

# Tragedy and New Beginnings. 19th and 20th Century German Philosophy and its Legacies (Spring only)

Dr. Detlef von Daniels

Email Address:	info@fubest.fu-berlin.de
Time Slot:	Thursdays, 4:30 p.m.
Language of Instruction:	English
Contact Hours:	45
ECTS Credits:	6

---

## Course Description

In this course we will discuss how German philosophy developed after the great systems of German Idealism. We begin by acknowledging that after Hegel, philosophy was no longer pursued as a unified whole, but as a reflection on specific sets of problems. We will focus on three philosophers or influential schools of thought and their legacies: Karl Marx, Friedrich Nietzsche and the existentialist philosophers Søren Kierkegaard and Martin Heidegger.

Thinkers from all three schools proclaimed the end of philosophy. However, like all the arts and sciences in Germany, philosophy helped pave the way for totalitarian ideologies and must therefore be examined for its role in the 'immoral end' of the 20th century. We will conclude the course with a more optimistic outlook. Like a phoenix from the ashes, philosophy has risen again in unexpected ways. We will therefore also consider how these ways of thinking have been taken up and received in postcolonial, feminist and indigenous thought.

## Learning Objectives

Students provide accurate and relevant answers, complete with supporting details, to specific questions about philosophical ideas covered in the course. They explain difficult passages clearly, precisely, and thoroughly. They learn to speculate in a well-informed, well-supported, and plausible way about what a given philosopher would say about a novel issue or problem.

## Student Profile

They should be in their fourth semester of college/university education or beyond.

## Assignments and Grading

Attendance & Participation: 300 Points (including weekly reading responses and one short presentation)

Independent Project Report: 100 Points

Midterm exam: 300 Points

Final exam: 300 Points

Completion of the Midterm Exam as well as the Final Exam is needed for a grade.

## Weekly reading responses

2-3 pages, due at 3 p.m. of the day of class.

## Short Presentation

Each student has to give one short presentation on a specific topic.

### ***Independent Project Report***

Visit the exhibition "Everyday Life in the GDR" in the Kulturbrauerei. Imagine that you are an American exchange student at the FU-Berlin in the 1980s. Write a 3-4 page literary text about your reasons for rejecting your future in the USA and moving to the GDR. The explanation can be based on Marxist reasons (the easiest explanation) or develop a Nietzschean or Heideggerian view. Include some pop culture references, e.g. the kind of jeans you will have to wear. The format is free. You can write a letter to a friend or your parents, a film script, a short story, etc.

FUB Grade	Points of 1,000
1.0	980-1,000
1.3	950-979
1.7	900-949
2.0	850-899
2.3	800-849
2.7	750-799
3.0	700-749
3.3	650-699
3.7	600-649
4.0	500-599
5.0	< 500

### **Attendance**

Attendance in class is **mandatory**. We also expect you to be **punctual** out of respect to both your instructor and your fellow students. An absence for more than half of a particular day's session will be considered an absence for that day.

If you cannot attend class because you are ill, please **notify your instructor** by e-mail (not via messenger service or through another student) before class. Any absence **without a notification** of your instructor before class will automatically be considered **unexcused**.

Absences because of **illness** are **excused**; however, for the **third** sick day and every other sick day after that (per course), you will need to turn in a **doctor's notice** ("Attest" in German) in order for them to count as excused, too. It is **your** responsibility to keep track of your absences and to know when a doctor's note is required. No doctor's notice issued more than three days after the day of illness will be accepted.

If you miss an **exam** due to an excused absence, your instructor and the FU-BEST team will arrange a make-up exam for you; you may also be entitled to a term paper **deadline extension**. If you, however, do not fulfill all course requirements needed for a grade by the (later) date determined by the program, passing the course is no longer possible.

Please also note that if you miss **more than half** of a course's sessions (even if due to excused absence), passing the course is no longer possible.

Personal travel and visits by relatives or friends are **not** accepted as reasons for absence (i.e., absences for these reasons always count as **unexcused**).

Regarding **unexcused** absences, please note the following:

- Any unexcused absence has consequences for at least the participation portion of the grade.
- Two unexcused absences lead to a lowering of the course grade by a fraction.
- Three unexcused absences will result in a 5.0 (equivalent to an "F") on the transcript.

Literature

Digitalized readings posted on the online learning platform Blackboard.

Course Schedule

Calendar	Topics, Readings, etc.
Session 1	<p><b>Topic: Living as a Philosopher</b></p> <p><b>Readings</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Arthur Schopenhauer, "On the Vanity and Suffering of Life" (from: <i>The World as Will and Representation</i>, 1836)</li> </ul> <p><b>Film</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Luchino Visconti, <i>Death in Venice</i> (1971) Soundtrack: Gustav Mahler, 5<sup>th</sup> Symphony <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ampu-e8A6Ls">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ampu-e8A6Ls</a></li> </ul>
Session 2	<p><b>Topic: Negation of the Will to Life</b></p> <p><b>Readings</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Arthur Schopenhauer, <i>On the Basis of Morality</i> (1841)</li> </ul> <p><b>Mini-presentation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Schopenhauer's View of Women <a href="https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1908/mec/six5.htm">https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1908/mec/six5.htm</a></li> </ul>
Session 3	<p><b>Topic: Overcoming the Scientific Worldview</b></p> <p><b>Readings</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Friedrich Nietzsche, "Reason in Philosophy" from <i>Twilight of the Idols</i> (1889)</li> </ul> <p><b>Mini-presentation 1</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Richard Wagner: Nietzsche's Antipode</li> </ul> <p><b>Mini-presentation 2</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lou Andreas-Salomé: Liberation from Nietzsche</li> </ul> <p><b>Film/Music</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Francis Ford Coppola, <i>Apocalypse Now</i> (1979), Soundtrack: Richard Wagner, "Ride of the Valkyries" <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VE03Lqm3nbl">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VE03Lqm3nbl</a></li> </ul>
Session 4	<p><b>Topic: Beyond Good and Evil or: Nietzscheanism and (Indigenous) American Philosophy</b></p> <p><b>Readings</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Friedrich Nietzsche, <i>Thus Spoke Zarathustra</i> (1883);</li> <li>Friedrich Nietzsche, <i>Beyond Good and Evil</i> (1886)</li> </ul> <p><b>Mini-presentation 1</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nietzsche's reception in the Third Reich</li> </ul> <p><b>Mini-presentation 2</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nietzsche and Indigenous American Philosophy</li> </ul>

	<p><b>Film/Music</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stanley Kubrick, <i>Space Odyssey 2001</i> (1968), Soundtrack: Richard Strauss, Thus Spoke Zarathustra <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ypEaGQb6dJk">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ypEaGQb6dJk</a></li> </ul>
<b>Session 5</b>	<p><b>Topic: Meaning, Despair, Faith</b></p> <p><b>Readings</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Søren Kierkegaard: <i>Is There Such A Thing as Teleological Suspension of the Ethical?; Is There Such A Thing as an Absolute Duty Toward God?</i> (From Fear and Trembling, 1843)</li> </ul> <p><b>Mini-presentation 1</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What philosophers did Kierkegaard meet in Berlin?</li> </ul> <p><b>Film</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Robert Bresson, <i>Pickpocket</i> (1959) <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CCZhSPwIZEg">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CCZhSPwIZEg</a></li> </ul>
<b>Session 6</b>	<b>MIDTERM EXAM</b>
<b>Session 7</b>	<p><b>Topic: The Materialist Conception of History</b></p> <p><b>Readings</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Karl Marx/Friedrich Engels: <i>Manifesto of the Communist Party</i> (1848)</li> </ul> <p><b>Mini-presentation 1</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Friedrich Engels. Marx's Capitalist Collaborator</li> </ul> <p><b>Music</b> The Internationale <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5DTbashesKic">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5DTbashesKic</a></p>
<b>Session 8</b>	<p><b>Topic: Freedom and Alienation</b></p> <p><b>Readings</b> Karl Marx/Friedrich Engels: <i>Theses ad Feuerbach</i> (1847); <i>Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts</i> (1844) <i>The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State</i> (1884)</p> <p><b>Mini-presentation 1</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Christopher Clark: The Revolutions of 1848 in Europe <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=782P0YcOOOQ&amp;t=1498s">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=782P0YcOOOQ&amp;t=1498s</a></li> </ul> <p><b>Mini-presentation 2</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Friedrich Hecker: The Impact of the Forty-Eighters on the American Civil War</li> </ul> <p><b>Mini-presentation 3</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Jenny von Westphalen. Karl Marx's Bourgeois Wife</li> </ul>

<p><b>Session 9</b></p>	<p><b>Topic: Staging Revolutions</b></p> <p><b>Readings</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vladimir Ilyich Lenin: <i>What Is To Be Done? Burning Questions of our Movement</i> (1902) <i>The Historical Destiny of the Doctrine of Karl Marx</i> (1913)</li> </ul> <p><b>Mini-presentation 1</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• William I. Prince of Grapeshtot and German Emperor</li> </ul> <p><b>Mini-presentation 2</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• History of the Berlin Palace and the Liebknecht Portal</li> </ul> <p><b>Mini-presentation 3</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wolf Biermann: The most Dangerous Poet of the GDR</li> </ul> <p><b>Film</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Armando Iannucci, <i>The Death of Stalin</i> (2017) <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E9eAshaPvYw">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E9eAshaPvYw</a></li> </ul>
<p><b>Session 10</b></p>	<p><b>Topic: The World of Human Being</b></p> <p><b>Readings</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Martin Heidegger: <i>Being and Time</i> (1927)</li> </ul> <p><b>Film</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Terrence Malick: <i>The Thin Red Line</i> (1998) <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mKl5_OxKBn8">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mKl5_OxKBn8</a></li> </ul>
<p><b>Session 11</b></p>	<p><b>Topic: Technology: The Enframing of Human Being</b></p> <p><b>Readings</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Martin Heidegger: <i>The Question Concerning Technology</i> (1954)</li> <li>• Interview with Martin Heidegger in <i>Der Spiegel</i> (1966)</li> </ul> <p><b>Mini-presentation 1</b> Martin Heidegger as Rector of the University of Freiburg</p>
<p><b>Session 12</b></p>	<p><b>Topic: Facing the Netherworld</b></p> <p><b>Readings</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Edith Stein: <i>Spirituality of the Christian Woman</i> (1931) <a href="https://www.ewtn.com/catholicism/library/edith-stein-10180">https://www.ewtn.com/catholicism/library/edith-stein-10180</a></li> </ul> <p><b>Film</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Terrence Malick: <i>A Hidden Life</i> (2019) <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qJXmdY4IVR0&amp;t=1s">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qJXmdY4IVR0&amp;t=1s</a></li> </ul>
<p><b>Session 13</b></p>	<p><b>FINAL EXAM</b></p>