The Paradoxes of Human Desire, Identity, Autobiography:

Fall 2009

LECTURE NOTES:

PROFESSOR: Chris Latiolais, Chair
Philosophy Department
Kalamazoo College
Humphrey House #201
Telephone # 337-7076

Offices Hours:

- Monday: 8:00 - 9:00/1:15 - 2:15
- Wednesday: 1:15 - 2:15
- By Appointment

COURSE GOALS:

In this course, we examine the way in which Friedrich Nietzsche’s genealogy and Sigmund Freud’s psychoanalysis severely challenge traditional conceptions of the rational self. Traditional “Enlightenment” or rationalist models of subjectivity assume that a person is conscious of feelings and desires, rational in planning and executing actions, and responsible, both to oneself and to others, for explaining and justifying one’s conduct. In short, rationalists uphold the ideal that we can master our own fate. Against this view, Nietzsche and Freud demonstrate the fragmented, unconscious, wild, strange, paradoxical, and often chaotic nature of human desire, action, and self-understanding. Such “dark thinkers of Enlightenment” unmask the ideal of rational agency as a comic pretense, naïve illusion, or, worse, dangerous illusion. In this course, we will explore Nietzsche’s and Freud’s views on the paradoxical nature of the human experience of desire, time, and one’s own body. More specifically, we will examine how subsequent figures such as Lacan and Merleau-Ponty have identified four famous paradoxes of human life: the paradoxical fact that we understand something only when it’s over (time); the paradoxical fact that we only come to know our prior intentions through our future deeds (action); the paradoxical fact that our desires are the source of our worst nightmares (desire); and the paradoxical fact that what is closest and most familiar to us, our body, is often what is most distant, alien, and perplexing (body). Readings from Nietzsche, Freud, Lacan, Merleau-Ponty, Carr, Habermas, Fink, and Lloyd. Movies such as Memento, Angle Heart, Apocalypse Now, Lost Highway, and The Pervert’s Guide to Cinema will be shown.

This course is part of the First-Year Seminar Program. Professor and students are therefore committed to the following goals: First-Year Seminar Goals:

EVALUATION:

Students will be evaluated on the basis of class participation, vocabulary quizzes, midterm examinations and a final paper.

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<tr>
<th>TYPE OF EVALUATION</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class Participation: Seminar presentations, classroom discussion and email correspondence</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midterm Writing Assignments</td>
<td>6 @ 18%</td>
<td>80%</td>
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REQUIREMENTS AND POLICIES:

Please read First-Year Seminar: Goals and Expectations. Students are expected to (1) follow the reading schedule, (2) take notes upon what they have read, (3) come prepared to discuss the text in class, (4) attend office hours if they encounter any difficulties, and (4) complete all required assignments and activities. More specifically, students must bring their texts to class, highlight or otherwise mark passages they consider important, write marginal notes and discussion questions, and identify any passages that they do not understand. Seminar discussion is a crucial part of the course, and students will be graded upon their contributions to classroom discussion and/or email correspondence. Students are also required to complete 5 writing assignments and to turn them in on time. Late papers will be marked down a half grade for the first day and a full grade for the second day. 3 unexcused absences will result in a full grade reduction. Attendance of scheduled movies is required. Students caught plagiarizing will fail the course. Any student with a disability who needs an accommodation or other assistance in this course should make an appointment to speak with me as soon as possible. The following are required activities of the First Year Seminar, and failure to complete them will result in grade reductions:

- **Survivor in the Library: College Information Literacy Skills:** Our Seminar will participate in one class session called “Survivor in the Library: College Information Literacy Skills.” The session is intended to help you learn research techniques and will be led by your instructor and reference librarians Robin Rank or Liz Smith. Your work will be part of a focused project on a topic selected by your professor.
- **First-Year Forums:** First-Year Forums are intended to help entering K students continue their academic and personal growth. They foster the goals of the First-Year Experience Program, which are to help students: achieve academic success, identify and pursue...
their passions, connect with Kalamazoo College and the greater Kalamazoo communities, construct complex intercultural understandings, and develop a purpose-filled and balanced life. First-year students choose five Forums to attend during fall term. If a student does not attend five, the final grade in the Seminar will be lowered by two points for each Forum missed. Student questions about attendance during the term should go to Sally Arent in Student Development (sarent@kzoo.edu).

TEXTS:

- Nietzsche, Friedrich. "On the Prejudices of Philosophers," from *Beyond Good and Evil*.
- Articles:
  - Sigmund Freud, "The Ego and the Id."
  - Habermas, Juergen. "Self-Critique as Science: on Freud's Psychoanalytic Critique of Meaning."

Schedule of Reading, Assignments, and Events

**PART ONE: THE SCEPTICAL CHALLENGE TO THE THESIS THAT HISTORIOGRAPHY IS NARRATIVE & CARR’S PHENOMENOLOGICAL ARGUMENT FOR THE COGNITIVE FUNCTION OF NARRATIVE IN EVERYDAY STORIES AND HISTORY WRITING:**

**Week One**

- Monday:
  - Courses Mechanics
  - Tracy Chapman's *Telling Stories*
  - Writing Assignment #1
- Wednesday:
  - Introductory Comments
  - Carr: Introduction
  - Due: Writing Assignment #1
- Friday:
  - Carr: "The Temporal Structure of Experience and Action"
  - Writing Assignment #2

**Week Two**

- Monday:
  - Carr: "Temporality and Narrative Structure"
- Wednesday:
  - Carr: "The Self and the Coherence of Life"
  - **WEDNESDAY EVENING MOVIE: Memento**
- Friday:
  - Carr: "Temporality and Historicity"
  - Due: Writing Assignment #2
  - Writing Assignment #3 Survivor in the Library

**PART THREE: STORY-TELLING AS MOTIVATED COVER UP: FREUD’S CLASSICAL PSYCHOANALYTIC CHALLENGE:**

**Week Three**

- Monday:
  - Carr: "From I to We"
- Wednesday:
  - Sigmund Freud, "The Ego and the Id."
  - **WEDNESDAY EVENING MOVIE: Angle Heart**
- Friday:
  - Survivor in the Library Day

**PART TWO: SELVES AND NARRATIVES IN PHILOSOPHY AND LITERATURE:**

**Week Four**

- Monday:
  - Lloyd, *Introduction*
  - Lloyd, "Augustive and the 'Problem' of time"
- Wednesday:
  - Lloyd, "The Self: Unity and Fragmentation"
- Friday:
  - Discussion
Due: Writing Assignment # 3

**Week Five**

- **Monday:**
  - Lloyd, "The Past: Loss or Eternal Return"

- **Wednesday:**
  - Nietzsche, Friedrich.

- **Friday:**
  - Nietzsche, Friedrich.
    - "On the Prejudices of Philosophers," from *Beyond Good and Evil*
  - Writing Assignment #4

**Week Six**

- **Monday:**
  - Lloyd, "Life and Literature"

- **Writing Assignment #3 Due**

- **Wednesday:**
    - "The Body in its Sexual Being" [Handout]

- **Friday:**
    - "Freedom" [Handout]

**PART FOUR: THE LACANIAN STRUCTURALIST CHALLENGE TO NARRATIVE UNITY OF IDENTITY: THE PARADOXES OF DESIRE, TIME, AND SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY:**

**Week Seven**

- **Monday:**
  - Fink, "Language and Otherness"
  - Fink, "The nature of Unconscious Thought or How the Other Half ‘Thinks’"
  - Fink, "The Creative Function of the Word: The Symbolic and the Real"

- **Due: Writing Assignment #4**

- **Wednesday:**
  - Fink, "The Lacanian Subject"
  - Fink, "The Subject and the Other’s Desire"


- **Friday:**
  - Discussion
  - Writing Assignment #5

**Week Eight**

- **Monday:**
  - Fink, "Metaphor and the Precipitation of Subjectivity"

- **Wednesday:**
  - Fink, "Object (a): Cause of Desire"

- **Friday:**
  - Discussion

**Week Nine**

- **Monday:**
  - Habermas, Juergen. "Self-Critique as Science: on Freud’s Psychoanalytic Critique of Meaning,"

- **Wednesday:**
  - Discussion

**Week Ten**

- **Monday:**
  - Due: Writing Assignment # 5

- **Wednesday:**
  - Discussion

**Finals Week**