

G364/H303

Professor William Rasch

Fall 2007; TR 9:30 - 10:45

Office: BH644; Office hours: W 9:00-11:00 and by appointment (call: 855-7947);

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Nietzsche, Weber, Freud

Purpose: One often hears the complaint that we live in an age in which “anything goes,” an age of relativism marked by the loss of religious belief, transcendent meaning, and moral standards – in short, a time of nihilism. In response, people talk of “values” and “norms,” by which they mean standards that ought to guide our behavior, even if we cannot determine or agree on where these standards come from – God? Tradition? Reason? These are neither new complaints nor new solutions, but represent rather a continuation of centuries-old debates. In this course we will look at three influential thinkers from German-speaking Europe of the late 19th and early 20th centuries – Friedrich Nietzsche, Max Weber, and Sigmund Freud – who sought to come to terms with a modernity that no longer provided tried and true guidelines for how to live. Each thinker presents us with a description of modern life in which the individual is beset by a variety of seemingly irresolvable moral and existential conflicts. Faced with these mutually exclusive obligations and desires, the modern man or woman has only one duty: choose, and live with the consequences of one’s choice.

The purpose of the course is to understand the problems the three thinkers addressed, but certainly not to solve them. We wish to understand the modern world as seen through their writings and compare their analyses with the way we see our place in the world at the beginning of the 21st century. Paradoxically, though the aim of this course is “increased knowledge,” the presupposition underlying that aim assumes that the initial effects of such increased knowledge will cause confusion, doubt, and self-reflection. Or, at the very least, intellectual excitement.

Texts:

Books:

Freud: *Civilization and Its Discontents*

--: *The Future of an Illusion*

Nietzsche: *On the Genealogy of Morality*

The Will to Power

Weber: *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*

The Vocation Lectures

E-reserves:

Weber: “Religious Rejections of the World”

Evaluation: The course is based on close and careful reading of the texts followed by intensive class discussion on particular passages and themes. Your reading will be guided by study questions and homework assignments. Grades will be based on:

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Attendance: 25 points (be here in body and mind)
Participation: 25 points (come prepared and talk about the texts)
Written work: 50 points (assignments are to be handed in on time)
Total: 100 points

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Additional Paper: 50 points
Total: 150 points

Each student will write **five** 2-page (single spaced) papers during the course of the semester. The papers will range from simple summaries of general arguments to detailed analyses and critiques of particular passages or concepts.

Students enrolled in **H303** will also write a ca.10-12-page (double spaced) paper, topics to be determined in consultation with me.

Schedule:

Week of:

Aug 27	T: Introduction R: Nietzsche: "God is Dead" " <i>Genealogy of Morality</i> : "Preface" (pp. 3-9)
Sep 3	T: Nietzsche: <i>Genealogy of Morality</i> : "First Essay" (pp. 10-34) R: " " " "
Sep 10	T: Nietzsche: <i>Genealogy of Morality</i> : "Second Essay" (pp. 35-67) R: No Class
Sep 17	T: Nietzsche: <i>Genealogy of Morality</i> : "Second Essay" " R: No Class
Sep 24	T: Nietzsche: <i>Genealogy of Morality</i> : "Third Essay" (pp. 68-120) R: Nietzsche: " "
Oct 1	T: Nietzsche: <i>Will to Power</i> : "Book One, Part 1" (pp. 3-39) R: " " " "
Oct 8	T: Nietzsche: <i>Will to Power</i> : "Book Two, Part 1" (pp. 85-146) R: " " " "
Oct 15	T: Weber: <i>Protestant Ethic</i> : "Part One" (pp. 1-36) R: " " "

- Oct 22 T: Weber: *Protestant Ethic*: “Part Two” (pp. 67-122)
R: “ “ “
- Oct 29 T: Weber: “Religious Rejections of the World...”
R: Weber: “ “ “
- Nov 5 T: Weber: “Science as a Vocation”
R: “ “ “
- Nov 12 T: Freud: *Future of an Illusion*
R: “ “
- Nov 19 T: Freud: *Future of an Illusion*
Freud: *Civilization and its Discontents*
R: **THANKSGIVING**
- Nov 26 T: Freud: *Civilization and its Discontents*
R: “ “ “
- Dec 3 T: Wrap-up
R: No Class
- Dec 10: **H303** Final Paper Due: **Dec. 14**