

Tragedy and New Beginnings. 19th and 20th Century German Philosophy and its Legacies (Spring only)

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Email Address:	info@fubest.fu-berlin.de
Time Slot:	Thursdays, 4:30 p.m.
Language of Instruction:	English
Contact Hours:	45
ECTS Credits:	6

Course Description

In this course we will discuss how German philosophy developed after the great systems of German Idealism. We begin by recognizing that after Hegel, philosophy was no longer pursued as a unified whole, but as a reflection on specific sets of problems. We will focus on four influential schools of thought or philosophers and their legacies: Positivism, Nietzscheanism, Marxism, and Existentialism. Most of them proclaimed the end of philosophy as it once was. However, like all the arts and sciences in Germany, philosophy helped pave the way for totalitarian ideologies. Therefore, we must also consider its role in the "immoral end" of history. We will conclude the course with a more optimistic outlook. Like a phoenix from the ashes, philosophy has risen again in unexpected ways. We will also consider how postcolonial, feminist, and indigenous thought have reshaped philosophy and set it on a new course.

Learning Objectives

Students provide accurate and relevant answers, complete with supporting details, to specific questions about philosophical ideas covered in the course. They explain difficult passages clearly, precisely, and thoroughly. They learn to speculate in a well-informed, well-supported, and plausible way about what a given philosopher would say about a novel issue or problem.

Student Profile

Should be in their fourth semester of college/university education or beyond.

Assignments and Grading

Attendance & Participation: 300 Points (including weekly reading responses and one short presentation)

Independent Project Report: 100 Points

Midterm exam: 300 Points

Final exam: 300 Points

Completion of the Midterm Exam as well as the Final Exam is needed for a grade.

Weekly reading responses

2-3 pages, due at 3 p.m. of the day of class.

Short Presentation

Each student has to give one short presentation on a specific topic.

Independent Project Report

Visit the exhibition "Everyday Life in the GDR" in the Museum in the Kulturbrauerei and write a 3-4 page literary text about your reasons for rejecting your future and moving to the GDR. (Ignore time travel, imagine you are in the 1980s). The explanation can be based on Marxist reasons (the easiest explanation) or develop a Nietzschean, or

existentialist view. The format is free. You can write a letter to a friend or your parents, a movie script, a short story, etc.

FUB Grade	Points of 1,000
1.0	980-1,000
1.3	950-979
1.7	900-949
2.0	850-899
2.3	800-849
2.7	750-799
3.0	700-749
3.3	650-699
3.7	600-649
4.0	500-599
5.0	< 500

Attendance

Attendance in class is mandatory. We also expect you to be punctual out of respect to both your instructor and your fellow students. If you cannot attend class because you are ill, please report sick to the FU-BEST office (info@fubest.fu-berlin.de) and to your instructor by e-mail before class.

Absences are **excused** in case of **illness**; however, for the fifth sick day and every other sick day after that (consecutive or cumulative, counted not per individual course but for the program overall), you will need to turn in a doctor's notice ("Attest" in German) to the FU-BEST office in order for them to count as excused, too.

If you miss an exam due to an excused absence, your instructor and the FU-BEST team will arrange a make-up exam for you; you may also be entitled to a term paper deadline extension. If you, however, do not fulfill all course requirements needed for a grade by the (later) date determined by the program, passing the course is no longer possible.

Please also note that if you miss more than half of a course's sessions (even if due to excused absence), passing the course is no longer possible.

Personal travel and visits by relatives or friends are **not** accepted as reasons for absence (i.e., absences for these reasons always count as unexcused).

Regarding **unexcused** absences, please note the following:

- Any unexcused absence has consequences for at least the participation portion of the grade.
- Two unexcused absences lead to a formal warning and a lowering of the course grade by a fraction.
- Three unexcused absences will result in an "F" (5.0) on the transcript.

An absence for more than half of a particular day's session will be considered an absence for that day.

Literature

Digitalized readings posted on the online learning platform Blackboard.

Course Schedule

Calendar	Topics, Readings, etc.
Session 1	<p>Introduction: Origins of Modernity</p> <p>Topic: What does a Philosopher do?</p> <p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> G.W. Leibniz: 1st and 2nd letter to Clarke, (1715) <p>Mini-presentation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leibniz as Geopolitician <p>Music:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Johann Sebastian Bach, Goldberg Variations https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cxpaggXLBqQ
Session 2	<p>I. Reflecting the Sciences</p> <p>Topic: The Method of the Sciences</p> <p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ernst Mach: <i>Introductory Remarks: Anti Metaphysical</i> (from: The Analysis of Sensations, 1897). <p>Mini-presentation 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lenin's criticism of Mach (Empirio-criticism) https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1908/mec/six5.htm <p>Mini-presentation 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Language of Science: Gottlob Frege's <i>Begriffsschrift</i> (1879) <p>Music:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Claude Debussy, La Mer https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fe1pB9KqHRg
Session 3	<p>Topic: The World of the Sciences (The Vienna Circle)</p> <p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Moritz Schlick: <i>Positivism and Realism</i> (1936); <i>Main Ideas of the Theory of Values</i> (1936) <p>Mini-presentation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The History of the Sciences: Thomas S. Kuhn's <i>The Structure of Scientific Revolutions</i> (1962)
Session 4	<p>II. Reflecting the Values of Human Being</p> <p>Topic: Overcoming the Scientific Worldview</p> <p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Friedrich Nietzsche: <i>Twilight of the Idols</i> (1889) <p>Soundtrack:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Richard Strauss: Thus spoke Zarathustra in Stanley Kubrick's 2001: A Space Odyssey https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ypEaGQb6dJk

Session 5	<p>Topic: Nietzscheanism and Indigenous American Philosophy</p> <p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Friedrich Nietzsche, <i>Thus Spoke Zarathustra</i> (1883); Sa-Go-Ye-Wet-Ha, <i>Speech at Council at Buffalo Creek</i> (1805) https://www.loc.gov/resource/rbpe.04702500/?st=text <p>Film:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dead Man (1995) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nn2nQMfLqwg
Session 6	MIDTERM EXAM
Session 7	<p>III. Reflecting the Work Human Being</p> <p>Topic: The Materialist Conception of History</p> <p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Karl Marx/Friedrich Engels: <i>Manifesto of the Communist Party</i> (1848) <p>Music:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Internationale https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5DTbashesKic
Session 8	<p>Topic: Freedom and Alienation</p> <p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Karl Marx/Friedrich Engels: <i>Theses ad Feuerbach</i> (1847); <i>Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts</i> (1844) <p>Music:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wolf Biermann, <i>Warte nicht auf bess're Zeiten</i> (1976) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GSw5H4tY29A
Session 9	<p>Topic: Staging Revolutions</p> <p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Curzio Malaparte, <i>The Technique of Revolution</i> (1931) <p>Film:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Death of Stalin (2017) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E9eAshaPvYw
Session 10	<p>IV. Existentialism and Beyond</p> <p>Topic: Meaning, Despair, Faith</p> <p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Søren Kierkegaard: <i>Is There Such A Thing as Teleological Suspension of the Ethical?; Is There Such A Thing as an Absolute Duty Toward God?</i> (From <i>Fear and Trembling</i>, 1843) <p>Film:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pickpocket (1959) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CCZhSPwlZEg

Session 11	<p>Topic: Human Solidary Existentialism</p> <p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simone Weil: <i>Human Personality</i> (1943) <p>Art:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thomas Hirschhorn: Simone Weil Map (2020) http://www.thomashirschhorn.com/simone-weil-map-2020/
Session 12	<p>Topic: Facing the Netherworld</p> <p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Edith Stein: <i>Spirituality of the Christian Woman</i> (1931) https://www.ewtn.com/catholicism/library/edith-stein-10180 <p>Film:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Terrence Malick: A Hidden Life (2019) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qJXmdY4IVR0&t=1s
Session 13	FINAL EXAM