

University of Guelph  
Department of Philosophy

PHIL\*3350, Selected Topics in Philosophy

“Our Ontological Predicament”  
Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Deleuze & Guattari

Instructor: Kyle S. Johnston

Winter 2018

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Office: MacKinnon 328

Office Hour: Wednesday 12:00-13:00, or by appointment

Course Meets: ALEX 117, Mondays and Wednesdays, 10:00-11:20

**Brief Course Description:** This seminar will explore the conceptual contributions of Friedrich Nietzsche, Martin Heidegger, and Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari to the history of metaphysics in 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century European philosophy. We will begin with one of Nietzsche’s last texts, *Twilight of the Idols* (1888), a work originally conceived as a short introduction to his opus wherein he psychologically analyzes concepts foundational to western metaphysics. Overall, the text argues that concepts like ‘reason,’ ‘being,’ and ‘objectivity’ are ultimately expressions of (moral) value. With Nietzsche, we will also engage new forms of philosophical expression, a pursuit consequential for subsequent European philosophy. We will then turn to Heidegger’s 1935 lecture course, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, which continues to outline his conception of a ‘hermeneutic ontology’ and offers fascinating reinterpretations of Greek philosophy’s understanding of ‘Being.’ The aim of Heidegger’s course is to offer us an original encounter of what it means ‘to be.’ We will address the ongoing controversy around this text, i.e. its putative fascist character and its acknowledgment of the Nazi Party, while raising the thorny issue of authorial ownership and responsibility. To finish our course we will study selections of Deleuze and Guattari’s *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980). This work develops the schizo-nomadology for which Deleuze and Guattari are well known and elaborates unorthodox philosophical concepts including: machinic assemblages, intensive becomings, lines of flight, bodies without organs, the war machine, stratification, deterritorialization, *et al.* We will focus on the Plateaus (i.e. chapters) that treat the concepts of rhizomes, multiplicities, content and expression, form and matter, regimes of signs, abstract machines, order-words, faciality, and becomings, in order to understand what the authors mean when they describe the human being as being *machined* within a socio-political context. Our study of these difficult concepts and the text’s form of argumentation will allow us to bear witness to contemporary inheritors of Nietzsche’s endeavor to forge new expressions of thought.

**Required Texts:**

- *The Portable Nietzsche*, Friedrich Nietzsche, trans. Walter Kaufmann. Penguin Classics, 1977.
- *Introduction to Metaphysics*, Martin Heidegger, Trans. Gregory Fried and Richard Polt, Yale Nota Bene, Yale University Press, 2000.
- *A Thousand Plateaus*, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, Trans. Brian Massumi, University of Minn. Press, 1987.

### Texts on Reserve:

- *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist*, Walter Kaufmann. Vintage Books Edition, 1968.
- *A Companion to Heidegger's Introduction to Metaphysics*, Richard Polt and Gregory Fried, Eds. Yale University Press, 2001.
- *Deleuze and Guattari's A Thousand Plateaus*, Eugene W. Holland. Bloomsbury Academic, 2013.

### Assignments: All assignments must be printed-out and submitted in hardcopy.

- 4 Explicative Reading Responses, 4 x 10% = 40%
  - Choose four classes to submit a commentary. Each commentary must be submitted at the beginning of that day's class and must be no more than two double-spaced pages (standard font and margins) in length. *Note*: you cannot submit a commentary on a reading for a previous class meeting. If you are submitting on Monday, it should concern the reading for that day's class. **You must write at least once on each text.**
  - For each commentary: 1) Pick one to three sentences of philosophical importance in the reading for that day's class; 2) Quote the material at the beginning of your paper and include the page number; 3) *Explain* – i.e. unpack, unfold, and make clear – what the author says in your own words; 4) *Articulate* its philosophical relevance; 5) *Include* one critical question about the reading at the end of your commentary. These questions may be used to stimulate class discussion.
- Paper Outline, 10%
  - You will turn in a detailed outline of your final paper, **including an introductory paragraph, thesis statement, and a plan for the flow of your argument**. We will talk about how this outline should be structured in more detail in class. The paper outline is due in **Week 11**.
- Final Term Paper, 7-9 pages, 35%
  - The details of the final paper will be discussed in class. In your essay, you will be required to: demonstrate accurate knowledge of the position in question, demonstrate facility with the specifics of the text, show insight into the philosophical relevance of the position(s) in question, and develop an original critical/interpretative stance of your own. **Final Term Paper due on the Final Exam date (TBA).**
- Class participation, 15%
  - You are expected to attend *all* seminars. However, simply attending seminar does not qualify as adequate participation. You should come prepared to contribute to each class discussion by offering comments pertinent to that class' reading. The best way to make sense of these difficult texts is to make an invested effort to understand them. That means not only passively reading the text but also attempting interpretations, articulating your thoughts, and defending your positions.

- *Note:* If you feel participating in class will be a problem please come and see me at the beginning of the seminar to arrange an alternative evaluation.
- Out of consideration for your fellow students, please observe the following rules:
  - No cell phone use, including text messaging.
  - No personal conversations.
  - Laptops should be used for note taking purposes only.
  - No taping or recording of any type in the class without the expressed permission of the instructor.

- **THERE IS NO MIDTERM OR FINAL EXAM**

**Late Policy:** Assignments submitted after their published due date will be penalized 10% per day up to seven days. After one week late assignments will not be accepted. **If you foresee having trouble submitting an assignment on time due to extenuating circumstances or based on compassionate grounds you must contact me in advance.** Any necessary documentation should also be submitted.

**Contact Policy:** Where a question cannot easily or briefly be answered with a reply email, I will simply indicate to the student that s/he should see me during my office hour. *Note:* substantial philosophical discussions will not be conducted via e-mail.

**Learning Outcomes:** In addition to the learning outcomes posted on the UoG website (<http://www.uoguelph.ca/vpacademic/avpa/outcomes/pdfs/Undergraduate%20Learning%20Outcomes.pdf>), you will gain confidence in being able to read and understand a piece of philosophy while maintaining a critical attitude towards its position. This means that you will be able to clearly articulate what is at stake in the literature, elucidate difficult terms, identify essential concepts and themes, and connect those concepts by showing how they work together. These skills are not acquired without effort. To get the most out of these texts you will have to read them, think about the ideas contained therein, then re-read, and continue to think.

The single most important objective of this course is for each of you individually to take your lives seriously, to put your values and thoughts into question, and ask yourselves, with care, what you can do to make for yourself a meaningful present and future. After University you may never again have such concentrated time to devote freely to intellectual and cultural pursuits. Take the time you have!

**Class Vision:** We will be textualists. Our attention and efforts will be put into plumbing the texts themselves. There is no reward in confronting a difficult idea and immediately turning to secondary sources for help. It is better to think through a tough concept yourself and get it wrong than instantly jump to someone else's labors in order to understand. Making mistakes is necessary for intellectual progress. Furthermore, arbitrarily 'name-dropping' other philosophers and their positions on a similar topic can serve to move one further away from the text. Our motto will be—"To the text!"

## Readings:

### Week 1 (Jan. 8<sup>th</sup> & 10<sup>th</sup>)

- Introduction:
  - “On Truth and Lie...” (pp. 42-47); *Human, All-Too-Human*, (#2, 113, 146, 170); *The Dawn* (#573) *The Gay Science* (#290, 319); *The Gay Science: Book V* (#343, 344)

### Week 2 (Jan. 15<sup>th</sup> & 17<sup>th</sup>)

- *Twilight of the Idols*
  - “Preface”, “The Problem of Socrates”, “‘Reason’ in Philosophy”, “How the ‘True World’ Finally Became a Fable”, “Morality as Anti-Nature”

### Week 3 (Jan. 22<sup>nd</sup> & 24<sup>th</sup>)

- *Twilight*
  - “The Four Great Errors”, “The ‘Improvers’ of Mankind”, “What Germans Lack”

### Week 4 (Jan 29<sup>th</sup> & 31<sup>st</sup>)

- *Twilight*
  - “Skirmishes of an Untimely Man” (**Except: #1-3, 6, 12, 13, 27, 43, 45**), “What I Owe the Ancients”, “The Hammer Speaks”
    - **Last week to submit a Nietzsche explicative reading response**

### Week 5 (Feb. 5<sup>th</sup> & 7<sup>th</sup>)

- *Introduction to Metaphysics*
  - Why is there something rather than nothing? (1-10)
  - Nature (*Phusis*) and Dasein (10-20)
  - Oblivion and Disclosedness (20-33)

### Week 6 (Feb. 12<sup>th</sup> & 14<sup>th</sup>)

- *Introduction*
  - Substance (*Ousia*) and ‘Is’ (33-49)
  - Essence and Language (79-91)

----- **WINTER BREAK (Feb. 19<sup>th</sup> – 23<sup>rd</sup>), NO CLASSES!!!** -----

### Week 7 (Feb. 26<sup>th</sup> & 28<sup>th</sup>)

- *Introduction*
  - Becoming, Appearance, Poetry (98-111)
  - Reason (*Logos*) and Making (*Poiesis*) (130-143)

Week 8 (Mar. 5<sup>th</sup> & 7<sup>th</sup>)

- *Introduction*
  - Conclusion (202-221)
    - **Last week to submit a Heidegger explicative reading response**

\*\*\*\*\* **March 9<sup>th</sup>**, Last day to drop course \*\*\*\*\*

Week 9 (Mar. 12<sup>th</sup> & 14<sup>th</sup>)

- *A Thousand Plateaus (ATP)*
  - “Introduction: Rhizome”

Week 10 (Mar. 19<sup>th</sup> & 21<sup>st</sup>)

- *ATP*
  - “November 20, 1923: Postulates of Linguistics” (Excerpts)

Week 11 (Mar. 26<sup>th</sup> & 28<sup>th</sup>)

- *ATP*
  - “587 B.C. – A.D. 70: On Several Regimes of Signs”
    - **Paper outline due on March 28<sup>th</sup>.**

Week 12 (Apr. 2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup>)

- *ATP*
  - “Year Zero: Faciality” (& Excerpts from “1730: Becoming...”)
    - **Last week to submit a Deleuze & Guattari explicative reading response**

**University of Guelph College of Arts Policy Statements (2016)**

**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, March 9<sup>th</sup>, 2018. 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 Student Accessibility Services as soon as possible. For more information, contact SAS at 519-824-4120 ext. 56208 or email [sas@uoguelph.ca](mailto:sas@uoguelph.ca) or refer to the [SAS 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>