PHIL 415 Continental Philosophy: Key Problems
Spring 2015

T and Th, 10 – 11:50am, 211B SC.
Instructor: Dr. Beata Stawarska
Office: 247 SC
Office hours: M 9-10:50am, and by appointment
Email: stawarsk@uoregon.edu

This course serves as a survey of the major traditions and key problems that emerged within the 20th C. Continental philosophy. Traditions represented will include phenomenology, phenomenological ontology, ethics of alterity, structuralism and post-structuralism, psychoanalysis, hermeneutics, genealogy, deconstruction, reconstruction, and critical theory. We will be readings representative texts by Husserl, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, Levinas, Derrida, F. de Saussure, C. Levi-Strauss, Lacan, Gadamer, Foucault, and Habermas. The course is organized topically around the following central issues and debates: 1. Should philosophical reflection be grounded in the sphere of pure consciousness, as developed within transcendental phenomenology? Or is this approach overly formal and to be overcome by ontology? 2. Are both phenomenology and ontology a product of a totalizing system of thought to be displaced by an ethics of radical otherness? Or is ethics necessarily reclaimed by the very metaphysical tradition it seeks to break away from? 3. What is the value of a structure-based approach to human reality, which captures the larger-than-individual forces such as linguistic differences, social determinations, and unconscious mental processes? To what degree are structure-based approaches wedded to the traditional conceptions of science and to the metaphysics of presence – hence in need of deconstruction? 4. Is philosophical practice best described as pure reflection, or rather as a language-based hermeneutical process? 5. What is the relation between the traditional concept of history and genealogy? 6. What does a deconstructive practice of reading philosophical texts consist in, and does deconstruction necessarily turn philosophy into a species of literature? If so, is this a problem? 7. Can such a problem (if it is a problem.....) be resolved by a reconstruction of Modernity and the turn to discourse ethics within critical theory? Other questions and debates will be addressed, and participants are encouraged and expected to bring their own research interests into the conversation.

Reading Schedule:

WEEK 1, March 30 – April 5

1. **Introductory session.**

2. **Phenomenology and/or Ontology.**
   **The Foundations. Phenomenology as Transcendental Philosophy.**
   Readings: Husserl, selections from *Ideas I* (sections 27-32; 33-36, pp. 51-75)
Recommended readings: Sokolowski, Ch. 1 & 4, Introduction to Phenomenology.

WEEK 2, April 6 – 12

3. **Phenomenology and/or Ontology.**
   Readings: Merleau-Ponty: The Philosopher and his Shadow (*Signs*, 159-181).

WEEK 3, April 13 - 19

6. Heidegger What is Metaphysics? (*Basic Writings*, 91-112)
   Recommended: S. 29, Being there as a State of Mind (*Being and Time*).

WEEK 4, April 20 – 26

7. **Beyond Phenomenology and Ontology? Ethics and Metaphysics.**

WEEK 5, April 27 – May 3


WEEK 6, May 4 – May 10

12. **Structuralism and Post-Structuralism.**

Midterm Paper due in Class on Thursday 4/30.

WEEK 7, May 11 – May 17

13. **Structuralism, Post-Structuralism, and the Human Sciences.**
    Levi-Strauss, Structural Analysis in Linguistics and in Anthropology (*Structural Anthropology*, 31-54).
    Recommended: Levi-Strauss, Language and the Analysis of Social Laws (*Structural Anthropology*, 55-80)
14. Derrida, Structure, sign, play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences (*Writing and Difference*, 278-293); Discussion (*The Structuralist Controversy*).
WEEK 8, May 18 – May 24

15. Hermeneutics
   Readings: Gadamer, The Universality of the Hermeneutic Problem; Language and Understanding (The Gadamer Reader, 77-88; 92-107).

   Foucault (1971), Nietzsche, Genealogy, History (The Foucault Reader, 76-100).

WEEK 9, May 25 – May 31

17. Deconstruction, Reconstruction, Critical theory.
   Deconstruction.

18. Deconstruction and/or Reconstruction
   Readings: Habermas: On Leveling the Genre Distinction between Philosophy and Literature (Discourse of Modernity, 185-210).
   Derrida, Is There a Philosophical Language? Habermas, A Last Farewell (Derrida-Habermas Reader).

WEEK 10, June 1 - 7

   Readings: Habermas, Discourse Ethics: Notes on a Program of Philosophical Justification (Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action, a selection).

20. Class Review; final paper workshop.

Note that the schedule of readings is subject to change during the quarter. All changes will be announced in advance during class.

The following required book is available at the UO Bookstore:
- Levinas, Time and the Other (Duquesne, 1987).
All other readings are available on Blackboard unless otherwise stated.

Course requirements:

READING. This class has a substantial reading load, and you will need to plan your schedule to allow sufficient time for reading the required texts ahead of class. Please read the assigned texts carefully, and be prepared to discuss them in class.

WRITING. Each Tuesday (excluding week 1 and 10) you will submit a one to two pages long typed-up response to the reading assigned for the day; please include at least one passage from the reading in your response. The response is not expected to be a polished piece of writing (but needs to be readable and free from spelling/grammatical errors); it provides
an opportunity for you to actively engage the material, and raise specific questions to the reading.

There will be one midterm and one term paper. The midterm is 5-7 pages long. The term paper is 8-12 pages long. Topics and guidelines for both papers will be provided in advance; students may write the term paper on a topic of your own choice if approved in advance by the instructor.

All written assignments should be typewritten, double-spaced, font size no smaller than 11. They need to include the class title, your name - and my name for the midterm and final papers.

**Grading**
What kind of paper deserves an “A,” “B,” etc.? The following rubric reflects the general standards of the Philosophy Department at the University of Oregon.

- **A** = excellent. No mistakes, well-written, and distinctive in some way or other.
- **B** = good. No significant mistakes, well-written, but not distinctive in any way.
- **C** = OK. Some errors, but a basic grasp of the material.
- **D** = poor. Several errors. A tenuous grasp of the material.
- **F** = failing. Problematic on all fronts indicating either no real grasp of the material or a complete lack of effort.

Please note: what counts as “excellent” or “OK,” for example, depends in part upon the nature and level of the class in question.

Late paper policy: the overall grade for the paper will be reduced by 0.3 grade if no extension has been granted by the instructor before the paper is due.

**Grade components (out of 100%):**
Attendance and class participation – 10%
Written response to weekly readings (8 total) – 10%
Midterm paper – 30%
Term paper – 50%

**Term paper** due on Thursday June 11 (finals week); submit to stawarsk@uoregon.edu as a Word Doc.

**Plagiarism:** a failure to cite your sources and give credit to others for their work is a violation of academic honesty, and can result in an F grade for the class.

**Attendance policy**
No more than one unexcused absence is allowed. Each additional unexcused absence negatively affects your grade (-0.3 of the final grade).

If you have questions about the assignments, requirements, or subject matter, please let me know. If you have special needs due to a disability, please talk with me as soon as possible so that your needs can be addressed.