

UNIVERSITY OF GUELPH
DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

Phil 3420: Philosophical Problems of Religion: The Philosophy of Søren Kierkegaard

Instructor: Niels Feuerhahn / MacKinnon 368 / email: nfeuerha@uoguelph.ca

Office hours: Tuesday 12:00pm – 1:15pm & by appointment

Class meets: Tuesday, Thursday 2:30pm – 5:20pm / MACK 225

Brief Description of Course:

In 1850, several years after the publication of his last major philosophical writings, Kierkegaard summarized his authorship as follows: “Never have I fought in such a way that I have said: I am the true Christian; the others are not Christians, or probably even hypocrites and the like. No, I have fought in this way: *I know what Christianity is*; I myself acknowledge the defects as a Christian – but I do know what Christianity is. And to come to know this thoroughly seems to me to be in the interest of every human being, whether one is now a Christian or a non-Christian, whether one's intention is to accept Christianity or to abandon it.” The overall goal of this course is to familiarize the student with Kierkegaard's theory of the three stages of human existence. We will begin the semester with two of Kierkegaard's most influential esthetic works: *Either/Or* (1843) and *Fear and Trembling* (1843). The self-avowed goal of the esthetic writings was not to “reflect oneself into Christianity but [to reflect] oneself out of something else and [become] more and more simple, a Christian.” In the first half of the course we will examine the first two stages of existence: the esthetic and the ethical. We will look at these stages under the auspices of the concept of the individual. This concept is of central importance for Kierkegaard's entire project as an author, as is attested by an entry in his *Journals*: “In old times being a Christian was expressed by going into the cloister (the category of individuality); now, on the contrary, one must use the category of the individual to become Christian.” One of the central questions that we shall examine throughout the semester is hence: What does it mean to be an individual? How does one become an individual?

Alongside the esthetic works students are encouraged to read some of Kierkegaard's early signed, religious writings published as *Upbuilding Discourses* which appeared concurrently with Kierkegaard's (pseudonymous) esthetic works. These readings are not required but are highly recommended because they constitute an integral part of Kierkegaard's work. In the week prior to reading week we will read and discuss one of these *Upbuilding Discourses* together in class. In the second half of the semester we will more closely examine some aspects of Kierkegaard's understanding of the religious. What is the nature of faith? What is the relationship between faith, understanding, and knowledge? We will also examine the difference between the ethical concept of the individual and the religious category of 'the single individual.' This section of the course will culminate in a reading of selections from one of Kierkegaard's most powerful religious works: *Works of Love* (1847).

Method of Evaluation:

1 mid-term paper (7-8 pages double-spaced)	=	25% (due February 17 at 5pm)
1 final essay (12-14 pages double-spaced)	=	40% (due April 12 at 3pm)
15 in-class discussion questions	=	15% (15x1%)
4 1-page (single-spaced) definition papers on a key concept	=	20% (4x5%)

The deadlines for the submission of the mid-term paper and the final essay are gauged reasonably. Therefore, late submissions without a valid excuse will be penalized with a deduction of 5% per overdue day.

Required texts:

Kierkegaard, Søren. *Either/Or. Part I*. Howard V. Edited and translated by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987. (ISBN: 0691020418)

Kierkegaard, Søren. *Either/Or. Part II*. Howard V. Edited and translated by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988. (ISBN: 0691020426)

Kierkegaard, Søren. *Fear and Trembling*. Edited and translated by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983. (ISBN: 978-0-691-02026-6)

Kierkegaard, Søren. *Works of Love*. Edited and translated by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995. (ISBN: 0691059160)

Kierkegaard, Søren. "What We Learn from the Lilies in the Field and from the Birds in the Sky", published in *Upbuilding Discourses in Various Spirits*. Edited and translated by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993. (ISBN: 978-0-691-14077-3)*

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*A copy of this text will be made available for photocopying.

Recommended additional texts:

Kierkegaard, Søren. *Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses*. Edited and translated by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992. (ISBN: 978-0-691-02087-7)

All required texts can be purchased through the University of Guelph bookstore. A copy of each text will also be put on reserve at the circulation desk of the university library. All page numbers refer to the above editions.

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES AND READINGS

Week 1

Tue, Jan 11 Formalities & General introduction to Kierkegaard
Thu, Jan 13 "Diapsalmata" from *Either/Or* Vol.1 (24-43)

Week 2

Tue Jan 18 Third Stage of "The Immediate Erotic Stages" from *Either/Or* Vol.1 (84-103)
Thu Jan 20 "The Unhappiest One" + "Rotation of Crops" from *Either/Or* Vol.1 (219-226 ; 285-300)

Week 3

Tue Jan 25 "Rotation of Crops" continued + "The Seducer's Diary" from *Either/Or* Vol.1 (303-335)
Thu Jan 27 "The Seducer's Diary" from *Either/Or* Vol.1 (336-375)

Week 4

Tue Feb 1 "The Seducer's Diary" from *Either/Or* Vol.1 (376-393 ; 437-445)
Thu Feb 3 "The Esthetic Validity of Marriage" from *Either/Or* Vol.2 (19-48)

Week 5

Tue Feb 8 "The Esthetic Validity of Marriage" from *Either/Or* Vol.2 (55-62 ; 79-88 ; 96-98)
Thu Feb 10 "The Esthetic Validity of Marriage" from *Either/Or* Vol.2 (125-153)

Week 6

Tue Feb 15 "What We Learn from the Lilies in the Field and from the Birds..." (readings TBA)
Thu Feb 17* "What We Learn from the Lilies in the Field and from the Birds..." (readings TBA)

*Mid-term essay due by 5pm.

Tue Feb 22 READING WEEK
Thu Feb 24 READING WEEK

Week 7 (53 pages)

Tue Mar 1 "Balance between Esthetic and Ethical" from *Either/Or* Vol.2 (158-169 ; 176-192)
Thu Mar 3 "Balance between Esthetic and Ethical" from *Either/Or* Vol.2 (206-232)

Week 8 (32 pages)

Tue Mar 8 "Balance between Esthetic and Ethical" from *Either/Or* Vol.2 (249-264)
Thu Mar 10 "Ultimatum" from *Either/Or* Vol.2 (337-354)

Week 9

Tue Mar 15 *Fear and Trembling* (readings TBA)
Tue Mar 17 *Fear and Trembling* (readings TBA)

Week 10

Tue Mar 22 *Fear and Trembling* (readings TBA)
Thu Mar 24 *Works of Love* (readings TBA)

Week 11

Tue Mar 29 *Works of Love* (readings TBA)
Thu Mar 31 *Works of Love* (readings TBA)

Week 12

Tue Apr 5 *Works of Love* (readings TBA)
Thu Apr 7 *Works of Love* (readings TBA)

Tue Apr 12 Last day for submission of final essay without late penalty

E-mail 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 e-mail contact. See the undergraduate calendar for information on regulations and procedures for Academic Consideration:

<http://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c08/c08-ac.shtml>

Drop Date

The last date to drop one-semester **Winter '11** courses, without academic penalty, is **Friday March 11th**. For regulations and procedures for Dropping Courses, see the Undergraduate Calendar:

<http://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c08/c08-drop.shtml>

Copies of out-of-class assignments

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

Academic Misconduct

The University of Guelph is committed to upholding the highest standards of academic integrity and enjoins 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. The Academic Misconduct Policy is detailed in the Undergraduate Calendar:

<http://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c08/c08-amisconduct.shtml>

Recording of Materials

Presentations which are made in relation to course work—including lectures—cannot be recorded in any electronic media without the permission of the presenter, whether the instructor, a classmate or guest lecturer.

Resources

The Undergraduate Calendar is the source of information about the University of Guelph's procedures, policies and regulations which apply to undergraduate programs. It can be found at:

<http://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/>