# Philosophy of History

## Prof. Giacomo Samek Lodovici

***COURSE AIMS AND INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES***

The course aims to provide students with a historiographical and (on various issues) theoretical understanding of certain key philosophical interpretations of history and of human action throughout history.

At the end of the course, students will be able to know and understand certain fundamental discourses on history e.g. Gnosis, Augustine, Joachim of Fiore, Vico, Enlightenment, Kant, Hegel, Marx, Nietzsche, Jonas, and transhumanism.

Armed with the above knowledge, they will be able to understand concepts such as history, regression/progression, human specificity, telos/senselessness of events, historical novelty/repetition and cyclicality, history and freedom, history and the existence/inexistence of God, the end/continuation of history, a catastrophic or perfective ending, etc.

In this way, students will generally be able to be understand, from a philosophical perspective, their own historical action, the history that preceded them (in particular, totalitarianism) and the context in which they currently live.

They will also be able to critically evaluate these concepts and examine their fruitfulness or unfruitfulness, they will be able to confirm or modify some of their own choices and actions, applying these concepts in practice in their lives.

Furthermore, at the end of the course, students will have the conceptual tools to refine: their independence of judgement and critical skills; their ability to understand philosophical and historical issues; and their communicative abilities in this field.

***COURSE CONTENT***

Part of the course will be historiographical in nature, but cover certain theoretical considerations as well. It will reconstruct a number of fundamental discourses on history (e.g. Gnosis, Augustine, Joachim of Fiore, Vico, Enlightenment, Kant, Hegel, Marx, Nietzsche, Jonas, and transhumanism).

The single-subject section will focus on two texts:

– F. Nietzsche, *Sull’utilità e il danno della storia per la vita* (On the utility and liability of history for life), in which Nietzsche reflects, for example, on the different attitudes of men (compared to animals) towards history, the way to cultivate it with a view to human greatness, and other topics;

– J. Pieper, *Speranza e storia* (Hope and history), in which this Thomist philosopher analyses, from a theoretical perspective, different philosophies of history (e.g. the one proposed by Kant), and tries to answer the question: what can we hope/despair for every one of us and for history as a whole? Will the end of history be catastrophic and/or perfective?

***READING LIST***

Mordacci R. (edited by), *Prospettive di filosofia della storia*, Bruno Mondadori, Milan 2009, available on www.bookrepublic.it (some parts of the text, that will be specified in class).

F. Nietzsche, *Sull’utilità e il danno della storia per la vita, in Id., La nascita della tragedia. Considerazioni inattuali I-III*, Adelphi 1972, p. 259-287, 295-355.

J. Pieper, *Speranza e storia*, Morcelliana 1969 (some parts of the text, that will be specified in class).

Benedetto XVI, *Spe salvi*, paragraphs 21-26 (the text will be provided by the lecturer).

N.B.: the reading list is indicative, a final list will be specified during the course

***TEACHING METHOD***

Lectures and seminars in the classroom.

***ASSESSMENT METHOD AND CRITERIA***

Students will be examined by means of an oral exam (marked out of 30) designed to assess their learning and accurate understanding of course contents.

There will be 6-8 questions on the contents of the syllabus, each worth roughly the same number of marks. Students will be assessed on their knowledge of each topic, their ability to present information effectively and their analytical skills.

The overall mark will (in particular) reflect the accuracy and fullness of their answers, but also (to a lesser degree) the ability to justify statements, evaluations and analyses, and to use specific terminology appropriately.

***NOTES AND PREREQUISITES***

Students are expected to be interested in philosophical reflection on history and humanity.

The reading list is approximate and will be specified further during the course.

Further information can be found on the lecturer's webpage at http://docenti.unicatt.it/web/searchByName.do?language=ENG or on the Faculty notice board.