

PHIL 377: 20th-Century Continental Philosophy

Fall Term 2021-22/ SGW Campus (3 credits)

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Office hours: W 14:50-16:10 online, 14:50-17:30 in person, and by appointment

*Office hours will be held on Zoom (accessed through Moodle) so that large numbers of students are not assembled in a confined space at the same time. Students can get in touch by email to request one-on-one, in-person meetings as well, if this is what they would prefer.

Class schedule: W 11:45-14:30, FG B030

Calendar description: Prerequisite: Six credits in Philosophy, or permission of the Department. This course examines 20th-century French and German philosophy. Philosophers examined may include Husserl, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, Foucault, Derrida, and Habermas.

Course description: Continental thinkers often elaborate their own work by ‘rereading’ the work of their philosophical forebears. We will achieve a deeper understanding of specific, 20th-century continental thinkers by attuning ourselves to the respects in which they were responding to the continental thinkers before them. We will attend to the ways in which they transform the ideas they respond to (or take up) and be on the lookout, too, together, in class, and while working on assignments, for novel ways of forging links between our readings. It will make the most sense to treat our thinkers in *roughly* chronological order, moving through Nietzsche, then Freud, Husserl, Heidegger, Sartre, Foucault, Deleuze, Levinas, Derrida, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Hélène Cixous, and Judith Butler. Specific themes will help us reflect on the relationships which maintain between these theorists: How do different continental thinkers conceive of the self and its relationship to freedom and subjection? How has the relationship between truth/knowledge and philosophy been imagined within the continental tradition? How has the continental tradition conceived of violence? Finally: How does the tradition invite us to consider how differently positioned people and hybrid forms of writing might transform philosophy for the better?

Our themes at a glance:

How do different continental thinkers conceive of the self and its relationship to freedom and subjection? We will begin the course with Nietzsche, who expired on the cusp of the twentieth century. His reflections on the production of ‘bad conscience’ lent themselves to the suggestions regarding power’s constitutive relationship to the self, or the ‘subject,’ that we find in work by Foucault’s from the 1970s and even later in Judith Butler’s writings. These suggestions go against the grain of Sartre’s thinking

on the subject, which we will also examine. We will explore Freudian tools for understanding the self's production early on; these are also repurposed by theorists we will explore in later weeks (e.g., Derrida and Judith Butler).

How has the relationship between truth/knowledge and philosophy been imagined within the continental tradition? Freud challenged the sovereignty of consciousness early in the twentieth century, but Husserl, at around the same time, made the scrupulous examination of conscious experience the key to philosophy's claim to scientificity. We will examine the very different brands of phenomenology that are discernible within Husserl, Heidegger, and Sartre's respective writings, reflecting on the ways in which an initially scientific project became an existential one.

One conception of philosophy discernible in Nietzsche's work—the vision of philosophy as genealogy, a form of cultural critique geared toward producing a new form of subjectivity—was embraced by Foucault and cast as a means of *resisting* insidious forms of knowledge (knowledge, Foucault suggested, intersected with subjugating forms of power).

This Nietzschean conception of philosophy also has relevance for thinking on the subject of humanism and attempts to move beyond it. We will trace these from Sartre to Heidegger, and then to Derrida.

How has the continental tradition conceived of violence? A consideration of Levinas's work and its relation to Husserlian and Heideggerian phenomenology will help us address this theme. Levinas's theoretical constructs are designed to subvert violence when it is construed as 'totalization.' Derrida takes these constructs up in a new way in his own work, making it possible to think that violence and destruction, without ceasing to be violence and destruction, can also, paradoxically, be saving. This is a thought we will initially graze in Deleuze's philosophy, which speaks to the difficult idea that uncomfortable forms of dissolution might be politically and in other ways fruitful.

Our engagement with Derrida will also impel us to attend to the forms of violent exclusion philosophy can perform as it thinks about human being (or, more reductively, 'man') and limns its own contours. It invites us to consider how differently positioned people and hybrid forms of writing might transform philosophy for the better. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Hélène Cixous will help us develop this theme during the final weeks of the course.

Required texts: All readings are in the course coursepack available through [Concordia Book Stop](#), in stores or online. (Consult our reading schedule to see the readings for each week.)

Course objectives: The course will (1) make it possible for students to acquire a sophisticated understanding of developments which occurred in continental thinking over the course of the twentieth century. It will (2) invite students to develop, in their written work, unique conceptions

of how diverse thinkers interface. It will also (3) make it possible for students to use continental theory to reflect on contemporary themes related to ‘difference’ and inclusivity. Assignments will (4) allow students to sharpen their philosophical writing skills and develop their critical and creative capacities.

How the course will run and expectations:

We will meet in person, in the room that has been booked for us, at our scheduled times. All students are expected to wear procedure masks in the classroom and to refrain from coming to class if experiencing symptoms of COVID-19. If I ever find myself having to cancel lecture because I am experiencing symptoms of the virus, I will create a replacement video lecture for the class which will be available through Moodle. Our tentative plan is to record live lectures so that students will have the option of accessing them through Moodle if they must take the course remotely. Note that this plan is contingent on the possibility of getting timely and sufficient setup assistance from IITS. I will notify you if there are any setbacks or changes to this plan. Although there is no participation requirement for this course, I will invite questions, comments, and some discussion during my lectures. The more communal the classroom is, the more lively it will be, and a convivial atmosphere will benefit everyone.

The weekly lectures will be more enriching if students complete the readings for the week in advance, and I highly encourage this practice. Our reading schedule is ambitious, and it is understandable if students have to be selective about which readings they devote the most time, attention, and energy to. At the same time, though, students are expected to demonstrate a rigorous understanding of the texts they choose to engage with in written assignments (they will have options). I recommend devoting at least 3-6 hours to reading each week. Additional reading will be necessary while students work on writing assignments, as it will be necessary to reread texts to write on them in a philosophically effective and engaging way. I recommend attending all lectures. Our texts are dense and sometimes opaque; learning how to read them will be a bit like learning how to read another language, and this is precisely what lectures will help students do. It will be difficult, and perhaps impossible, to do this work alone.

Assignment requirements:

Students will be required to submit one short, critical summary (length: 1000-1500 words) and two longer essays (length: 2500 words each). The critical summary will be worth 20% of the final grade for the course, and each longer essay will be worth 40% of the final grade. Detailed instructions for each assignment will be provided through Moodle at least two weeks in advance of the assignment’s deadline. Students can expect to have their work returned to them within two weeks after submission. I will apprise the students of any unanticipated and unavoidable delays, if they arise.

The critical summary will bear on two authors of their choosing from those discussed in the weeks preceding the assignment’s deadline. It will ask the students to motivate and pose a critical question by means of a close reading of their texts.

The two longer essays will ask students to advance an original thesis while synthesizing the work of at least two of the thinkers explored in select weeks. Students will have quite a bit of freedom when it comes to selecting the thinkers they work with and the themes they choose to explore in their essays. A list of possible essay topics will be provided for inspiration and to give students direction while they work.

*Note that, although this course’s language of instruction is English, students have the option of submitting their written work in French.

Critical Summary (1000-1500 words; worth 20%): Due Sept. 28th by 11:59pm on Moodle.

First Essay (2500 words; worth 40%): Flexible deadline. Aim to hand this essay in on Nov. 18th on Moodle. I will still accept submissions after this point without penalty, but please get in touch to communicate when you anticipate getting them in. Also: Make sure to give yourself enough time between submitting this essay and having to write and submit the final essay.

Final-Exam Essay (2000 words; worth 40%): Due Dec. 20th by 11:59pm on Moodle.

Grading scheme:

Philosophy Department Statement Regarding Grades and Grade Distribution:

1) The Undergraduate Calendar 16.3 specifies that As, Bs, and Cs are for “outstanding,” “very good” and “satisfactory” work, respectively. The Philosophy Department interprets this to mean that: Cs are awarded for work that is adequate, yet in some way fails to completely meet all expectations and requirements; Bs are awarded for work that fully meets all expectations and requirements; As are reserved for outstanding work that exceeds expectations and requirements by, e.g., demonstrating outstanding rigour, clarity, or insight.

2) In 200 & 300 level courses with over 30 students, it is normally expected that: the grade average will be in the C+ to B- range; there will be no more than 25% As.

Numerical Equivalents:

A- 80-84% 3.7 GP	A 85-89% 4.0 GP	A+ 90-100% 4.3 GP
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B- 70-72% 2.7 GP	B 73-76% 3.0 GP	B+ 77-79% 3.3 GP
C- 60-62% 1.7 GP	C 63-66% 2.0 GP	C+ 67-69% 2.3 GP
D- 50-52% 0.7 GP	D 53-56% 1.0 GP	D+ 57-59% 1.3 GP

I emphasize that A-range grades are reserved for work that EXCEEDS expectations and requirements. Outstanding, A-range work will, while grounding itself in a rigorous understanding of the course content, and while meeting all assignment requirements, move course content in new directions. It may set itself apart by advancing notably original ideas, by making unique connections between ideas, or by in other ways demonstrating keen philosophical insight while at the same time being well-argued. Exceptional assignments will also be well-composed.

The evaluation scheme and more in light of extraordinary circumstances: In the event of extraordinary circumstances and pursuant to the Academic Regulations, the University may modify the delivery, content, structure, forum, location and/or evaluation scheme. In the event of such extraordinary circumstances, students will be informed of the changes.

Important advice: If a special condition or circumstance in your life may or will affect your performance, please let me know about it as soon as possible. It will be treated with the strictest confidence. Please do not wait until the condition or circumstance is impending or has already happened before telling me about its impact on you. If something unanticipated occurs, bring it to my attention and we will work out a way of dealing with it.

Accessibility: I will strive to make the course as accessible and inclusive as possible. If you have accessibility needs that require academic accommodations, please meet with an advisor from the Access Centre for Students with Disabilities (ACSD) as soon as possible to set up an accommodation plan. I welcome meeting with all students to discuss their accessibility needs.

Undergraduate general assignment policies: To hand in one of the longer papers late, please negotiate a new arrangement with me at least one week in advance of the deadline. Your paper will not be accepted unless you do this (barring exceptional circumstances, which will require documentation). Note that if you make arrangements to hand in your paper late, I may not be able to comment on it. The short-term absence form can be used to acquire additional time for

the critical summary, if necessary. It can only be used for assignments that are less than 30% of the final grade, so it cannot be used for either of the longer papers.

Ensure that you keep backup copies of your work in paper and/or electronic form. This is good common sense. Don't make the mistake of typing up an assignment in a hurry on a library computer without saving it to an online account at the university or elsewhere, to a memory key, etc. Consider purchasing a small USB key that you can carry with you at all times with your work on it, or finding an online resource such as DropBox or SugarSync where you can store files. Also, develop good backup practices: turn on the timed auto-recover function in your word processor, the save backup copy function, and get in the practice of saving versions of your work under a new name when you start making drastic revisions (or use version management functions of your word processor). Also note that according to the calendar (16.3.9.2) "Students are responsible for the preservation of any material, in its entire and original form, which has been returned to them."

Academic integrity: Your academic Code of Conduct makes it very clear that plagiarism, as well as any other form of academic dishonesty, is entirely unacceptable. The Code defines plagiarism as "the presentation of the work of another person as one's own or without proper acknowledgement" (CU Undergraduate Calendar; the Code goes on to state other offences). This could be material copied word for word from books, journals, internet sites, professor's course notes, etc. It could be material that is paraphrased but closely resembles the original source. It could be the work of a fellow student, for example, an answer on a quiz, data for a lab report, a paper or assignment completed by another student. It might be a paper purchased through one of the many available sources. Plagiarism does not refer to words alone - it can also refer to copying images, graphs, tables, and ideas. "Presentation" is not limited to written work. It also includes oral presentations, computer assignments and artistic works. If you translate the work of another person into French or English and do not cite the source, this is also plagiarism. If you cite your own work without the correct citation, this too is plagiarism. In Simple Words: DO NOT COPY, PARAPHRASE OR TRANSLATE ANYTHING FROM ANYWHERE WITHOUT SAYING FROM WHERE YOU GOT IT! DON'T FORGET TO USE QUOTATION MARKS!

Plagiarism and academic dishonesty are highly disruptive of the learning that we should be doing here. Should I detect any form of academic dishonesty, including plagiarizing from the internet, from books, journals, other students, etc., I will report it directly to the Vice-Dean of Academic Affairs. The penalties for plagiarism tend to be rather severe, and in any case undermine your learning process. So avoid it. In case of doubt as to what counts as plagiarism, ask me. Cite your sources and inspirations; this enriches your ideas by showing their roots in the thoughts of other people, and does not detract from your exposition, articulation, and development of ideas.

Note on intellectual property: Content belonging to instructors shared in online courses, including, but not limited to, online lectures, course notes, and video recordings of classes remain the intellectual property of the faculty member. It may not be distributed, published or broadcast, in whole or in part, without the express permission of the faculty member. Students

are also forbidden to use their own means of recording any elements of an online class or lecture without express permission of the instructor. Any unauthorized sharing of course content may constitute a breach of the Academic Code of Conduct and/or the Code of Rights and Responsibilities. As specified in the Policy on Intellectual Property, the University does not claim any ownership of or interest in any student IP. All university members retain copyright over their work.

Note on behaviour: All individuals participating in courses are expected to be professional and constructive throughout the course, including in their communications. Concordia students are subject to the Code of Rights and Responsibilities which applies both when students are physically and virtually engaged in any University activity, including classes, seminars, meetings, etc. Students engaged in University activities must respect this Code when engaging with any members of the Concordia community, including faculty, staff, and students, whether such interactions are verbal or in writing, face to face or online/virtual. Failing to comply with the Code may result in charges and sanctions, as outlined in the Code.

Note on gender neutral language & human diversity: In addition to all the other reasons for using gender neutral language and language that attends to human diversity, there are philosophical reasons for this too. Philosophy demands that we think very carefully, clearly and rigorously about human life and ideas. To do this well, we have to attend to the diversity of human life. Otherwise we build in and reinforce prejudices that betray who we are as human beings. Using gender neutral language in your writing and speaking reminds us that human beings are diverse in gender, that not all of them are “he.” And this reminds us of further diversities of human being. There are different ways of approaching the task of keeping gender and other differences in mind, e.g., substituting “she” where “he” might have traditionally been expected, alternating systematically between the two, using “she/he,” and so on. No formal procedure is adequate to the task, for the task is improving your thinking and that of our culture and future generations, and the form of thinking adequate to this cannot be set in advance. For helpful discussion and guidelines, Google: Warren, Virginia L. “Guidelines for the Nonsexist Use of Language.”

Note on pronouns: All course participants have the right to request which names and pronouns instructors use to refer to them. I respect this right and will do my best to satisfy any of these requests. If you want to be called by a name other than what is listed on the class list, please feel free to pass along the information to me. If I mistakenly use the wrong pronoun when referring to you, please advise me as soon as possible.

Note on sexual violence: Concordia’s [Policy Regarding Sexual Violence](#) defines sexual violence as “any violence or misconduct, physical or psychological, carried out through sexual means or by targeting sexuality. This includes, but is not limited to, sexual assault; sexual harassment; stalking; coercion; sexist, homophobic and/or transphobic jokes; indecent exposure; stealthing; voyeurism; degrading sexual imagery; recording and distribution of sexual images or video of a

member of the University without their consent; cyber harassment or cyber stalking of a sexual nature or related to a person's sexual orientation and gender identity and/or presentation.”

The Policy further defines sexual assault and harassment.

- The Philosophy Department condemns sexual violence. The Department encourages all students to report sexual violence to the Department Chair, the Dean, or to the Office of Rights and Responsibilities.
- Concordia's [Sexual Assault Resource Centre \(SARC\)](#) is an important resource on campus for students needing support, accompaniment, resources or information about sexual violence. SARC may convene a Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) to support a survivor/victim reporting sexual violence. See the [Policy](#) for further details.
- Other resources include the [Centre for Gender Advocacy](#) and the [CSU Advocacy Centre](#).
- The Philosophy Department welcomes Concordia's [Consensual Romantic Or Sexual Relationships Guidelines](#), which “strongly discourage[] all instructors from commencing or continuing any consensual romantic or sexual relationship with a student.”

Territorial acknowledgment:

I would like to acknowledge that Concordia University is located on unceded Indigenous lands. The Kanien'kehá:ka Nation is recognized as the custodians of the lands and waters on which we gather today. Tiohtiá:ke/Montreal is historically known as a gathering place for many First Nations. Today, it is home to a diverse population of Indigenous and other peoples. I respect the continued connections with the past, present and future in our ongoing relationships with Indigenous and other peoples within the Montreal community.

List of student services/resources:

[Counselling and Psychological Services](#)
[Concordia Library Citation and Style Guides](#)
[Student Success Centre](#)
[Health Services](#)
[Financial Aid and Awards](#)
[HOJO \(Off Campus Housing and Job Bank\)](#)
[Academic Integrity](#)
[Access Centre for Students with Disabilities](#)
[CSU Advocacy Centre](#)
[Dean of Students Office](#)
[International Students Office](#)

[Student Hub](#)

[The Otsenhákta Student Centre](#)

[Birks Student Service Centre](#)

[Sexual Assault Resource Centre](#)

Reading Schedule

*Note: Our reading schedule isn't set in stone and we will be free to adjust it as the course progresses. Some topics may require slightly more time to cover than our reading schedule indicates, in which case we will allow them to spill over into subsequent weeks. Think of the course, of our thinking in the course, as an organism developing, rather than as a body of pre-partitioned information whose delivery is rigidly determined in advance.

<i>Weeks</i>	<i>Readings</i>
1 <i>Sept. 8/2021</i>	Friedrich Nietzsche. 2007. Selections from "Second Essay." <i>On the Genealogy of Morality</i> . Ed. Keith Ansell-Pearson. Cambridge: Cambridge UP. 35-43, 47-52, and 56-8.
2 <i>Sept. 15/2021</i>	Sigmund Freud. 1984. Selection from "The Ego and the Id." <i>On Metapsychology</i> . New York: Penguin. 350-89. Sigmund Freud. 2005. "Mourning and Melancholia." <i>On Murder, Mourning and Melancholia</i> . London; New York: Penguin. 201-19.
3 <i>Sept. 22/2021</i>	Edmund Husserl. 1999. "Phenomenology as Transcendental Philosophy" and selections from "The Structure of Intentionality" from <i>Part One: Contours of a Transcendental Phenomenology in The Essential Husserl: Basic Writings in Transcendental Phenomenology</i> . Ed. Donn Welton. Bloomington; Indianapolis: Indiana UP. 60-96.
4 <i>Sept. 28/2021</i>	*Critical Summary due on Moodle by 11:59pm.

<p>Sept. 29/2021</p>	<p>Martin Heidegger. 1962. Selections from <i>Being and Time</i>. Trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson. New York: Harper Collins. 94-101, 106-115, 219-24, 281-90, 296-311, and 314-21.</p> <p><u>Optional</u>: Drew Leder. 1990. "The Recessive Body." <i>The Absent Body</i>. Chicago; London: The University of Chicago P. 36-68.</p>
<p>5 Oct. 6/2021</p>	<p>Jean-Paul Sartre. 2013. "A Fundamental Idea of Husserl's Phenomenology." <i>We Have Only One Life to Live: The Selected Essays of Jean-Paul Sartre</i>. Ed. Ronald Aronson and Adrian Van Den Hoven. New York: New York Review of Books. 3-6.</p> <p>Jean-Paul Sartre. 1984. "Chapter 2: Bad Faith." <i>Being and Nothingness</i>. New York; London; Toronto; Sydney: Washington Square Press. 86-118.</p> <p><u>Optional</u>: Hazel E. Barnes. 1992. "Sartre's Ontology: The Revealing and Making of Being." <i>The Cambridge Companion to Sartre</i>. Cambridge: Cambridge UP. 13-39</p>
<p>6 Oct. 13/2021</p>	<p>Jean-Paul Sartre. 1993. "The Humanism of Existentialism." <i>Essays in Existentialism</i>. New York: Citadel. 31-63.</p> <p>Martin Heidegger. 2008. "Letter on Humanism." <i>Basic Writings</i>. Ed. David Farrell Krell. London; Toronto; Sydney: Harper Perennial. 219-28, 231-8, 240-2, 244-65.</p>
<p>7 Oct. 20/2021</p>	<p>Emmanuel Levinas. 1969. Selections from <i>Totality and Infinity</i>. Pittsburgh: Duquesne UP. 33-41, 194-209 and 218-219.</p> <p>Emmanuel Levinas. 1998. "'Dying for...'" <i>Entre Nous</i>. London; New York: Continuum. 178-89.</p>
<p>8</p>	

<p>Oct. 27/2021</p>	<p>Michel Foucault. 1990. Part 4, Chapter 2: "Method." <i>The History of Sexuality: An Introduction</i>. New York: Vintage. 92-102.</p> <p>Michel Foucault. 2000. "Truth and Power." <i>Power</i>. Ed. James D. Faubion. New York: New Press. 110-133.</p> <p>Michel Foucault. 1997. "What is Enlightenment?" <i>Ethics, Subjectivity and Truth</i>. Ed. Paul Rabinow. New York: New Press. 302-319.</p> <p><u>Optional</u>: Judith Butler. 1997. "Subjection, Resistance, Resignification." <i>The Psychic Life of Power</i>. Stanford: Stanford UP. 82-105.</p> <p>Sandra Bartky. 1990. "Foucault, Femininity, and the Modernization of Patriarchal Power." <i>Femininity and Domination</i>. New York: Routledge. 62-83.</p>
<p>9</p> <p>Nov. 2/2021</p> <p>Nov. 3/2021</p>	<p>*First Essay due on Moodle by 11:59pm.</p> <p>Michel Foucault. 1983. "Preface" to <i>Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia</i> by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P. XI-XII.</p> <p>Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. 1987. "November 28, 1947: How Do You Make Yourself a Body Without Organs?" <i>A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia</i>. Minneapolis; London: University of Minnesota P. 148-67.</p> <p>Gilles Deleuze. 1997. "Literature and Life." <i>Essays Critical and Clinical</i>. Minneapolis: Minnesota. LVI-7.</p>
<p>10</p> <p>Nov. 10/2021</p>	<p>Jacques Derrida. 1982. Selections from "Différance." <i>Margins of Philosophy</i>. Chicago: University of Chicago P. 3-21.</p>
<p>11</p> <p>Nov. 17/2021</p>	<p>Jacques Derrida. 1982. "The Ends of Man." <i>Margins of Philosophy</i>. Trans. Alan Bass. Chicago: University of Chicago P. 111-36.</p>

12 Nov. 24/2021	<p>Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. 1997. "Displacement and the Discourse of Women." <i>Feminist Interpretations of Jacques Derrida</i>. Ed. Nancy J. Holland. University Park: Pennsylvania State UP. 43-71.</p> <p>Cixous Hélène. "The Laugh of the Medusa." <i>Signs</i> 1:4 (Summer 1976): 875-893.</p> <p>Cixous Hélène. 2006. Selection from <i>Dream I Tell You</i>. New York: Columbia UP. 12-23.</p>
13 Dec. 1/2021	<p>Judith Butler. 2008. Sections III. 'Freud and the Melancholia of Gender' and 'IV. Gender Complexity and the Limits of Identification' from "Prohibition, Psychoanalysis, and the Production of the Heterosexual Matrix." <i>Gender Trouble</i>. New York; London: Routledge. 78-97.</p>
14 Exam Period Dec. 20/2021	<p>*Final Essay due on Moodle at 11:59pm</p>