Course Title

German Intellectual Tradition: Marx, Nietzsche, Freud

Course Number
GERM-UA.9240D01, SOC-UA.9942D01

SAMPLE SYLLABUS

Lecturer Contact Information
Dr. Christian Woehst
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Course Details
Mondays, 5:15 pm to 8:00pm

Location
Rooms will be posted in Albert before your first class. Please double check whether your class takes place at the Academic Center (BLAC) or at St. Agnes (SNTA).

Prerequisites
None

Units earned
4

Course Description
This interdisciplinary course examines the works of Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud, three German-speaking writers who pioneered radically different and influential interpretations of modern life, which continue to shape our contemporary understanding of society and individuality. The seminar not only delves into the origins of these prominent traditions of modern Western thought, but also underscores their relevance in modern social theories and poetics. Hence, the course will also include references to the writings of their contemporaries, as well as explications of the direct and indirect influences of Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud on other writers.
Course Objective
The aim of this course is to provide an introduction to some central ideas and texts of each author and to construct interdisciplinary dialogues on topics such as history, politics, morality, religion, subjectivity, interpretation, and art. While taking account of the historical complexities and stylized conventions of each text, the course also aims to highlight the recurrent themes that animate these influential writings.

Assessment Components
Students are expected to do the readings, attend all sessions, participate in discussions, and complete written assignments. Student performance will be evaluated on the basis of four components: attendance & class participation, presentation & reading responses, a midterm essay and a final writing assignment.

(1) Participation 10%
(2) Class Presentation & Reading Responses 30%
(3) Writing Assignment I: Midterm 20%
(4) Writing Assignment II: Final Essay 40%

(1) Participation in discussions constitutes an important component of course activities and makes up a significant portion of student grades. You will have the opportunity to further explore the course readings, seek clarification, express your views, and engage in peer discussion.

(2) In order to prepare for discussion in class, students are required to submit 10 short reading responses (250 words) before each class by uploading them to NYU Classes. These reading responses serve to develop a habit of critical engagement with the texts and regular writing practice. They can also help to identify your research interests early on. Furthermore, students will convey their negotiations of a reading by giving one in-class presentation of 10 to 15 minutes, which incorporates exemplary close readings of selected passages and the development of critical discussion questions for the seminar.

(3) The course is also writing-intensive. Students will write a midterm paper (5 pages), based on discussion questions, which will be provided one week before the deadline.

(4) Finally, students will write a critical essay (final paper of 10-12 pages) about a given topic related to the course. Students will be able to choose one out of three questions that will be handed out in session 12. The deadline is on the last session.
(17 Dec 2018). The final essay demands argumentative writing and requires the students to engage into a critical discussion with the texts we read in class.

Failure to submit or fulfill any required component may result in failure of the class, regardless of grades achieved in other assignments.

**Required Text(s)**

- Electronic Resources (via NYU Classes / NYU Library)

One copy of each book is kept in the Reading Room of NYU Berlin's Academic Center, for you to read in the center but not to take out.

NYU Berlin Library Catalogue or follow the link on NYU Berlin's website (Academics/Facilities & Services).

**Supplemental Text(s) (not required to purchase)**


**Internet Research Guidelines**

To be discussed in class

**Additional Required Equipment**

None

**Session 1 – 03 Sept 2018: Introduction**

In this session, we will talk about the objectives of the course and start looking at some defining quotes by the three authors. We will also discuss a short passage by Michel Foucault in order to come to an understanding of the different methodologies we will encounter this semester.

*Karl Marx*
Session 2 – 10 Sept 2018: Towards a “Ruthless Criticism of Everything Existing”
We start our discussion of Marx with four of his earliest texts, which already foreshadow Marx’s later analyses. Here, Marx negotiates the realms of philosophy and religion in order to arrive at his own methodological point of view.

Reading:

For a Ruthless Criticism of Everything Existing (1843/44)

On the Jewish Question (1843)

Toward a Critique of Hegel’s “Philosophy of Right”: Introduction (1843/44)

Theses on Feuerbach (1845)

Session 3 – 17 Sept 2018: History and Revolution
In this session, we look at two of the most pivotal texts by Marx and Engels, which enter into a discussion of philosophical problems in the light of historical developments and arrive at pragmatic conclusions for the re-shaping of the world.

Reading:

The German Ideology: Part 1 (1845-46)

Manifesto of the Communist Party (1848)

Session 4 – 24 Sept 2018: Society and Capitalism
We dedicate ample time to discuss Marx’s magnum opus Das Kapital, as we will trace the development of Marx’s analytical work as well as the complex structure of his argument and its ramifications for Marx’s objectives. At the same time, we also address the historical evolution of his theory.

Reading:

[Marx on the History of His Opinions] (1859)

Capital, vol. I (1867), selected passages
Session 5 – 01 Oct 2018: Marx and the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory

We continue our discussion of *Das Kapital* and venture to look at Marx's project as a whole. Furthermore, we will look at the work of the Frankfurt School, which has continued critical Marxist thinking and adapted it for contemporary analysis.

Reading:

*Capital*, vol. I (1867), selected passages


Friedrich Nietzsche

Session 6 – 08 Oct 2018: Art and Civilization – MIDTERM QUESTIONS ARE HANDED OUT IN CLASS

Our discussion of Nietzsche starts with one of his first publications, which seeks to bring a fresh perspective to a traditional field while establishing Nietzsche himself as a creative thinker and writer. The second text offers us Nietzsche's seasoned perspective on his earlier work as a fascinating attempt at self-criticism.

Reading:

*The Birth of Tragedy* (1872), Sections 1 – 15

*The Case of Wagner* (1888), selected passages

Session 7 – 15 Oct 2018: Language and History – MIDTERM ESSAY IS DUE IN CLASS

In this session, we will engage with Nietzsche's thoughts on the roles of language and history for the shaping of the modern mind.

Reading:

*On Truth and Lying in a Non-Moral Sense* (1873)

*On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life* (1874)
**22 Oct 2018 – No Class – Fall Break**

**Session 8 – 29 Oct 2018: The Failure of Teaching**
This entire session is dedicated to Nietzsche’s *Zarathustra*, which Harold Bloom calls a “gorgeous disaster” of a book. We will trace and critically engage with some of the most popular concepts coined by Nietzsche such as the “Übermensch” and the “will to power”.

Reading:

*Thus spoke Zarathustra. A Book For All And None* (1883 – 85), First Part and additional selected passages  

**Session 9 – 05 Nov 2018: Society and Morality**
We will discuss the first two essays of *On the Genealogy of Morality*, which investigate the development of morality as a value system, the internalization of guilt, and the rise of the institution of Law respectively.

Reading:

*On the Genealogy of Morality* (1887), Sections I & II  

**Session 10 – 12 Nov 2018: Will to Truth and Deconstruction**
We will continue our discussion of the *Genealogy* with an analysis of the third essay, which negotiates ascetic ideals in the light of modern institutions. Finally, we take a look at a text by Jacques Derrida to trace Nietzsche’s influence on French Post-Structuralism.

Reading:

*On the Genealogy of Morality* (1887), Section III  

Sigmund Freud

Session 11 – 19 Nov 2018: Panel Discussion: “Decolonize Mitte!”

Further information will be provided

Session 12 – 26 Nov 2018: Freud’s models of the mind
We will begin our investigation of Freud with his early publication on the interpretation of dreams, which introduces his first model of the mind. Then, we will discuss the major shift in Freud’s theory as he leaves his first model of the mind behind for a second, more complex model.

Reading:

*Interpretation of Dreams* (1900), selected passages

*Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), selected passages

*The Ego and the Id* (1923), selected passages

Session 13 – 03 Dec 2018: Religion and Civilization
Moving from the individual mind to questions of civilization and society, we will analyze the two predominant works, in which Freud negotiates the developments of religion and morality for the contemporary state of humanity and its repercussions for the individual.

Reading:

*The Future of an Illusion* (1927)

*Civilization and its Discontents* (1930), selected passages

Session 14 – 10 Dec 2018: History and Monotheism
We conclude our discussion of Freud with his last major work, which not only builds on a number of Freud’s prior texts but also illuminates interpretations of history and formations of community in light of the regime of the Third Reich.

Reading:

*Moses and Monotheism* (1939), selected passages

[NYU Classes]

Michel Foucault. “Nietzsche, Freud, Marx”
Session 15 – 17 Dec 2018: Résumé – FINAL PAPER DUE IN CLASS
In our last session, we will review major milestones of the seminar and take a brief look at the final projects.

Classroom Etiquette
To be discussed in class

Suggested Co-Curricular Activities
None

Your Lecturer
Christian Woehst has studied Politics, German History and German Literature at the University of Munich and the London School of Economics and Political Science. In 2016, he received his Ph.D. in politics from Dresden University, where he teaches Political Theory and the History of Political Thought. His research focuses on 19th and 20th century intellectual history, liberalism, constitutionalism and democracy.
Academic Policies

Assessment Expectations

**Grade A:** The student makes excellent use of empirical and theoretical material and offers well-structured arguments in their work. The student writes comprehensive essays / answers to exam questions and their work shows strong evidence of critical thought and extensive reading.

**Grade B:** The candidate shows a good understanding of the problem and has demonstrated the ability to formulate and execute a coherent research strategy.

**Grade C:** The work is acceptable and shows a basic grasp of the research problem. However, the work fails to organize findings coherently and is in need of improvement.

**Grade D:** The work passes because some relevant points are made. However, there may be a problem of poor definition, lack of critical awareness, poor research.

**Grade F:** The work shows that the research problem is not understood; there is little or no critical awareness and the research is clearly negligible.

**Grade Conversion**

Your lecturer may use one of the following scales of numerical equivalents to letter grades:

- A = 94-100 or 4.0
- A- = 90-93 or 3.7
- B+ = 87-89 or 3.3
- B = 84-86 or 3.0
- B- = 80-83 or 2.7
- C+ = 77-79 or 2.3
- C = 74-76 or 2.0
- C- = 70-73 or 1.7
- D+ = 67-69 or 1.3
- D = 65-66 or 1.0
- F = below 65 or 0

**Attendance Policy**

Participation in all classes is essential for your academic success, especially in courses that meet only once per week. Your attendance in both content and language courses is required and will be checked at each class meeting. As soon as it becomes clear that you cannot attend a class, you must inform your professor by e-mail immediately (i.e. before the start of your class). Absences are only excused if they are due to illness, religious observance or emergencies. Your professor or NYU Berlin's administration may ask you to present a doctor's note or an exceptional permission from NYU Berlin's Director or Wellness Counselor as proof. Emergencies or other exceptional circumstances must be presented to the Director. Doctor's notes need to be submitted to the Academics Office, who will inform your professors. Doctor's notes need to be from a local doctor and carry a signature and a stamp. If you want the reasons for your absence to be treated confidentially, please approach NYU Berlin's Director or Wellness Counselor.
Unexcused absences affect students' grades: In content courses each unexcused absence (equaling one week's worth of classes) leads to a deduction of 2% of the overall grade and may negatively affect your class participation grade. In German Language classes two or three (consecutive or non-consecutive) unexcused absences (equaling one week's worth of classes) lead to a 2% deduction of the overall grade. Three unexcused absences in one content course and five unexcused absences in your German language course may lead to a Fail in that course. Being more than 15 minutes late counts as an unexcused absence. Furthermore, your professor is entitled to deduct points for frequent late arrival or late arrival back from in-class breaks. Please note that for classes involving a field trip, transportation difficulties are never grounds for an excused absence. It is the student's responsibility to arrive in time at the announced meeting point.

Exams, tests and quizzes, deadlines, and oral presentations that are missed due to illness always require a doctor's note as documentation. It is the student's responsibility to produce this doctor's note and submit it to the Academics Office; until this doctor's note is produced the missed assessment is graded with an F and no make-up assessment is scheduled. In content classes, an F in one assignment may lead to failure of the entire class.

Regardless of whether an absence is excused or not, it is the student's responsibility to catch up with the work that was missed.

**Attendance Rules on Religious Holidays**
Members of any religious group may, without penalty, excuse themselves from classes when required in compliance with their religious obligations. Students who anticipate being absent due to religious observance should notify their lecturer AND NYU Berlin's Academics Office in writing via e-mail one week in advance. If examinations or assignment deadlines are scheduled on the day the student will be absent, the Academics Office will schedule a make-up examination or extend the deadline for assignments. Please note that an absence is only excused for the holiday but not for any days of travel that may come before and/or after the holiday. See also [University Calendar Policy on Religious Holidays](#).

**Late Submission of Work**

1. Written work due in class must be submitted during the class time to the professor.

2. Late work should be submitted in person to the lecturer or to the Academics Office, who will write on the essay or other work the date and time of submission, in the presence of the student. Another member of the administrative staff may also personally accept the work and will write the date and time of submission on the work, as above.

3. Work submitted late receives a penalty of 2 points on the 100 point scale for each day it is late (excluding weekends and public or religious holidays), unless an extension has been approved (with a doctor's note or by approval of NYU Berlin's administration), in which case the 2 points per day deductions start counting from the day the extended deadline has passed.

4. Without an approved extension, written work submitted more than 5 days (excluding weekends and public or religious holidays) following the submission date receives an F.

5. End of semester essays must be submitted on time.
(6) Students who are late for a written exam have no automatic right to take extra time or to write the exam on another day.

(7) Please remember that university computers do not keep your essays - you must save them elsewhere. Having lost parts of your essay on the university computer is no excuse for a late submission.

Provisions for Students with Disabilities
Academic accommodations are available for students with documented disabilities. Please contact the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities at 212-998-4980 or see their website for further information.

Plagiarism Policy
The presentation of another person’s words, ideas, judgment, images or data as though they were your own, whether intentionally or unintentionally, constitutes an act of plagiarism. Proper referencing of your sources avoids plagiarism (see as one possible help the NYU library guide to referencing styles.

NYU Berlin takes plagiarism very seriously; penalties follow and may exceed those set out by your home school. Your lecturer may ask you to sign a declaration of authorship form.

It is also an offense to submit work for assignments from two different courses that is substantially the same (be it oral presentations or written work). If there is an overlap of the subject of your assignment with one that you produced for another course (either in the current or any previous semester), you MUST inform your professor.

For a summary of NYU Global's academic policies.