

Nietzsche In His Time and Ours

Phil 348-TH.01

Dr. Saul Myers

Meetings: Fridays 1-3:45, Bunting 460

Office Hrs. Bunting 429 Friday 4-5 and by appointment

Who was Friedrich Nietzsche, what did he think and what is the significance of Nietzsche's ideas for us one hundred and ten years after his death? Perhaps addressing these questions we can come to know better who *we* are and what we think. This course offers students the chance to read five of Nietzsche's books: *The Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Music*, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, *Beyond Good and Evil*, *The Genealogy of Morals*, and *Ecce Homo*. Engaging these writings, discussing them in class and writing essays on Nietzsche's ideas, students develop their own interpretations of such ideas as the Dionysian and Apollonian poles of art, Nietzsche's "perspectivism", the death of God, the will and the will to power, eternal recurrence, the re-evaluation of values, and the superman. While Nietzsche was a philosopher of a kind, he was not a systematic thinker by any means. Indeed, it is possible to read his middle and last books in almost any order and, as Arthur Danto has noted, still come up with a reasonable overview of his philosophy. That is not to say that he didn't change his views: compare his idolizing of Wagner in *The Birth of Tragedy* with his later criticism of Wagner and Wagnerism, or his different views, at different stages of his thinking career, of science. It is just that he lacked the constructive and systematic spirit that we see in Plato and Aristotle, Spinoza and Descartes, Kant, Schopenhauer and Hegel. That's OK, Nietzsche wouldn't be Nietzsche if he had a been like these philosophers. The course takes seriously Nietzsche's claim to being a philosopher. But rather than drawing out passages from different books and arranging them systematically under useful philosophical headings like theory of knowledge, ontology, morality, religion, aesthetics, and so on, I've decided to read the books *as books*, and to save the specific domains and subdivisions for our weekly discussion of a book or section of a book.

At the halfway point in the course we begin reading a recent biography of Nietzsche, Leslie Chamberlain's *Nietzsche in Turin: The End of the Future*, which focuses on Nietzsche's last years of sanity, 1888-90, before the onset of his ten-year madness. The book also looks back at his life and, with its author's imaginative attempt at an "intimate portrait" of the man, will I hope aid us in forming our view of Nietzsche in the 21st century.

Since music was a profound influence on Nietzsche, we will listen every so often to samples from Wagner's operas. And we will also listen to some well-known and maybe not-so-well known music inspired by his words: Strauss's *Also Sprach Zarathustra*, and Mahler's setting of 'O Mensch! Gib acht!' in his Third Symphony.

One later class is devoted to a twentieth century poet, Rene Char, whose poetry takes up Nietzschean themes in an interesting way.

On the day the second essay is due we'll watch the film *Zorba the Greek* (based on the novel by Kazantzakis), and I hope there will be time for us to discuss the film.

The Difficult and the Disturbing

Nietzsche's pronouncements on Christianity, women, Jews, democracy, equality and many other subjects are bound to disturb and outright offend many of us, even while we concede that these passages are open to interpretation. But being disturbed needs to happen in education, particularly when encountering Nietzsche. I hope the disturbance will be a goad for untrammelled thought in this class rather than a hindrance to it. One class will be devoted to a number of essays devoted to the unavoidable issue of Nietzsche and fascism. How much is Nietzsche's writing responsible for the fact that Nazis and Italian fascists found his thinking so congenial?

There's a difficulty of another sort: that of Nietzsche's Eurocentric style. In most of his books he assumes the reader shares his knowledge of classical Greek and Roman culture (he was for a while a Professor of philology), the Bible and history of Christian institutions and teachings, the Renaissance, Reformation, the French Revolution, Romanticism, the history of philosophy, European literature, and music, as well as developments sweeping through Europe in his own time. Thus Nietzsche assumes his reader is conversant with a certain good old European civilization. That is no longer the case. *That* Europe no longer exists, and though its major documents are at our fingertips, many of us do not have that reading down yet. Don't worry, it comes.

An additional difficulty—which can be a source of intellectual pleasure—is Nietzsche's poetic style (especially the style of *Thus Spake Zarathustra*). We have to think in his metaphors, and also against his metaphors, we have to interpret what his symbols and images mean in order to grasp his philosophical points.

Requirements and Class Routine

Writing: Essays and Journal

You write two five-page essays in this class and also keep a philosophical journal in which your responses to the weekly readings are recorded. The journal should have at least two paragraphs per week on any part of the week's reading that moves you to write and think about. Beginning a class discussion we will often refer to your journal responses, so please be sure to bring the journal to class.

There will also be occasional in-class writings on questions of interest.

The written component of course-work comprises 75% of your grade. The final component of your grade will be based on my evaluation of your participation in class. The factors that comprise participation are: preparedness (have you done the reading and thought about it?), the quality of your contributions to discussion and interpretation, and your attendance record.

Attendance

Attendance is mandatory. All excused absences must be verified. The instructor reserves the right to fail any student who has accrued more than two unexcused absences.

If you miss a class, you are responsible for the assigned reading due on that day as well as for the assignment due for the next week.

Plagiarism Statement and Policy

Plagiarism is using someone else's words or ideas without acknowledgment. It is a serious breach of academic integrity and is grounds for failure of an assignment or failure of the course. Repeat offenses will be referred to Academic Affairs with a recommendation for suspension or dismissal

from MICA.

To be responsible when summarizing, paraphrasing, or quoting, include a citation like:

Henri Michaux quipped “If Christ had not been crucified, he would not have had a hundred disciples in Europe.” (Michaux, p. 33)

Be sure to cite the source in parentheses and then give the source in a Works Cited at the end of your paper. Follow standard guidelines such as those given in the *MLA* or the *Chicago Manual of Style*. Familiarize yourself with these guidelines in Diana Hacker’s *A Pocket Style Manual*, and always check with your instructor before turning in questionable work.

Required Books

Basic Writings of Nietzsche (Walter Kaufmann translator), Modern Library Edition, *BW*
Nietzsche, Thus Spake Zarathustra (R.J. Hollingdale translator), Penguin
Leslie Chamberlain, *Nietzsche in Turin*

Recommended Books

Arthur Danto, *Nietzsche as Philosopher*
Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*
Alexander Nehamas, *Nietzsche: Life as Literature*
Ruediger Safranski, *Nietzsche: A Philosophical Biography*

Reading Schedule

January

22 Introduction. Outline of Course. Listen: excerpts from Wagner’s *The Ring*.

29 *Birth of Tragedy*, *BW*, Preface to Wagner, sections 1-10,13-15, 23-25
“Attempt at a Self-Criticism”
Danto, “Art and Irrationality” in *Nietzsche as Philosopher* (handout)
Listen: excerpts from Wagner’s *Tristan*

February

5 *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, Part I
Listen: Richard Strauss, excerpts from *Also Sprach Zarathustra*

12 *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, part II . You may **SKIP** the following sections: “of the Rabble”, “of the Sublime Men”, “of the Land of Culture”, “of Scholars”, “of Manly Prudence”

Also read: Nehamas: “This Life—Your Eternal Life” from *Nietzsche: Life as Literature*” (Handout)

19 *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, part III. **Read:** “the Wanderer”, “of the Vision and the Riddle”, “before Sunrise”, “of Passing-by”, “of the Apostates”, “of the Spirit of Gravity”, “of Old and New Tablets”, “the Convalescent”, “of the Great Longing”, “the Second Dance-Song”, “the Seven Seals(or: the Yes-and-Amen-Song)”
Listen: Mahler, Third Symphony, “O Mensch! Gib acht!...”

26 *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, part IV, **read (don’t skip):** “the Cry of Distress”, “the Sorcerer”, “the Ugliest Man”, the Shadow”, **then read from** “the Greeting” to the end.

Also **read:** Danto, “Uebermensch and Eternal Recurrence” in *Nietzsche as*

Philosopher (handout)

March

5 *Beyond Good and Evil (BW)* part I The Prejudices of Philosophers, part II The Free Spirit, part IV Maxims and Interludes

First Essay Due

12 *Beyond Good and Evil (BW)*, part V on the Natural History of Morals, part VII Our Virtues, part VIII Peoples and Fatherlands, part IX What is Noble
Optional: Danto, “Philosophical Psychology” in *Nietzsche as Philosopher* (handout)

Spring Break

26 *Nietzsche in Turin*, Preface, chapters 1-3, pp3-56
Poems of Rene Char (handout).

April

2 *The Genealogy of Morals (BW)*, essays I and II
Foucault, “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History” (handout)
Derrida, “On Becoming Woman” (handout)

9 *Genealogy of Morals* essay III
Nehamas, “Nature Against Something That IS Also Nature”, in *Nietzsche: Life as Literature* (handout)

16 *Nietzsche in Turin*, chapters 4-7, pp 57-128

Second Essay Due

Watch: the film *Zorba the Greek*

23 *Ecce Homo (BW)*, Chapter I “Why I am so Wise”, II “Why I am So Clever”, IV “Why I am a Destiny”
Nehamas, “How One Becomes What One IS” in *Nietzsche: Life as Literature*
Optional: chapter III “Why I Write Such Excellent Books” (handout)

30 Essays from Golomb and Wistrich (eds), *Nietzsche the Godfather of Fascism?* (handout)

Nietzsche in Turin, chapters 8-9 pp129-180

May

7 *Nietzsche in Turin*, chapters 10-11, pp181-217
Conclusions. Bring in one-page document on: Nietzsche’s Significance in Our Time. (This can be the last entry in your philosophical journal. It will serve as basis for final class discussion.

Collection of Journals

ADA Compliance Statement

Learning Resource Center ADA Compliance Statement Any student who feels s/he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact the instructor privately to

discuss specific needs. Please contact the Learning Resource Center at 410-225-2416, in Bunting 458, to establish eligibility and coordinate reasonable accommodations. For additional information please refer to: <http://www.mica.edu/LRC>

Health and Safety Compliance

From the Office of Environmental Health and Safety (EHS)

The Office works to provide EHS support for all members of the

MICA community. The primary goal of the Office is to be proactive in establishing a culture of safety in which each member of the community shares ownership responsibility that allows each person to be involved in maintaining a healthy work and studying environment. EHS uses several methods to achieve this objective.

First, the EHS office looks at the totality of the EHS requirements by combining campus needs with state and federal requirements and clearly communicating the shared policies and procedures. Second, EHS identifies training needs and develops guidelines for the use of equipment, material and procedures. Third, we ensure compliance with policies through evaluations, inspections, and committees.

It is the responsibility of faculty and students to understand health and safety policies relevant to their individual activities and to review MICA's Emergency Action Plan, as well as to participate in training, drills, etc. It is also each faculty member's responsibility to coordinate with the EHS Office to ensure that all risks associated with their class activities are identified and to assure that their respective classroom procedures mirror the EHS and Academic Department guidelines. Each of the Academic Department's also publish EHS procedures and policies such as a dress code, the use of personal protective equipment, fire safety, training, and how to properly dispose of chemical waste. Each of these policies and procedures must be followed by all students and faculty. Most importantly, it is the responsibility of the faculty to review, test, and assess each student's awareness of basic safety procedures, such as evacuation routes, use of chemicals, fire prevention, and all other guidelines posted by the Environmental Health and Safety Office, (e.g., smoking policy, independent studio policies, pet policy, disposing of hazardous and chemical waste, etc).

To become a member of the Faculty EHS Committee or for any questions relating to EHS, please contact Denelle Bowser, EHS Manager, at dbowser@mica.edu or by calling 410.462.7593. You can also visit the department online at www.mica.edu/ehs

H1N1 Pandemic Information

From the Office of Environmental Health and Safety (EHS)

What to do if I get sick?

If you are sick consider the following:

- Limit contact with other people as much as possible. DO NOT GO TO CLASS! Seek medical attention at Mount Royal Medial Assoc. (410) 225-8855 but please call ahead*
- Students who are sick should self-isolate for at least 24 hours after any fever is gone.*
- Make sure to get plenty of rest and drink clear fluids to keep from being dehydrated*
- Avoid normal activities including work, school, travel, shopping, social events, and public gatherings*

Reporting Procedures

- Contact the Office of Student Affairs at 410-225-2422 who will assist with plans for self-isolation, arranging for meals, and any other necessary support*
- Contact any faculty whose class you anticipate missing and inform them of your illness. Work with them to make arrangements for catching up on any missed work. If you have difficulty reaching your faculty or if your illness lingers to the point where you will miss two or more of any one class contact the Office of Student Affairs*