you've learned through the course. It will test your abilities to research and reconstruct social-political theories with clarity, to analyse their arguments, and to evaluate their significance in light of contemporary scholarship and events. You will be provided with a report format to follow, and a choice of what to investigate. The weekly activities will lead up to and train you in how to write this report.

This Assessment Task relates to the following Learning Outcomes:

- By the end of this unit, you will possess a well-developed understanding of philosophical problems of "freedom" and it's opposite, "domination" (or "alienation"). This understanding will be integrated with broader social, cultural and political debates.
In completing this unit, you will have obtained advanced skills in the analysis, evaluation and reconstruction of arguments and theories, particularly those that concern *social-political* and *moral* life.

**Learning Community**

**Due:** Throughout semester  
**Weighting:** 25%

One quarter of your grade will be obtained through your communicative engagement with your peers throughout the course. You will be assessed on how you contribute to the community of the unit via your discussion, questions, collaboration with peers, and overall contribute to the learning environment. This includes online contributions as well as face to face, and lectures (which are interactive) as well as tutorials.

This Assessment Task relates to the following Learning Outcomes:

- By the end of this unit, you will also have honed and developed your *interpersonal skills* of clear communication, collaboration with peers, time-management, and making and receiving constructive feedback. These skills will approach a professional level of expectation.

**Delivery and Resources**

**Technology Used and Required**

PHL254 will be delivered using a combination of interactive lectures and tutorial/seminar discussion groups.

This unit uses an ilearn website and Echo360 lecture recordings (https://ilearn.mq.edu.au/login/MQ/). The website contains links to lecture notes, ilecture recordings, and other learning materials you might require for the course.

Students will therefore require access to a computer and a good internet connection in order to participate in the unit effectively.

**Lecture and Tutorial Times**

There are two lectures per week:

Monday 12.00pm - 1.00pm E4B 308  
Thursday 10.00am - 11.00am E5A 160

There are two tutorial class scheduled, both on Monday afternoon:

Monday 1.00pm - 2.00pm W5C 234  
Monday 2.00pm - 3.00pm W5C 234
Studying Externally
External students will be required to participate in online tutorials and complete activities, and engage in discussion between students.

Information about ilearn and other resources:
Very useful information and resources for using ilearn can be found at this website:
http://www.mq.edu.au/iLearn/
The web page for this unit can also be found at the mq ilearn website:
https://ilearn.mq.edu.au/login/MQ/

Changes since the last offering of this unit:
Since last being offered this unit has undergone the following changes:
Revision of learning activities, outcomes, and assessment tasks.

Required and Recommended Texts and/or Materials
PHL254 Freedom and Domination will use a Unit Reader, available through the Co-op Bookshop at the start of semester. Readings will also be available electronically via the library - but using a hard-copy of the Reader is encouraged.
If you would like to purchase the main texts to be focused on they are:

Recommended websites, articles, and video clips will also be made available via the PHL254 website. A guide to further reading/recommended bibliography will also be posted for students.

Unit Schedule
Week 1: Introduction: Freedom and Domination (Start Feb 29)
The definition of freedom as autonomy. The notion of alienation. The idea of philosophy as emancipatory critique.

Weeks 2-3: Freedom as autonomy: Kant’s philosophy of history and politics (March 7 & March 14)
Kant’s core definition of freedom as autonomy. The categorical imperative; the ‘kingdom of ends’ as transition from morality to history and politics. Kant’s philosophy of history and the idea of a rationally constituted free community. Kant’s legacy (Rawls and Habermas).

Essential Readings:


Secondary Readings:

- Christine Korsgaard, “Morality as Freedom,” *Creating the Kingdom of Ends*, pp. 159-185.

Week 4: Hegel’s critique of Kantian morality: the Notion of “Ethicality” (March 21)

Hegel’s critique of Kant’s moral philosophy. The critique of the categorical imperative: tautology, abstraction, subjectivism. Ethics versus morality. The social conditions of moral autonomy.

Readings:

- G.W.F. Hegel, "The Good and conscience" in his *Philosophy of Right*, § 129-140.

Week 5: Hegel’s Theory of Civil Society and the State (March 28)

Hegel’s model of autonomy: individual freedom as social freedom. The political determination of social freedom. Social alienation and the State. Contemporary relevance of Hegel’s critique of individualistic conceptions of autonomy.

Readings:

- Axel Honneth, *Suffering from Indeterminacy*, p.52-60.
Week 6: The End of History? Hegel’s critical interpretation of modernity (April 4)

Historical dimensions of freedom and alienation: the idea of moral progress. The idea of an “end of history”. Current debates about the “end of history”: the meaning of neoliberalism.

Readings:


~ Mid-Semester Break : April 11 - Monday April 25 (Anzac Day) ~

Weeks 7-8: Marx’s critique of Hegel: alienated labour (NB. Week begins Tuesday April 6; May 2)

Marx’ early critique of the Hegelian state and Hegel’s political philosophy; the relationship between philosophy and social life; freedom through labour and activity; alienation as alienated activity; losing oneself in alienated labour; the alienated society. The description and critique of modern alienation; the program of liberation; history as emancipation of alienated labour.

Essential Readings:

- Karl Marx, Economico-Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844, in: The Portable Karl Marx, pp. 131-152.

Secondary Readings:


Week 9: Marx’s critique of capitalism: prescient or prehistoric? (May 9)

The description and critique of modern alienation. The programme of a liberation of mankind. Contemporary debates on the relevance of Marx’ critique.

Readings:

- Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, Communist Manifesto, part 1, pp. 54-75.
Weeks 10-11: Nietzsche on nihilism and the death of God (May 16; May 23)

Nietzsche’s challenge to modern conceptions of freedom. Nietzsche’s diagnosis of nihilism and the (moral, social, cultural) meaning of the ‘death of God’. Philosophical and cultural responses to nihilism.

Readings:


Secondary Readings:


Week 12: Nietzsche’s Critique of Modernity: freedom as alienation (May 30)

Nietzsche’s radical critique of Western society, culture, and politics. The problem with liberal and social democracy. Nietzsche as aristocratic radical or conservative revolutionary? The contemporary legacy of Nietzsche’s critique of modernity.

Readings:


Secondary Reading:


Week 13: Reading Week
No scheduled lectures: tutorials will be devoted to essay writing workshops.

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:


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.

**Student Support**

Macquarie University provides a range of support services for students. For details, visit [http://students.mq.edu.au/support/](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.
Graduate Capabilities

Discipline Specific Knowledge and Skills

Our graduates will take with them the intellectual development, depth and breadth of knowledge, scholarly understanding, and specific subject content in their chosen fields to make them competent and confident in their subject or profession. They will be able to demonstrate, where relevant, professional technical competence and meet professional standards. They will be able to articulate the structure of knowledge of their discipline, be able to adapt discipline-specific knowledge to novel situations, and be able to contribute from their discipline to inter-disciplinary solutions to problems.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcome

• By the end of this unit, you will possess a well-developed understanding of philosophical problems of "freedom" and it’s opposite, "domination" (or "alienation"). This understanding will be integrated with broader social, cultural and political debates.

Assessment task

• Weekly Learning Activities

Critical, Analytical and Integrative Thinking

We want our graduates to be capable of reasoning, question and analysing, and to integrate and synthesise learning and knowledge from a range of sources and environments; to be able to

http://unitguides.mq.edu.au/unit_offerings/62221/unit_guide/print
critique constraints, assumptions and limitations; to be able to think independently and systemically in relation to scholarly activity, in the workplace, and in the world. We want them to have a level of scientific and information technology literacy.

This graduate capability is supported by:

**Learning outcome**
- In completing this unit, you will have obtained advanced skills in the analysis, evaluation and reconstruction of arguments and theories, particularly those that concern *social-political* and *moral* life.

**Assessment tasks**
- What do you already know?
- Weekly Learning Activities
- Final Research Report

**Problem Solving and Research Capability**

Our graduates should be capable of researching; of analysing, and interpreting and assessing data and information in various forms; of drawing connections across fields of knowledge; and they should be able to relate their knowledge to complex situations at work or in the world, in order to diagnose and solve problems. We want them to have the confidence to take the initiative in doing so, within an awareness of their own limitations.

This graduate capability is supported by:

**Learning outcome**
- In completing this unit, you will have obtained advanced skills in the analysis, evaluation and reconstruction of arguments and theories, particularly those that concern *social-political* and *moral* life.

**Assessment task**
- Final Research Report

**Effective Communication**

We want to develop in our students the ability to communicate and convey their views in forms effective with different audiences. We want our graduates to take with them the capability to read, listen, question, gather and evaluate information resources in a variety of formats, assess, write clearly, speak effectively, and to use visual communication and communication technologies as appropriate.

This graduate capability is supported by:
Learning outcome

- By the end of this unit, you will also have honed and developed your *interpersonal skills* of clear communication, collaboration with peers, time-management, and making and receiving constructive feedback. These skills will approach a professional level of expectation.

Assessment tasks

- Final Research Report
- Learning Community

Socially and Environmentally Active and Responsible

We want our graduates to be aware of and have respect for self and others; to be able to work with others as a leader and a team player; to have a sense of connectedness with others and country; and to have a sense of mutual obligation. Our graduates should be informed and active participants in moving society towards sustainability.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Assessment task

- Learning Community

Capable of Professional and Personal Judgement and Initiative

We want our graduates to have emotional intelligence and sound interpersonal skills and to demonstrate discernment and common sense in their professional and personal judgement. They will exercise initiative as needed. They will be capable of risk assessment, and be able to handle ambiguity and complexity, enabling them to be adaptable in diverse and changing environments.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcome

- By the end of this unit, you will also have honed and developed your *interpersonal skills* of clear communication, collaboration with peers, time-management, and making and receiving constructive feedback. These skills will approach a professional level of expectation.