



MORAVIAN COLLEGE

CONTINENTAL PHILOSOPHY COURSE SYLLABUS Moravian College Fall 2015

PHI 292: Continental Philosophy

Classtime: MW 11:45 AM-12:55 PM (8/31/2015 -12/18/2015)

Room: Comenius 101

Instructor: Dr. Leon Niemoczynski ("Dr. Leon")

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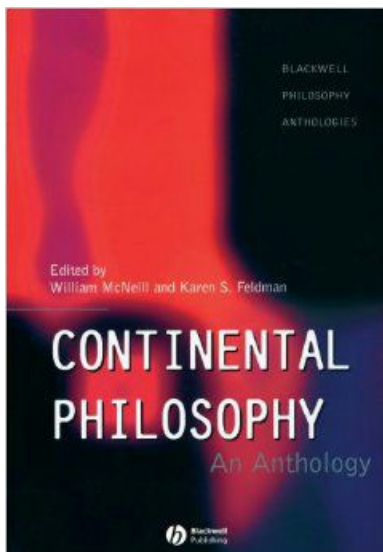
Office Hours: MW 10:30-11:30am and 1-2pm / T 10-11am

Course Description

A thematic and developmental approach to contemporary Continental thought with an emphasis on introducing the student to phenomenology, hermeneutics, structuralism and poststructuralism, psychoanalysis, deconstruction, and speculative realism. We begin with Kant and Hegel but keep our main focus on 20th century figures including Heidegger, Sartre, Foucault, Derrida, and Deleuze, while moving into the 21st century to cover Badiou, Meillassoux, Brassier, Malabou, and Laruelle. We will trace how these philosophers formulate questions about reality, truth & knowledge, and values.

Course Objectives

1. To comprehend the major movements and figures of Continental philosophy and their relation to the history of philosophy from Plato to Kant and Hegel.
2. To become familiar with the various methodologies of Continental philosophy including phenomenology, hermeneutics, structuralism and poststructuralism, psychoanalysis, deconstruction, and speculative realism.
3. To understand the critique of transcendental philosophizing, the critique of philosophical system building, ideology-critique, and various critiques of power.
4. To understand the recent return to "speculative" philosophy (i.e. metaphysics), the rational sciences, materialism, realism, and nihilism.
5. To engage with some 21st century philosophical texts to see how Continental philosophy of today is critiquing its own roots and traditions.



Required Text

1. McNeil and Feldmen, eds. *Continental Philosophy: An Anthology* (Blackwell, 1998) ISBN-13: 978-1557865618 [represented as CA_RED in syllabus].

Optional Text

1. Andrew Cutrofello, *Continental Philosophy: A Contemporary Introduction* (Routledge, 2005) ISBN-13: 978-0415242097 [represented as (CP_PURPLE) in syllabus]

Other Texts We Will Encounter

1. Ian James, *The New French Philosophy* (Polity: 2012).
2. Quentin Meillassoux, *After Finitude: An Essay on the Necessity of Contingency*, trans. Ray Brassier (Bloomsbury: 2008).

3. Ray Brassier, *Nihil Unbound: Enlightenment and Extinction* (Palgrave Macmillan: 2007).
4. Lee Braver, *A Thing of this World: A History of Continental Anti-Realism* (Northwestern UP, 2007).

- Weekly Summaries of the Readings - 20%
- Class Participation - 10%
- Three Take Home Exams - 60% (3 x 20% each)
- Group Presentation - 10% (choose from sample list below or create own)

1. Weekly Summaries of the Readings (20%): Each week we will complete reading from the McNeil & Feldmen anthology, noted as CA_RED (all other information present under each week's heading is there for your support or interest, but not required). I will lecture on the selection first, then students go home and read the selection and type their summaries. You are to type an approximately two page summary for each selection (if you type more, then that is fine: type is double-spaced, Times News Roman 12 point font) that outlines the main themes, concepts, and ideas found in each selection. Generally speaking you should prepare something that you would be willing to read to the class and submit for a grade. The summary will be graded on a Scale of 1 to 10. I understand that you may not initially understand all of the material so I am generally just looking for accuracy in terms of your summary (demonstrable effort for comprehension is appreciated, but not necessarily graded). One of the best ways to cultivate a clear understanding of difficult texts is to engage in good old fashioned expository writing: no ambitious argumentative aims, no grandiose critical agenda, just following the text and rehearsing the key moments of its development clearly and concisely in your own words. The fact that we will focus primarily on understanding the texts we read rather than on criticizing them, however, doesn't mean that you should abstain from raising critical concerns if you have them. It simply means that you shouldn't feel badly if it takes some effort in order to figure out what's going on in the text. Finally, **AS PART OF YOUR SUMMARY YOU SHOULD APPEND TO THE END OF YOUR SUMMARY TWO QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS INTENDED TO PROVOKE CLASS DISCUSSION.** The two questions may count as part of your two pages. Any terms or ideas or questions that you may have about the text would count; or if you particularly agree or disagree with anything expressed in the selection would be game as well. The better formulated the questions, the better your overall score.

2. Class Participation (10%): This portion of your grade measures your preparedness for class, as well as your participation in class either as an individual or in groups. "Participation" means your full engagement during class including: video questions for credit, group work for credit, or other forms of review within the class that count for credit. All take-home Homework Assignments must be typed in order to receive credit.

3. Three Take-Home Exams (60%): Students are required to take three take-home essay exams over the course of the term. For each exam the instructor will distribute a list of five possible test questions. Students may then select according to their own individual choosing any three of those five test questions to take home and answer in short-answer essay fashion. Essay exams are to be typed, single-spaced, using Times News Roman 12 point font with standard margins. Students should use class notes, text, and handouts to guide their response to each question. **Please use common sense and write as much as you think that will answer the question (typically responses to each question will range from ¾ of a page to about a page per answer when typed single space).** Please staple together the pages of your exam when complete, and print your name on each page. Exams that are not stapled together or that are not single space typed will not be accepted. To score well on this sort of exam good note-taking skills and reading the assigned texts are essential, so please do read the texts as assigned and take good notes—as that is how you will be able to answer the questions. Again, rules about plagiarism apply so it is best to stick with class notes and the text when you construct your answer (the questions are specifically designed this way).

Take Home Exams: Exams are "take home" exams in that students are distributed an exam and then have approximately one week to take the exam home, complete the exam, and then return it the following week. Most, if not all, exams will be scheduled for distribution on Monday and hence will be due, to me, in class, in person, the following Monday. Please do not submit your exam to the secretary, or slip it under my door. This will not be accepted under any circumstance. Anything else counts as a late submission unless given prior consent or written excuse, which is to the full discretion of the instructor.

****Late policy for exams: Exams which are submitted late under circumstances as outlined above will be penalized one full letter grade for the first class period late. Exams submitted thereafter will not be accepted. For example, if an exam is distributed on Monday and is due the following Monday, yet the student does not return it until Wednesday, then that exam will drop one full letter grade. After Wednesday I will not accept the exam.**

The third (and final) take-home exam will look like the two previous except that you will turn in the exam during finals week during the time of the scheduled Final Exam. You will have a week to complete it as well.

4. Group Presentation (10%): The presentation is to be a full fifteen minute, thought-provoking multi-media presentation. You are simply to present basic information on your topic: a small lecture intended to explain basic concepts to those who are unfamiliar with your subject. In order to accomplish this goal and fulfill the "multi-media" requirement you are to use some audio or visual aids in your presentation (a home produced video clip of one to two minutes length; visual slideshow; powerpoint presentation; photographs; artworks; music; pointing out weblinks or resources online; etc. etc). The point is to be creative and to be dynamic in your presentation. Bring in text-books that you used to research your presentation, use stage props—anything to make for an interesting presentation that will in an entertaining manner educate the class. The point is, it must be a true presentation of information. Groups will be assigned and rubric provided after the first exam.

Grade Scale

96-99 = A / 95 = A / 90-94 = A-; 86-89 = B+ / 85 = B / 80-84 = B-; 76-79 = C+ / 75 = C / 70-74 = C-; 66-69 = D+ / 65 = D / 64-60 = D-; 60 and below = F

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the inclusion of someone else's words, ideas, or data presented as one's own work. When a student submits for credit work that includes the words, ideas, or data of others, the source of that information must be acknowledged through complete, accurate, and specific references and, if verbatim statements are included, through quotation marks as well. By placing his/her name on work submitted for credit, the student certifies the originality of all work not otherwise identified by appropriate acknowledgments. Please note that plagiarism covers unpublished as well as published sources. These statements apply to students who consult Wikipedia, or other online sources, and then recite information found there as if it were their own. Reciting work that is not your own without proper citation will result in a reduced grade (including "F" or zero) for the assignment. More information about the Academic Integrity Policy may be found on pages 32-38 of the Student Handbook.

Attendance Policy

Students who wish to request accommodations in this class for a disability should contact the Academic Support Center, located on the first floor of Monocacy Hall (extension 1401). Accommodations cannot be provided until authorization is received from the Academic Support Center.

Late Work

1. Weekly Summaries: I will not accept late summaries for any reason. If you miss the prior week's lecture it is your responsibility to get the notes for the reading so that you are able to complete the summary for your return. Please always keep a back-up electronic copy of your summary so that I can check to see if it is completed on the day that it is due.

Classroom Procedure

1. Text messaging or any form of cell phone use (including internetting on "smart phones") is strictly forbidden. If the Instructor finds using smartphones during class to be a problem, the Instructor reserves the right to mark you absent for that class due to smartphone use. Please put all phones and technology away during class.

2. Because of persistent and wide-spread abuse of laptops in classrooms, student will NOT be allowed to use laptops in class. Laptop use for note-taking will require documentation as a special need at which point the screen must be visible to the Instructor at all times. (According to research even when laptops are used solely to take notes, they may still be impairing learning because their use results in shallower processing. See the

study, "The Pen Is Mightier Than the Keyboard" by Mueller [Princeton University] and Oppenheimer [UCLA]: *Psychological Science*, Vol. 25 No. 6 (2014):1159-1168).

3. Regarding class participation, you are expected to be prepared for each class and be prepared according to the class participation rubric. All students are expected to fully contribute to, and participate in, their respective Group Presentations. .

4. Please refrain from private discussion or other disruptive behavior during lecture. Disruptive students are given an immediate verbal warning, if a chronic problem ("three strikes" rule) the student is asked to leave the class.

5. You are expected to have as much fun as possible. ©

Students Requiring Special Services and Accommodations

Students who wish to request accommodations in this class for a disability should contact the Academic Support Center, located on the first floor of Monocacy Hall (extension 1401). Accommodations cannot be provided until authorization is received from the Academic Support Center.

COURSE OUTLINE & TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

I. Kant and Hegel

What is Continental Philosophy?

- Background (CP_PURPLE) I.1-I.6 (Introduction pgs. 1-29).

II. Phenomenology and Existentialism

Precursors to Existentialism

Friedrich Nietzsche, read selections CA_RED 75-89.

- Background (CP_PURPLE) 1.2; 2.2; 4.2 (see especially "Nietzsche's genealogy of the ascetic ideal" and "Nietzsche's overman.")

Existentialism

Søren Kierkegaard, read *Either/or* CA_RED 65-75.

- Background (CP_PURPLE) 1.1 (see especially "Kant's Vigilance against fanaticism: the Limits of Reason.")

Phenomenology & Existentialism I: transcendental phenomenology

Edmund Husserl "Cartesian Meditations" CA_RED 97-107.

- Background (CP_PURPLE) 1.4 ("Husserl's intuition of ideal essences.")

Phenomenology & Existentialism II: from transcendental to existential phenomenology

Martin Heidegger, read *Being and Time* CA_RED 107-123.

- Background (CP_PURPLE) 3.4; 1.5; 4.4 (see especially "Heidegger's Dialogue with Nietzsche about Great Art"; "Heidegger's Openness to Being"; and "Heidegger's reproach against man's hubris.")

Phenomenology & Existentialism III: existentialism and phenomenological ontology

Jean-Paul Sartre, read *Being and Nothingness* CA_RED 153-161

- Background (CP_PURPLE) 1.7; 4.3 (see especially: "Sartre's nihilating cogito"; "Sartre's resolve for man's freedom")

III. Hermeneutics

Hans-Georg Gadamer, read "The Universality of the Hermeneutical Problem" CA_RED 186-194

- Background (CP_PURPLE) 3.9; 3.10 ("Gadamer's fusion of horizons"; "Ricoeur's dialectic of rival hermeneutics.")

IV. Critical Theory, Structuralism, Psychoanalysis

Critical Theory

Herbert Marcuse, read *One-Dimensional Man* CA_RED 279-286 and Jurgen Habermas "Knowledge and Human Interests" CA_RED 294.

- Background (CP_PURPLE) 3.7 ("Marcuse's Great Refusal")

Structuralism and Psychoanalysis

Sigmund Freud, read *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* CA_RED 316-322

- Background (CP_PURPLE) 2.3 ("Freud's diagnosis of superegoic cruelty and his speculative anthropology")

V. Poststructuralism and Deconstruction

Poststructuralism

Foucault, read "History of Sexuality" CA_RED 380-391

- Background (CP_PURPLE) 4.8 ("Foucault's genealogy of power")

Deconstruction

Derrida, read *Of Grammatology* CA_RED 354-365

- Background (CP_PURPLE) 1.10 ("Derrida's deconstruction of the metaphysics of presence")

VI. Speculative Realism and the New French Philosophy

Ian James, read Chapter 4 "Catherine Malabou: The Destiny of Form" in *The New French Philosophy*

Ian James, read Chapter 6 "Alain Badiou: The Science of the Real" in *The New French Philosophy*

Quentin Meillassoux, read Chapter 1 "Ancestrality" in *After Finitude*

Quentin Meillassoux, read Chapter 5 "Ptolemy's Revenge" in *After Finitude*

Ray Brassier, read Chapter 3 "The Enigma of Realism" in *Nihil Unbound*

Ray Brassier, read Chapter 7 "The Truth of Extinction" in *Nihil Unbound*

Ian James, read Chapter 7 "Francois Laruelle: Beginning with the One" in *The New French Philosophy*