

Nietzsche Spring 2016

Instructor: Jordan Rodgers
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Office Hours: TR 1:30-3:00 (or by appt.)

Course: PHIL 20233-01
Room: Geddes Hall, B034
Time: TR 9:30-10:45

Aims of the Course:

The primary aim of this course is to introduce you to some of the texts and ideas of one of the most important, but also one of the strangest, philosophers of the modern period – Friedrich Nietzsche. We will focus on 5 major works of Nietzsche’s career – *The Birth of Tragedy*, *The Gay Science*, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, *On the Genealogy of Morality*, and *The Antichrist*.

As you’ll see, these works are in some ways easier to understand than those of other philosophers, and in some ways harder. Nietzsche’s writing is often clearer, less technical, and simply more *fun* to read than that of, say, Aristotle, Descartes, Hume or Kant. However, his writing can leave a great deal unsaid and often forces you to fill in the argumentative gaps yourself. Reading Nietzsche can thus by turns be both exciting and frustrating, sometimes within the space of a single page. I hope you will find it more exciting than frustrating, and will do my best to help along the way.

The secondary aim of the course is to teach you how to read difficult texts carefully and take pains to write about them in a clear and insightful manner. In this course, I will be expecting you to keep up with a relatively large amount of difficult reading material, and your grade will be determined largely based upon your ability to synthesize that material and respond to it in writing. The result of all this work will hopefully be not only a more developed ability to read and respond to philosophical argument, but also a greater facility with communicating your ideas in general.

Required Texts (Available in ND bookstore):

Basic Writings of Nietzsche, Modern Library (ed. & trans. Kaufmann) = “BWN”

The Portable Nietzsche, Penguin (ed. & trans. Kaufmann) = “PN”

The Gay Science, Vintage Press (ed. & trans. Kaufmann) = “GS”

Please get these translations and not others (don’t worry, they’re cheap) – this class will be focused a great deal on close reading of the texts involved, and we will quite often refer to specific page numbers. You’ll get lost if you have different editions. Please get **print editions**, **not e-books**.

Other readings will be made available at the course’s **Sakai website**. On the site, you’ll also find copies of the syllabus and class assignments, and a bunch of links to (hopefully) fun and informative Nietzsche-related stuff on the Internet.

Course Requirements:

Your grade will be determined by four separate components – an exam, two papers, and a participation grade. The first paper will be relatively short (3-5 pp.) and will be worth 20% of your grade. The second paper will be on a topic of your choosing, and will be longer (7-8 pp.); it will be worth 40%. The final exam will be in essay format, and will be worth 20%.

Your participation grade (worth the remaining 20%) will be determined by a holistic consideration of your contribution to in-class discussions. A significant amount of class time will be devoted to discussing your own reactions to the assigned text of the day. Your participation grade will be high if you are a **willing** and **informed** contributor at these times. (I'm confident that we'll be able to create an accepting atmosphere in which you can feel comfortable contributing, but if you are intimidated by the prospect of talking in front of groups, let me know, and we'll meet up in my office sometime or converse through email. That you contribute your own thoughts in some form is crucial.) I won't be taking attendance in this class, but your attendance in class **will** be crucial to your doing well in the course. First, if you don't keep up with the material you're going to have trouble with the class assignments. Second, if you don't show up your participation grade will be lower.

Last-Minute Papers: At the end of every class, we will stop a few minutes early so that you can write what we'll call "last-minute papers." These papers will consist of 1-3 sentence answers to the following two questions: (1) what was the most important point of today's class?; and (2) what issue or problem remains unresolved or unclear in your mind? I will be checking to see that you've done these papers, but won't grade them for content (apart from checking to make sure they're at least on topic). Your participation in these assignments, or lack thereof, will be factored into your participation grade.

Academic Dishonesty:

I take the issue of academic dishonesty very seriously, and will penalize any form of plagiarism to the maximum extent permitted to me by the University. Keep in mind that, as a Notre Dame undergraduate, you have agreed to hold yourself to the Notre Dame Honor Code (if you need to brush up on what that means, please check out honorcode.nd.edu), and that committing plagiarism is in general a really dumb decision – if you do it, I WILL catch you, and it WILL (at best) put your passing of the course in serious jeopardy.

If you feel at all tempted to commit any form of academic dishonesty, please come to see me instead. Whatever the difficulty is that you face, I'm sure that together we can come up with a better solution for it than your committing plagiarism.

If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism, I strongly suggest that you consult the Philosophy Department's guidelines, which are admirably clear, and can be found here: <http://philosophy.nd.edu/assets/77703/plagiarism.pdf>. If you still have questions after consulting this document, let me know, and we'll straighten it out together.

Tentative Schedule

| DATE | TOPIC | READINGS |
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| T - 1/12 | Introduction, Background I: Nietzsche's life and historical background | N/A |
| R - 1/14 | Background II: Kant and the distinction between thing-in-itself and appearance | <i>Critique of Pure Reason</i> , preface to the second edition (PDF on Sakai) |
| T - 1/19 | Background III: Schopenhauer and the pessimism of the will | <i>The World as Will and Representation</i> , selections (PDF on Sakai) |
| R - 1/21 | Apollo vs. Dionysus | <i>The Birth of Tragedy</i> , secs. 1-5 (BWN, pp. 31-52) |
| T - 1/26 | The birth of Greek tragedy | <i>The Birth of Tragedy</i> , secs. 6-10 (BWN, pp. 52-76) |
| R - 1/28 | The triumph of rationality and the death of tragedy: Socrates | <i>The Birth of Tragedy</i> , secs. 11-15 (BWN, pp. 76-98) |
| T - 2/2 | Stray observations on morality and knowledge | <i>The Gay Science</i> , book I and "Preface to the second edition," (GS pp. 32-38, and selections from GS, pp. 73-118) |
| R - 2/4 | Stray observations on art and culture | <i>The Gay Science</i> , book II (selections from GS, pp. 121-164) |
| T - 2/9 | The problem: God is dead *FIRST PAPER ASSIGNED* | <i>The Gay Science</i> , book III (GS, pp. 167-197) |
| R - 2/11 | The problem: God is dead | <i>The Gay Science</i> , book III, cont'd (GS, pp. 197-220) |
| T - 2/16 | Solutions? | <i>The Gay Science</i> , book IV (GS, pp. 223-247) |
| R - 2/18 | Solutions? *FIRST PAPER DUE* | <i>The Gay Science</i> , book IV, cont'd (GS, pp. 247-275) |
| T - 2/23 | A new prophet? | <i>Thus Spoke Zarathustra</i> , Prologue and part I (PN, pp. 121-152) |
| R - 2/25 | A new prophet? | Rest of part I, cont'd (PN, pp. 152-191) |
| T - 3/1 | Zarathustra's new insight: the eternal recurrence | <i>Thus Spoke Zarathustra</i> , part III (selections from PN, pp. 264-343) |
| R - 3/3 | First part retrospective | N/A (time to catch up, if you need to!) |
| 3/5-3/13 | SPRING BREAK | N/A |

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| T - 3/15 | Critique of philosophers | <i>Beyond Good and Evil</i> , preface and part I (BWN, pp. 192-4, 199-222) |
| R - 3/17 | New philosophers? *SECOND PAPER IDEA DUE* | <i>Beyond Good and Evil</i> , book IX (BWN, pp. 391-427) |
| T - 3/22 | History of morality I: masters and slaves | <i>On the Genealogy of Morality</i> , preface and First Essay (BWN, pp. 451-472) |
| R - 3/24 | History of morality I: masters and slaves | <i>On the Genealogy of Morality</i> , First Essay, cont'd (BWN, pp. 472-493) |
| T - 3/29 | History of morality II: bad conscience and the development of soul | <i>On the Genealogy of Morality</i> , Second Essay (BWN, pp. 493-519) |
| R - 3/31 | History of morality II: bad conscience and the development of soul *SECOND PAPER FIRST DRAFT DUE* | <i>On the Genealogy of Morality</i> , Second Essay, cont'd (BWN, pp. 520-532) |
| T - 4/5 | History of morality III: the ascetic ideal | <i>On the Genealogy of Morality</i> , Third Essay (BWN, pp. 533-552) |
| R - 4/7 | History of morality III: the ascetic ideal | <i>On the Genealogy of Morality</i> , Third Essay, cont'd (BWN, pp. 552-575) |
| T - 4/12 | History of morality III: the ascetic ideal | <i>On the Genealogy of Morality</i> , Third Essay, cont'd (pp. 575-599) |
| R - 4/14 | Attack on Christianity I: Christianity, theism, nihilism | <i>The Antichrist</i> , preface and secs. 1-28 (PN, pp. 568-599) |
| T - 4/19 | Attack on Christianity II: The redeemer and the rabble-rouser *SECOND PAPER FINAL DRAFT DUE* | <i>The Antichrist</i> , secs. 28-46 (PN, pp. 599-627) |
| R - 4/21 | Attack on Christianity III: skepticism, faith, and the final condemnation | <i>The Antichrist</i> , secs. 47-62 (PN, pp. 627-656) |
| T - 4/26 | Taking stock: Nietzsche's perspective and ours | <i>Ecce Homo</i> , selections from "Why I am so Clever" (BWN, pp. 692-714) |
| T - 5/3 | *FINAL EXAM* (10:30-12:30) | N/A |