

# **PHIL10175 - Late Modern Philosophy (Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, and Heidegger)**

**Course Lecturer:** Dr Jason W. Carter

**Course Secretary:** Ann-Marie Cowe ([philinfo@ed.ac.uk](mailto:philinfo@ed.ac.uk))

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Department of Philosophy  
School of Philosophy, Psychology and Language Sciences  
University of Edinburgh

## 1. Course Summary:

In this course, we will explore the roots of existentialist thought as it appears in the works of Friedrich Nietzsche, Søren Kierkegaard, and Martin Heidegger. What unifies these thinkers is that they all share a striking ambivalence towards traditional objective philosophical approaches to morality, truth, and the self. Instead, they claim that the exploration of subjective, emotional, and temporal aspects of human existence offers a more powerful way of discovering philosophical truth, and they argue that this requires that we do philosophy in non-traditional ways. By reading through selections of these thinkers' primary works, we will explore critically their accounts of (1) morality and value, and (2) truth, and (3) authenticity and selfhood.

## 2. Primary Texts

- Kierkegaard, Søren (2006). *Fear and Trembling*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kierkegaard, Søren. (2009). *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* (Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (On MyEd)
- Nietzsche, Friedrich Wilhelm. (2002). *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (On MyEd)
- Nietzsche, Friedrich Wilhelm (2006). *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None* (Cambridge texts in the history of philosophy). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Heidegger, Martin. (1973). *Being and Time* (trans. Macquarrie and Robinson) Oxford: Blackwell.

NB: It is essential that you have a copy of each of these texts. Texts not on MyEd can be found online, or at local bookstores for very cheap.

The central **secondary readings** will be taken from:

- Bernier, M. (2015). *The Task of Hope in Kierkegaard*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. (On MyEd)
- Clark, M. (2009). *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (On MyEd)
- Furtak, R. (2010). *Kierkegaard's Concluding Unscientific Postscript: A Critical Guide*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (On MyEd)
- Gemes, K, and May, S. (2009). *Nietzsche on Freedom and Autonomy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. (On MyEd)
- May, S. (2005). *Nietzsche's On the Genealogy of Morality: A Critical Guide*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (On MyEd).
- McManus D. (2012). *Heidegger and the Measure of Truth*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. (On MyEd)

- Mulhall, S. (2005). *Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Heidegger and 'Being and Time'*. London: Routledge. (On MyEd)
- Stein, E. (2007). 'Martin Heidegger's Existentialist Philosophy' (translation). (On Learn)
- Wrathall, M. (2013). *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger's Being and Time*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press. (On MyEd)

### 3. Assessment:

This course will be assessed by a mid-term essay on Nietzsche (approx. 1500 words) due on **Thursday, 24<sup>th</sup> of October, by 12pm** (40%), and a final essay on either Kierkegaard or Heidegger (approx. 2500 word) due **Thursday, 12<sup>th</sup> of December, by 12pm** (60%).

You may pick any question on Nietzsche listed below as your mid-term topic, and any question on Kierkegaard or Heidegger for your final essay topic. If you would like to write an essay on your own question, please confirm this with me first.

### 4. Seminar and Tutorial Content:

In our seminars, I will try to clarify the main ideas and claims of the primary reading material. Because of the difficulty of the texts we are studying, *it is essential that you do the primary reading before the weekly 2-hour seminar*. In addition, after the seminar, and *before* the tutorial, you should write a short paragraph or two giving your own 'critical reaction' to one or more ideas of the primary texts you encounter that week. Your short critical reactions should contain one or two thoughtful ideas about how the text for that week relates, if at all, to your own experience of yourself and the world. *Please bring your critical reaction papers to your tutorial*. In tutorials, we will engage in a more detailed discussion of the philosophical ideas discussed during seminar, as well as your critical reactions. Although these critical reactions will not be marked, you should expect to present *at least one* of your critical reactions to your tutorial group during the semester.

#### Week 1

#### SEMINAR TOPIC: NIETZSCHE: THE GENEALOGY OF MORALITY

#### Primary Reading:

(S) Nietzsche: *Genealogy of Morality*: Preface and First Essay: 'Good and Evil', 'Good and Bad'.

#### Secondary Reading:

1. Foot, P. (2002) – 'Nietzsche: The Revaluation of Values', in *Virtues and Vices: And Other Essays in Moral Philosophy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press (on MyED)
2. May, S. (2011): 'Chapter 8 – The relevance of history for moral philosophy'.

#### Questions:

1. Is Nietzsche right that Judeo-Christian morality has its psychological origin in *ressentiment*?
2. Does Nietzsche's desire to 'go beyond' good and evil mean that we should work to return to a noble morality?
3. Assess Nietzsche's claim that the value of a morality derives from *what* it is valuable for.

## Week 2

### SEMINAR TOPIC: NIETZSCHE: BEYOND GOOD AND EVIL

#### **Primary Reading:**

Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*: Part One: On the Prejudices of Philosophers

#### **Secondary Reading:**

1. Gemes, K. (1992). 'Nietzsche's Critique of Truth', *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 52: 47–65.
2. Clark, M. (2009) – 'Chapter 1 – Interpreting Nietzsche on Truth'.

#### Questions:

1. Is Nietzsche right to question whether truth should be one of our highest values?
2. Critically assess Nietzsche's claim that every philosophical system is fundamentally driven by a 'will to create the world in one's own image'?
3. Why does Nietzsche think that 'the falseness of a judgement is to us not necessarily an objection to a judgement' (*BGE*, chapt 1., sect. 4)?

## Week 3

### SEMINAR TOPIC: NIETZSCHE: THUS SPOKE ZARATHUSTRA

#### **Primary Reading:**

Nietzsche: *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*: Parts 1 & 2

#### **Secondary Reading:**

1. Leiter, B. (2019). 'The Death of God and the Death of Morality', *The Monist* 102:386–402.
2. May, S. (2011): 'Chapter 4 – Why Nietzsche is still in the morality game'

#### Questions:

1. What does Nietzsche mean by 'the death of God', and can any 'objectively true' morality survive it?
2. Is Zarathustra right that the belief in an afterlife rests upon an unjustifiable hatred for life?
3. Does Zarathustra offer any persuasive reasons for thinking that anyone should try to overcome 'the human' to become an 'overman'?

## Week 4

### SEMINAR TOPIC: NIETZSCHE: THUS SPOKE ZARATHUSTRA

#### **Primary Reading:**

Nietzsche: *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*: Parts 3 & 4

#### **Secondary Reading:**

1. Gemes and May (2009): Chapter 7: 'Nihilism and the Free Self'.
2. Clark, M. (2009) – 'Chapter 8 – Eternal recurrence'.

Questions:

1. What is the doctrine of eternal recurrence, and how is it supposed to help us deal with our existence in the world?
2. Critically discuss Zarathustra's 'creation' of the value of selfishness in 'On the Three Evils' (TSZ, Third Part).
3. Critically discuss the 'ugliest human being's' motivation for 'murdering God'.

**Week 5**

SEMINAR TOPIC: KIERKEGAARD: FEAR AND TREMBLING

**Primary Reading:**

Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling: Preface; Tuning Up; A Tribute to Abraham; Preliminary Outpouring*

**Secondary Reading:**

1. Bernier, M. (2015), Chapter 7: 'Infinite Resignation'.
2. Krishek, S., and Furtak, R. (2012). 'A Cure for Worry? Kierkegaardian Faith and the Insecurity of Human Existence', *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 72:157-175.

Questions:

1. Why is Silentio fascinated with Abraham? Should he be?
2. What is the benefit, if any, of becoming a knight of infinite resignation?
3. Does Kierkegaardian faith make any sense at all?

**Week 6**

**\*Mid-Term Essay Due Thursday, 24<sup>th</sup> of October, by 12pm\***

SEMINAR TOPIC: KIERKEGAARD: THE CONCEPT OF ANXIETY

**Primary Reading:**

Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling: Problem I; Problem II; The Concept of Anxiety (Selections)*

**Secondary Reading:**

1. Sagi, A. (1992). 'The Suspension of the Ethical and the Religious meaning of Ethics in Kierkegaard's Thought', *Philosophy of Religion* 32:83-103.
2. Bernier, M. (2015) – 'Chapter 2: The Kierkegaardian Self'.

Questions:

1. According to Silentio, how can we distinguish an act of faith from an act of immorality?
2. Does Silentio have good reasons for thinking that only the 'knight of faith' exists as a singular individual?
3. According to Vigilius, what is the relationship between temporality and anxiety?

## Week 7

### SEMINAR TOPIC: KIERKEGAARD: CONCLUDING UNSCIENTIFIC POSTSCRIPT

#### **Primary Reading:**

*Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, Section 2, Chapter 1: Becoming Subjective; pp. 132-133 (section 8); Chapter 1: Becoming Subjective, 137–148; Section 2, Chapter 2: The Subjective Truth, Inwardness; Truth is Subjectivity, pp. 159–178.

#### **Secondary Reading:**

1. Furtak, R. (2010): 'Chapter 5 – The Kierkegaardian ideal of 'essential knowing' and the scandal of modern philosophy'
2. McLane, E. (1977). 'Kierkegaard and Subjectivity', *International Journal for the Philosophy of Religion* 8:211-232.

#### Questions:

1. Is Climacus right that 'truth is subjectivity'?
2. How, according to Climacus, does one *subjectively* seek knowledge of what it is 'to die'? How do *you* subjectively relate to the uncertainty of your own death?
3. How, according to Climacus, does one *subjectively* know what it is 'to be immortal'? How do *you* subjectively relate to the possibility of your own immortality?

## Week 8

### SEMINAR TOPIC: HEIDEGGER: DASEIN AND BEING-IN-THE-WORLD

#### **Primary Reading:**

Heidegger, *Being and Time*: Introduction I; Division One, I.§9–III.§15

#### **Secondary Reading:**

1. Mulhall, S. (2005), *Routledge Guidebook to Heidegger and BT*, Introduction & chapter 1.
2. McManus, D. (2013). Part II, Chapter 3: 'Vorhandenheit', in McManus (2013).

#### Questions:

1. Why does Heidegger think that your Dasein is the 'entity' we should be 'interrogating' in asking about the 'meaning of being'? Is he right?
2. Can any sense be made of Heidegger's claim that your Dasein *is* being-in-the-world?
3. Critically discuss Heidegger's distinction between experiencing entities as 'ready-to-hand' (*zuhauseheit*), and experiencing them as 'present-at-hand' (*vorhandenheit*).

## Week 9

### SEMINAR TOPIC: HEIDEGGER: BEING-ONE'S-SELF AND THE 'THEY'

#### **Primary Reading:**

Heidegger, *Being and Time*: Division One, IV.§25-27; V.§34B-38.

### **Secondary Reading:**

1. Mulhall, S. (2005), *Routledge Guidebook to Heidegger and BT*, chapter 2, 'Individuality and community'
2. Dreyfus, H. (2013). 'Being with Others', in Wrathall (2013).

### Questions:

1. If Heidegger is right that 'idle talk' tricks us into thinking that we understand the world, does that mean that we shouldn't use Twitter? Critically discuss.
2. Is Heidegger right that Dasein is always 'with-others', even when they are absent?
3. Critically discuss why Heidegger thinks that our Dasein, in its everyday life, is *not* 'itself', but part of the 'they'.

## **Week 10**

### SEMINAR TOPIC: HEIDEGGER: ANXIETY, SELFHOOD, AND CARE

### **Primary Reading:**

Heidegger, *Being and Time*: Division One, V.§29; VI.§40–42

### **Secondary Reading:**

1. Mulhall, S. (2005), *Routledge Guidebook to Heidegger and BT*, chapter 2, 'Passions and projects'; chapter 4; 'Anxiety and care'
2. Han-Pile, B. (2013). 'Freedom and the "Choice to Choose Oneself in Being and Time', in Wrathall (2013).

### Questions:

1. Are moods, or being-in-a-state of mind, as important to ontology as Heidegger thinks?
2. What does existential anxiety reveal to Dasein, according to Heidegger? Is he right?
3. Is Heidegger right to think that 'care' is the best way to understand the core structure of Dasein?

## **Week 11**

### SEMINAR TOPIC: HEIDEGGER: BEING, REALITY, AND TRUTH

### **Primary Reading:**

Heidegger, *Being and Time*: Division One, VI. §43–44.

### **Secondary Reading:**

1. Mulhall, S. (2005), *Routledge Guidebook to Heidegger and BT*, chapter 3, 'Reality and Truth'
2. McManus, D. (2012), Chapter 2: 'Constitution and the Categories'
3. Stein, E. (2007). 'Martin Heidegger's Existentialist Philosophy', pp. 69–83. (On Learn)

### Questions:

1. Is Heidegger right that the 'problem of the external world' is generated by a philosophical confusion?

2. Analyse and critically discuss Heidegger's claim that 'all truth is relative to Dasein's Being'?
3. Critically discuss Edith Stein's criticism of Heidegger's existentialism.

**\*Final Essay Due Thursday, 12<sup>th</sup> of December, by 12pm\***

### **5. Further Reading**

- Conway, D. (2015). *Kierkegaard's Fear and Trembling: A Critical Guide*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Guignon, C. (2003). *The Existentialists: Critical Essays on Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Sartre*. New York: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Lippit, J. (2003). *Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Kierkegaard and Fear and Trembling*. London: Routledge.
- Mcmanus, D. (2014). *Heidegger, Authenticity, and the Self: Themes from Division Two of Being and Time*. London: Routledge.
- Macann, C. (ed.) (1992). *Heidegger: Critical Assessments* (4 Volumes). London: Routledge.
- Mulhall, S. (2001). *Inheritance and Originality: Wittgenstein, Heidegger, Kierkegaard*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Stokes, Patrick (2015). *The Naked Self: Kierkegaard and Personal Identity*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.