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University of Guelph
Department of Philosophy

PHIL 3200: Contemporary European Philosophy

Lecture Time: Monday, 7:00 – 9:45 PM

Course Description

The European philosophical tradition in the 20th century is diverse in ideas, problems, and methodologies. This course will provide a survey of the tradition by focusing on how a number of philosophers have conceived “the world.” The world at once forms the condition of our experience, action, and our systems of meanings. Yet at the same time the world is significantly altered by the systems of knowledge through which we conceive the world itself, as well as the political and economic processes that mold it to, and often times against, our human ends. We will focus on the relation between metaphysical and political accounts of the world. This relation entails the corresponding questions of being, subjectivity, time, knowledge, and history. We will read selections from the phenomenological movement in the work of Martin Heidegger that seeks to establish the fundamental relationship between human subjectivity and its worldly and temporal context. We will then turn to a number of thinkers in French post-structuralism (Deleuze, Guattari, and Foucault). In their attempt to shift the focus away from the human subject, these texts push us to think the structures of the world differently. In the final part of the course, we will examine a number of critical theorists (Cixous, Adorno and Horkheimer, and Fanon) that challenge the gendered, racial, and political ways in which the world has been framed.

Pedagogical Goals

The aims of this course are (1) to introduce advanced students to central philosophical texts in the contemporary European tradition, and (2) to assist them in developing their skills in the oral and written interpretation. The course will be reading and writing intensive. There will be an average of 40 pages of reading per week. Required texts will be essays or focused selections from larger works. There will be a major writing assignment (between 6-8 pages in length) due at the end of the semester that will allow students to develop a substantial explanation and interpretation of a single philosophical problem found in one of the course readings. Prior to this, there will be two shorter writing assignments meant to hone skills in written explication and critique. A supplementary writing workshop will be provided early in the semester to assist students in these tasks, and I will offer to read and comment on drafts of papers prior to their due date. My aim is to encourage students to start their papers early, and to dedicate time to generating multiple drafts. Students will be expected to participate in class, and they will be assessed on their contributions to the ongoing discussion.

Required Course Texts

Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Joan Stainbaugh (SUNY, 2010).

Henri Bergson, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. T. E. Hulme (Hackett, 1999).

Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things* (Routledge, 2002).

Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* (Penguin, 2009).

Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*

* Additional readings will be made available on CourseLink or as handouts at least two weeks prior to scheduled reading. All required texts are available at the University Bookstore. It is the responsibility of students to ensure that they have these texts prior to dates required.

Assignments

Explication Essay 15%

A short, 2-3 page paper devoted to explaining concisely a philosophical idea, argument, or passage from Heidegger's *Being and Time*. The goal of this assignment is to hone writing skills in explanation rather than critique. To "explicate" something literally means *to unfold* it. Students must take a compact idea or argument and clearly lay out its premises, dimensions, and consequences. Papers will be evaluated on clarity, comprehension, philosophical insight, and grammar.

Explication Revisions 10%

Extensive comments and critical questions will be provided on all explication papers. Students will be evaluated on the quality of revisions on their explication essays.

Midterm 20%

The midterm assignment will entail answering 3-5 questions with specific and necessary length limits. The purpose of these limits is to focus attention on writing substantial philosophical responses in the most concise and precise way. The range of possible questions will be comprehensive from all of the material covered in the course up until this point.

Final Essay 40%

An analytic and critical essay between 6-8 pages in length. Students are expected to explain and critically assess the arguments of one or more thinkers we have studied in the course. Students will employ and critically expand on the explication techniques used in the first essay assignment. Possible essay topics will be provided by instructor. Students will have the opportunity to develop an original topic and thesis with the prior approval of the instructor.

Participation 15%

Dialogue is an essential aspect of philosophical study. Participation marks will be determined by the degree to which students regularly and meaningfully contribute to class discussion. This can include short class presentation, posing critical questions, responding to their peer's questions and comments, and providing verbal interpretations of texts and ideas.

Course Policies

All assignments must be turned *in person during the class* in which they are due, without exception unless with prior approval from the instructor and for compassionate reasons. Late assignments will be accepted only under these conditions.

Laptops are permitted during lecture only for work related purposes (e.g. taking notes). Students using laptops for any other purpose leading to the distraction of the class will be asked to leave class.

Reading Schedule

All students are expected to complete the entirety of the assigned readings *before* the class for which readings are scheduled, and to come to class prepared to ask questions and contribute to in-depth discussion of the material. Reading schedule is subject to change. Students should check syllabus on CourseLink regularly for updated reading schedule. More focused sections will be indicated weekly along with questions to consider. Texts marked with an * will be provided as handouts or digitally on CourseLink.

Week 1

The Being of the World

Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, “Antinomies” *

Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, introduction

Week 2

Being at Home in the World

Heidegger, *Being and Time*, selections from pp. 73-168

Week 3

Time: Anxiety and the Future

Heidegger, *Being and Time*, pp. 179-82, selections from 279-311 and 383-422

Explication Essay Topic Assigned

Week 4

Time and the Intuition of Life

Henri Bergson, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*

Explication Essay Due

Week 5

The Grounds and Subject of Time

Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, “Repetition For Itself,” pp. 70-91 *

Explication Revisions Due

Week 6

Deleuze, “Repetition for Itself,” cont.

Week 7

Knowledge of the World

Foucault, *The Order of Things*, “Preface” and “The Prose of the World”

Midterm Assignment Questions Assigned

Week 8

Sexuality and Becoming

Hélène Cixous, “The Laugh of Medusa” *

Midterm Assignment Due In-Class

Week 9

Desire and the World

Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, “The Desiring-Machines”

Week 10

History and Political Formations

Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, “Savages, Barbarians, Civilized Men”

Week 11

History and Knowledge of the World

Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, “The Concept of Enlightenment”

Week 12

Colonialism and the Destruction of the World

Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, “On Violence” *

Film Viewing, TBD

December 15: Final Essay Due

2014 University Standards

EMAIL COMMUNICATION

As per university regulations, all students are required to check their uoguelph.ca email account regularly: email is the official route of communication between the University and its students.

WHEN YOU CANNOT MEET A COURSE REQUIREMENT

When you find yourself unable to meet an in-course requirement because of illness or compassionate reasons, please advise the course instructor (or designated person, such as a teaching assistant) in writing, with your name, id#, and email contact. See the Undergraduate Calendar's [information on regulations and procedures for Academic Consideration](#).

DROP DATE

The last date to drop one-semester courses, without academic penalty, is Friday, October 31, 2014. See the Undergraduate Calendar's [regulations and procedures for Dropping Courses](#).

COPIES OF OUT-OF-CLASS ASSIGNMENTS

Keep paper and/or other reliable backup copies of all out-of-class assignments: you may be asked to resubmit work at any time.

ACCESSIBILITY

The University of Guelph is committed to creating a barrier-free environment. Providing services for students is a shared responsibility among students, faculty and administrators. This relationship is based on respect of individual rights, the dignity of the individual and the University community's shared commitment to an open and supportive learning environment. Students requiring service or accommodation, whether due to an identified, ongoing disability or a short-term disability should contact the Centre for Students with Disabilities as soon as possible. For more information, contact CSD at 519-824-4120 ext. 56208 or email csd@uoguelph.ca or go to [their website](#).

ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT

The University of Guelph is committed to upholding the highest standards of academic integrity and it is the responsibility of all members of the University community—faculty, staff, and students—to be aware of what constitutes academic misconduct and to do as much as possible to prevent academic offences from occurring. University of Guelph students have the responsibility of abiding by the University's policy on academic misconduct regardless of their location of study; faculty, staff and students have the responsibility of supporting an environment that discourages misconduct. Students need to remain aware that instructors have access to and the right to use electronic and other means of detection.

Please note: Whether or not a student intended to commit academic misconduct is not relevant for a finding of guilt. Hurried or careless submission of assignments does not excuse students from responsibility for verifying the academic integrity of their work before submitting it. Students who are in any doubt as to whether an action on their part could be construed as an academic offence should consult with a faculty member or faculty advisor.

The Academic Misconduct Policy is [detailed in the Undergraduate Calendar](#).

RECORDING OF MATERIALS

Presentations which are made in relation to course work—including lectures—cannot be recorded or copied without the permission of the presenter, whether the instructor, a classmate or guest lecturer. Material recorded with permission is restricted to use for that course unless further permission is granted.

RESOURCES

The Academic Calendars are the source of information about the University of Guelph's procedures, policies and regulations which apply to undergraduate, graduate and diploma programs: <http://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars>