

Introduction to Continental Philosophy

PHIL 3100 • Fall 2011 • Professor Tuedio

This course will focus on central questions and methods emphasized in prominent 19th and 20th century philosophies framed in the “Continental” (European) tradition. Texts drawn from philosophical writings of *Hegel, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty and Deleuze/Guattari* will figure prominently in setting the agenda for our class discussions. We will focus on questions concerning *human experience, meaning, knowledge, objectivity, being-in-the-world, immanence and transcendence*, and Nietzsche’s decisive proclamation of the “*death of God.*” We will also work to understand the distinction between “*modern*” and “*postmodern,*” with special emphasis on the significance of *nihilism* as a possible *condition of life* (and what it might mean for us to *transcend nihilism*).

Required Course Texts

All four required texts can be purchased at Kiva Bookstore.

Charles Guignon & David Pereboom (eds.),

Existentialism: Basic Writings

(Hegel, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Husserl, Sartre)

(Hackett: 2nd Edition) => Kiva Bookstore

Thomas Baldwin (ed.),

Maurice Merleau-Ponty: Basic Writings

(Routledge) => Kiva Bookstore

Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari,

A Thousand Plateaus

(Minnesota) => Kiva Bookstore

Jean-Luc Nancy, Listening

(Fordham) => Kiva Bookstore

Recommended Background/Contextual Secondary Readings

*All four recommended texts are published by
Oxford University Press and can be purchased on-line.*

Michael Tanner, Nietzsche: A Very Short Introduction

Michael Inwood, Heidegger: A Very Short Introduction

Robert Solomon, Continental Philosophy Since 1750: The Rise and Fall of the Self

Simon Critchley, Continental Philosophy: A Very Short Introduction

Assignment of Course Readings

- Th 8/25 Overview of course themes and assignments. **Note:** all readings up thru October 20th are in **Existentialism: Basic Writings (EBW)**.
- Th 9/01 Hegel, "Introduction" to Phenomenology of Spirit =>EBW, 20-25.
Kierkegaard, Fear and Trembling ("Preface," "A Panegyric Upon Abraham," & "Problemata: Preliminary Expectoration") =>EBW, 26-55.
- Th 9/08 Kierkegaard, Fear and Trembling ("Problem I ...Teleological Suspension of the Ethical?" & "Problem II ...Absolute Duty Toward God?" **plus:** The Sickness Unto Death ("That Despair is the Sickness Unto Death") Concluding Unscientific Postscript ("The Subjective Truth, Inwardness: Truth is Subjectivity") =>EBW, 55-92.
Nietzsche, Birth of Tragedy (§1) =>EBW 119-122
Nietzsche, The Gay Science (Preface to 2nd Edition) =>EBW, 123-128.
- Th 9/15 Nietzsche, The Gay Science (§§ 1, 54, 57-8, 108-125) =>EBW, 129-142.
- Th 9/22 Nietzsche, The Gay Science (§§ 270, 276, 283, 289, 290, 335, 341-347) =>EBW, 142-155.
- Th 9/29 Nietzsche, The Gay Science (§§ 348-9, 353-56, 370, 373-75, 377, 382-383); also Twilight of the Idols ("The Problem of Socrates") =>EBW, 155-176.
- Th 10/06 Nietzsche, Twilight of the Idols ("Reason' in Philosophy" and "How the 'True World' Finally Became a Fiction") =>EBW, 176-181.
Husserl, "Phenomenology and Anthropology" =>EBW, 278-289.
- Th 10/13 Heidegger, Being and Time (thru §18) =>EBW, 211-230.
- Th 10/20 Heidegger, Being and Time (thru §32, plus §§38, 40, 60, 62) =>EBW, 231-46 and 251-54.
- Th 10/29 Merleau-Ponty, "Body" & "World" =>Basic Writings, 79-164 (selections TBA).
- Th 11/03 Merleau-Ponty, "Cogito" & "Freedom" =>BW, 166-233 (selections TBA).
- Th 11/10 Merleau-Ponty, "Chiasm" & "Eye and Mind" =>BW, 247-270 & 290-321.
- Th 11/17 Deleuze/Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, pp. 3-25, 149-166, 310-20, 333-350.
- Th 12/01 Deleuze/Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, pp. 208-309 (selections TBA).
- Th 12/08 Deleuze/Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, pp. 351-423 (selections TBA).
Nancy, Listening, pp. 1-43.
- Th 12/15 Final Exam (In-class writing exercise)

Writing Assignments

To help you keep pace with concepts, themes and issues emphasized in the course readings and class discussions, I will ask you for *one exploratory paper every two weeks (7 in all)*, in which you present, develop and respond to a significant point or idea from the reading, with specific attention to how it impacts or challenges your thinking. I'll be gauging your connection to the course material through these papers, so use them as an opportunity to stretch the boundaries of your engagement with these philosophical movements of thought. Use class discussion to plant the seeds of curiosity from which these connections will grow. If you can use these papers to begin articulating what you are distilling from the reading and discussion, this will prove helpful to you as you go to write your two conceptual papers for the course. Each exploratory paper should be around 500 words.

To help you focus on what is at stake in the philosophies we are analyzing, and to help orient you to organizing ideas shaping these philosophies, I will also assign *two short but substantial papers (1200 words each)*, in which I expect you to present and comment on an assigned topical theme/conceptual point emphasized in our discussion of the readings. The *first paper topic* will draw on your engagement with Hegel, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche and Husserl. The *second paper topic* will draw on your engagement with Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty and Deleuze/Guattari. We will close the course with a *final exam* in-class (or optional take-home) writing exercise on Nancy.

Contact Information

The best way to contact me is by email: [**tuedio@altair.csustan.edu**](mailto:tuedio@altair.csustan.edu). You can also send me brief text messages to set up an appointment, ask brief questions, or keep me in the loop regarding attendance: **209-402-8312**. Office hours will be by appointment only since my primary responsibilities this semester are in the Dean's Office and my appointment schedule is too fluid to tie down a specific time for the whole term. The main thing is to stay in touch if you have questions! And try not to get nervous about the writing requirements for this course. The short writing assignments are intended to help you draw thoughts together, but I won't be expecting these to be high caliber interpretive readings of the texts. I just expect to see an honest effort to engage with a significant point or idea that we have developed to some extent in our class discussion. If you have problems framing the more substantial papers, you will have the opportunity to revise and resubmit those papers after reviewing my feedback.

**INTRODUCTION TO CONTINENTAL PHILOSOPHY
PHIL 3100 / Fall 2011**

First Study-paper Topic

Due: Monday, October 31st

Length: 1200 words)

Submission: Hardcopy (L-175/5pm) or E-mail <tuedio@altair.csustan.edu>

Focus: Nietzsche's critical analysis of prevailing attunements and beliefs implicitly influencing our worldly experience and what we make of our situation in life.

You can look at any combination of elements: e.g., Nietzsche's examples of the numerous "errors" contributing to the conceptual fabrication of a "2nd world" which soon takes primacy over the original world (the one to which we belong in our more fundamental mode of existing, Heidegger might interject here). How does this "2nd world" function in support of our understanding of the ground and situation of human experience? How does it operate in support of the justification or assessment of moral claims and evaluations? What role does "tradition" play in maintaining the *stability* of this 2nd world? What kind of *analysis* is sanctioned by the "2nd world" that might *occlude* our understanding of the "*primary*" world of our experience? Is there something to identify as "primary" about the world of our experience—if so, what is it? At what point does our experience of the "2nd world" become more primary for us than experience of a "1st world"? What *is* this "1st world" that Nietzsche keeps referencing? How (in Nietzsche's thought) do these two worlds *operate* in our experience? Also, perhaps: some reflection on the need for *certainty* in matters of faith and opinion, and the strength to move *beyond* certainty.

Another angle: consider Nietzsche's views on *consciousness*: his idea concerning the "origin" of consciousness, especially how this evolution eventually gives rise to *institutions* of consciousness (through a transference of *discourses* and *methods* of reflective and calculative analysis) and to the birth of *conscience* as a *moral rudder*; also his idea regarding the environment of *necessity* that pervades human existence. Perhaps also his emphasis on *perspectivism*: how we are fundamentally *interpretive* beings who "cannot see around our own corner (GS 374)," that is, beings whose understanding comprises *interpretation*, and whose judgments, being *interpretive*, are continually influenced by *dynamic, shifting relations* among our *drives*...

"We are searching for words: maybe we are also searching for ears." (GS, 346)

"We know well that the world in which we live is ungodly, immoral, 'inhuman' – we have interpreted it all too long falsely and dishonestly, but according to the wish and will of our reverence, that is, according to a *need*." (GS, 346)

Write a paper that draws on your engagement with these and related points in our readings (especially Nietzsche, but feel free to bring in relevant points from the Hegel, Kierkegaard or Husserl readings if they will contribute to your discussion.

Things to track re: Nietzsche's analysis of the "myth" of the 2nd world:

his references to numerous "errors" contributing to the conceptual fabrication of a "2nd" world which soon takes primacy over the original world (to which we belong in our most fundamental mode of being, Heidegger might interject here). How does this 2nd world function in support of a metaphysical understanding of the nature of things? Or how does it operate in support of the justification or assessment of moral claims and evaluations? What role does tradition play in maintaining the stability of this 2nd world? What kind of analysis is sanctioned by the 2nd world that might occlude our understanding of the primary world of experience? At what point does our experience of the 2nd world become more primary for us than experience of the 1st world? What *is* this 1st world he keeps referencing? Are the two "worlds" he speaks of really *worlds*? Or are they perhaps more like "*worldhoods*" (in Heidegger's sense of the term), or worldly attunements? How do these "worlds" operate with respect to our experience? Also, perhaps: some reflection on the role of "obedience" in regard to moral attunements; or on the need for "being certain" in matters of faith and opinion.

Another angle: consider Nietzsche's views on consciousness: e.g., his analysis of the "origin" of consciousness and how this eventually gives rise to institutions of consciousness (through the transference of discourses and methods of reflective analysis) and to the birth of conscience as a moral rudder -- but also his claims regarding the environment of necessity pervading our existence. Perhaps also several points about perspectivism: that we are fundamentally interpretive beings, that all understanding is interpretation, and that all interpretive judgments are influenced by dynamic relations among our drives...

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Focus: Heidegger's analysis of <<ready-to-hand Being>> as our "founding" mode of "worldhood" existence (and <<present-at-hand Being>> as a "founded" mode) => in comparison to Merleau-Ponty's analysis of the coextensive range of <<consciousness/body/world>> as a springboard for addressing "problems of transcendence."

Issue: operative assumptions for situating the place of experience and contextualizing the experience of place: motivating notions of "involvement" (H 221-22) and "coextensive insertion" (M-P 149-50, 168) to de-center the problem of accounting for our contact with the "real" world (a world transcendent to human experience that nevertheless contributes to contextualizing that experience, both spatially and situationally). How is it that "projective understanding," "interpretation" and "bodily intentionality" can mark out our primordial point of contact with worldly existence, and do so as "momentum of transcendence" (M-P 175) or "thrown possibility" (H pp. 232-33)?

From Heidegger's *Being and Time* (Guignon translation, page references)

"...because the phenomenon of the world itself gets passed over in this absorption in the world, its place gets taken by what is present-at-hand within-the-world, namely, Things. The Being of those entities which *are there with us* gets conceived as presence-to-hand." (Heidegger, p. 236)

"the present-at-hand which makes itself known is still bound up in the readiness-to-hand of equipment... The presence-at-hand of entities is thrust to the fore by the possible breaks in that referential totality in which circumspection 'operates'..." (H 228-29)

"To say that the Being of the ready-to-hand has the structure of assignment or reference means that it has in itself the character of having been assigned or referred... *With* any such entity there is an involvement which it has *in* something. The character of Being which belongs to the ready to hand is just such an involvement." (H 229)

"But the totality of involvements itself goes back ultimately to a 'towards-which' in which there is *no* further involvement: this 'towards-which' is not an entity with the kind of Being that belongs to what is ready-to-hand within a world; it is rather an entity whose Being is defined as Being-in-the-world, and to whose state of Being, worldhood itself belongs." (H 230)

"...Dasein, in its everydayness, not only is in a world but comports itself towards that world with one predominant kind of Being. Proximally and for the most part Dasein is fascinated with its world. Dasein is thus absorbed in the world..." (H 231)

"...man's '*substance*' is not spirit as a synthesis of soul and body; it is rather *existence*." (H 232)

"As understanding, Dasein projects its Being upon possibilities..." (H 240)

"...interpretation is ... the working out of possibilities projecting in understanding." (H 241)

"Dasein is proximally and for the most part *alongside* the 'world' of its concern. This 'absorption in...' has mostly the character of Being-lost in the publicness of the 'they'. Dasein has, in the first instance, fallen away from itself as an authentic potentiality for Being its Self, and has fallen into the 'world'..." (H 242)

"Dasein, tranquilized, and 'understanding' everything ... drifts along towards an alienation in which its ownmost potentiality-for-Being is hidden from it." (H 242)

Landgrebe & Husserl on subjective accomplishments of meaning and validity; world as intersubjectively available for objective inquiry; and pregivenness as an accomplishment of consciousness.

from Ludwig Landgrebe, *The Phenomenology of Edmund Husserl* (Cornell: 1981)

“...if the world as a whole is ‘bracketed’ by means of the phenomenological reduction, the first task is to understand precisely those subjective accomplishments by which this always-ready-given fact of the world as nature, as the purely sensuously pregiven substrate for any human efficacy, is built up for us.... And the result...is the insight that the proper clue to these subjective accomplishments is this pregiven world, not as it has been determined by natural science, but as the world of immediate sensuous experience...” (*PhEH*, p. 142)

“In the constitutional analyses that lie closest at hand, the world is encountered chiefly in the guise of the immediate horizon of perception, the perceptual situation.” (143)

“After analyzing all the intentional accomplishments that provide an initial understanding of the character of a perceived thing as standing before us --its givenness in adumbrations, the cooperation of kinaesthesia and data belonging to the different sensuous fields, and the apprehendings built on what is sensuously given -- all conceived as in the ‘primordial sphere’ (that is, without taking into account the fact that the thing, as objective, as veritably existent, is always, according to its own sense, intersubjectively constituted)-- we reach the insight that these accomplishments, taken all together, involve a first level of activity on the part of the ego, an active receiving of what is passively pregiven. First of all, this activity is a turning toward something in the sensuous fields that ‘affects’ the ego.... Any active grasping presupposes this passive pregivenness, presupposes that something is already given there in the sensuous fields and stands out in them. To stand out is to stand out from a background of what does not stand out...” (143-44)

“...if we use the term ‘world’ to indicate the whole set of horizons in which experience of what exists takes place, and within which alone such experience is possible, we must say that Husserl [in his early phenomenological studies] was tracing the constitutive origin of the ‘worldly,’ that is, of what exists ‘in’ the world, rather than the origin of the world itself.” (144)

“All actual, potential, or habitual positings...are accomplishments on the part of transcendental subjectivity, accomplishments by virtue of which the world with all that belongs to it, as we intend it and believe it, is there for us. But if we are to show that all being is thus built up from the accomplishments of consciousness, we cannot begin at an arbitrary point; rather, the existent, as it is given and accessible to us, and in its experientially given order of founding, must be taken as a clue.... For Husserl, a real understanding of the world can only mean an understanding of it in its origination as an accomplishment of consciousness, and such an understanding can be attained only after the reduction has been performed, only as the result of detailed constitutional analyses.” (128)

“The ‘idea’ of the world that is to be acquired in this way is...precisely an explication of what is tacitly and inexplicitly contained in our prephilosophical awareness of the world.” (138)

“The task of clarifying the origin of the world from the intentional accomplishments of subjectivity is first fulfilled when we shed light on the origin of this comprehensive horizon of acquaintedness and familiarity.” (146)

“The conditions of the possibility of having a world as historical world are found not only in the accomplishments of the perceptual constitution of a natural world, but also in the temporal self-constitution of transcendental subjectivity, a constitution in which each living present has its ‘comet tail’ of a past continuously sinking back and an open horizon of the future. These are, therefore, the conditions of the possibility of having a world with its traditions, thus a historical world. These accomplishments can remain ‘anonymous.’ The access to the ground of having this world-horizon can be concealed or buried. But this horizon can never be missing; otherwise our world would not be a potentially universal human world with its unrestricted possibility of communication.” (196-97)

From Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology* (Northwestern: 1970)

“‘The’ thing itself is actually that which no one experiences as really seen, since it is always in motion, always, and for everyone, a unity for consciousness of the openly endless multiplicity of changing experiences and experienced things, one’s own and those of others. The cosubjects of this experience themselves make up, for me and for one another, an openly endless horizon of human beings who are capable of meeting and then entering into actual contact with me and with one another.” (*Crisis*, p. 164)

“In the epoche...we go back to the subjectivity which ultimately aims, which already has results, already has the world through previous aims and their fulfillment; and we go back to the ways in which this subjectivity has, ‘has brought about,’ and continues to shape the world through its concealed internal ‘method.’ ...thus the naïve ontic meaning of the world in general is transformed for [the phenomenologist] into the meaning ‘system of poles for a transcendental subjectivity,’ which ‘has’ a world and real entities within it, just as it has these poles, by constituting them.” (177)

“By virtue of our present method of epoche, everything objective is transformed into something subjective. Clearly this cannot be meant in such a way that through this method the existing world and the human world-representation are [somehow] set over against each other....” (178)

“...the world that exists for us -- that is, our world in its being and being-such -- takes its ontic meaning entirely from our intentional life through *a priori* types of accomplishments that can be exhibited rather than argumentatively constructed or conceived through mythical thinking.” (181)

“Who are we, as subjects performing the meaning- and validity-accomplishment of universal constitution -- as those who, in community, constitute the world as a system of poles, as the intentional structure of community life? Can ‘we’ mean ‘we human beings,’ human beings in the natural-objective sense, i.e., as real entities in the world? But are these real entities not themselves ‘phenomena’ and as such themselves object-poles and subject matter for inquiry back into correlative intentionalities of which they are the poles, through whose function they have, and have attained, their ontic meaning [and validity]?” (182)

....

from Merleau-Ponty’s *Phenomenology of Perception* (pagination from *Maurice Merleau-Ponty: Basic Writings* (Routledge: 2004)

“...with all problems of transcendence...the question is always how I can be open to phenomena which transcend me, and which nevertheless exist only to the extent that I take them up and live them.” (M-P 162-3)

“My life is constantly thrown headlong into transcendent things, and passes wholly outside me.” (M-P 167)

“The very experience of transcendent things is possible only provided that their project is borne, and discovered, within myself...” (M-P 168)

“Insofar as I find things round about me, this cannot be because they are actually there, for, *ex hypothesi*, I can know nothing of this factual existence. The fact that I am capable of recognizing it is attributable to my actual contact with the thing, which awakens within me a primordial knowledge of all things, and to my finite and determinate perceptions’ being partial manifestations of a power of knowing which is coextensive with the world and unfolds it in its full extent and depth.” (M-P 168)

“The acts of the *I* are of such a nature that they outstrip themselves leaving no interiority of consciousness. Consciousness is transcendence through and through, not transcendence undergone...but active transcendence. [By this we mean]...not *psychological immanence*, the inherence of all phenomena in ‘private states of consciousness’...not *transcendental immanence*, the belonging of all phenomena to a constituting consciousness...[but a] *deep-seated momentum of transcendence*, which is my very being, the simultaneous contact with my own being and with the world’s being.” (M-P 175, *my italics*)

“The body’s motion can play a part in the perception of the world only if it is itself an original intentionality, a manner of relating itself to the distinct object of knowledge. The world around us must be, not a system of objects which we synthesize, but a totality of things, open to us, towards which we project ourselves.” (M-P 186)

“As for the meaning of the word, I learn it as I learn to use a tool, by seeing it used in the context of a certain situation.” (M-P 202-3)

“[The tacit cogito] does not constitute the world, it divines the world’s presence round about it as a field not provided by itself; nor does it constitute the word, but speaks as we sing when we are happy, nor again the meaning of the word, which instantaneously emerges for it in its dealing with the world and other men living in it, being at the intersection of many lines of behavior, and being, even once ‘acquired’, as precise and yet as indefinable as the significance of a gesture.” (M-P 203)

“There is vision only through anticipation and intention, and...all vision assumes in the last resort, at the core of subjectivity, a total project or a logic of the world which empirical perceptions endow with specific form, but to which they cannot give rise... The essential point is clearly to grasp the project towards the world that we are. What we have said above about the world’s being inseparable from our views of the world should help us here to understand subjectivity conceived as *inherence in the world*.” (M-P 204)

“Inside and outside are inseparable. The world is wholly inside and I am wholly outside myself.” (M-P 207)

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From our interpretive reading and analysis of *A Thousand Plateaus*, be prepared to track key concepts as they emerge through repetition, renewed associations and provocative lateral forms of inter-connectivity: “immanence”, difference, becoming, “assemblage”, “territorial—deterritorial—reterritorial” practices, “multiplicity”, “stratification—destratification”, “smooth—striated” spaces, nomadology, “refrain (“becoming music”), “plane of consistency”, style, “folds”, “events”, limits, margins, “lines of flight”, and “transversal logic” (the transversal element in multilinear systems). How do these various concepts help us fathom a Deleuzian critique of traditional philosophical assumptions (ranging from subject/object dichotomies to transcendental discourses)?

“Significance and interpretation are so thick-skinned, they form such a sticky mixture with subjectification, that it is easy to believe that you are outside them when you are in fact still secreting them.” (*Thousand Plateaus*, 138)

- “rhizome” & “rhizomatic assemblage” / the contrast to “arborescent schemas”
- “mapping” vs. “tracing”
- “a body without organs” and its relation to the “organism”
- “stratification” / “line of flight” / “deterritorialization” / “line of becoming”
- “multiplicity” (including the contrast to the “one/many” duality)
- “haecceity” as a mode of individuation (the contrast to “forms and subjects”)
- the “anomalous/borderline” / the “intermezzo” / “quantum flow”
- the “between/middle” dimensionality of “nomadic lines of flight”
- the “plane of consistency” as a “composition of haecceities” vs. the “plane of forms, substances, and subjects.”