

# Introduction to Continental Philosophy

## Syllabus Précis

**Instructor:** Dr. Aaron Smuts

### Description

This course is a survey of the major figures in post-Kantian continental philosophy. We will principally be concerned with how these thinkers respond to the threat of nihilism posed by the scientific revolution of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, or what Nietzsche called the "death of God." We will use Julian Young's extremely clear book *The Death of God and the Meaning of Life* as a guide through the often murky primary sources. In the first part of the course, we will study figures who attempt to find meaning through grand-historical narratives. In the second half of the course, we will examine several radically different attempts to find meaning in life.

### Texts

1. Julian Young, *The Death of God and the Meaning of Life* [DG]
2. Plato, *Phaedrus*
3. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. Miller (Oxford UP, 1977) [PS]
4. Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (Vintage, 1966) [BT]
5. Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (Vintage, 1974) [GS]
6. Heidegger, *Being in Time*, trans. Macquarrie and Robinson (Harper One, 1962) [BT]
7. Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* [BN]
8. Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus* [MS]
9. Foucault, *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (Penguin, 1994) [FR]
10. Numerous articles posted on Blackboard. [BB]

### Schedule

#### Part I: Before the Death of God

**Week 1:** Plato — Young, ch.1 | Plato, *Phaedrus*

**Week 2:** Kant and Christianity — Young, ch.2 | Kant, selections [BB]

**Week 3:** Schopenhauer — Young, ch.3 | Schopenhauer, selections [BB]

**Week 4:** Early Nietzsche — Young, ch.4 | Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*

**Week 5:** Hegel — Young, ch.5 | Hegel, "Lordship and Bondage" [PS, sec.178-196] and "Freedom of Self-Consciousness" [PS, sec.197-230]

**Week 6:** Hegel, cont. — Young, ch.6 | Hegel, "Legal Status" [PS, sec.477-523] and "Culture and its Realm of Activity" [PS, sec.488-526]

#### Part II: After the Death of God

**Week 7:** The Later Nietzsche — Young, ch.7 | Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*

**Week 8:** Posthumous Nietzsche — Young, ch.8

**Week 9:** Early Heidegger — Young, ch.9 | Heidegger, *Being and Time*, selections

**Week 10:** Sartre — Young, ch.10 | Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, selections

**Week 11:** Sartre, cont. — Young, ch.11 | Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, selections

**Week 12:** Camus — Young, ch.12 | Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*

**Week 13:** Foucault — Young, ch.13 | Foucault, "Space, Knowledge, Power" and "The Repressive Hypothesis" [FR]

**Week 14:** Derrida — Young, ch.14 | Derrida, "Difference"

**Week 15:** Kaufmann — Kaufmann, "Existentialism and Death" and "Death Without Dread"