University of Guelph tagline

PHIL\*3200 - Continental Philosophy

Term: Fall 2023

Section(s):  01

Department of Philosophy

Credit Weight: 0.50

# Course Details

## Calendar Description

This course focuses on 20th century French and German philosophy and the influences that shaped it. The course will be part historical, part contemporary. The historical part may survey touchstones of current Continental thought in ancient and modern philosophy. The contemporary part of this course may focus on any of the hundred or so key figures in 20th or 21st century Continental thought, or groupings thereof according to particular thematic.

**Prerequisite(s):**1.50 credits in Philosophy or 7.50 credits

## Detailed Course Description

European philosophy over the past centuries has transformed the way we think about ourselves and the world in which we live. As a discipline, continental philosophy draws on a range of distinct but related traditions, exemplified by such 19th century philosophers as Hegel, Schopenhauer, and Nietzsche, and 20th century French philosophers such as Sartre, Foucault, and Deleuze. The techniques of continental philosophy encompass various practices, including the close analysis of texts, the creative reading of literary texts, and reflection on one’s own lived experience. As a result, continental philosophy has had a strong influence not only in philosophy but also in a wide range of humanist and social scientific disciplines.

Moreover, the borders of continental philosophy are continually being stretched and critiqued by contemporary thinkers, coming from outside the French and German philosophical traditions. There are now many thinkers who offer philosophical insights into the social and political problems that structure experience, such as Eurocentrism, colonialist expansionism, and modern slavery, among others. Continental philosopher Ofelia Schutte asks: “Is there an excessive concern for keeping the field of Continental philosophy methodologically pure and delimited to certain non-negotiable questions? Or is there a willingness to be open to new and hybrid constructions of Continental thought, such that can accommodate philosophers and thinkers from the West's internally diverse populations and the West's cultural peripheries?” We will consider these questions.

This first half of this course will focus on texts by Sartre, Foucault, and Derrida, while the second half will take up some of the novel constructions within Continental thought by Saidiya Hartman, Achille Mbembe, and Jasbir Puar. In so doing, this course will suggest that “new and hybrid constructions” of continental thought begin with strategic deployments of classical philosophical methodologies, as well as challenges to them.

Since continental thinkers often arrive at their own ideas through their understanding of inherited lineages, each new philosophical project often draws on the work of earlier philosophers. One of the central aims of this course is to learn to attend to the ways in which the philosophers we study transform the ideas to which they respond, and we should become attuned to the ways that the readings are dialogically interrelated. We will pursue a reading schedule that follows a roughlychronological order, from Sartre, Foucault, and Derrida to Mbembe, Puar, and Hartman.

Over the duration of this course, we will focus on questions concerning the death penalty; prisons and jails; US plantations; and slavery and colonialism in the modern and contemporary world. These specific themes will help guide our understanding of the thinkers we study. Our central question will be the following: How do different continental thinkers conceive of surveillance, carcerality, and death?

The course will begin with a reading of Sartre’s concept of death. Next, we will read the entirety of our major text Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish*. Reading Foucault’s arguments in their full context will help us to understand how surveillance systems arose in the West throughout the 18th and 19th centuries. We will then examine Derrida’s lectures on the death penalty, for an understanding of retributive forms of justice, as well as Derrida’s call for an abolitionist response. Jasbir Puar will help us to explore questions related to debilitation and disability as structurally endemic in colonial societies. Achille Mbembe’s concept of necropolitics will help us to conceptualize the temporal duration of incarceration and death in the global South. Then we will read Hartman, to gauge the impact of the slave trade, plantation life, and post-emancipation segregation in the US on modern systems of incarceration, surveillance, and death.

Schutte, Ofelia (2000). Contintental Philosophy and Postcolonial Subjects. *Philosophy Today* 44 (Supplement):8-17.

## Timetable

Lecture: Monday from 2:30 – 3:50pm (in person)

Lecture: Wednesday from 2:30 – 3:50 pm (in person)

The classroom locations can be assessed on WebAdvisor.

**Hybrid option: lectures will be accessible via Zoom if you are unable to attend class.**

The expectation is that you will attend in person sessions. However, if it is not possible for you to attend due to exceptional circumstances, you are expected to attend via Zoom, and active participation is still required. If you are attending regularly on zoom, you must communicate to the professor the reasons for virtual attendance prior to class.

# Instructional Support

Please see Web Advisor for instructor information.

Office Hours: Wednesday 4-5 pm

# Resources

Sartre, from *Being and Nothingness*

Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*

Jacques Derrida, from *The Death Penalty Lectures*

Jasbir Puar, from *The Right to Maim: Debility, Capacity, Disability*

Achille Mbembe, from *Necropolitics*

Saidiya Hartman, from *Scenes of Subjection*

-All readings with the exception of Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish* will be available in e-version on ARES. The links and/or pdfs are found on the course site.

-Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish* is available at the University of Guelph Bookstore.

# Course Learning Outcomes

The course is designed to help students:

1. Develop close reading skills of philosophical texts.
2. Identify and analyze some major ideas in continental philosophical thought.
3. Articulate and comment critically on key ideas related to course themes.
4. Write clearly and cogently on course related topics.

## Lectures

Organization of Classroom Hours & Readings:

Classes will incorporate both presentation of material by me, and discussion. The balance and relation of these components will vary as required (we might start with discussion or end with it or move in and out of it). For each class, a reading will be assigned, and **it is necessary and expected that you read and study it BEFORE the class** so that you are prepared to think about it and questions arising from it. Discussions and lectures **presume that you are familiar with the text** and will be very difficult to follow if you have not done the reading. And without good comprehension of the classes and text, papers usually fail to adequately meet the grading criteria.

NOTE: The assigned readings are complex. They require careful, slow, attentive, and thoughtful reading. **You can expect to spend at least two to four hours on your reading each week and should schedule accordingly.** *You should think of reading as the main assignment in the course*.

# Assessments

**Assignments and Grades:**

1. **Midterm Test (20%)** [LO 1,2,3,4]: This will cover the readings up until October 19th and will be mainly short-answer questions aimed to test your knowledge of readings and lectures. It will take place in class on **October 23rd**. Please bring your computers to class. If you do not have a computer in class, you will be asked to complete a handwritten assignment. This test will be an open book test.

2. **One essay (25%)** [LO 1,2,3,4]**:** This will take the form of a five-page essay and must be chosen from a list of topics provided by the instructor. The purpose is to give you practice in writing philosophical, that is, critical and well-reasoned essays. (Guidelines for essays will be explained in class.) **DUE DATE: NOV 17, 2023.**

3. **The take-home final (35%)** [LO 1,2,3,4]will include two components: I/ A short essay (5 pages) along the same lines as your first essay assignment, but with a list of topics covering the second half of the course. II/ Short-answer questions, mainly expository, aimed to test your knowledge of readings and lectures from the entire course. The assignment will be uploaded to Dropbox on DEC 4, 2023, at 12 pm and the **DUE DATE is DEC 7, 2023, at 6 pm.**

4. **Short Weekly Questions (10%)** [LO 2,3,4]**:**  
You should come to all weeks of class with ***one short written question/concept****,* designed to generate discussion **ONCE PER WEEK**. **You should be ready to contribute this orally if there is a lull in discussion or when called on.** Questions will not be individually graded, but I ask that you hand them in at the end of each class; I will grade them at the end of term taken as a whole. (As a rough guideline, short weekly questions should be about *75-100 words* in length.)

Hints: The aim is not to give an exhaustive interpretation of the reading; rather it is to interrogate as precisely and attentively as possible an issue in that week’s reading that you think is significant for understanding the text. *Questions/concepts must be clearly formulated and elaborated in light of the text we are reading*. (Please motivate your question by referring to passage(s) from the text but avoid linear summaries of the text.)

**5. Attendance and Participation** **(10%)** [LO 2,3]**:**

Since this is a discussion-based seminar, **ATTENDANCE** and **PARTICIPATION** are crucial to your role in the class – both in virtual and in person sessions. Together they are worth **10%** of your grade. If attending virtually, via the hybrid option, participation is expected in the form of commentary, questions, and contributions to classroom discussion and counted toward your participation grade.

**Expectations with respect to Participation and Attendance**

It is your responsibility to come to each class, having done the readings and prepared for substantial and nuanced discussion. **You are expected to attend all sessions** (unless you have a valid medical reason for absence). IF YOU CANNOT ATTEND DUE TO ILLNESS, accommodations will be made. If attending virtually, active participation is expected.

You are expected to engage seriously with the questions, interventions, and presentations of your fellow students. Oral participation should be thoughtful, respectful of others, and constructively critical, as well as on-going.

# Late Policy

Late work  
For fairness reasons, there is a penalty for late work. A deduction of 2% per day, starting and including the day it is due, will normally be applied. There is no limit to the % that can be deducted. The date stamp on the Dropbox indicates the time the assignment was submitted, and you must submit your assignment in the correct format (\*.doc or .docx) by this time.

You will have one grace period of 3 hours that you may use either for the essay due on November 17, or the final take-home exam. (This grace period is not to be used for the mid-term test.) Your TA will make a note of whether that is used.

WEEKLY QUESTIONS must be handed in – IN CLASS (or uploaded to Dropbox).

Missed test or exam  
Make-up tests will require a note from your Program Counsellor.

Students who are unable to write the final take-home exam within the designated time, e.g., for medical reasons, must follow the guidelines set out in Undergraduate calendar.

I reserve the right to require you to submit rough notes and rough drafts as part of your grade on any written piece of work.

# University Standard Statements

## Email Communication

As per university regulations, all students are required to check their <uoguelph.ca> e- mail account regularly: e-mail 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.

Undergraduate Calendar - Academic Consideration and Appeals <https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c08/c08-ac.shtml>

Graduate Calendar - Grounds for Academic Consideration <https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/graduate/current/genreg/index.shtml>

## Drop Date

Courses that are one semester long must be dropped by the end of the last day of classes; two-semester courses must be dropped by the last day of classes in the second semester. The regulations and procedures for course registration are available in their respective Academic Calendars.

Undergraduate Calendar - Dropping Courses [https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c08/c08- drop.shtml](https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c08/c08-%20drop.shtml)

Graduate Calendar - Registration Changes [https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/graduate/current/genreg/genreg-reg- regchg.shtml](https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/graduate/current/genreg/genreg-reg-%20regchg.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.

## Accessibility

The University promotes the full participation of students who experience disabilities in their academic programs. To that end, the provision of academic accommodation is a shared responsibility between the University and the student.

When accommodations are needed, the student is required to first register with Student Accessibility Services (SAS). Documentation to substantiate the existence of a disability is required, however, interim accommodations may be possible while that process is underway.

Accommodations are available for both permanent and temporary disabilities. It should be noted that common illnesses such as a cold or the flu do not constitute a disability.

Use of the SAS Exam Centre requires students to make a booking at least 14 days in advance, and no later than November 1 (fall), March 1 (winter) or July 1 (summer).

Similarly, new or changed accommodations for online quizzes, tests and exams must be approved at least a week ahead of time.

More information: [www.uoguelph.ca/sas](http://www.uoguelph.ca/sas)

## 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.

Undergraduate Calendar - Academic Misconduct [https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c08/c08- amisconduct.shtml](https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c08/c08-%20amisconduct.shtml)

Graduate Calendar - Academic Misconduct <https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/graduate/current/genreg/index.shtml>

## AI Statement

The use of AI is **not authorized** for the completion of assignments. Turnitin may be used in the evaluation process for all assignments.

Please read the University statement on the use of AI in classrooms: <https://news.uoguelph.ca/2023/03/university-of-guelph-statement-on-artificial-intelligence-systems-chatgpt-academic-integrity/>

## 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.

## Disclaimer

Please note that the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic may necessitate a revision of the format of course offerings, changes in classroom protocols, and academic schedules. Any such changes will be announced via Courselink and/or class email.

This includes on-campus scheduling during the semester, mid-terms and final examination schedules. All University-wide decisions will be posted on the COVID-19 website (https://news.uoguelph.ca/2019-novel-coronavirus-information/) and circulated by email.

## Illness

Medical notes will not normally be required for singular instances of academic consideration, although students may be required to provide supporting documentation for multiple missed assessments or when involving a large part of a course (e.g., essay or major assignment).

## COVID-19 Safety Protocols

For information on current safety protocols, follow these links:

* [https://news.uoguelph.ca/return-to-campuses/how-u-of-g-is-preparing-for-your- safe-return/](https://news.uoguelph.ca/return-to-campuses/how-u-of-g-is-preparing-for-your-%20safe-return/)
* <https://news.uoguelph.ca/return-to-campuses/spaces/#ClassroomSpaces>

Please note, that these guidelines may be updated as required in response to evolving University, Public Health, or government directives.