Course / Module title: Communication and Humanistic Thought

Lecturer: Dr. Bina Nir

Semester: A

Course code: 23280

Format: Compulsory course

Number of hours: 2

Number of credits: 2

Course days and times:

Prerequisites: None

Reception hours: Monday 13.00 - 14.00

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Background:

The technological changes experienced in recent decades have been accelerating so rapidly that it sometimes seems all our patterns of social attachment have changed. These changes have also impacted the mass media, which has social, cultural and political implications. At the same time, fundamental questions about the essence of human nature and our social affiliations remain. Examining these questions in light of technological changes is more important than ever. During the course, students will delve into a discussion about modes of media and communication in society, through studying and entering into dialogue with major classic texts of Western culture.

This text-based philosophical study will provide students with tools for in-depth observation and enable them to differentiate between the essence of major, fundamental questions, and the platform through which social discourse on these questions takes place. This study will enable a deep dialogue with basic questions such as: Is the human heart inherently good or evil? What is free will? Is loneliness an existential condition? Why do we so desperately seek the approval of the "herd"? What is the art of life and the purpose of humanity? What is freedom and why do we try to flee from it?

The classic texts chosen for this course span from the roots of our culture to the present day. They teach us that essential philosophical questions dealing with the human spirit, its nature and values, remain valid in Western culture, despite all the technological changes and the multiplicity of platforms for communication.

Course Objectives:

1. Provide students with a broad perspective on the nature of human society and the underlying commitment to it.
2. Provide students with the basic skills needed to engage in a dialogue with major classic texts regarding current issues.
3. Introduce students to basic concepts related to human nature, values, and the purpose of humanity.

Learning outputs:

Upon successful completion of the course the student will be able to:

1. Distinguish between the essence of the issues under discourse and the platforms on which this discourse is taking place.
2. Examine fundamental questions in their broad context.
3. Distinguish between fundamental social issues and specific socio-political behaviors.
4. Analyze social issues in the context in which they occur.

Teaching methods:

The course will include frontal lectures and class discussions regarding the relevant texts.

Course requirements:

1. Attendance in at least 80% of the classes.

2. Reading the assigned materials prior to each session.

3. Final exam (passing score 60)

Assessment:

Final exam: 100%

Course / Module topics:

Lesson 1-2: From Plato to the Present Day - The Cave Allegory as a Metaphor for the Media and Public Opinion

Required reading:

Plato. (1979). Apology(pp. 222-224). In *Plato's Writings, Vol. I*. Jerusalem and Tel Aviv:

 Schocken Publishing.

Lesson 3: Human Purpose

Required reading:

Russell, B. (1955). *The Conquest of Happiness* (pp. 31-38). Jerusalem: Ahiasaf Publishing Ltd.

Lesson 4: Human Nature - From Machiavelli to Contemporary Politics

Required reading:

Machiavelli, N. (1988). *The Prince* (pp. 71-74 pp. 100-102 pp. 105- 108). Tel Aviv: Zmora Bitan Publishing.

Lesson 5: Is Human Nature ‘Evil from Its Origins’?

Required reading:

Hobbes, T. (2004). *Leviathan* (Chapter 13, pp. 113-119). Jerusalem: The Magnes Press Publishing House - The Hebrew University.

Lesson 6: Rousseau - The Social Covenant and Ourselves

Required reading:

Russo, J-J. (1959). *The Social Contract* (Book 1, Chapters 1-4, pp. 8-22). Jerusalem: The Magnes Press Publishing House, The Hebrew University.

Rousseau, J-J (1969). A Dissertation on the Origin and Foundation of the Inequality of Mankind. In *Articles* (pp. 161-171, pp. 197-201). Jerusalem: Magnes Press, University Press Hebrew.

Lesson 7: Freud, Human Nature and Contemporary Culture

Required reading:

Freud, S. (2000). Civilization and Its Discontents. In *Culture and Religion* (pp. 85-89) Tel Aviv: Poalim.

Lesson 8-9: Escape from Freedom - The Automaton Conformity Mechanism and Us.

Required reading:

Fromm, E. (1992). *Escape from Freedom*. (Chapter 5, pp. 97-138). Zmora-Bitan, Publishers.

Suggested reading:

Nir, B. (2018). The Individual and Society: The Social Role of Shame. *Journal of Philosophical Criticism*, 1(2), 36 -70. doi: 10.17605/OSF.IO/JF32V

Lesson 12: What About Compassion?

Required reading:

Nietzsche, F. *Dawn of Day* (pp. 160-161). Jerusalem and Tel Aviv: Schocken Publishing.

Lesson 13: On Education - Towards Liberated Thinking and the Escape from the 'Herd' Mentality

Required reading:

Nietzsche, F. (1959). Schopenhauer as Educator. In *Culture and Education* (Chapter 1). Jerusalem: Magnes Books, The Hebrew University.

Lesson 14: Reward and Punishment? From the Classic Texts and Back to Us

Required reading:

The Bible, Deuteronomy, Chapter 11 and Chapter 28.

New Testament, Matthew, Chapter 19, verses 28-29.

New Testament, Epistle to the Philippians, Chapter 3, verses 12-21.