

Nietzsche

(version of September 10, 2015)

Instructor: Mathias Risse
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Office Hour: Tuesday 3-4

Location: Barker Ctr 218

Class Days and Time: Wednesday, 7-9 pm

Short course Description:

We explore Nietzsche's moral and political philosophy with emphasis on his best-known work, *The Genealogy of Morality*. However, we also read several other of Nietzsche's works, and do so chronologically (except that we begin with his autobiography, *Ecce Homo*, which Nietzsche wrote briefly before his mental collapse). We do not read any secondary literature, though the instructor will recommend such literature as appropriate. The point is to become familiar with Nietzsche's writings themselves. Nietzsche addresses some of the big questions of human existence in a profoundly searching but often disturbing manner that continues to resonate with many.

Longer Course Description

Friedrich Nietzsche addresses some of the big questions of human existence in a profoundly searching but often disturbing manner that continues to resonate with many. Hardly any philosopher (except Karl Marx) has exercised such a far-reaching and penetrating impact on intellectual life in the last 150 years or so. He has influenced thinkers and activists across the political spectrum. Nietzsche has always been of special interest to young people who have often appreciated the irreverence and freshness of his thought, as well as the often very high literary quality of his writing. In this course, we explore Nietzsche's moral and political philosophy with emphasis on the themes he develops in his best-known and most accessible work, *The Genealogy of Morality*. The best-known themes from this book include the slave rebellion in morality, resentment, bad conscience, and ascetic ideals. However, we also read several other of Nietzsche's works, and do so chronologically (except that we begin with his auto-biography, *Ecce Homo*, which Nietzsche wrote briefly before his mental collapse in 1889). The others works include *The Birth of Tragedy*, *The Gay Science*, *Beyond Good and Evil*, and *The Antichrist*. We do not read any secondary literature, though the instructor will recommend such literature as appropriate. The

point is to become familiar with Nietzsche's writings themselves and to engage with his thought.

Requirements:

This is a freshman seminar and presupposes no previous exposure to Nietzsche or philosophy. The purpose is to get a sense of philosophical questions by engaging with one rather irreverent thinker. The main expectation is that you engage with his ideas, and that you came to class having done the readings and prepared to share your thoughts with the group. Attendance is required. There is also one modest writing requirement. You are expected to keep a Nietzsche log. That is, after each class you should write down some thoughts on the discussions of the day in about 400-500 words. Which argument has impressed you most? How do you support it, or object to it? Which passage has attracted your attention, and how to you propose to interpret it? The Nietzsche log will be due on three different dates, Oct 8, November 5 and Dec. 3. These writings will be returned to you with some comments, but they will not be graded.

Readings (available for purchase at the Coop):

Maudemarie Clark and Alan Swensen (eds.), *Nietzsche: The Genealogy of Morality*. Hackett

Walter Kaufmann (ed.), *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*. Modern Library

Walter Kaufmann (ed.), *Friedrich Nietzsche: The Gay Science*. Vintage

Walter Kaufmann (ed.), *The Portable Nietzsche*. Penguin

Teaching Plan:

Week 1 (Wednesday, September 9): No readings

Week 2 (Wednesday, September 16): *Ecce Homo*

Week 3 (Wednesday, September 23): *Birth of Tragedy*, sections 1-12

Week 4 (Wednesday, September 30): *Birth of Tragedy*, remainder

Week 5 (Wednesday, October 7): *Gay Science*, Books I and II

Week 6 (Wednesday, October 14): *Gay Science*, Books III-V

Week 7 (Wednesday, October 21): *Beyond Good and Evil*, Books I -III

Week 8 (Wednesday, October 28): *Beyond Good and Evil*, Books IV –VI

Week 9 (Wednesday, November 4): *Genealogy of Morality*, Essays 1 and 2

Week 10 (Wednesday, November 11): *Genealogy of Morality*, Essay 3

Week 11 (Wednesday, November 18): *Twilight of Idols*

Week 12 (Wednesday, December 2): *Antichrist* (and *Ecce Homo*, again)