

PHIL 3180 Contemporary European Philosophy - Spring 2015 Syllabus 1

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Format: We will meet Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from 2:00-2:50 in Main 006
Office Hours: Monday 12:45-1:45, Friday 10:30-11:30, or by appointment

General Objectives of the Course

At the end of the course, you will be asked to evaluate the course's success at meeting these objectives:

- 2. Learning fundamental principles, generalizations, or theories.
- 8. Developing skills in expressing oneself orally or in writing
- 11. Learning to analyze and critically evaluate ideas, arguments, and points of view.

Specific Objectives of the Course

Basic themes will be the problems with the modern philosophy of consciousness, the movement to post-metaphysical thought, and an exploration into the implications (both positive and negative) of this movement for subjectivity and the 'ethical turn' to the Other. Along the way we will consider the possibility and philosophical implications of gift-giving, the relation between thinking and violence, the role and nature of language, the relation between the immanent and the transcendent, and the possibility of revelation. This is an upper level course that has been designed for students who have a solid background in philosophy.

Required Materials

- *The Gift of Death and Literature in Secret*, Jacques Derrida (trans. David Wills). 2nd ed, UChicago, 2007.
- *Basic Writings*, Martin Heidegger (ed. David Krell). Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 2008.
- *Collected Philosophical Papers*, Emmanuel Levinas. Duquesne Univ Press, 1998.
- *Works of Love*, Soren Kierkegaard. Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 2009.
- *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body*, John Paul II. Pauline Books & Media, 2006.
- *Course Packet (available at the bookstore).*

Required Work

* Please Note: I reserve the right to lower a student grade by up to 1 letter grade for poor attendance and participation.*

- Reading Questions (25% of course grade): I expect that you will submit, via Canvas, answers to daily reading questions for each day they are assigned (see the course schedule). Reading Questions are due by the beginning of class; late submissions will not be accepted. These will be checked to see if a complete and adequate submission was turned in on time.
 - I will provide a detailed description of the assignment in another handout. In brief, each reading reflection should provide a substantive answer to the following four questions:
 - (1) What was the reading about as a whole?
 - (2) What was said in detail, and how?
 - (3) Is what was said true, in whole or in part?
 - (4) What of it?
 - I do not want you to rely on secondary sources as the Reading Questions are meant to be the outcome of your engagement with the primary text. Evidence that you have used outside (including online) sources will be considered cheating.
 - These will be graded (adequate/inadequate on a 0 to 1 scale) and a Reading Question grade given based on your percentage of received/possible points. Since I know things come up, I have set the grade scale so that a student can miss up some number of these (assuming they complete the ones they do submit adequately) and still get an A. The grade scale for these is as follows:
 - 89% or more = A 86-88% = A-
 - 82-85% = B+ 79-81% = B 75-78% = B-
 - 72-74% = C+ 68-71% = C 65-67% = C-
 - 62-64% = D 61 and lower = F
- Grade Reading Questions (50% of course grade): Some number of your Reading Questions will be selected for more careful grading. See the Course Schedule for the Reading Questions that will be graded along with being checked for a complete and adequate submission.

- Final Paper (25% of course grade): This will be a scholarly paper (15-20pp) on a topic of interest to the student. Students must submit a paper proposal which includes an abstract (200 words or less) and an annotated bibliography of primary and secondary sources. A final paper will not be accepted unless the proposal has been approved. See the course schedule for proposal and final paper due dates.
- Attendance and Participation: I expect that you will attend class every session, missing only very rarely if at all. Cases of habitual absenteeism (missing more than 3 weeks of class) or habitual failure to participate in class will be considered sufficient conditions for consequences ranging from modest course grade reductions to outright failure in the course.

Note on Grades: As Aristotle notes, various subjects and activities admit of varying degrees of precision. It is my view that papers do not admit of the same level of grading precision as, say, multiple choice exams. As such, I grade using letter grades rather than points. However, there is a value for both students and professors to express grades in numerical form. So while I use letter grades, I will give percentages as numerical place holders. 'A's are 95%, 'A-'s 91%, 'B+'s 88%, 'B's 85%, etc. *I do not negotiate on the percentage grade* (entertain an argument for an 86% instead of an 85% on a paper). Course grades are then based on the following scale:

- 93-100 = A 90-92 = A- 87-89 = B+ 83-86 = B 80-82 = B-
- 77-79 = C+ 73-76 = C 70-72 = C- 67-69 = D+ 63-66 = D 62 and lower = F

Canvas

We will use Canvas in this course. It is ***your responsibility*** to make sure you understand how to access course information and submit Canvas administered assignments. Go to canvas.usu.edu to see various tutorials as well as to log in using your A# and Banner password. Make sure you properly set up your notification preferences (see tutorials) so that you receive with regularity any class announcements or messages. If you have problems logging in or other technical difficulties, please do not contact me - I am a philosophy professor, not an IT guy. If technical problems persist, call the USU Help Desk (797-HELP).

Policies

- Syllabus/Schedule changes: The syllabus and schedule are subject to change. I will notify the class of any and all changes. In the event of a discrepancy between this syllabus/schedule and Canvas (the Canvas syllabus or calendar), *the information on Canvas will take precedence*.
- Unless otherwise noted, late work will be accepted only with a reasonable and documented excuse.
- University regulations are enforced concerning any kind of dishonesty.
- If you have any circumstance that requires any sort of special consideration, see me as soon as possible.
- Logistical and educational point: Email has made for considerably easier communication between students and teachers. However, the medium can be abused. I prefer that you come to my office hours when you have questions. It is beneficial for you too – the human contact allows for a more intimate and natural mode of discourse, and it is my belief that students learn more from dialogue than from monologue (which is the necessary form of email).

Philosophy Department Grading Guidelines

A or A-

The essay is **excellent**. The writing is clear and concise, using proper sentence structure, grammar, and spelling. The essay stays firmly on topic. The writer has accurately and thoroughly described the relevant philosophical positions and arguments. The essay demonstrates that the student has engaged the topic with intellectual curiosity and seriousness, going beyond classroom discussions and readings, and demonstrating a thorough understanding of the material.

B+

The essay is **very good**. The writing is clear and concise, using proper sentence structure, grammar, and spelling. The essay stays firmly on topic. The writer has accurately described the relevant philosophical positions and arguments, except perhaps with a few very minor errors, omissions, or some lack of thoroughness of explanation. The essay shows intellectual engagement with the topic, but there is little in the essay which goes beyond classroom discussions and readings.

B or B-

The essay is **good**. The writing is clear and concise, using proper sentence structure, grammar, and spelling. The essay stays on topic. The writer has provided a broadly accurate account of the relevant philosophical positions and arguments. There are some errors or omissions, but they do not detract from the central aim of the essay. There is little in the essay which goes beyond classroom discussions and readings.

C+ or C or C-

The essay is **adequate** in meeting the assignment's requirements. The writing is generally clear and is acceptable in terms of grammar, spelling, and sentence structure, though there are errors or the writing is at times awkward and confusing. The writer has provided an adequate account of relevant philosophical positions and arguments, but with some important errors or omissions. Perhaps the essay wanders from the topic, introducing needless examples or pursuing tangents.

D+ or D

This essay is **not adequate** in quality. The writing is frequently awkward and confusing, with serious problems in spelling, grammar, and sentence structure. It is not clear that the writer has grasped the relevant philosophical positions or arguments, though there may be hints of some minimally adequate understanding of some relevant material. The organization of the essay is unclear, or nonexistent. Nevertheless, it is clear that some attempt has been made to meet the assignment's requirements; but the result does not demonstrate an adequate mastery of the material.

F

This essay is a **failure**. Writing errors abound, and there is no indication of an understanding of the material, or even that any serious effort has been made.