

Existentialism & Post-Modernism from Nietzsche to Irigary: Freedom and Love

Spring 2011 -- Monday and Thursday 1:00-2:25, Seafox

Gray Cox, Office second floor Davis

Hours: MTTh from 2:30-4:00 and by appointment

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This is a study of key texts in the tradition of Existentialism and Post-modernism. As a point of entry into the full range of themes, questions and ideas in that tradition, it focuses on the ways in which authors frame and interpret the experiences of freedom and of love. Are these the most profound and important aspects of human being-in-the-world or illusions used to manipulate the masses? How is individual freedom related to communal liberation? What role does love play in struggles for individual redemption or national liberation? Are they paths to connection with God or Being? How are experiences of freedom and love gendered? How are they related to instinctual drives for power or sex? What is the nature of the self and how is it realized or transformed by acts of freedom or love – or by events and institutional trends in history? Texts will include: THE BASIC WRITINGS OF NIETZSCHE, Kierkegaard's FEAR AND TREMBLING, selected readings from Michel Foucault, Luce Irigary's THE WAY OF LOVE, Paulo Freire's THE PEDAGOGY OF THE OPPRESSED, Sartre's "Existentialism is a Humanism", and selections from Simone de Beauvoir's THE SECOND SEX and Martin Buber's I AND THOU. Two films will also be used as texts and we will have two extra sessions in the evening so we can watch these as a group. Students with relevant skills will be encouraged to work with texts in the original languages. Evaluation will be based on the level of understanding of -- and engagement with -- texts studied and the development of skills in textual analysis and writing as demonstrated in class participation, a series of short papers, and a final project. Intermediate, HS.

The goals for the class are that students will:

1. develop oral and written skills in critical reasoning, phenomenological reflection and textual analysis.
2. become conversant with and able to engage with key authors, ideas and questions in the continental European tradition of philosophy and
3. learn to deal in depth with the multiple ways in which two conjoined themes, freedom and love, can be used to illuminate as well as obscure our understanding of the human condition and our opportunities for living well.

The texts, ideas and philosophical methods studied in this class are seminal. They provide key points of reference for a wide range of thought, art and social

practice throughout the 20th century and down to today. Understanding these texts will enable students in history to better understand historical movements such as feminism and third world liberation struggles as well as texts by historians that write about them. It will also aid significantly in understanding a wide range of literature and art. It should also help students better understand themselves and the quests for freedom and love that may motivate or guide their efforts to change themselves and the world.

Homework assignments: For any class for which a short paper is not due, the homework assignment will be to write a short (100-150 word) piece that picks a passage of interest and explains why it is of interest. These short writing assignments can and should take very different formats through the term including explaining why the passage seems important, true, false, transitional, summative, puzzling, in contrast with another author, poetically evocative, obscure, obvious to the point of seeming pointless, . . . or of interest for some other reason. These are due at the start of the class. You should submit them electronically but also be sure you have a copy in hand (or in computer) at the start of class since we will use them to help structure and focus class discussions.

Short papers: Three short papers (~3 pages) will be due, dealing with the authors discussed in class. Topics for each will be suggested but you will be free to pick other themes or ways to focus your paper if you choose.

Final paper (8-12 pages): There are two options for this. The first is to write a comparative and critical essay on readings from the class. The second is to pick an author and text of special interest and write a critical analysis of it. The topics for these papers need to be worked out in collaboration with Gray.

All written work should be submitted electronically and will be commented on electronically during the term. Copies will be kept for evaluation at the end of the term. If you take this course for a letter grade the evaluation will be determined at the end of the term and will be based on: class participation 20%, homework 20%, short papers 30%, final paper 30%.

Course Outline:

3/28 Introductions, Lecture on Background: A brief history of Western Philosophy – Plato, Descartes & Kant

3/31 Sartre's "Existentialism is a Humanism", in complete,
<http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/sartre/works/exist/sartre.htm>

(French version available online at: <http://www.danielmartin.eu/Textes/Existentialisme.htm>)

and Martin Buber's I AND THOU, pp. 17-27

http://ia700300.us.archive.org/load_djvu_applet.php?file=22/items/IAndThou/IAAndThou.djvu (German text available in Xerox)

and

http://www.myjewishlearning.com/beliefs/Theology/Thinkers_and_Thought/jewish_Philosophy/Philosophies/Modern/Martin_Buber/I_and_Thou.shtml

- 4/4 Kierkegaard's FEAR AND TREMBLING, pp. 1-59, mini-lecture on Kant and Hegel
- 4/5 EXTRA SESSION at 6:30 for viewing of THE SEVENTH SEAL
- 4/7 FEAR AND TREMBLING, pp. 59-109
- 4/11 Nietzsche's BEYOND GOOD AND EVIL "Preface", Part I "On the Prejudices of Philosophers", Part V "Natural History of Morals" and Section #260
DUE: FIRST PAPER
- 4/14 GENEALOGY OF MORALS (GM), Preface and Section I, "'Good and Evil,' 'Good and Bad'"
- 4/18 GM Section II, "'Guilt,' 'Bad Conscience,' and the Like", section 5 of ECCE HOMO, on "Why I Write Such Good Books"
- 4/21 Paulo Freire's THE PEDAGOGY OF THE OPPRESSED, Preface and Chapter 1 – Lecture on context of Freire's work,
- 4/25 Paulo Freire's THE PEDAGOGY OF THE OPPRESSED, Chapters 2 & 3
- 4/28 Paulo Freire's THE PEDAGOGY OF THE OPPRESSED, Chapter 4, and Simone de Beauvoir's THE SECOND SEX, "Introduction"
- 5/2 Mark Wrathal, HOW TO READ HEIDEGGER, pp. 1-57, recommended selections from Don Ihde's EXPERIMENTAL PHENOMENOLOGY
DUE: SECOND PAPER
- 5/5 HOW TO READ HEIDEGGER, pp. 57-118
- 5/9 Luce Irigaray's THE WAY OF LOVE, "Preface" and pp. 1-54 and Heidi Bostic, "Reading in Translation: Luce Irigaray's THE WAY OF LOVE", from READER: ESSAYS IN READER-ORIENTED THEORY, CRITICISM, AND PEDAGOGY, Fall 2003, pp. 44-64
- 5/10 EXTRA SESSION AT 6:30 for viewing a movie about love
- 5/12 Luce Irigaray's THE WAY OF LOVE. pp. 55-107
- 5/16 Luce Irigaray's THE WAY OF LOVE, pp. 108-174
PAPER DUE due by email on 5/17 framing a question and then explaining its significance
- 5/19 Luce Irigaray's THE WAY OF LOVE, reread and review for conversation (possibly including the book translators, Heidi Bostic and Steven Pluháček)
- 5/23 Michel Foucault, "What is Enlightenment?", "Truth and Power", "Panopticism" (from DISCIPLINE AND PUNISH) and Foucault, THE HISTORY OF SEXUALITY, VOLUME I: AN INTRODUCTION, (HS) pp. 1-14
- 5/26 HS, 15-91
- 5/30 HS, 92-160
- 6/2 Closing
FINAL PAPER DUE: Comparative and Critical Analysis on agreed on topic

Movies:

BEING JOHN MALKOVICH
GROUNDHOG DAY
THE MATRIX
THE SEVENTH SEAL
Last Year at Marienbad
Hiroshima mon Amour
Waiting for Godot

I've attached a PDF that may be of interest...there are lots of others available here:

<http://movingimage-library.blogspot.com/>

<http://fckvrso.wordpress.com/>

Here are some titles I thought might be of interest:

Last Year at Marienbad

The Seventh Continent (Michael Haneke's films in general)

I Heart Huckabees

Paths of Glory

Les Carabiniers (Godard in general, heavy Brecht influence)

Synecdoche, NY

The Seventh Seal (Bergman in general)

Red Desert or The Passenger (Antonioni in general)

Waking Life

Fassbinder in general (especially Berlin Alexanderplatz, but it's 15 hours long...)

Lessons of Darkness (Herzog in general)

any David Lynch

24 Hour Party People

...Baudrillard called Sergio Leone's 'Once Upon a Time in the West' the "first postmodern film"...

Love Poems

Your sweet etcetera

Love songs

Scene from movie – Romantic Comedy? Sophie's Choice? . . .

1. Compare and contrast Sartre and Buber's understanding of the "I" or self.
2. Is the view presented in FEAR AND TREMBLING a coherent "existentialist" one in Sartre's sense? What is the relationship between love of God and love of a person? What role does free will play in each?
3. How might a Christian respond to Nietzsche's critique? What is the relationship between history and moral philosophy? What do freedom and love mean for Nietzsche?

4. How are Freire and de Beauvoir's understandings of oppression and love similar? How is Heidegger's view of freedom and the human condition different from Sartre's?
5. How is Irigaray's view of human relationships different from Heidegger or Buber's?
6. How is Foucault's way of conceiving the self, freedom and love similar to and different from two of the other authors studied this term?

Suggested texts for final papers?

HS pp. 75- 160

and Cixous, "The Laugh of the Medusa"

- 1 Baudrillard on "The Precession of the Simulacra" and selections from Lyotard
 - 3 selected readings from Michel Foucault, "What is Enlightenment?", "What is an Author?", "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History", and "Truth and Power"
- THE HISTORY OF SEXUALITY, VOL. I: AN INTRODUCTION
And Panopticism

NO CLASS on April 24

Movies: in connection with Baudrillard -- Iraq
And a love story . . .
or Stranger than Fiction or
or Groundhog Day
or Breathless
or Waiting for Godot or
something really postmodern . . .
feminist film

Lecture Notes:

3/28 Introductions, Lecture on Background: A brief history of Western Philosophy
– Plato, Descartes & Kant

Background on Sartre

WWI and WWII and absurdity
And MH and meaning and nihilism
And resistance and Fascism
Others – de Beauvoir, Fanon, Camus, Absurdist
Origins of ideas in western tradition
Freedom, Human condition,

Essence vs. Existence –

Thales – triangle as essence

Plato – theory of ideas

And Metaphysics in Timaeus

Descartes – Modern Mind -- consciousness vs. matter

Kant -- Transcendental Turn – and things in themselves, and Categorical Imperative

3/31 Sartre’s “Existentialism is a Humanism”, and Martin Buber’s I AND THOU
<http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/sartre/works/exist/sartre.htm>

On love – Huis Clos

Open discussion of themes

Closing prep on SK -- Kant and Things in selves to Hegel and the Absolute

And the real is rational, and . . . the individual is just part of a much larger whole.

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4/7 FEAR AND TREMBLING, pp. 59-109

Mention Tillich, Jaspers,

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4/28 Paulo Freire’s THE PEDAGOGY OF THE OPPRESSED, Chapter 4 and Simone de Beauvoir’s THE SECOND SEX, Introduction
mention Argentine Philosopher of Liberation

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