

PHIL 217H1 S: Intro to Continental Philosophy

 Winter Term 2024/ University of Toronto St. George Campus (3 credits)

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Email:	natalie.helberg@utoronto.ca (email is my preferred contact method)
Office hours:	Thursday 1:00pm-3:00pm (or by appointment) *There will be no office hours the first week of class
Class schedule:	M & W 9:00am-10:00am in person; locations: SF 1105 (M) and PB B250 (W)

Course description: There is no definitive definition of ‘continental philosophy’; much, though not all, of the work that is canonical within this philosophical subfield emerged in Germany and France and was deemed ‘continental’ when the work was received abroad. In this course, we will sample various texts which have been and are constitutive of this rich tradition in philosophy: works by Hegel, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Freud, Sartre, Heidegger, Levinas, Foucault, Derrida, Judith Butler, and Catherine Malabou. Our work will take us from the nineteenth century up to the present day. Many continental thinkers develop original work by re-reading the work of the continental thinkers who preceded them, repeating their ideas with difference. Our particular sequence of readings is designed to make this strategy for thinking, this strategy for developing philosophical discourse, conspicuous; we will reflect on it as we grapple with the question of what continental philosophy is, of what sets it apart from other philosophical discourses. There are innumerable themes it would be possible to treat using continental texts; for the sake of binding the course, we will focus, in lectures, specifically on questions related to the ethics of recognition and heteronomy (understood as the sway of forces external to the self on the self), concerns which feature prominently in all of our readings.

Required texts: Electronic versions of our readings will be available as PDFs or via links to resources in the UofT Library on our Quercus page. Consult the reading schedule for a comprehensive list of our readings.

How the course will run and expectations:

We will meet at our scheduled times in the rooms that have been assigned to us (our Monday sessions and Wednesday sessions are in different locations; see above).

Make sure that you monitor Quercus for any announcements and keep apprised of any email communications from me. If ever an emergency constrains me to cancel class, I will notify you using Quercus.

Do your very best to complete the readings for the week in advance. We have quite a few readings and at least a subset of our readings are difficult texts. You will be learning how to read the more linguistically challenging texts on our reading list during lectures (I will give you the frameworks you need for the texts to become intelligible to you) and while engaged in your own reading practice (you do have to grapple with the texts on your own, too, to start to unlock them).

Informal reading policy: I will be working with an informal ‘reading policy’ as I run the course. I want the class to be maximally enriching, and so I’ve loaded it up with interesting texts. I realize, though, that this can set students up to feel overwhelmed by the course and perhaps unable to rise to its challenges; it can set students up to feel as if they are up against the impossible, or even to feel like abject failures. These feelings are among the worst the contemporary university can foster. How, then, to strike a balance between the desire to teach generously—to give students everything it is possible, as an instructor, to give them—while also refraining from subjecting them to the abuses of finitude that the contemporary university is already so primed and prone to inflict (e.g., acting like dense texts can be processed instantly, or in no time at all, or even acting as if ‘time,’ that precious resource, is evenly distributed across the student body, when the truth is that some students have more than others)? How, too, to offer resistance to a post-literate culture? Many students struggle with reading itself and with attention. I believe in the value of the activity that is reading, so the solution to the problem of stressing students out with more reading than they can do *cannot* be that of having no required readings or even a scanty number of them. I view the class as partly an opportunity for students to develop the reading muscles whose atrophy our culture encourages. It is imperative, then, for students in the class to read, and not only read, but read as much as they can—to exercise those muscles, in other words, and transform their limits by pushing them. What I would like students in the class to do, then, is to use the texts on our reading list to cultivate a reading practice guided by the following principles.

1. View the reading list as a challenge to push your reading capacities beyond their own bounds. Everyone will come to the class with different capacities. The point is not to feel that you’re competing with your peers; the point is to gauge where you as an individual are and to try to use the class, and the work you do in it, to move past that particular point. If, after the course ends, you’ve done this (your own reading limits have budged and you find yourself able to productively read more than you were able to before), then you’ve succeeded.
2. Make time every week to look at the readings for the following week. If we’re looking at a particularly long reading the next week, then try to tackle it over the course of a few days, instead of all at once. Even when I’m not ‘sitting down to read,’ I enjoy keeping the things I’m reading close to me and glancing at them in the little intervals of time I’m afforded throughout the day. When I’m reading this way (intermittently glancing at a text), I find it changes the way I focus on and process the text. The smaller units of the text stand out to me more. I might only be looking at a sentence or a paragraph while I’m nibbling on some breakfast. The sentence, or the paragraph, isn’t as prone to being

swallowed up into the larger ocean of text it's a part of and I myself am more liable to remember it. Anyway: you're not obliged to fill every second of free time you find yourself with with our readings. Here, I'm just highlighting one technique among several that you might embrace as you develop your own reading practice.

3. Make a concerted effort to do all of the readings assigned for a given week, BUT don't think you've 'failed' (or are not meeting expectations) if you don't manage to. *Try* to tackle our mountain of texts and then observe how far you were able to go. This is a way of learning about where your limits stand now. Track how they change over time (that is, track how they change during the time of the course and after the course is over).
4. If you don't have time to get to a given text on our reading list while the course is running, consider saving it for a rainy day in the future. The course is pointing you to interesting resources. We act as if learning can transpire in 12 weeks, but often it takes far more time. Don't be afraid to let the course exceed its own bounds and spill over into your post-course life.
5. You do have to read the texts you work with to produce your written assignments carefully. If you find yourself having to make hard choices about what to read and what to save for another day, prioritize the texts you think you might want to write on.
6. Do attend lecture. If you haven't had a chance to read a given text, you can still learn about it by listening to me discourse on it while taking notes, and this will make it possible for you to write the quizzes in your tutorials.

I will provide notes which indicate the core ideas I've discussed during a given lecture after the lecture via Quercus, as students often find them useful to have while studying the readings independently and while working on written assignments. Please also take your own notes (creating a personalized set of notes while engaged in a learning process is a special, enriching activity!). The lectures themselves will contain more detail than typed-up lecture notes can convey and you may want to capture some of it.

Evaluation/Assignments:

- 1) **3 quizzes (each scored out of 100; each worth 10% for a total of 30% of the final grade)**

Dates of quizzes: Quiz 1: Jan. 26th; Quiz 2: March 1st; Quiz 3: Marh 22nd

Each quiz will run during one of your Friday tutorial sessions. You will have approximately 40 minutes to write (some time will be required for the TA to get organized at the beginning of the session and to collect the assignments at the end of the session; if students happen to be a few minutes late for legitimate reasons—perhaps they

are coming from other classes, etc.—they should still be able to have the full 40 minutes to write). The submissions which score the highest will be the most accurate, detailed, and clear submissions received.

- 2) **Collection of philosophical, text-specific questions (25%). Due during reading week: Feb. 20th/2024. Submit by 11:59pm on Quercus.** As we move through the first few weeks of the course, I will be articulating critical questions about our readings. Your job with this first assignment is to generate philosophical questions of your own: 4 in total. You will have to lead your reader up to each of your questions by explaining the material that acts as a background for it. **Leading up to your question and articulating it should take a short-paragraph's worth of work. The collection of questions you submit should consist of 4 short paragraphs in total; it should be roughly 1000 words in length (with each entry consisting of approximately 250 words). You must provide in-text citations in the portion of each entry that leads up to the question** (leading up to the question will involve paraphrasing and perhaps quoting the readings you're working with, and you must cite page numbers in parentheses whenever paraphrasing or quoting; including only the year in parentheses is not enough for the purposes of this exercise).

3) **Attendance and participation during tutorials (15% of the grade)**

*The thoughtfulness of your contributions to tutorials matters. Only the most thoughtful and engaged regular attenders will receive an A for participation.

4) **Final paper: 2000 words in length (worth 30% of the grade). Due during the exam period: April 20th. Submit via Quercus by 11:59pm that day.**

* The essay prompts will ask you to work with at least three thinkers we've studied (to work closely with their texts) to support an original thesis related to our course themes.

Assignment Submission: All assignments should be submitted via Quercus by 11:59pm on the day they are due.

Extensions: Extensions may be permitted for valid reasons (emergencies, severe illnesses, etc.). Please request an extension before the day the assignment you are requesting an extension for is due. Retroactive extensions may be possible, depending on a person's reasons for requesting them. Getting in touch with me to explain your situation and see what accommodations are possible never hurts! You can reach out to your TA directly to request extensions if you are asking in advance of the deadline.

Late Policy: Late assignments for which an extension has not been granted will be penalized (2% of the grade will be subtracted each day after the deadline until the assignment is

submitted).

Email Policy: If you have questions that require elaborate philosophical responses or detailed explanations, please come to my office hours or schedule a meeting with me to pose them (I won't have time to write up a treatise for you by email, but I'm happy to speak with you and help you that way—I can answer questions much more efficiently using spoken language). For practical questions: First, make sure I haven't already answered the question (e.g., on the syllabus or on Quercus), then, if I haven't, feel free to reach out. You can email me to ask for extensions or to set up meetings. Email: natalie.helberg@utoronto.ca. You can email your TA for administrative-type questions as well; if you have questions you would like to ask your TA which require elaborate philosophical responses, save these for tutorials.

Re-marking Policy: When a graded assignment is returned to you, please consider the feedback provided on it carefully. If, after careful consideration of this feedback, you feel that your grade is unfair, you can reach out to your TA and request a re-evaluation. In the email you send to your TA, you must explain your reasons for thinking the initial grade is unfair. There are three possible outcomes of a re-evaluation: the grade may remain the same, the grade may be adjusted upwards, or, in cases where the TA feels they were initially too generous, the initial grade may be lowered. I will support the TA's judgement. I will only step in if there are assignments that are particularly difficult to re-assess.

Attendance Policy: Attendance is not mandatory. You will want to attend regularly so you can succeed on the quizzes and while completing written assignments, however. It will be difficult to do the readings on your own, as many are rather difficult; beyond this, we will be reading the texts in lecture with an eye to specific themes (again: the ethics of recognition and heteronomy) and you will want to be privy to the unique ways we link our readings to these themes.

Missed Test Policy: If you miss a quiz for a valid reason (an emergency, a severe illness, a death in your family), I will allow you to write the quiz on an alternative date in my office. I will ask you to supply documentation, so have that ready. You must reach out to me as soon as possible to inform me about your situation.

Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty:

Plagiarism (misrepresenting the work of others as one's own, or failing to cite one's sources properly) and other forms of academic dishonesty are serious offenses and will not be tolerated. Offenses of this kind run counter to the aims of education and evaluation: Skill acquisition (one becomes a better reader, writer and thinker because one does the work) and fair assessment (one's grades should reflect one's actual capacities; competition in the academic environment should be fair). In order to avoid inadvertent acts of plagiarism, students should familiarize themselves with the following resources: <http://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/osai> (the Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters: a complete outline of the University's policy and expectations)

and <http://academicintegrity.utoronto.ca>. Reach out to me or your TA for advice on anything you find unclear.

Accessibility:

Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. Accessibility-related concerns should be communicated to me. I will do my best to accommodate students who require accommodations. Depending on the nature of the accommodation, students requiring accommodations may also need to contact accessibility services: www.accessibility.utoronto.ca

Reading Schedule

*Note: Our reading schedule isn't set in stone and we will be free to adjust it as the course progresses if we need to. 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. The metaphor of a 'developing organism' suggests that you can think of the course as a unified entity as well: the links between the readings will ramify as we move through them, so we will be calling back to past readings as the course progresses, refreshing and transforming them in the context of the newer readings.

<i>Weeks</i>	<i>Readings</i>
1	
<i>Jan. 8/2024</i>	Introduction to the course. No readings, but students may begin the readings for the second lecture of Week 1 and for Week 2.
<i>Jan. 10/2024</i>	Kierkegaard, Søren. 2013. <i>Fear and Trembling and The Sickness Unto Death</i> . Princeton: Princeton University Press. E-book (link to e-version in the UofT Library on Quercus). Read: 'Preface,' 'Prelude,' 'A Panegyric upon Abraham,' 'Problemata,' and 'Preliminary Expectoration' (pages 31-106)
2	
<i>Jan. 15/2024</i>	Continue reading Kierkegaard: 'Problem I' and 'Problem II' (pages 107-51).
<i>Jan. 17/2024</i>	Continue reading Kierkegaard: 'Problem III' and 'Epilogue' (pages 152-222)

<p>3</p> <p><i>Jan. 22/2024</i></p> <p><i>Jan. 24/2024</i></p> <p><i>Jan. 26/2024</i></p>	<p>Finish lecturing on Kierkegaard if need be.</p> <p>Hegel, G. W. F.. 1977. <i>Phenomenology of Spirit</i>. Oxford; New York; Toronto; Melbourne: Oxford UP. 104-119. (Sections: “The Truth of Self-Certainty” and “Independence and Dependence of Self-Consciousness: Lordship and Bondage”).</p> <p>Continue reading Hegel.</p> <p>Quiz 1 (during tutorials; 10%).</p>
<p>4</p> <p><i>Jan. 29/2024</i></p> <p><i>Jan. 31/2024</i></p>	<p>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.</p> <p>Finish lecturing on Nietzsche if need be.</p> <p>Sigmund Freud. 2005. “Mourning and Melancholia.” <i>On Murder, Mourning and Melancholia</i>. London; New York: Penguin. 201-19.</p>
<p>5</p> <p><i>Feb. 5/2024</i></p> <p><i>Feb. 7/2024</i></p>	<p>Freud, Sigmund. 2003. “Remembering, Repeating, and Working Through.” <i>Beyond the Pleasure Principle and Other Writings</i>. New York; London: Penguin. 31-42.</p> <p>Freud, Sigmund. 2002. “On the Dynamics of Transference.” <i>Wild Analysis</i>. New York; London: Penguin. 19-30.</p> <p>Begin the Sartre reading for next week, if you have extra time.</p>
<p>6</p> <p><i>Feb. 12/2024</i></p>	<p>Jean-Paul Sartre: “Chapter Three: Concrete Relations with Others” from Part Three of <i>Being and Nothingness</i>. New York; London: Washington Square. 534-58.</p>

<p>Feb. 14/2024</p>	<p>No new reading: continue reading Sartre.</p>
<p>7 Feb. 19-23/2024 Feb. 20/2024</p>	<p>Reading Week</p> <p>Due: Collection of philosophical, text-specific questions (25%); submit by 11:59pm via Quercus.</p>
<p>8 Feb. 26/2024 Feb. 28/2024 March. 1/2024</p>	<p>Continue with Sartre...</p> <p>Martin Heidegger. 2008. "Letter on Humanism." Basic Writings. Ed. David Farrell Krell. London; Toronto; Sydney: Harper Perennial. 219-28, 231-8, 240-2, 244-65.</p> <p>Quiz 2 (during tutorials; 10%)</p>
<p>9 March 4/2024 March 6/2024</p>	<p>Continue with Heidegger.</p> <p>Emmanuel Levinas. 1969. Selections from <i>Totality and Infinity</i>. Pittsburgh: Duquesne UP. 33-41, 194-209 and 218-219.</p> <p>Optional reading: Lugones, Maria. 2003. "Playfulness, 'World'-Travelling, and Loving Perception." <i>Pilgrimages = Peregrinajes: Theorizing Coalition against Multiple Oppressions</i>. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield. 3-19.</p> <p>*Trigger warning for the following text (the text thinks about female sexual slavery):</p> <p>Frye, Marilyn. 1983 "In and out of Harm's Way: Arrogance and Love." <i>The Politics of Reality: Essays in Feminist Theory</i>. Berkely: Crossing Press. 52-83.</p>
<p>10 March 11/2024</p>	<p>Derrida, Jacques. 1976. "...That Dangerous Supplement." <i>Of Grammatology</i>. Baltimore: The John Hopkins UP. 141-164.</p>

<p><i>March 13/2024</i></p>	<p>Derrida, Jacques. 2020. "Second Session: Logic of the Living (She the Living)." <i>Life Death</i>. Chicago; London: U of Chicago P. 25-49.</p>
<p>11</p> <p><i>March 18/2024</i></p> <p><i>March 20/2024</i></p> <p><i>March 22/2024</i></p>	<p>Foucault, Michel. 1995. "Panopticism." <i>Discipline and Punish</i>. New York: Penguin. 195-228.</p> <p>Foucault, Michel. 1997. "Technologies of the Self." <i>Ethics, Subjectivity and Truth</i>. Ed. Paul Rabinow. New York: New Press. 223-249.</p> <p>Quiz 3 (during tutorials; 10%)</p>
<p>12</p> <p><i>Marh 25/2024</i></p> <p><i>March 27/2024</i></p>	<p>Butler, Judith. 2005. <i>Giving an Account of Oneself</i>. New York: Fordham UP. E-book (link to e-version in the UofT Library on Quercus).</p> <p>No new readings. Continue reading Butler.</p>
<p>13</p> <p><i>April 1/2024</i></p> <p><i>April 3/2024</i></p>	<p>Continue with Butler if need be.</p> <p>Malabou, Catherine. 2012. "Impossible Recognition: Lacan, Butler, Zizek." <i>Recognition Theory and Contemporary French Moral and Political Philosophy</i>. Ed. Miriam Bankovsky and Alive Le Goff.</p> <p>Last day of class.</p> <p>No new readings. Continue with Malabou and Butler.</p>
<p>14</p> <p><i>April 10-30/2024</i></p> <p><i>April 20/2024</i></p>	<p>Exam Period</p> <p>Due: Final paper (30%). Submit by 11:59pm via Quercus.</p>