

TOPICS IN PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGION: NIETZSCHE
PAR 393-01, FALL 2006
MW 2:30-3:45 P.M. – MCKEE 223
DR. JOHN F. WHITMIRE, JR.

“Intelligence plus character – that is the goal of a true education.” – ML King, Jr.

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This course will trace several themes in the thought of Friedrich Nietzsche, who has been appropriated by philosophical schools from existentialism to psychoanalysis to post-structuralism; and by politicians from fascists to radical democratic theorists over the last hundred years. We will examine Nietzsche’s entire philosophical career, beginning with the metaphysically-inclined *Birth of Tragedy* and one of the *Untimely Meditations*, proceeding through a short consideration of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, and culminating with a more in-depth look at the texts from 1887-1888. Throughout, we will consider his relationship to literature and religion (particularly Christianity), the notions of the eternal recurrence and the *Übermensch*, the conflict between Apollinian and Dionysian, the figures of Zarathustra and Socrates, and the status of “will to power.” We will also consider whether Nietzsche can rightly be called an “existentialist.”

I don’t study these texts simply for their own sake – to know what Plato or Augustine or Nietzsche thought – nor do I expect you to do so. Rather, I hope more than anything else that by *seriously engaging* with each of these texts, some of which will call your own presuppositions about the world into question quite radically, you will not simply learn “what Nietzsche thought” about these issues, but will also begin to develop your *own* positions in thoughtful dialogue with the texts. To do that, however, each of us has to do what any reasonable person must do in any conversation: come to every text with an open mind, listen critically to what it has to say, analyze carefully the arguments that it gives us, and consider the possibility that what we believe right now might actually be wrong.

Expectations and Objectives

Students should be present *and on time* for all classes, do each reading prior to class, and complete all assignments by their due date and on their own (unless instructed otherwise). *Late assignments will be docked one full grade for each day late, and plagiarism (taking credit for someone else’s words or ideas) constitutes grounds for failure of this course.* In addition, since philosophy from Socrates on has been dialogue-oriented, students are expected to participate *actively* in class discussions. You should *always* feel free to ask questions in class. This class will be run seminar-style, by which I mean I will do some lecturing, but ideally we will mostly discuss the texts as a group. *This will not work unless everyone is well-prepared for the class!* Each day, two students will read a text summary (= précis and analysis of what is going on in that text) they have written on that day’s reading, and then lead the discussion with me.

Beyond the substantive philosophical goals of **1) understanding Nietzsche’s positions (and their implications)** on the issues described above, and **2) developing your own positions** in dialogue with his texts, I also hope that you will improve your **3) critical reading and 4) writing** abilities over the course of this semester, through the practice of reading, discussing, and writing about these complex philosophical texts. To do so, you will have to put in enough time and effort outside of class: it’s not enough to come to class and listen to the lectures, you’ve got to practice *doing* philosophy on your own.

Reading philosophy is hard work, though, and most students find it very difficult to understand the texts we will be looking at with a single reading. Consequently, you may find it necessary to read a selection carefully *twice or more* before class. For this reason, most of the readings I have selected are fairly short. I expect that you will spend, *at minimum*, two hours outside of class preparing (reading, taking notes, analyzing the text and summarizing it in your own words), for every hour you spend in class. (Some students may find it necessary to spend more than this!) Finally, you should recognize that **Nietzsche is deceptively difficult!** Just because his prose is easier to read than “philosophy” normally is, don’t be fooled into thinking that his complex philosophical works don’t require rigorous analytical thought!

Required texts for the course

Required Texts: 1) *The Portable Nietzsche* and 2) *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*

Supplemental Readings: These may be found on my homepage. When you see <Web> on the syllabus, you should go to my homepage, follow the links to this class, and print out and read the required selection. Please bring the texts to class with you each day so we can refer to them actively in our discussion.

Other course policies

Grades: I adhere to the grading policies found in the Western Carolina University Undergraduate Studies Catalog. Please refer to it for the official policies regarding the awarding of grades on written work. Final grades of “A” are, as defined there, reserved not merely for satisfactorily completing all requirements for the class, but for “Excellent” work over the course of the semester.

Attendance and Participation: If you aren’t here, you obviously can’t participate in the discussions, so excessive absences will be reflected in your participation grade. Attendance will be taken at all meetings. “Good” or “Satisfactory” (“B”- to “C”-range) participation grades may be earned by consistent attendance and answering questions when called on in class. Higher participation grades will be reserved for those who demonstrate that they have carefully read and actively reflected on the assigned reading, by (for example) raising questions and issues for discussion without my prompting. In general, “A”-range participation grades will not be awarded to students with 3+ absences. At the end of the term, I will also ask you to turn in a worksheet evaluating *your own* participation and preparation over the course of the semester. I weigh these self-evaluations heavily in assigning class participation grades. (You can find this worksheet on my web page.)

If you must miss class, it is your responsibility to make other arrangements for turning in work due on that day, to get class notes, to find out if any assignments have been made for the next class, and to turn those in on time.

Final grades for the course will be calculated as follows:

- 1) Comprehensive Final Examination: 25%
- 2) Quizzes/Homework/Class Participation: 25% (I will, on occasion, give short quizzes or homework assignments to determine how well you are reading the texts.)
- 3) Three Text Summaries (1200-1500 words each): 25% total.
- 4) Term Paper (2750-3250 words) due Dec. 6; plus abstract and annotated bibliography, due Sept. 27: 25%.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: Western Carolina University is committed to providing equal educational opportunities for students with documented disabilities. Students who require disability services or reasonable accommodations must identify themselves as having a disability and provide current diagnostic documentation to Disability Services. All information is confidential. Please contact Kimberly Marcus for more information. Phone: (828) 227-7234; E-mail: kmarcus@email.wcu.edu.

Tentative Schedule of Readings and Class Discussion Topics:

(Subject to change: it is *your* responsibility to make sure you know what the reading is for each class.)

The Early Nietzsche [BT = 1872; UM = 1874]

Aug 23 Introduction to course. Course Goals and Expectations. How do you read Nietzsche?

Aug 28 *The Birth of Tragedy*, §§1-8 (BW, 33-67). Apollo and Dionysus.

Aug 30 *The Birth of Tragedy*, §§9-15 (BW, 68-98). Socrates, philosophy, and the death of tragedy.

Sept 4 Labor Day holiday: No Class

Sept 6 *Untimely Meditations*: “On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life,” Foreword and §§1-6 (<Web>). What’s the point of doing history (or philosophy)?

Sept 11 “Uses and Disadvantages,” §§7-10 (<Web>). History in the service of life.

Nietzsche as Existentialist [GS = 1882; Z = 1883-1885]

Sept 13 *The Gay Science*, §§125, 290, 299, 335, 341, 343. (<Web>) Death of God. Eternal recurrence.

Sept 18 *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Part I, “Prologue,” “On the Despisers of the Body,” “On the Preachers of Death,” “On the Friend,” “On the Thousand and One Goals,” “On the Way of the Creator,” “On the Gift-Giving Virtue.” (PN, 121-137, 146-147, 156-158, 167-172, 174-177, 186-191). Overman and Last Man.

Sept 20 *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Part II: “Upon the Blessed Isles,” “On Priests,” “On the Tarantulas,” “On Self-Overcoming,” “On Redemption,” “The stillest Hour” (PN, 197-200, 202-205, 211-214, 225-228, 249-254, 257-259). Self-creation. Egalitarianism.

Sept 25 *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Part III: “On the Vision and the Riddle,” “On Old and New Tablets, §§1-10,” “The Convalescent,” §§1-2 (PN, 267-272, 308-314, 327-333). Eternal recurrence and new values.

Sept 27 *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Part IV: “The Awakening,” §§1-2, “The Ass Festival,” §§1-3, “The Drunken Song,” §§1-12, “The Sign” (PN 422-439). Dionysian Affirmation. ****Tentative Thesis Due****

Beyond Good and Evil [1886]

Oct 2 *BGE*, Preface and Part I, “On the Prejudices of Philosophers” (BW, 192-222). Self, language, substance, and causality.

Oct 4 *BGE*, Part II, “The Free Spirit” (BW, 225-246). Pathos of distance, will to power, morality.

Oct 9 *BGE*, Part V, “Natural History of Morals” (BW, 287-308). Herd morality. Faith and knowledge.

Oct 11 *BGE*, Part VII, “Our Virtues” (BW, 335-360). Disinterestedness, pity, honesty. Woman.

Oct 16 *BGE*, Part IX, “What is Noble” (BW, 391-427). Will to power. Order of rank – common and noble.

Oct 18-20 *Fall Break: No Class*

The Final Works [GM = 1887; TI, A, and EH all written 1888]

Oct 23 *Genealogy of Morals*, Preface and Essay I, §§1-9 (BW, 451-472). “Good and Evil, Good and Bad.”

Oct 25 *Genealogy of Morals*, Essay I, §§10-17 (BW, 472-492). The slave revolt in morality. *Ressentiment*.

Oct 30 *Genealogy of Morals*, Essay II, §§1-11 (BW, 493-512). Carving out a soul.

Nov 1 *Genealogy of Morals* Essay II, §§12-25 (BW, 512-532). Punishment and bad conscience.

Nov 6 *Twilight of the Idols*, Preface through “The Four Great Errors” (PN, 465-501). Socrates, morality.

Nov 8 *Twilight of the Idols*, “The ‘Improvers’ of Mankind” through “Skirmishes of an Untimely Man,” §31 (PN, 501-533). Beauty and the impersonal.

Nov 13 *Twilight of the Idols*, “Skirmishes,” §32, through “The Hammer Speaks” (PN, 533-563). Genius.

Nov 15 *The Antichrist*, Preface and §§1-27 (PN, 568-599). Christian “pity.” Will to nothingness.

Nov 20 *The Antichrist*, §§28-46 (PN, 599-627). Psychology of the Redeemer and the Gospels.

Nov 22-24 *Thanksgiving Break: No Class*

Nov 27 *The Antichrist*, §§47-62 (PN, 627-656). Paul. Christianity and Rome.

Nov 29 *Ecce Homo*, Preface, “Why I Am So Clever,” §§1-10, “Why I Write Such Good Books: *Human, All-Too-Human*,” §§3-4. (BW, 673-677, 692-714, 742-744). (Un-)consciousness and the instincts.

Dec 4 *Ecce Homo*, “Why I Write Such Good Books: *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*,” §§1-8, “Why I Am A Destiny,” §§1-8 (BW, 751-765, 782-791). Christian (anti-)nature and Dionysus.

Dec 6 General Review for Final Exam. ****Research Papers Due****

Dec 14 (Thursday) 8:30-11:00 am ****Comprehensive Final Examination****

The philosophical secondary literature on Nietzsche is immense (some might say abyssal – you can go into it and never come out again!). You will find you really need to define your search narrowly on the Philosopher’s Index when you begin working on your term paper, or you’ll end up with hundreds of hits. What follows is a (relatively) short list of some classic and contemporary books (as well as a couple of important articles) to help get you started. Everything here should be available at Hunter or through ABC.

The Old Standards

*** Heidegger, Martin. *Nietzsche*, vols. I-IV. Translated by David Farrell Krell. New York: Harper and Row, 1979. This is the classic study of Nietzsche in the continental tradition. Heidegger makes (too) much of Nietzsche’s notion of will to power as a kind of metaphysical principle, and reads Nietzsche as the culmination of the Western metaphysical tradition, notwithstanding all of Nietzsche’s protestations to the contrary.

*** Kaufmann, Walter. *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist*, 4th edition. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974. The corresponding work in the English-language tradition of Nietzsche scholarship. Many of Kaufmann’s claims have since been superseded, but still an excellent place to start; really the first English-language scholar to take Nietzsche seriously as a philosopher.

Some “New Classics”

*** Deleuze, Gilles. *Nietzsche and Philosophy*. Translated Hugh Tomlinson. New York: Columbia University Press, 1983. This work, like Heidegger’s, probably gives an undue importance to

- Nietzsche's notebooks, but it is crucial for understanding the "French" Nietzsche from the 1960's on. Deleuze's reading of the will to power as a metaphysical principle is central to an understanding of Jacques Derrida's notion of *différance*.
- Derrida, Jacques. *Éperons: Les styles de Nietzsche/Spurs: Nietzsche's Styles*. Translated by Barbara Harlow. University of Chicago Press, 1979. This work has become a classic, both in terms of reading Nietzsche, and for seeing the "process" of "deconstruction" at work.
- Foucault, Michel. "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History." In *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, edited by Donald F. Bouchard, translated by Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon, 139-164. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1977. As with the Deleuze and Derrida texts, this is perhaps more important for an understanding of Foucault's own method of "genealogy," but this is a classic nonetheless.
- *** *The New Nietzsche*. Edited by David B. Allison. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1985. This text, containing essays by a number of eminent scholars in the continental tradition, pushed the reading of Nietzsche beyond the classic studies of Heidegger and Deleuze.
- *** Nehamas, Alexander. *Nietzsche: Life as Literature*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1985. This text produced a real revolution in Nietzsche studies in English. Very accessible, though probably laying too much interpretive emphasis on Nietzsche's more existential "middle" works.
- *** Clark, Maudemarie. *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991. This text has become a real classic in analytic philosophy circles over the last 10 years.

Good Recent Literature

- Nietzsche: A Critical Reader*. Edited by Peter R. Sedgwick. Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, 1995. A collection of critical texts.
- The Fate of the New Nietzsche*, edited by Keith Ansell-Pearson and Howard Caygill. Avebury Series in Philosophy. Brookfield, Vermont: Ashgate Publishing Company, 1993. Essays following those in *The New Nietzsche*, particularly oriented to the French and German interpretations of Nietzsche from 1980 on.
- Exceedingly Nietzsche: Aspects of Contemporary Nietzsche-Interpretation*. Edited by David Farrell Krell and David Wood. New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul, in association with Methuen, 1988. A nice collection.
- Nietzsche's Postmoralism: Essays on Nietzsche's Prelude to Philosophy's Future*. Edited by Richard Schacht. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001. Also good on Nietzsche's "morality."
- *** Gemes, Ken. "Postmodernism's Use and Abuse of Nietzsche." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 62:2 (March 2001): 337-360. An excellent piece exploring what many "postmodern" interpretations of Nietzsche miss.
- Magnus, Bernd, et al. *Nietzsche's Case: Philosophy as/and Literature*. New York: Routledge, Chapman and Hall, 1993. Obviously, essays on literary aspects of Nietzsche's work.
- *** *The Cambridge Companion to Nietzsche*. Edited by Bernd Magnus and Kathleen Higgins. Cambridge Companion Series. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996. A number of different scholars explore various aspects of Nietzsche's work.
- Montinari,azzino. *Reading Nietzsche*. Translated by Greg Whitlock. International Nietzsche Studies. New York: University of Illinois Press, 2003. The editor of the recent German critical edition of Nietzsche's works. Will likely become indispensable in the next 10 years.
- Parkes, Graham. *Composing the Soul: Reaches of Nietzsche's Psychology*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994. An interesting, lyrical text exploring Nietzsche's concept of selfhood.
- Richardson, John. *Nietzsche's System*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996. An excellent recent work that attempts to systematize Nietzsche – perhaps too much.
- *** Schacht, Richard. *Nietzsche. Arguments of the Philosophers*. Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985. Schacht is one of the best English-language scholars of Nietzsche's work. This is a mammoth work, generally excellent in quality.

You might also look for any recent work by Robert Solomon and Brian Leiter, two competing (contemporary) interpreters of Nietzsche in English. I tend to think that Leiter, like Clark, tries to push an analytic reading of Nietzsche a bit too far; Solomon provides a reasonably good balance.