German 3353H: German Intellectual History: Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud

In this course we will examine the positions of three seminal thinkers on the nature of human history. Karl Marx, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Sigmund Freud were perhaps the three most important German writers of the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Although they worked in different fields – Marx devoted most of his mature thought to political economy, Nietzsche was a philosopher and cultural critic, Freud concentrated on the human psyche – each has had significant influence beyond their more narrow specialty. In particular each developed a unique view of history and of historical process. We will examine seminal writings of Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud, in order to discern (1) what their views of history were, (2) how their view of history informs or is informed by their more general projects, and (3) how their views of history measure up against each other. During the first two weeks of the course we will make some general observations on history and historiography, and read two texts, one by Immanuel Kant, the other by Georg Friedrich Wilhelm Hegel's on history. Kant and Hegel provide useful background for our further readings. Thereafter we will proceed to texts by the three main authors.