

Phil 341: Kierkegaard and Nietzsche

CSUN Spring, 2016
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Office Hours: Tuesdays 2:00–3:30 and Wednesdays by appointment

I. Course Description and Overview

Kierkegaard and Nietzsche are both particularly challenging to read. This is not necessarily a feature of their prose style: In each case the writing can be lyrical and literary and on occasion, quite beautiful. Instead, it is a feature of their methods. Kierkegaard, for example, wrote under a number of pseudonyms, each with its own ‘voice’, making it difficult to determine what Kierkegaard *the man* actually believed. For his part, Nietzsche’s genre-bending philosophizing can make his writing appear unsystematic, and his hyperbolic prose, which only becomes more extreme as he descends into madness in the late 1880s, leaves us with the question of whether or not to take him at his word. The danger in both cases is that we may be tempted to cherry-pick from their texts, or read them without context (sometimes to quite dangerous ends!) and so miss that each philosopher sought to develop a coherent project over the course of a career.

Part of our task this semester is to address these challenges, both on our own and—in the last unit of the course—by reading from each of the thinkers’ philosophical autobiographies. Our point of orientation will be the role of the individual in society. This is an issue, central to both Kierkegaard and Nietzsche’s thought, that will help us grasp how each thinker conceived of the role of religion and morality in structuring social life.

II. Required Texts

The following texts are available for purchase in the Matador bookstore.

Søren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*
Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Portable Nietzsche* [PN]
Friedrich Nietzsche, *Basic Writings of Nietzsche* [BW]

All other readings will be made available on Moodle. Moodle readings are indicated on the schedule by an asterisk (*).

III. Schedule of Readings

I. Orientations and Presuppositions

1/26: Introduction and Course Overview

I.1 Introducing Kierkegaard

1/28: * Søren Kierkegaard, “The Historical Point of View,” from *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*.

- 2/2: * Søren Kierkegaard, "The Speculative Point of View," from *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*;
 * Søren Kierkegaard, "That Christendom is an Enormous Illusion," from *The Point of View of My Work as An Author*.

I.2 Introducing Nietzsche

- 2/4: Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Antichrist* §§1–9 [PN: 569–576];
 * 2. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Daybreak* §103.
 2/9: Friedrich Nietzsche, "Morality as Anti-Nature" and "The Four Great Errors," from *Twilight of the Idols* [PN: 486–501]

II. Kierkegaard

II.1 From the Aesthetic to the Ethical

- 2/11: * Søren Kierkegaard, "Diapsalmata," from *Either/Or*, vol. 1.
 2/16: * Søren Kierkegaard, "Crop Rotation," from *Either/Or*, vol. 1.
 2/18: * Søren Kierkegaard, *Either/Or*, vol. 1, cont'd.
 2/23: * Søren Kierkegaard, "Equilibrium between the Aesthetical and the Ethical in the Composition of Personality," from *Either/Or*, vol. 2.
 2/25: * Søren Kierkegaard, "Equilibrium," from *Either/Or*, vol. 2 cont'd.

II.2 From the Ethical to the Religious

- 3/1: Søren Kierkegaard, "Preliminary Expectoration" and "Problem 1," from *Fear and Trembling*.
 3/3: Søren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, "Problem 1," cont'd.
 3/8: Søren Kierkegaard, "Problem 1" and "Problem 2," from *Fear and Trembling*.
 3/10: Søren Kierkegaard, "Problem 1" and "Problem 2," cont'd.
 3/15: Kierkegaard review.

Take-Home Midterm on Kierkegaard [*due by midnight 3/19*]

III. Nietzsche

III.1. Nietzschean Anti-Ethics: The Genealogical Move

- 3/17: Friedrich Nietzsche, "The Natural History of Morals," from *Beyond Good and Evil* [BW: 285–309]

3/22: *Spring Break, no class*

3/24: *Spring Break, no class*

3/29: Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, cont'd.

3/31: *César Chavez day, no class.*

4/4: Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, First Essay [BW: 460–492]

4/6: Friedrich Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, First Essay, cont'd.

4/12: Friedrich Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, Second Essay [BW: 493–532]

4/14: Friedrich Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, Second Essay, cont'd.

III.2 Religion and Decadence

- 4/19: Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science* §§283, 285, 341 [PN: 97–98, 101–102].
4/21: Friedrich Nietzsche, “Prologue,” from *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* [PN: 121–137]
4/26: Friedrich Nietzsche, “Prologue,” from *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, cont’d.
4/28: Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, §§343, 344 [PN: 447–450];
* Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, §125.

IV. On Authorship

- 5/3: * Søren Kierkegaard, “Introduction” to *My Point of View of My Work as An Author*.
5/5: * Søren Kierkegaard, pt. 1 of *My Point of View of My Work as An Author*.
5/10: Friedrich Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo* [BW]
5/12: Friedrich Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo* [BW]

5/19: Final Exam on Nietzsche

IV. Grading Overview

Your grade for this course will be based upon your attendance and participation, two exams, and written work produced over the course of the semester. The section below outlines each of the course requirements in detail as well as the system by which your final grade will be calculated.

Grading System

This course will be partly graded according to a pass/fail system. The midterm and final exams, as well as your attendance grade, will utilize a 100-point scale.

Grade Breakdown

Attendance and Participation:	15%
Discussion Questions:	5%
Kierkegaard Journal:	15%
Nietzsche Journal:	15%
Midterm:	25%
Final:	25%

V. Written Assignments and Other Course Requirements

Attendance and Participation

Your consistent attendance and active engagement are integral to the success of this course and will constitute a portion of your final grade. I will take attendance during the first minutes of every class and it is your responsibility to arrive *on time* in order to register your presence. Please also note that late arrivals are extremely disruptive to the class, and I will offer zero or only partial attendance credit to anyone arriving more than five minutes late (see the rubric below).

Discussion Questions

Over the course of the semester, you are responsible for generating 5 discussion questions to be submitted to me in advance of class. A discussion question reflects a thoughtful engagement with a text and can be of either of the following types:

What questions: A *what* question identifies a passage or concept that you believe is important to the author's argument but that you find particularly difficult to understand. Questions of this type will note the passage or concept in question (with page references) and will include your thoughts on what you think the author may be trying to say.

Why questions: A *why* question identifies a passage or argument that you find mystifying because it is not clear why one might hold the view in question. This may be because the argument seems to lack support or it may be because the view seems counterintuitive to you. Questions of this type will include a brief restatement of the passage or argument and will explain why you find the view particularly puzzling.

Your question must be e-mailed to me by the midnight before the text is to be discussed. Each question must be on a different text. There are no specific due dates for these questions. They will be graded pass/fail, but only questions that meet the requirements outlined above will receive a grade of pass. Your assignment is to generate 5 passing questions over the course of the semester.

Kierkegaard Journal

During the Kierkegaard section of this course (2/11–3/15) you will be responsible for keeping a reading journal with entries for *each* reading. The journal should be typed and printed out in hard copy (you may find it useful to keep it together in a folder) and will be collected by me on 2/25 and 3/15. It is your responsibility to keep your journal up to date. The precise format of the entries is up to you, but at a minimum, the journal should record: (1) your reflections on the reading and (2) a list of any concepts or terms that are unfamiliar to you, that seem to be used in a specialized sense, or that you identify as central to Kierkegaard's argument. The entries are graded pass/fail, and receive a passing grade only if they clearly demonstrate that you have read the text and tried your best to engage with it.

Nietzsche Journal

During the Nietzsche section of the course, you will also keep a journal. However, for the Nietzsche journal you will be responsible for responding to specific questions. I'll post the Nietzsche questions on Moodle at the beginning of each week and you must bring typed, hard copies of your responses with you to class. Your Nietzsche responses will also be graded pass/fail. I will return your responses with comments; however, I will also keep a copy of each of your responses to be returned to you on the date of your exam. You are welcome to use these notes as you take the exam. If you would like to revise any of your responses before the exam date, you must submit the revisions to me in advance.

Midterm Exam

There will be a midterm exam covering Kierkegaard. The exam will be posted online and you may take it at home any time between when it is posted and midnight on 3/19. You may use your texts and your notes but you may not consult with anyone else while

you take the exam. You may not consult Internet sources. The exam will be timed.

Final Exam

There will be a final exam covering Nietzsche. The exam will be held in person on May 19. Your Nietzsche journal will be returned to you at that time and you may consult it, as well as your texts, as you take the exam.

VI. Course Policies

Absences and Lateness

Your final attendance grade for the course will be calculated according to the following scale:

A	(100)	0 absences
A	(95)	1–2 absences
B+	(87)	3 absences
B-	(80)	4 absences
C	(75)	5 absences
D	(60)	6 absences
F	(0)	7 absences

More than 7 absences will result in failure of the course

Please note that I do *not* distinguish excused from unexcused absences, except in extraordinary circumstances. If documentable circumstances will cause you miss class for an extended period of time, you should see me well in advance to discuss possible solutions. *Per CSUN policy, if religious observation will cause you to miss class, you may be excused, but you must let me know in the beginning of the semester.*

I will take attendance during the first minutes of class. If you are late to class, your tardiness will be calculated in your attendance grade according to the following scale:

5 to 10 minutes late	1/3 absence
10 to 15 minutes late	1/2 absence
More than 15 minutes late	Full absence

Leaving class early will also count as a full absence.

Electronics

All electronic devices must be turned off (not just set to vibrate!) during class time and kept in your bag. The use of laptop computers is prohibited, unless you have a documented reason for needing one in the classroom. If you use your phone or other electronic device during class time, I reserve the right to ask you to leave for the remainder of class.

Written Work

All written work must be typed, and handed in on time. I do not accept late work except under exceptional circumstances that have been cleared with me in advance, and I do not

accept work submitted via e-mail (with the exception of your discussion questions). Should circumstances prevent you from getting to class on the day an assignment is due, you should make prior arrangements to have a friend turn in your work, or to submit the work in my mailbox or via Moodle, as appropriate. Please also see the note on academic honesty, below.

Correspondence

You are welcome to e-mail me any questions you have about the course (or about philosophy more broadly) and I will do my best to respond, where appropriate, in a timely manner. Note, however, that I will not respond to e-mails if the question you're asking is clearly answered on the syllabus. If you need to miss class for any reason, you're under no obligation to let me know, but you should make sure you follow up with a classmate to learn what you missed; I won't fill you in over e-mail. If you have more substantive questions or are concerned about your progress, the appropriate way to discuss these is in person, during my office hours.

Assignments and Grading

I'll provide detailed instructions for your class assignments, as well as grading rubrics. My intention is to demystify the grading process as much as possible. When I calculate a grade, however, that grade is non-negotiable except in demonstrated cases of an error.

You're responsible for keeping track of your own progress, and should be able to provide evidence if you believe my grade was calculated in error. If you have concerns or want to discuss your progress with me, I'm happy to chat with you during office hours. Please note that I do not offer extra credit assignments, and do not accept rewrites. However, I am more than happy to read drafts and offer feedback on your work up to a week before the assignment is due or according to a schedule announced in class.

Statement on Disabilities

If you need special accommodations (note taker, interpreter, extended time), please make sure to make me aware of these during the first weeks of the semester so that we can make the classroom experience productive. Please also reach out to the office of Disability Resources and Educational Services if you have any questions about available accommodations.

Academic Honesty

Academic dishonesty is a serious offense, a violation of academic integrity, and a violation of the trust of professors and fellow students. It will not be tolerated. Violations of academic honesty include plagiarism, cheating, dishonest communication about timely assignment completion, or other violations of community trust. Plagiarism of any assignment will result in a 0 on the assignment or failure of the course and will be reported to the University. Instances of cheating or other violations of academic integrity will result in a 0 on the assignment or failure of the course and will be reported to the University.

The CSUN statement on academic honesty states:

The maintenance of academic integrity and quality education is the responsibility of each student within this University and the CSU system. Cheating or plagiarism in connection with an academic program at a CSU campus is listed in Section 41301, Title 5, California Code of Regulations as an offense for which a student may be expelled, suspended or given a less severe disciplinary sanction. Academic dishonesty is an especially serious offense and diminishes the quality of scholarship and defrauds those who depend on the integrity of the University's programs.

For further information about these policies, including what constitutes plagiarism, what constitutes cheating, and what constitutes an appropriate penalty, please consult the University Catalogue.

N.B. Although I do not anticipate it, this syllabus may be subject to revision.