



HON 201: Honors Seminar: Ideas That Shaped the Modern World

Term: Fall 2026

Credits: 3.0

Lecture Times & Location: Tuesday & Thursday 9:30–10:45 a.m., Lovell Hall 140

Modality: In-Person

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Instructor Information

- **Instructor:** Prof. Sofia Lindgren (Professor of Philosophy)
- **Email:** slindgren@university.alkimi.ai
- **Office:** Lovell Hall 246
- **Office Hours:**
 - Monday & Thursday: 3:30–5:00 p.m. (In person, Lovell Hall 246)
 - Friday: 10:00–11:00 a.m. (Virtual via Zoom; link posted in Canvas)
 - Also available by appointment.

Course Description

Interdisciplinary exploration of foundational intellectual, political, and philosophical transformations that shaped modern thought, examined through seminal primary texts, seminar discussion, and analytical writing. HON 201 is an intensive interdisciplinary honors seminar exploring the foundational intellectual, scientific, political, and philosophical transformations that constructed the modern world. Through close reading of seminal primary sources, vigorous seminar discussion, and rigorous analytical writing, we interrogate how human beings redefined truth, authority, individual rights, reason, and social order from the early modern scientific revolution through the twentieth century. Guided by the curricular commitments of the University Honors Program, students engage classic treatises not merely as historical artifacts, but as living arguments that continue to define contemporary culture, ethics, and democratic governance.

Prerequisites

Admission to the University Honors Program.

Measurable Student Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of HON 201, students will be able to:

1. **Interrogate Foundational Primary Texts:** Perform close textual analysis of seminal primary philosophical, scientific, and political treatises from early modernity to the contemporary era.
2. **Trace Conceptual Revolutions:** Analyze how shifting paradigms regarding epistemology, the social contract, individual liberty, and secularism transformed human societies.
3. **Conduct Rigorous Seminar Dialogue:** Lead and sustain collaborative seminar discussions through evidence-based arguments, thoughtful counter-examination, and active listening.

4. **Construct Advanced Analytical Essays:** Formulate compelling, thesis-driven scholarly essays that synthesize multiple primary texts and articulate reasoned philosophical arguments.
5. **Evaluate Enduring Legacies of Modernity:** Critique the triumphs, internal contradictions, and exclusions—particularly regarding gender, race, and colonial expansion—inherent in Enlightenment ideals.

Required Course Materials & Approximate Costs

1. **René Descartes. *Discourse on Method and Meditations on First Philosophy*.** Trans. Donald A. Cress. 4th ed., Hackett Publishing, 1998. Approx. \$10 print purchase.
2. **John Locke. *Second Treatise of Government*.** Ed. C. B. Macpherson. Hackett Publishing, 1980. Approx. \$8 print purchase.
3. **Jean-Jacques Rousseau. *The Basic Political Writings*.** Trans. Donald A. Cress. 2nd ed., Hackett Publishing, 2011. Approx. \$14 print purchase.
4. **Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. *The Marx-Engels Reader*.** Ed. Robert C. Tucker. 2nd ed., W. W. Norton & Company, 1978. Approx. \$25 print purchase.
5. **Alkimi Honors Primary Source Reader: Wollstonecraft, Kant, Mill, Nietzsche, Du Bois, Arendt, and Fanon.** Free digital collection provided via Canvas.
6. **Total estimated cost:** \$40 to \$57.

Generative AI Policy (AI Level 1: AI Not Permitted for Graded Work)

In accordance with Alkimi University Academic Policies (Student Handbook §5.8), HON 201 operates under **AI Level 1**.

- **What is permitted:** You may use generative AI tools strictly for looking up historical publication dates, biographical timelines of authors, or standard dictionary definitions of unfamiliar terminology.
- **What is prohibited:** You may not use generative AI to interpret primary texts, generate thesis statements, outline or write analytical essays, formulate discussion questions, or compose seminar reflections.
- **Disclosure:** Every submitted paper must conclude with a signed honor statement affirming that all textual interpretations, arguments, and prose represent the student's own intellectual work without generative AI assistance.

Grading Components and Weights

- **Primary Source Analytical Essay 1: Reason and Sovereignty:** 20% (Due Thursday, October 1 at 11:59 p.m.)
- **Seminar Discussion Leadership & Provocation:** 15% (In class, Thursday, October 22)
- **Comparative Analytical Essay 2: Freedom, Class, and Equality:** 25% (Due Thursday, November 12 at 11:59 p.m.)
- **Weekly Primary Text Reading Briefs:** 15% (Weekly analytical briefs (500 words) interrogating the primary source argument submitted in Canvas on Tuesdays by 8:30 a.m.)
- **Honors Seminar Colloquy & Deliberative Engagement:** 10% (Informed, constructive, and respectful daily contributions to primary text seminar deliberation and collective inquiry)
- **Comprehensive Seminar Final Examination:** 15% (Tuesday, December 15, 2026, 8:00–10:00 a.m.)

Grading Scale (Alkimi University Standard)

- **A:** 93–100% | **A-:** 90–92%
- **B+:** 87–89% | **B:** 83–86% | **B-:** 80–82%
- **C+:** 77–79% | **C:** 73–76% | **C-:** 70–72%
- **D+:** 67–69% | **D:** 60–66% | **F:** Below 60%
- **Extra credit:** None is offered.

Course Schedule (Fall 2026)

Week	Dates	Topics & Readings	Assignments & Deadlines
Week 1	Aug 27	The Architecture of Modernity: What is an Idea that Shapes a World?: Orientation to the honors seminar method; what constitutes an idea that shapes a world? Paradigm shifts, modernity, and intellectual authority. <i>Reading: Seminar syllabus and introductory reading selection</i>	<i>First day of classes: Wed Aug 26.</i>
Week 2	Sep 1, 3	The Scientific Revolution and Empirical Inquiry: Francis Bacon: The scientific revolution, inductive empirical observation, and breaking with scholasticism; Francis Bacon's <i>Novum Organum</i> (selections). <i>Reading: Bacon, *Novum Organum (Aphorisms on the Interpretation of Nature)*</i>	<i>Wed Sep 2: Add/section change deadline.</i>
Week 3	Sep 8, 10	Rationalism, Doubt, and the Thinking Self: René Descartes: Radical skepticism, the foundations of certainty, mind-body dualism, and rationalist epistemology in Descartes' <i>Meditations</i> (I–IV). <i>Reading: Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy</i>	<i>Mon Sep 7: Labor Day (no classes). Wed Sep 9: Census date (last day to drop without a W).</i>
Week 4	Sep 15, 17	The State of Nature and the Sovereign Commonwealth: Thomas Hobbes: Mechanical materialism, psychological egoism, the brutal state of nature, and the creation of the sovereign commonwealth in <i>Leviathan</i> . <i>Reading: Hobbes, *Leviathan (Ch. 13–18)*</i>	—
Week 5	Sep 22, 24	Natural Rights, Property, and Legitimate Government: John Locke: Natural rights, the labor theory of property, the limits of legislative power, and the right to revolution in the <i>Second Treatise</i> . <i>Reading: Locke, *Second Treatise of Government (Ch. 1–9, 18–19)*</i>	—
Week 6	Sep 29, Oct 1	The Enlightenment Project and the Autonomy of Reason: Immanuel Kant: Enlightenment autonomy, <i>sapere aude</i> , public versus private use of reason; Analytical Essay 1 due Thursday. <i>Reading: Kant, 'An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?'</i>	Primary Source Analytical Essay 1: Reason and Sovereignty due Thu Oct 1 at 11:59 p.m.
Week 7	Oct 6, 8	Inequality, the General Will, and Popular Sovereignty: Jean-Jacques Rousseau: The critique of civilized vanity, the origin of inequality, the social compact, and the enigmatic 'general will' in Rousseau. <i>Reading: Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality (Part II) and The Social Contract (Book I)*</i>	—
Week 8	Oct 15	Rights, Gender, and Universal Human Agency: Mary Wollstonecraft (Fall Break Week): Extending the rights of man to woman; education, moral virtue, and the critique of patriarchal subordination; Fall break week. <i>Reading: Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman (Ch. 1–4)*</i>	<i>Oct 12–Oct 13: Fall break (no classes). Fri Oct 16: Midterm grades due.</i>
Week 9	Oct 20, 22	Tradition, Prudence, and Revolutionary Terror: Edmund Burke: The French Revolution, the critique of abstract metaphysical rights, prescription, and conservative constitutionalism; Seminar leadership presentations. <i>Reading: Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France (selections)*</i>	Seminar Discussion Leadership & Provocation (in class).
Week 10	Oct 27, 29	Historical Materialism, Alienation, and Capital: Karl Marx: Historical materialism, alienation of labor, the class struggle between bourgeoisie and proletariat, and communist revolution. <i>Reading: Marx & Engels, *The Communist Manifesto and Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844</i>	—
Week 11	Nov 3, 5	Individual Liberty and the Tyranny of the Majority: John Stuart Mill: Utilitarian liberties, freedom of thought and discussion, individuality as an element of well-being, and the harm principle. <i>Reading: Mill, *On Liberty (Ch. 1–3)*</i>	<i>Fri Nov 6: Last day to withdraw (W) or elect Pass/No Pass.</i>
Week 12	Nov 10, 12	The Revaluation of Values and the Crisis of Nihilism: Friedrich Nietzsche: The genealogy of morals, master and slave morality,	Comparative Analytical Essay 2: Freedom, Class, and

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		the death of God, will to power, and the challenge of nihilism; Analytical Essay 2 due Thursday. <i>Reading: Nietzsche, "On the Genealogy of Morals" (First and Second Essays)*</i>	Equality due Thu Nov 12 at 11:59 p.m.
Week 13	Nov 17, 19	Double Consciousness and the Veil of Race: W. E. B. Du Bois: The color line, double consciousness, the veil of race, and the spiritual strivings of Black folk in modern democratic society. <i>Reading: Du Bois, "The Souls of Black Folk" (Ch. 1–3, 6)*</i>	—
Week 14	Nov 24	Totalitarianism, Evil, and the Human Condition: Hannah Arendt (Thanksgiving Week): The collapse of moral boundaries in totalitarian states, the banality of evil, and the defense of the public realm (Thanksgiving week). <i>Reading: Arendt, selections from "The Origins of Totalitarianism" and "Eichmann in Jerusalem"</i>	Nov 25–Nov 27: Thanksgiving break (no classes).
Week 15	Dec 1, 3	Decolonization and Postcolonial Humanism: Frantz Fanon: The colonial condition, the psychology of colonization, decolonial liberation, and the creation of a new humanist consciousness. <i>Reading: Fanon, "The Wretched of the Earth" (Ch. 1: "On Violence")*</i>	—
Week 16	Dec 8	The Legacies of Modernity: Seminar Synthesis and Evaluation: The unfinished dialectic of modern thought; synthesis of overarching themes, evaluation of Enlightenment promises, and seminar retrospective. <i>Reading: Review handouts and synthesis prompts</i>	Wed Dec 9: Last day of classes. Thu Dec 10: Reading Day.
Finals	Dec 15	Comprehensive Seminar Final Examination: Tuesday, December 15, 2026, 8:00–10:00 a.m., Lovell Hall 140.	Culminating synthesis examination featuring primary source passage identifications and comparative thematic essays.

Course Policies

Attendance Policy

The University Honors Program seminars function as intellectual communities centered on collaborative inquiry and close textual dialogue. Regular, punctual attendance at every Tuesday and Thursday meeting is mandatory. Students are granted two excused absences for illness or documented emergencies. Each subsequent absence reduces your final course grade by one-third of a letter grade. Missing more than four seminar meetings will result in dismissal from the seminar and a failing grade. Students who miss the first two class meetings without notifying the instructor may be dropped. Students may miss class for religious observance without penalty if they notify the instructor in writing within the first two weeks of the semester (by Wednesday, September 9, 2026). Absences for university-sponsored activities (athletics, performances, conferences) are excused with a letter from the sponsoring office at least one week in advance.

Late Work Policy

Analytical essays submitted past the deadline incur a penalty of one-third of a letter grade per 24 hours of delay. Submissions will not be accepted after three days past the deadline. Weekly reading briefs cannot be submitted late, as their purpose is to prepare students for live seminar discussion; however, each student's lowest brief score is dropped at the end of the semester.

Final Exam Policy

The final examination (Tuesday, December 15, 2026, 8:00–10:00 a.m.) is scheduled by the University Registrar and can't be moved without the Dean's written approval (Faculty Handbook §5.5). A student with three or more final exams on the same calendar day may reschedule one of them. Requests go to the instructor of the middle exam by the last day of classes. For this term, send the request by Wednesday, December 9, 2026 (Student Handbook §6.4).

Academic Integrity

Alkimi University is an academic community devoted to rigorous scholarship, open intellectual inquiry, and uncompromising ethical conduct. All students are subject to the regulations of the Alkimi University Academic Integrity Policy. Academic dishonesty—including plagiarism, cheating on examinations, unauthorized collaboration, fabrication of empirical data, and unauthorized submission of academic work generated by artificial intelligence—undermines the integrity of the university and carries severe disciplinary sanctions. Sanctions range from a failing grade on an assignment or exam to an administrative course failure recorded as an 'XF' on the official transcript, academic suspension, or expulsion. Suspected violations are formally investigated and resolved through the Office of Academic Integrity in accordance with Faculty Handbook §6. For detailed information, consult the Office of Academic Integrity, Lovell Hall 315, (555) 555-0163, integrity@university.alkimi.ai.

Accessibility Services

Alkimi University is committed to providing equitable educational access and reasonable accommodations for all students with documented disabilities, including physical, sensory, psychological, learning, and chronic health conditions. Students requesting academic accommodations must formally register with the Office of Accessibility Services, Harlan Hall 204, (555) 555-0155, access@university.alkimi.ai. Once approved, students will receive an official Faculty Accommodation Letter detailing approved accommodations. Students should present this letter to the instructor as early in the semester as possible, and at least one week prior to any exam or assignment requiring accommodation. Accommodations cannot be applied retroactively.

Student Wellness and Mental Health

Your physical health, psychological well-being, and mental health are essential to your academic success. If you experience heightened stress, anxiety, depressive symptoms, personal trauma, or academic burnout, free, confidential counseling and medical care are available through the Hollis Health & Counseling Center, located in the Hollis Center. Routine appointments are available Monday–Friday 8:00 a.m.–6:00 p.m. and Saturday 10:00 a.m.–2:00 p.m. during the semester by calling (555) 555-0190 or emailing health@university.alkimi.ai. Urgent, 24/7 crisis psychological counseling is accessible immediately at (555) 555-0199.

Campus Student Support Services

- **Academic Advising Center:** Lovell Hall 101 | (555) 555-0158 | advising@university.alkimi.ai
- **Writing Center:** Whitcombe Library 3rd Floor | Free consultations on papers, reports, and research projects at any stage.
- **Whitcombe Library:** Whitcombe Library, Main Floor | (555) 555-0170 | askalibrarian@university.alkimi.ai
- **Hollis Health & Counseling Center:** Hollis Center | (555) 555-0190 | 24/7 Counseling Line: (555) 555-0199 | health@university.alkimi.ai
- **The Writing Center:** Whitcombe Library | Consultations on honors-level thesis construction, primary source argument synthesis, and close reading revisions.