Wagner's Ring and the Nineteenth Century

Reading List:
Andrew Porter, ed., Wagner: The Ring
G.B. Shaw, The Perfect Wagnerite
Thomas Mann, Pro and Contra Wagner
Gardner, ed., Nineteenth Century Philosophy
F. Nietzsche, The Birth of Tragedy and the Case of Wagner
C. Schorske, "The Quest for the Grail: Wagner and Morris"
G. Windell, "Hegel, Feuerbach and Wagner's Ring"

Purpose of the Course:
We will study intensively Wagner's Ring of the Nibelungen, along with several interpretations of its relation to modern culture and society. The class will view a production of the Ring (that of Boulez and Chereau) while studying the Porter translation of the libretto or text of the Ring and reading the interpretations. We will focus on the problem of interpretation with particular application to the Ring. The general aim of the class is to strengthen our understanding of the problems of interpretation of a cultural artifact and its relation to society. The specific aim of the class is that each student formulate his or her interpretation of the Ring.

Format of the Class:
For each class period the student is expected to study that portion of the libretto that will be discussed, along with reading the interpretation assigned. In class we will view a part of the Ring and have open discussion about its interpretation.

Exams and Papers:
There will be one paper, due at the end of the quarter, in which the student will develop his or her interpretation of the Ring (or a theme in it) and compare it with one or more of the readings. The paper should be 15 pages typed and doublespaced. There are no exams anticipated at this time.

Assignments:
Week One Introduction
   Shaw, The Perfect Wagnerite, prefaces and pp. 1-56

Week Two Shaw, The Perfect Wagnerite, pp. 57-86
   Shaw, The Perfect Wagnerite, pp. 87-136
Week Three  Schorske, "The Quest for the Grail"
   (available at the Clone Factory)
   Windall, "Hegel, Feuerbach and Wagner's Ring"
   (available at the Clone Factory)

Week Four  Gardner, "Hegel," pp. 40-87
   Gardner, "Schopenhauer," pp.88-130

Week Five  Gardner, "Feuerbach, pp. 237-250

Week Six  Nietzsche, The Case of Wagner, pp. 147-180
   Nietzsche, The Case of Wagner, pp. 181-197

Week Seven  Mann, pp.91-148
   Mann, pp.171-193

Week Eight  Mann, pp.194-222

Week Nine  continued discussion

Week Ten  continued discussion

Suggested Readings:


L.J. Rather, The Dream of Self-Destruction (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State, 19179)