

Philosophy 108: Nineteenth Century Philosophy (Nietzsche)

Spring 2011

Instructor: Eric Campbell

Solis 110
MW 5- 6:20

Office hours: Monday 2:45 – 4:45 or by appt. (HSS 8056)

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It is common to suppose that philosophers like to question everything, and perhaps it is also common to think that in doing so they run no small risk of insanity. No philosopher fits this picture better than Nietzsche, who thought that philosophers had not questioned thoroughly enough:

“What provokes one to look at all philosophers half suspiciously, half mockingly, is ... that they are not honest enough in their work, although they all make a lot of virtuous noise when the problem of truthfulness is touched even remotely ... They are all advocates who resent that name, and for the most part even wily spokesmen for their prejudices which they baptize ‘truths’—and very far from having the courage of conscience that admits this, precisely this, to itself ... (Beyond Good and Evil 5).

For Nietzsche the ‘death of God’ represents (the beginning of) a process whereby people (Europeans) are losing their belief in God and by extension the belief that there is an inherent or ‘cosmic’ meaning to existence. Since “man *has to* believe, to know, from time to time *why* he exists; his race cannot flourish without a periodic trust in life—without faith in *reason in life*” (Gay Science 1), the death of God is one aspect of the nihilism that Nietzsche believed threatened Europe in the late 19th century, and was part of a calamity that would play out over centuries.

However, unlike many other philosophers, Nietzsche does not set out to show that (most) of the values that people had thought to depend on God in fact could be justified in other ways (thereby avoiding a true calamity). Rather, Nietzsche saw his task as centered in the *re-evaluation* of the Judeo-Christian values and morality that had become so dominant that they had come to be seen as beyond question. Nietzsche saw them as highly questionable however, and thought that what the ‘true’ philosopher required was not the courage of one’s convictions, but rather could only find his freedom by daring to have “the courage for an *attack* on one’s convictions!” In reading Nietzsche one must have that courage, for he attacks our convictions about the nature and especially the *value* of good and evil, truth, pity, compassion, suffering, cruelty, (belief in the) equality of persons, and morality. In confronting Nietzsche, try to maintain the spirit and excitement of an *adventure*, which as such must contain some danger:

“Indeed, we philosophers and “free spirits” feel, when we hear the news that “the old god is dead,” as if a new dawn shone on us; our heart overflows with gratitude, amazement, premonitions, expectation. At long last the horizon appears free to us again, even if it should not be bright; at long last our ships may venture out again, venture out to face any danger; all the daring of the lover of knowledge is permitted again; the sea, *our* sea, lies open again; perhaps there has never yet been such an “open sea.”—” (GS 343)

I. Texts:

- F. Nietzsche (tr. Swensen and Clark), *On the Genealogy of Morality* (Hackett)
- F. Nietzsche (tr. W. Kaufmann), *The Gay Science* (Vintage)
- F. Nietzsche (tr. W. Kaufmann), *Beyond Good and Evil* (Vintage)
- F. Nietzsche (tr. W. Kaufmann), *The Portable Nietzsche** (Penguin)
- B. Leiter, *Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Nietzsche on Morality* (Routledge)

*Readings taken from this book are followed by '(PN)' on the reading list.

II. Requirements

1. Midterm Exam (30%)
2. One 4-5 pp. paper on *The Genealogy of Morality* (topics will be handed out one week in advance) (30%)
3. Final exam (40%)

Option 1: Cumulative final during scheduled exam time

Option 2: Research paper (10+ pp.) drawing on Nietzsche's writings and secondary literature (e.g. Leiter). If you elect this option, you must submit a 1-2 pp. proposal for your paper at least two weeks before the due date. The paper will be due at the final exam.

III. Schedule of Classes

Week 1

Class 1: Introduction

Recommended: Leiter, *Nietzsche on Morality*, chs. 1-2

Class 2: *The Gay Science*, Prelude, bks. I-II

Week 2

Class 3: *The Gay Science*, bks. III-IV

Class 4: *The Gay Science*, bk. V

Week 3

Class 5: *Beyond Good and Evil*, bks. I-III

Recommended: Leiter, *Nietzsche on Morality*, ch. 3

Class 6: *Beyond Good and Evil*, bk. IV-VI

Week 4

Class 7: *Beyond Good and Evil*, bks. VII-IX

Recommended: Leiter, *Nietzsche on Morality*, ch. 4

Class 8: *Beyond Good and Evil*

Week 5

Class 9: MIDTERM EXAM

Class 10: *On the Genealogy of Morality* Introduction and Part I

Recommended: Leiter, *Nietzsche on Morality*, chs. 5-6

Week 6

Class 11: *On the Genealogy of Morality* Part II

Recommended: Leiter, *Nietzsche on Morality*, ch. 7

Class 12: *On the Genealogy of Morality* Part III

Recommended: Leiter, *Nietzsche on Morality*, ch. 8

Week 7

Class 13: *On the Genealogy of Morality*

Class 14: *Twilight of The Idols* (PN) Preface through "The 'Improvers' of Mankind" PAPER DUE

Week 8

Class 15: *Twilight of the Idols* Remainder

Class 16: *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Part I (PN)

Week 9

Class 17: *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* Part II

Class 18: *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* Part III

Week 10

Class 19: *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* Part IV

Class 20: Summing up