Course Title
HM 484: Modern European Philosophy: From Descartes to Nietzsche

Course Abstract
This course is a thematic introduction to modern European philosophy. The theme for this edition of the course is **Kant and Post-Kantian Philosophy** in the 19th century.

Building on the Cartesian foundations, Immanuel Kant had initiated a complete revolution in modern philosophy, “Copernican revolution” in his own terms, which spawned a period of intensely productive period called Post-Kantian philosophy. While Kant was a major champion of the Enlightenment, a great enthusiast of Isaac Newton’s physics, and created a rich architectural account of human reason in his *Critique of Pure Reason*, the Post-Kantians like Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel absorbed the powerful currents of the German Romanticism and vehemently reacted against the influence of Kant in ways that the latter did not anticipate. Later on Schopenhauer and Nietzsche introduced important variant readings of Kant’s ideas and in due course offered their own metaphysics. Each one of the Post-Kantians, except for Nietzsche, developed systematic metaphysics taking off from the Kantian breakthrough. And Nietzsche iconoclastically overturned all attempts to offer a systematic philosophy.

In this course we will study the core ideas of Kant and his most significant successors, namely Fichte, Hegel, Schopenhauer and Nietzsche. We shall read several excerpts from their works, and examine the general contours of their metaphysical systems. The main argument of the course is to chart and assess the influence of Kant in shaping the ideas of the thinkers who came after him but did not follow his lead.

**Introductory Books:**
Scruton, Roger. *A Short History of Modern Philosophy: From Descartes to Wittgenstein*.
Pinkard, Terry. *German Philosophy, 1760-1860: The Legacy of Idealism*

**Course Specific Readings (selections from the following):**
O’Connor, Brian. *German Idealism: An Anthology*
Kant, Immanuel. *A Prolegomenon to Future Metaphysics*
Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friederich. “Sensuous Certainty”, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*
Schopenhauer, Arthur. Excerpts from *The World as Idea and as Will*
Nietzsche, Friedrich. Excerpts from *Beyond Good and Evil*

**Suggested Secondary Readings (to be further updated)**
Henrich, Dieter. *Kant to Hegel*
Allison, Henry. *Kant’s Transcendental Idealism: A Defense*
Strawson, P. F. *The Bounds of Sense*
Young, Julian. *Schopenhauer*
Taylor, Charles. *Hegel*
LEARNING OUTCOMES

The course aims to make students proficient in some well-known debates in modern philosophy, and laterally aims to hone their argumentative and critical skills.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. **Attendance and Participation**: Success of the course much depends upon your active engagement with the readings and with each other in the class.

2. **Mode of Teaching**: The course will be organized around the ideas of the philosophers chosen for study. The lectures will be held online as per the time table, through Google Meet. Their function is to help students in critically approaching the assigned readings. Discussions would be aimed at targeting the specific aspects of the readings, such as ideas, difficult passages and arguments. There will be periodic quizzes. Independent study and initiative will be highly encouraged and the required guidance would be provided.

3. **Writing**: You will be asked to write three short papers, varying between 1000 to 3000 words each, over the course of the semester. The word/page limit will be specified at the time of assigning the task. Alternatively, on popular demand the term papers can be substituted with scheduled exams.

EVALUATION

The first paper/exam will count for 30%, second paper/exam for 40% and the final paper/exam for 30%.

PLAGIARISM AND ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Submitting someone else’s work as your own, or using others’ words and phrases without proper citation, is a violation of norms of academic integrity, and may result in penalties up to and including a failing grade in the course. Genuine effort and commitment will have direct bearing on the evaluation.