**GE 211 ‘Modernity and its Discontents’: Essay questions 2015-16**

Answer **one question**. All questions should be answered with reference to the texts and extracts read in class. While you are permitted to refer to other texts by the authors discussed, there is no expectation that you do so. For marking criteria (pp. 21-22) and general advice on essay writing please see the *Guidelines for assessed Essays and Examinations* on the ‘Academic Resources’ website at <http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/modernlanguages/currentstudents/undergraduate/german/materials-copy/>.

The length of your essay should be **3000 words** (+/- 10%).

1. Some commentators claim that Marx’s critique of alienation [*Entfremdung*] in modern, capitalist society is based on the comparison of the present with some assumed unalienated way of life in the past. Discuss this view with reference to the extracts from the *Ökonomisch-Philosophische Manuskripte*.
2. According to the texts we read by Karl Marx, did the increasing division of labour that is one important characteristic of modern society have positive or negative effects, or both, in terms of general social progress, and of the well-being of each member of society? You can also compare Marx’s views to those of Friedrich Schiller and/or Georg Simmel if you wish.
3. Nietzsche’s philosophy has been described as “aristocratic radicalism” because, such commentators claim, it is based on a glorification of strength and a valuation of superiority, rather than on any positive notion of universal equality. Discuss this characterisation with reference to the extracts from *Zarathustra* and *Zur Genealogie der Moral*.
4. Compare and contrast the theory and critique of religion AND/OR of dominant ideas of morality in the texts by Nietzsche and Freud.
5. How does Freud describe the relationship of libido and civilisation [*Kultur*] in *Das Unbehagen in der Kultur*? Is it purely conflictual?
6. With reference to ONE OR MORE of the following authors: Schiller, Marx, Nietzsche, Simmel, Freud, explain how modern society impacts on the way in which human beings relate to the material world.
7. With reference to Marx, Nietzsche, Simmel OR Freud, discuss the degree to which the development of modernity represents a change for the better or for the worse or both, and in which respects.
8. Compare and contrast the standpoint of critique in any TWO of the following authors: Schiller, Marx, Nietzsche, Simmel, Freud, with reference to the following question: Is modern society criticised with reference to a better past, or a possible better future – or both?
9. How does any ONE of the following authors: Marx, Nietzsche, Simmel OR Freud, describe the relationship of the individual and society in modernity? What, according to your chosen author, are the problems with this relationship?
10. During the Enlightenment, a view emerged that saw the individual as rational, self-determined, possessing full self-knowledge and free will, and being master of his/her body and its impulses. With reference to AT LEAST ONE of the following authors: Marx, Nietzsche, Simmel, Freud, explain how several aspects of this conception were increasingly called into question in the 19th and/or 20th Century.

This assignment (weighted 100% of the overall module mark for assessment by essay) is to be submitted both electronically and as hard copy (to the Departmental Secretary Catherine Johnstone) by **Thursday 28 April, 2016 (Term 3, week 1) at 12 noon.** Cover sheets can be obtained from the office.