

Darwin, Marx, Nietzsche, Freud: Value, Transvaluation and Society

SS. 490

Room: North Hall 112

Meeting Time: Monday 9:30am-12:20pm

Department of Social Science & Cultural Studies

Pratt Institute

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Course Description

What is value? Is it imposed or does it arise naturally? If it is natural, should we transform it. If it is imposed, how do we transform it, i.e., how do we achieve the *transvaluation* of value? The problem of value is as old as those of morality and society. Often we see them as being different, but in fact, they are inseparable. For this reason, the critique of each goes hand in hand with the critique of all. This course will introduce students to these various critiques through the examination of some important attempts to transform our understanding of the production of social value and the transformation of value or *transvaluation*. The notion of transvaluation is deployed in the foundational works of our era. It unites what might seem at first glance or to the uninitiated eye very different texts: Darwin's *Descent of Man*, Marx's sections of *The Holy Family*, Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil* and the *Genealogy of Morals*, and Freud's *Civilization and its Discontents*. It is not difficult to find the concern for value in the pages and between the lines of these works.

In fact, the notion of transvaluation is central to the work of all of these authors. This is perhaps one source of the continued interest in their work, for they consistently remind us of the possibilities which could arise from experiencing our world in new ways.

Wrightman in his *Growth of Scientific Ideas* says that "Darwin gave us nothing less than the transformation of all possible biological values," the goal of his work being that many of the scientific values of his day, chiefly defined by the question of human classification, would "die a silent and obscure death" (*Descent of Man*). Karl Marx exposed the mystifications of the moral values of the bourgeoisie when in *Capital* he describes "...valorization as a process, labor in the act of realizing itself consistently as value, but also flowing beyond already existing values to work new ones...capital is...value valorizing itself, value that gives birth to value" (*Capital*, I). Nietzsche summed up his project as "the transvaluation of all values" (*The Antichrist*). Freud took this idea seriously and invested the psyche with an economy while splintering the individual into value producing and transforming processes: "One function of mental activity during dream construction, the transformation of the unconscious thoughts into the content of the dream, is peculiar to dream-life and characteristic of it. This dream-work proper...is exhaustively described by an enumeration of the conditions which it has to satisfy in producing its result. That product, the dream, has above all to evade censorship, and with that end in view the dream-work makes use of a displacement of psychical intensities to the point of a transvaluation of all psychical values (*Interpretation of Dreams*)."

So we will examine the production of value, its transvaluation, and its relation to society, power, and desire.

Readings

The readings for the class will be drawn from the following sources. The primary texts that you will want to purchase for this course are below. Some are available online, but make sure that your translation is the same as that listed here, and of course, the page references are to these editions:

Karl Marx

The Holy Family or Critique of Critical Criticism (with Frederick Engels). New York: Progress Publishers, 1980 [1956].

Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy (Rough Draft). New York: Penguin Books, 1973.

Capital. New York: Penguin Books, 1973.

Friedrich Nietzsche

Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future. Translated with Commentary by Walter Kaufmann. New York: Vintage, 1966.

On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo. Translated with Commentary by Walter Kaufmann. New York: Vintage, 1969.

The Portable Nietzsche. Translated with Commentary by Walter Kaufmann. New York: Vintage.

Sigmund Freud

The Future of an Illusion. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1961.

Civilization and its Discontents. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1961.

Beyond the Pleasure Principle. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1961.

Charles Darwin

The Descent of Man. New York: Modern Library, 1995.

The Origins of Species (3rd [1861] or final 5th edition).

Suggested Texts:

The Gay Science: with a Prelude in Rhymes and an Appendix of Songs, Translated with Commentary by Walter Kaufmann, New York: Vintage, 1974.

Darwin: A Norton Critical Reader. New York: W.W. Norton & Company.

Early Writings. New York: Penguin Books, 1992.

The reading for the class will be drawn from these and other sources. Given the number of bookstores available either on-line or here in the city --- as well as having the New York Public Library at your disposal--- you are responsible for obtaining the required texts. This is not to place a burden upon you, but it is a necessary part of education that you learn how to acquire books and materials for yourself.

These are some additional sources for the texts:

Labyrinths Books: <http://www.labyrinthbooks.com/>

The Advanced Book Exchange abebooks.com

The Strand www.strandbooks.com - the huge second-hand store on 12th street.
Powells powells.com
Barnes and Nobles www.bn.com
Amazon <http://www.amazon.com>
City Lights Books www.citylights.com
St. Marks Bookstop <http://www.stmarksbookshop.com>

Outline of the Course of Study

Week I. Introduction to the Course

Week II. Darwin

"An Historical Sketch of the Progress of Opinion on the Origin of Species Previously to the Publication of the First Edition of this Work," pgs. 53-64 of *The Origin of Species*
The Origin of Species, pgs. 65-130 435-460

Week III. Darwin

The Descent of Man, pgs. 1-66, and 100-213, and 629-644.

Week IV. Marx

The Holy Family, pgs 27-30, 60-97, 201-261

Week V. Marx

The Grundrisse, "Introduction" or "Manuscript M," pgs. 81-114

Week VI. Marx

Capital, Volume I, Chapter I. The Commodity, pgs. 125-177, and pgs. 188-197, 914-930.

Week VII. Nietzsche

Beyond Good and Evil "The Natural History of Morals" pgs 95-118
"Beyond Good and Evil" from *Ecce Homo*, pgs 310-312

Week VIII. Nietzsche

The Genealogy of Morals, Part I, "Good and Evil," "Good and Bad" pgs. 24-57
"The Genealogy of Morals" from *Ecce Homo*, pgs 312-314

Week IX. Nietzsche

The Genealogy of Morals, Part II, Guilt, 'Bad Conscience,' and the Like" pgs 57-96
The Gay Science(selections)

Week X. Nietzsche

The Twilight of the Idols
The AntiChrist

"The Twilight of the Idols" from *Ecce Homo*, pgs 314-317

Week XI. Freud

Group Psychology

Week XII. Freud

The Future of an Illusion

Week XIII. Freud

Civilization and its Discontents

Week XIV. Essays Due

Week XV. Essay Discussion.

Course Requirements

Presentations

Participants are expected to give at least one presentation during the semester on the readings for the class. In addition, a final brief presentation on your paper/project is also required.

The presentations and class participation will account for 40 percent.

Final Paper

One research paper, a minimum 13-15 pages in length (typed and double-spaced). The paper will count for 60 percent of the final grade.

Class Participation

Education is not a one way street and we can not expect to simply passively receive knowledge unless we expect to live a passive life. Participation is mandatory and will be factored into the final grade.

Absences and Lateness

Persistent absences or lateness will result in a reduction of your final grade.

Grades and Incompletes

Incompletes will be granted only in accordance with the established policy of the college. The request must be made in advance of the last week of class. It must be made in writing. **An incomplete is "available only if the student has been in regular attendance, has satisfied all but the final requirements of the course, and has furnished satisfactory proof that the work was not completed because of illness or other circumstances beyond control" (Pratt Institute Bulletin).** *If you do not turn in your paper on time, and you do not have an approved incomplete, you will fail the course. If you do not complete your work by the beginning of the next semester, I will not issue a change of grade except under the most extraordinary circumstances.*

SYLLABUS ATTACHMENT

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Pratt Institute considers Academic Integrity highly important. Instances of cheating, plagiarism, and wrongful use of intellectual property will not be tolerated.

- Faculty members will report each incident to the registrar for inclusion in students' files.
- More than one report to the registrar during a student's program of study at Pratt will result in a hearing before the Academic Integrity Board, at which time appropriate sanctions will be decided. These may include dismissal from the Institute.
- The nature and severity of the infraction will be determined by faculty members who can: ask students to repeat an assignment, fail students on the assignment, fail students in the course and/or refer the incident to the Academic Integrity Board.

For more details about these procedures please see the Pratt Student Handbook, the Pratt Bulletins, and the pamphlet entitled Judicial Procedures at Pratt.

CHEATING

If students use dishonest methods to fulfill course requirements, they are cheating. Examples of this include, but are not limited to:

- Obtaining or offering copies of exams or information about the content of exams in advance.
- Bringing notes in any form to a closed book exam.
- Looking at another student's paper during an exam.
- Receiving or communicating any information from or to another student during an exam.

PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism is a bit more complicated, but the rules of documentation and citation are very specific and are tailored to different academic disciplines. Types of plagiarism include:

- Including any material from any source other than you in a paper or project without proper attribution. This includes material from the Internet, books, papers, or projects by other students, and from any other source.
- Using your own work to fulfill requirements for more than one course
- The extensive use of the ideas of others in your work without proper attribution.
- Turning in work done by another person or a fellow student as one's own.

Please remember that all work must be the student's own. If it is not, the source should be cited and documented appropriately.

If there are aspects of this statement that are not understood, ask faculty members for help.