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.

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**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.

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**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%.

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**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.

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**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?


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)*


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**Beyond Good and Evil [1886]**


Oct 18-20 Fall Break: No Class

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


Nov 22-24 Thanksgiving Break: No Class


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

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

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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.


**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 différence.

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.


*** 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


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.