379-01 Nietzsche

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Course Description

This semester we shall have to do with Friedrich Nietzsche, a very famous man whom many people read, but who disdained fame and refused disciples. Since he was a very prolific writer, we will focus our attention primarily on three works: *Untimely Meditations*, a group of four essays composed in the early phase of his career, and *The Gay Science* and *Beyond Good and Evil*, works spanning his middle and late years. Our goal is, first, to learn how to read Nietzsche—a task he himself thought to be very difficult—and second, to become acquainted with some of his principal doctrines, for example, the “eternal return of the same,” and the “will to power.” Since the latter notion had, in the twentieth century, a particular affect on politics, we will also be examining some of the political dimensions of his thought. Our highest goal, though, is to learn how to be inspired by Nietzsche, to discover what has made him so compelling a thinker, so see what he gets us to think.

Texts

Required


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Optional


Reserve Books


In addition, you will be responsible for any supplemental material distributed in class.

**Assignments and Grading**

Five reflection papers (10% each), a term paper (50%), or a final exam (50%).

**Term Paper**: The term paper will develop some issue in Nietzsche’s writings; it can remain in one book, compare a few of his writings, or compare him to other authors. You may also work with someone else on a joint project. The paper will be due in two parts. The first part, due by Monday, October 6, is a proposal for your term paper, explaining the central themes you will address, the basic organization of your paper, the primary sources you intend to use, and a list of (minimum) two secondary sources, annotated. If you are engaged in a joint project, explain the contribution of each member. Other writings of Nietzsche’s besides those required for the class may count as a secondary source. The term paper itself will be due Friday, December 5. It should be approximately 15 pages in length, 30 for a dual authorship. Both the proposal and the term paper should be formatted according to the criteria of the Chicago Style Manual.

Here is a list of possible themes for your research. You are however not bound to this list.

- Music (e.g., Wagner, Brückner, Brahms, Strauss)
- History
- Literature (e.g., Thomas Mann, Emerson, “The Beats”)
- Laughter
- Politics (especially National Socialism)
- Poetry (e.g., Hölderlin, Nietzsche)
- “The Greeks” (e.g., Homer, Socrates)
- Tragedy (e.g., Sophocles, Euripides)
- Heidegger
- Fate and Freedom
- Eternal Recurrence
- Christianity and Judaism
- The Death of God
- Morality
- Post-Modernism (e.g., Derrida, Foucault, etc.)
- Folks Nietzsche Read (e.g., Emerson, Montaigne)

**Final Exam**: Students have the option of foregoing a research paper for a final exam. The final exam will be cumulative, and have two parts: a take-home essay due on the day of
the final exam, and a written final exam, consisting of four essay questions. The final totals 50%.

Reflection Papers: In these, you are to develop a thought based on the readings we have been doing, citing and explaining Nietzsche’s texts. They are to be approximately two single spaced pages in length. They are due on the following dates: Sept. 12 & 26; October 17 & 31; November 14.

Class Participation: The mode of philosophy is discussion. Regular class attendance and participation are necessary. Without them, it is not possible to receive an “A” for the course. More than 3 unexcused absences drop your grade one letter grade; more than 6 results in failure for the course.

Office Hours: Drop in any time.

A note on electronics: Cell phones are not allowed in class, and will be destroyed on sight.

Zarathustra Reading Group: For anyone interested, there will be a reading group this semester, on Thus Spoke Zarathustra. It will meet once a week throughout the semester. It is entirely optional. There are no assignments and no extra credit involved. Time and location to be determined. Come, if you wish to read a fascinating and difficult book with friends.

Schedule of Readings

Aug. 25: Introduction to Nietzsche

Aug. 27—Sept. 26: Untimely Meditations


Sept. 15—26: Richard Wagner in Bayreuth

Sept. 29—Oct. 31: The Gay Science

Nov. 3—Dec. 12: Beyond Good and Evil

Term Paper Due: Friday, Dec. 5.

Final Exam: Wednesday, Dec. 17, 12:00—1:50.
GRADING STANDARDS

The Philosophy Department has adopted the following standards for evaluation of all written work:

A= work that not merely fully and accurately reproduces class discussion, the main thread in an argument or the main philosophical significance of a text under discussion, but which goes beyond these and indicates a contribution of the student, giving evidence of a deeper understanding of the material in question.

B= work that shows a more or less complete and exact understanding of the issues, texts, and/or arguments as explained in class, clearly and logically formulated without going beyond such explanations.

C= work that shows basic understanding of the material but with errors, omissions and confusions of either a formal or material nature.

D= work that shows a minimal acquaintance with the material or serious logical and conceptual flaws in formulating responses to the question raised, the argument at issue, or to the philosophical text under discussion.

F= work that shows inadequate acquaintance with texts, issues, or ideas with little or no valid logical argumentation; or, the work is a plagiarism. In cases of plagiarism, which involve the use of published or other’s written work without giving credit, an F will be awarded for the semester and the student’s name reported to the Dean of the College.

Instructions for Using “Philosopher’s Index”

Many of you are no doubt familiar with our library’s databases. In the event that you are not, here are some simple instructions for using “Philosopher’s Index,” the principal database for research in philosophy.

1) Go to the Resource Guide on the library page; click on “Database Guide.”
2) Click “Select Database” by subject; click “philosophy,” then “Philosopher’s Index.”
3) On the top of the Philosopher’s Index page you will find three boxes for entering your search information. Type a key term or subject or person, then click on the “select a field” box next to your entry, and click on the appropriate parameter. For example, type “Descartes” in the first box, then click “select a field,” then click “people as subject.” Tab over to the next box, type “Meditations,” then click “select a field,” and choose “subjects.”

In general, you want to avoid book length studies for your research paper; focus on articles or chapters in books.