

Tragedy and New Beginnings. 19th and 20th Century German Philosophy and its Legacies (Spring only)

Dr. Detlef von Daniels

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| Email Address: | info@fubest.fu-berlin.de |
| Time Slot: | Thursdays, 4:30 p.m. |
| Language of Instruction: | English |
| Contact Hours: | 45 |
| ECTS Credits: | 6 |

Course Description

In this course we will discuss how German philosophy developed after the great systems of German Idealism. We begin by recognizing that after Hegel, philosophy was no longer pursued as a unified whole, but as a reflection on specific sets of problems. We will focus on four influential schools of thought or philosophers and their legacies: Positivism, Nietzscheanism, Marxism, and Existentialism. Most of them proclaimed the end of philosophy as it once was. However, like all the arts and sciences in Germany, philosophy helped pave the way for totalitarian ideologies. Therefore, we must also consider its role in the "immoral end" of history. We will conclude the course with a more optimistic outlook. Like a phoenix from the ashes, philosophy has risen again in unexpected ways. We will also consider how postcolonial, feminist, and indigenous thought have reshaped philosophy and set it on a new course.

Learning Objectives

Students provide accurate and relevant answers, complete with supporting details, to specific questions about philosophical ideas covered in the course. They explain difficult passages clearly, precisely, and thoroughly. They learn to speculate in a well-informed, well-supported, and plausible way about what a given philosopher would say about a novel issue or problem.

Student Profile

They should be in their fourth semester of college/university education or beyond.

Assignments and Grading

Attendance & Participation: 300 Points (including weekly reading responses and one short presentation)

Independent Project Report: 100 Points

Midterm exam: 300 Points

Final exam: 300 Points

Weekly reading responses

2-3 pages, due at 3 p.m. of the day of class.

Short Presentation

Each student has to give one short presentation on a specific topic.

Independent Project Report

Visit the exhibition "Everyday Life in the GDR" in the Museum in the Kulturbrauerei and write a 3-4 page literary text about your reasons for rejecting your future and moving to the GDR. (Ignore time travel, imagine you are in the 1980s). The explanation can be based on Marxist reasons (the easiest explanation) or develop a Nietzschean, or existentialist view. The format is free. You can write a letter to a friend or your parents, a movie script, a short story, etc.

| FU Grade | Points of 1,000 |
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| 1.0 | 980-1,000 |
| 1.3 | 950-979 |
| 1.7 | 900-949 |
| 2.0 | 850-899 |
| 2.3 | 800-849 |
| 2.7 | 750-799 |
| 3.0 | 700-749 |
| 3.3 | 650-699 |
| 3.7 | 600-649 |
| 4.0 | 500-599 |
| 5.0 | < 500 |

Literature

Digitalized readings posted on the online learning platform Blackboard.

Course Schedule

| Calendar | Topics, Readings, etc. |
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| Session 1 | <p>Introduction: Origins of Modernity</p> <p>Topic: What does a Philosopher do?</p> <p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> G.W. Leibniz: 1st and 2nd letter to Clarke, (1715) <p>Mini-presentation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leibniz as Geopolitician <p>Music:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Johann Sebastian Bach, Goldberg Variations https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cxpaqgXLBqQ |
| Session 2 | <p>I. Reflecting the Sciences</p> <p>Topic: The Method of the Sciences</p> <p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ernst Mach: <i>Introductory Remarks: Anti Metaphysical</i> (from: <i>The Analysis of Sensations</i>, 1897). <p>Mini-presentation 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lenin's criticism of Mach (Empirio-criticism) https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1908/mec/six5.htm <p>Mini-presentation 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Language of Science: Gottlob Frege's <i>Begriffsschrift</i> (1879) <p>Music:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Claude Debussy, La Mer https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fe1pB9KqHRg |

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| <p>Session 3</p> | <p>Topic: The World of the Sciences (The Vienna Circle)</p> <p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moritz Schlick: <i>Positivism and Realism</i> (1936); <i>Main Ideas of the Theory of Values</i> (1936) <p>Mini-presentation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The History of the Sciences: Thomas S. Kuhn's <i>The Structure of Scientific Revolutions</i> (1962) |
| <p>Session 4</p> | <p>II. Reflecting the Values of Human Being</p> <p>Topic: Overcoming the Scientific Worldview</p> <p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Friedrich Nietzsche: <i>Twilight of the Idols</i> (1889) <p>Soundtrack:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Richard Strauss: Thus spoke Zarathustra in Stanley Kubrick's 2001: A Space Odyssey https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ypEaGQb6dJk |
| <p>Session 5</p> | <p>Topic: Nietzscheanism and Indigenous American Philosophy</p> <p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Friedrich Nietzsche, <i>Thus Spoke Zarathustra</i> (1883); • Sa-Go-Ye-Wet-Ha, <i>Speech at Council at Buffalo Creek</i> (1805) https://www.loc.gov/resource/rbpe.04702500/?st=text <p>Film:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dead Man (1995) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nn2nQMfLqwg |
| <p>Session 6</p> | <p>MIDTERM EXAM</p> |
| <p>Session 7</p> | <p>III. Reflecting the Work Human Being</p> <p>Topic: The Materialist Conception of History</p> <p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Karl Marx/Friedrich Engels: <i>Manifesto of the Communist Party</i> (1848) <p>Music:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Internationale https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5DTbashesKic |
| <p>Session 8</p> | <p>Topic: Freedom and Alienation</p> <p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Karl Marx/Friedrich Engels: <i>Theses ad Feuerbach</i> (1847); <i>Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts</i> (1844) <p>Music:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wolf Biermann, <i>Warte nicht auf bess're Zeiten</i> (1976) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GSw5H4tY29A |
| <p>Session 9</p> | <p>Topic: Staging Revolutions</p> <p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curzio Malaparte, <i>The Technique of Revolution</i> (1931) |

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| | <p>Film:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Death of Stalin (2017) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E9eAshaPvYw |
| Session 10 | <p>IV. Existentialism and Beyond</p> <p>Topic: Meaning, Despair, Faith</p> <p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Søren Kierkegaard: <i>Is There Such A Thing as Teleological Suspension of the Ethical?; Is There Such A Thing as an Absolute Duty Toward God?</i> (From Fear and Trembling, 1843) <p>Film:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pickpocket (1959) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CCZhSPwIZEq |
| Session 11 | <p>Topic: Human Solidary Existentialism</p> <p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Simone Weil: <i>Human Personality</i> (1943) <p>Art:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thomas Hirschhorn: Simone Weil Map (2020) http://www.thomashirschhorn.com/simone-weil-map-2020/ |
| Session 12 | <p>Topic: Facing the Netherworld</p> <p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Edith Stein: <i>Spirituality of the Christian Woman</i> (1931) https://www.ewtn.com/catholicism/library/edith-stein-10180 <p>Film:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Terrence Malick: <i>A Hidden Life</i> (2019) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qJXmdY4IVR0&t=1s |
| Session 13 | <p>FINAL EXAM</p> |