

FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY
Department of Religious Studies
REL 4461 Later Heidegger
Spring 2015

Instructor: Mr. Daniel Alvarez
Office Hours: T/TH, 11:15 a.m.-12:00 p.m.
DM 304A

Class Days & Times: MWF 11:00 - 11:50- a.m.
Class Room: Chemistry & Physics (CP) 117
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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course examines a specific topic in the philosophy of religion, such as faith and reason, religious experience, or an important thinker. It may be repeated with permission of the instructor. This semester the course will focus on the later work of Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), the preeminent continental philosopher of our time.

TEXTBOOK

Martin Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, revised and expanded edition (Harper, 2008). ISBN 0061627011

INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVES AND COURSE STRUCTURE

In this course we will attempt a close reading of selections from primary sources, although some of the selections contain complete essays/lectures. In other words, no use of secondary literature. As most of you know by now, my approach is textual and focused on primary sources. We are going to wrestle with the text, as Jacob wrestled with God at Bethel, and perhaps we will wrest enough “blessings” from the text to leave satisfied at the end of the term.

Our goal is to read as much of the book as possible. Given the fact that the selections are organized in chronological order, this will allow to appraise the evolution of Heidegger’s thought after *Being and Time* (1927, henceforth B&T), although the Introduction to B&T is the first reading of the anthology. This period has been called by Heidegger himself “the turn,” where his philosophy leads him in a different direction from the approach to philosophy taken in B&T. We will not rush through the texts; we will read with the purpose of gaining enough understanding of the text that will allow us to move forward to the next selection. The *Basic Writings* anthology we are using contains a generous selection of Heidegger’s quite significant output, most of which consists in lectures given in the post-war period until his death. The last volumes of his writings were published in 2014 (the controversial “Black Notebooks”), and the complete writings now come to 104 volumes!

We will not feel obligated to read through the entire book, but we will try to read as much as time permits. One reason for not rushing through the texts is that Heidegger is notoriously difficult, if not cryptic, and discerning his thought beyond the standard clichés and stereotypes of what the text means will not be an easy task. But that **is our task**. In terms of number of pages, if I have an implicit goal, it is to read most of the readings (with a couple of exceptions). It’s not the whole book, but it is a substantial number of pages.

Last year, when I undertook to do a whole year on B&T, I wrote, “those of us trained in the Analytic (Anglo-Saxon) tradition in philosophy have had difficulty making sense of Heidegger (and most of the Continental tradition in philosophy for that matter).” Having read B&T, I can say that Heidegger can be read and understood. I think it is sheer prejudice that leads someone to say Heidegger is unintelligible or inscrutable. Difficult and demanding yes; inscrutable and unintelligible, no. I remember distinctly when Burton Dreben (d. 1999), perhaps the most

penetrating interpreter of the Analytic tradition, and the philosophy of Quine in particular, devoted a whole semester to a course on Heidegger's B&T at Harvard in the 1980s. Furthermore, having worked through several selections from Derrida in Fall 2014, I think we can say the same applies to Derrida. In any case, we will bracket those prejudices, regardless of how misguided I now find them to be, for the purposes of the course. None of this implies one has to agree with either Heidegger or Derrida, or that everything they say is transparent without further ado. I am primarily interested in this course in what Heidegger has to say to us and what he means, than in whether Heidegger is right. One must also remember that thinkers trained in the Analytic Tradition, such as Richard Rorty, do not consider Heidegger (or Derrida) absurd and his words meaningless.

However, it is also clear that the reputation of Heidegger, along with that of Derrida, Foucault, and Rorty, as serious philosophers, has suffered from the deluge of criticism hurled against it by the Analytic tradition. On this side of the Atlantic at least, the admirers in academic philosophy are few; the detractors many. Philosophy departments across the nation are set up on a strictly continental or analytic approach, with very little conversation across confessional lines. Again, our goal is to *understand* Heidegger, and this will require a major effort and discipline on our part. With that said, the influence of Heidegger in modern philosophy has been far reaching; Derrida, Foucault, Rorty, among others, trace their lineage to Heidegger. Notwithstanding the (further) deleterious effect the publication of the "Black Notebooks" (with its reported even more overt Anti-Semitism) is bound to have on Heidegger's legacy and reputation, the fact is that his thinking and influence cannot be ignored.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADES

1. One research 12-15 research paper on a topic provided by the instructor (70% of final grade).
2. Class Presentation (based on the reading assignment for each week): Two (2) pages, orally delivered in class (30% of final grade).

GRADE DISTRIBUTION

A	95-100	C	70-74
A-	91-94	C-	68-69
B+	88-90	D+	66-67
B	83-87	D	63-65
B-	79-82	F	0-62
C+	75-78		

COURSE OUTLINE

Week 1

Introduction: Syllabus, Requirements, Textbooks, Overview of course\

From the early Heidegger to the later Heidegger
Basic Writings, "Being and Time: Introduction"

Week 2

Basic Writings, "What is Metaphysics"

Week 3

"The Fundamental Question of Metaphysics," from *Introduction to Metaphysics* (file on Blackboard)

Presentation: _____

Week 4

Basic Writings, “On the Essence of Truth”; “Plato’s Doctrine of Truth,” (pdf file posted on Blackboard)

Presentation: _____

Week 5

Basic Writings, “Letter on Humanism”

Presentation: _____

Week 6

Basic Writings, “Modern Science, Metaphysics, and Mathematics”

Presentation: _____

Week 7

Basic Writings, “The Question Concerning Technology”

Presentation: _____

Week 8

Basic Writings, “Building, Dwelling, Thinking”

Presentation: _____

Week 9

Basic Writings, “What Calls for Thinking?”

Presentation: _____

Week 10

Basic Writings, “The Way to Language”

Presentation: _____

Week 11

Basic Writings, “The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking”

Presentation: _____

Week 12

“alētheia: Heraclitus Fragment,” from *Early Greek Thinking* (on Blackboard)

Presentation: _____

Week 13

“The Anaximander Fragment,” from *Early Greek Thinking* (on Blackboard)

Presentation: _____

Week 14

“The Anaximander Fragment,” concluded; “The Word of Nietzsche: ‘God is dead’”
(pdf file on Blackboard)

Presentation: _____

Week 15

Concluding Discussion on Later Heidegger

Presentation: _____

LAST DAY OF CLASSES, RESEARCH PAPERS DUE