



Twentieth-Century Continental Philosophy

55-01.201.409, Hauptseminar Spring/Summer 2020
Tuesday 12:15-13:45, Raum Ü35 - 03080

Twentieth-century world wars and atomic warfare introduced the experience of crisis on a global scale. Today we again encounter crisis on a global scale in the form of the environmental disaster and the rise of fascism.

The experience of global crisis—touching vulnerable populations as well as the elite—can be seen as an opportunity to fight for a global ethics. However, global crisis also shows us that although we belong to a common world, our experiences of this shared planet are very different. Thus, global crisis gives rise to a deep skepticism toward grand narratives about who we are as individuals, as nations, and as human beings.

Continental philosophy attends to social and political inequality and injustice. It analyzes the historical context of philosophical concepts and logical structures that are presented as universal. It reveals power structures that are deeply embedded in symbolic orders, institutional structures, and language. In response to global crisis and trauma, continental philosophy fights for global justice and political action while questioning the myth of single human experience.

What connects us? What divides us? What kinds of political landscapes can protect our differences while offering greater unity and equality?

This course offers an introductory overview of the main schools of philosophy belonging to twentieth-century Europe: Phenomenology, Existentialism, Critical Theory, Structuralism, Postmodernism, and Psychoanalysis.

By analyzing the relationship between twentieth-century history and philosophy, we will question the role of philosophy in response to today's global crises.

Learning Objectives

Objective 1: to obtain an overview of figures, methods, and concepts that are central to twentieth-century Continental philosophy

Objective 2: to examine philosophers' responses to the major political events of the twentieth-century

Objective 3: to question philosophy's capacity to respond to global crisis and trauma

Objective 4: to take a stance on philosophy's role in relationship to the global crises of the twenty-first-century



Readings

Questioning the World-Stage [Phenomenology, Existentialism]

Heidegger. *An Introduction to Metaphysics*. excerpt

Sartre. *Being and Nothingness*. excerpt

Ethics after Auschwitz [Phenomenology, Existentialism]

Beauvoir. *The Ethics of Ambiguity*. excerpt

Levinas. *Time and the Other*. excerpt

Reconciling the Past and Future [Critical Theory, Structuralism]

Arendt. *Between Past and Future*. excerpt

Adorno. "The Meaning of Working Through the Past."

Althusser. *Reading Capital*. excerpt

Voicing Today's Crises [Postmodernism, Psychoanalysis]

Cixous. *Coming to Writing*. excerpt

Derrida. *Monolingualism of the Other*. excerpt

Kristeva. *Hatred and Forgiveness*. excerpt



Course Material

PDFs of many of our readings will be made available on Stine. You will be required to bring hard or electronic copies of the readings with you to class. I expect you to read the text, mark your copy, take notes, and prepare thoughtful questions and comments for class discussion.

You are encouraged to read our course material in the original language. However, class lectures and discussions will be held in English. We will compare English translations with the original texts when relevant.

Preparation and Attendance

Regular attendance and active participation are a requirement of this course. Lively class discussion and debate will be a critical component of our time together. In addition to our weekly readings, students will be expected to stay informed about current international events at the intersection of politics and the environmental crisis by drawing on different kinds of news sources.

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Final Paper

Final paper:
6,000-words, English or German, double-space, Times New Roman, 12 font, 2,54 cm margins, include 100 word abstract, choose a citation style (further details will be discussed in class).