

UBC's Point Grey Campus is located on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the xwməθkwəyəm (Musqueam) people. The land it is situated on has always been a place of learning for the Musqueam people, who for millennia have passed on in their culture, history, and traditions from one generation to the next on this site.

Course Title, Time and Location	Course Code Number	Credit Value
Introduction to Continental Philosophy Mon, Wed, Fri 12-1 pm BUCH D 217	PHIL 348 001 W1 2023	3 credits

Course Instructor	Contact Details	Office Location	Office Hours
Dr. Willow Verkerk	willow.verkerk@ubc.ca	BUCH E 158	Mon, Wed 3-4 pm

OTHER INSTRUCTIONAL STAFF

TBA

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course introduces key texts and ideas from major European philosophers from the 18th century onward. The discussion commences with Kant's answer to the question "What is Enlightenment?" and follows with texts by Hegel, Marx, Lukács, Nietzsche, and Freud. Next, the notion of enlightenment is questioned by Heidegger's text on technology. We then turn to Hannah Arendt's analysis of terror and ideology and the conditions that allow for totalitarianism to emerge. We study Frantz Fanon's critique of colonialism, Christine Delphy's analysis of the oppression of women, and Judith Butler's examination of heterosexist power. We revisit the question, "What is Enlightenment?" with Michel Foucault to complete the course.

Together, we examine the relationships between knowledge, freedom, and progress to understand the concepts of humanism and enlightenment from continental perspectives. In addition, we explore problems thought to be particular to the loss of meaning and value occurring after the death of God and the rise of consumer culture, such as nihilism and alienation. During the course, the relationship between power and truth will be under discussion. Consideration will be given to the roles that rationality, desire, and politics have in the constitution of the subject (and their capacity for freedom).

This is a lecture style course with class discussion.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Students are expected to read the materials before class and come prepared to take part in class discussion. The schedule includes all of the readings which can be found in LOCR or online.

ASSESSMENTS OF LEARNING

Take Home Exam 1 (750 words) 20% posted October 6; *Due October 11*.

Take Home Exam 2 (750 words) 20% due posted November 3; *Due November 8*.

Final Essay (3000 words) 50% posted November 8; *Due December 6*.

Participation 10%: based on attendance and participation in class.

All assignments are submitted on Canvas.

SCHEDULE: MON, WED, FRI 12-1 PM

Wednesday September 6: Introduction: What is Continental Philosophy?

QUESTIONS:

1. How do you understand continental philosophy?
2. How does it differ from analytic philosophy?

Friday September 8: On Enlightenment and Thinking for Oneself

READ: Kant, "An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?" (LOCR)

AND Tsenay Serequeberhan, "The Critique of Eurocentrism and the Practice of African Philosophy" (LOCR).

QUESTIONS:

1. What does it mean to think for oneself according to Kant?
2. Is there a tension between fulfilling one's duties as a citizen and speaking one's mind freely?

September 13-15: Critical Thinking and Abstract Thought

READ: Hegel, "Who Thinks Abstractly"

<https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/hegel/works/se/abstract.htm>

And

Schopenhauer, "On Thinking for Yourself" (LOCR)

QUESTIONS:

1. What does Hegel mean by abstract thinking?
2. Do you agree with Schopenhauer's account on the importance of thinking for yourself?

September 18-22: Alienation

READ: Marx, "Estranged Labour" in *Economic and Political Manuscripts*

<https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1844/manuscripts/labour.htm>

QUESTIONS:

1. In which four ways does alienation occur according to Marx?
2. Do you think Marx's analysis of labour is still relevant today? Why or why not?
3. How does the process of alienation impact upon one's ability to think?

September 25-29: Class and the Human Being as a Commodity

READ: Georg Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness*, "Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat, I: The Phenomenon of Reification"

<https://www.marxists.org/archive/lukacs/works/history/hcc05.htm>

QUESTIONS:

1. How does Lukács explain the process of reification?
2. How does reification change human experience?

October 2: National Day for Truth and Reconciliation (no class)**October 4-6: Truth/Untruth and the Will to Power**

READ: Nietzsche, "Preface" and "Part One: On the Prejudices of Philosophers," in *Beyond Good and Evil* (LOCR)

Further reading: Willow Verkerk, "14. Friedrich Nietzsche" in *Rethinking Political Thinkers*, edited by Simon Choat and Manjeet Ramgotra, 239-255. Oxford University Press, 2023.

QUESTIONS:

1. Explain Nietzsche's analogy between 'woman' and 'truth'. What do you think he is trying to teach us about these concepts?
2. How does Nietzsche explain his notion of the will to power?

Take Home Exam 1 posted October 6

Holiday October 9- Thanksgiving Day

Take Home Exam 1 due October 11

October 11-13: The Free Spirit and Truth

READ: Nietzsche, "The Free Spirit" in *Beyond Good and Evil* (LOCR)

QUESTIONS:

1. How does Nietzsche describe the free spirit?
2. What is the relationship between the free spirit and truth?

October 16-20: Freud's Drives and the Interjections of Desire

READ: *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (LOCR)

QUESTIONS:

1. How does Freud describe the pleasure principle?
2. How does Freud's notion of the drive differ from that of Nietzsche's?

October 23-27: Freud on Repetition and the Death Drive

READ: *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (LOCR)

QUESTIONS:

1. How does Freud use the concept of repetition in this text?
2. What is the 'beyond' that Freud is discussing?

October 30- November 3: On Being and Technology

READ: Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology" (LOCR)

QUESTIONS:

1. What does Heidegger mean by Enframing? Give an example of Enframing from the text.
2. Is there a problem with being on “standing reserve” according to Heidegger? If so, what is it?

Take Home Exam 2 posted on Friday November 3

** Take Home Exam 2 due November 8**

November 6-10: The Dangers of Totalitarianism

READ: Hannah Arendt, “Ideology and Terror: A Novel Form of Government” (LOCR)

QUESTIONS:

1. What are some of the conditions that allow for totalitarianism to emerge?
2. What is the role of ideology in the move towards totalitarian rule?

Final Essay Topics posted November 8

Midterm Break November 13-15

November 17: Discussion Day

November 20-24: Freedom and the Anticolonial Struggle

READ: Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, “On Violence,” pages vii-52 (LOCR)

QUESTIONS:

1. How does Fanon describe the relationship between the colonist and the colonized?
2. Why does Fanon argue that decolonization is a violent event?

November 27-December 1: Capitalistic, Patriarchal, and Heterosexual Power

READ: Delphy, “The Main Enemy” (LOCR)

And Butler, *Gender Trouble*, “1: Subjects of Sex/Gender/Desire” (LOCR)

QUESTIONS:

1. What is the source of the oppression of women according to Delphy?
2. How is Butler critiquing the relationship between sex, gender, and desire? What do these terms mean for them?

December 4-6: Knowledge, Power, and the Subject and Closing Discussion

READ: Foucault, “What is Enlightenment?” (LOCR)

QUESTIONS:

1. How is Foucault critiquing humanism in this essay?
2. How would you describe Foucault’s positive view of enlightenment?

December 6 Final Essay due

LEARNING OUTCOMES

During the course, students will learn concepts central to the history of European philosophy. They will practice talking and thinking critically about the arguments and ideas. The take home exams provide opportunities to demonstrate understanding of the concepts studied to date. The final paper is an exercise in critical thinking to explore and deepen understanding of one or more of the thinkers studied during the course. By the end of the semester, students will be familiar with key figures and themes in the continental tradition.

UNIVERSITY POLICIES AND SUPPORT

UBC provides resources to support student learning and to maintain healthy lifestyles but recognizes that sometimes crises arise and so there are additional resources to access including those for survivors of sexual violence. UBC values respect for the person and ideas of all members of the academic community. Harassment and discrimination are not tolerated nor is suppression of academic freedom. UBC provides appropriate accommodation for students with disabilities and for religious observances. UBC values academic honesty and students are expected to acknowledge the ideas generated by others and to uphold the highest academic standards in all of their actions. Details of the policies and how to access support are available on [the UBC Senate website](#).

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Plagiarism, which is intellectual theft, occurs where an individual submits or presents the oral or written work of another person as his or her own. Scholarship quite properly rests upon examining and referring to the thoughts and writings of others. However, when another person's words (i.e. phrases, sentences, or paragraphs), ideas, or entire works are used, the author must be acknowledged in the text, in footnotes, in endnotes, or in another accepted form of academic citation. Where direct quotations are made, they must be clearly delineated (for example, within quotation marks or separately indented). Failure to provide proper attribution is plagiarism because it represents someone else's work as one's own. Plagiarism should not occur in submitted drafts or final works. A student who seeks assistance from a tutor or other scholastic aids must ensure that the work submitted is the student's own. Students are responsible for ensuring that any work submitted does not constitute plagiarism. Students who are in any doubt as to what constitutes plagiarism should consult their instructor before handing in any assignments. A link about Academic misconduct is below

<http://www.calendar.ubc.ca/Vancouver/index.cfm?tree=3,54,111,959>

The use of *Chat GPT* and similar online resources may fall under “cheating” in the UBC policy if students make unauthorized use of this tool in the creation of assignments or on exams (“use...of unauthorized means to complete an examination or coursework...including, but not limited to, ...accessing websites or other online resources not specifically permitted by the instructor or examiner”).

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