



Core Texts (Part I)

Term:	Spring 2023
ECTS credits:	6
Lessons per week:	2 x 90 min
Language:	English
Instructor:	Associate Professor Samuel Abrahám (April 18-June 1) Jozef Majerník, PhD. (February 20- April 16)
Form of study:	Lecture + class discussion

Instructor: Jozef Majerník, PhD.
Meeting: Tues: 1:00-2:30, Thurs: 1:00-2:30
Office hours: one hour after each class or as agreed.
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Course description

The two World Wars have wrought murder and devastation on an unprecedented scale; they have demonstrated both the extent of human power and our incapacity to use it safely and peacefully. They have thus prompted a wave of reflections on the momentous but highly questionable changes not just to our way of life, but to Earth itself, brought about by Western modernity. In this course we will look at several of them. Hans Jonas attempts to formulate new ethical principles to guide our use of techno-scientific power so as not to put our own existence at risk. Leo Strauss looks at the changed conception of the political responsibility of the thinker. Karl Löwith considers the political functions of the peculiarly modern phenomenon of philosophy of history. These thinkers will help us better understand our own situation, which is shaped by humanity's own actions more than ever before.

Course objectives

- To increase the students' understanding of the nature of modernity and of the problems inherent in it
- To gain familiarity with some of the key political thinkers of the post-World War 2 period
- To improve the skills of critical thinking, writing, and speaking.

Office Hours

By appointment.

Course Requirements and Evaluation

30% **Active attendance** at seminars, participation in debates, preparedness for class, having a question ready

40% **Written assignments:** 3 short essays (500 words) in the first part of the course

10% **Midterm exam**

20% **Final test**

Grading System

A – excellent:	100-93%
B – very good:	92-84%
C – good:	83-74%
D – satisfactory:	73-63%
E – sufficient:	62-51%
Fx – fail:	50-0%

Passing a course assumes that a student was not absent at more than 4 lessons.

Plagiarism and Academic Integrity

Plagiarism will automatically result in an Fx and may be subject to disciplinary proceeding and penalties stipulated in Disciplinary Code (up to expulsion).

All assignments at BISLA should be: (a) based on *your* reading of the sources, (b) based on *your analysis* of the sources, and (c) written by you. All used sources have to be properly referenced in the text as well as in the bibliography of your papers. You may also reference lectures and class discussions—there is a way to reference everything.

Definition of plagiarism: If you use a statement, argument or idea from someone without giving them credit, you are guilty of plagiarism. You can avoid plagiarism by citing your source(s). You must cite a source in two cases: first, whenever you are using the exact wording of the source (in this case, enclose the words in quotation marks; if you add words to the quotation, use square brackets) and, second, whenever you are summarizing or paraphrasing a statement, argument, idea or narrative from the source. If you do not do this, you are guilty of plagiarism.

APA formatting and style guide:

https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/apa_style/apa_formatting_and_style_guide/general_format.html

Expectations in the Classroom

When the text is available in print, having it in class is required and no electronic devices excepting e-readers are permitted (unless you have a medical reason for using one). Please bring a pen and a notebook to write in with you.

Required Readings

- Jonas, H. (1984). *The Imperative of Responsibility: In Search of an Ethics for the Technological Age*. Trans. H. Jonas & D. Herr. The University of Chicago Press.
- Löwith, K. (1949). *Meaning in History*. The University of Chicago Press.
- Strauss, L. (1952). *Persecution and the Art of Writing*. The University of Chicago Press.

Course Schedule

Week 1: Jonas, *The Imperative of Responsibility*

- **21.2.:** Introduction to the course; Jonas, Preface (pp. ix–xii)
- **23.2.:** Jonas, ch. 1.I–III (pp. 1–8)

Week 2: Jonas, *The Imperative of Responsibility*

- **28.2.:** Jonas, ch. 1.IV–VI (pp. 9–17)
- **2.3.:** Jonas, ch. 1.VII–IX (pp. 17–24)

First essay

Week 3: Jonas, *The Imperative of Responsibility*

- **7.3.:** Jonas, ch. 2.I (pp. 25–31)
- **9.3.:** Jonas, ch. 2.II–III (pp. 31–8)

Week 4: Jonas, *The Imperative of Responsibility*

- **14.3.:** Jonas, ch. 4.III (pp. 98–108)
- **16.3.:** Jonas, ch. 4.V (pp. 117–23)

Second essay

Week 5: Jonas, *The Imperative of Responsibility*

- **21.3.:** Jonas, ch. 5.I–II (pp. 136–42)
- **23.3.:** Jonas, ch. 6.I (pp. 178–86)

Week 6: Strauss, *Persecution and the Art of Writing*

- **28.3.:** *Persecution and the Art of Writing* pp. 22–9
- **30.3.:** *Persecution and the Art of Writing* pp. 29–37

Third essay

Week 7: Löwith, *Meaning in History*

- **4.4.:** Löwith, Introduction, pp. 1–9
- **6.4.:** Löwith, Introduction, pp. 9–19

Reading week

Week 8: Löwith, *Meaning in History*

- **18.4.:** Löwith, ch. V (pp. 104–14)
- **20.4.:** Conclusion of Part I of the course, **midterm exam**



Instructor: Associate Professor Samuel Abrahám
Meeting: Tues: 1:00-2:30, Thurs: 1:00-2:30
Office hours: one hour after each class or as agreed.
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CONTENT and ASSIGNMENTS

We will do a philosophical overview of the history of political philosophy. The course will require two types of written assignments. You will be tested on your knowledge of the arguments used by the philosophers. You will also be asked, in separate assignments, to explore your own opinions in the light of the arguments discussed. The former type of examination is objective, insofar as no one is being asked to affirm or deny the arguments the philosophers make only show that you know them. The latter type of assignment is graded on more subjective grounds, which include clarity, inventiveness, grammar, and above all, evidence of some idea that you are working out in thought. Participation in class discussion is a part of your grade.

CLASS MATERIALS

- When the text is available in print, having it in class is required and no electronic devices excepting e-readers are permitted. Bring a notebook and pen or pencil.

Readings:

Richard Rorty: Trotsky and the Wild Orchids * The Humanistic Intellectual:
Eleven Theses (Read before our first meeting)
Richard Rorty: Philosophy as a Transitional Genre OR Democracy and Philosophy
https://kritika.sk/pdf/2_2006/2.pdf
Harvey Mansfield: A Student Guide to Political Philosophy
Kritika & Kontext 3-4 1998 Rorty in Slovak and English
[https://kritika.sk/#document\(3_4_1998\)](https://kritika.sk/#document(3_4_1998))
https://kritika.sk/pdf/3_4_98/2.pdf

Grading scale

A – 100-93%
B – 92-84%
C – 83-74%
D – 73-63%
E – 62-51%
Fx – 50-0%

Four or more absences result automatically in Fx.

Regular attendance of all classes is of crucial importance in this course. Much of the explanation and implementation of what we learn towards your research project will take place in the seminars. As per BISLA policy, four absences are permitted during the semester (these are to be reserved for cases of illness or family emergency). Any more absences result in failing the course. Do inform me prior to missing a class.



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*******This syllabus is subject to change.*******