

**Advanced Topics in Moral, Political & Legal Philosophy:
Nietzsche on Morality, Suffering, and the Value of Life**

Winter 2019

Michael Forster and Brian Leiter

Tuesdays, 4-6:30 pm

Syllabus as of January 22, 2019

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Description: Nietzsche objects to Judeo-Christian morality (and its ‘ascetic’ analogues in non-Western traditions) because he argues it is a fatal obstacle to certain kinds of human flourishing and cultural excellence. This is closely connected to his opposition to Schopenhauer’s pessimistic view that the inescapable fact of suffering renders life without value (a life without human excellence would, on Nietzsche’s view, lack value). These issues (and others, e.g., the nature of philosophy and tragedy, the conception of Dionysus) have antecedents in his early work as a scholar of antiquity and the influence of his Basel colleague, the important historian Jacob Burckhardt. Roughly the first five sessions will be devoted to reconstructing the “mature” Nietzsche’s view, as represented by the *Genealogy*, but also excerpts from *Daybreak*, *The Gay Science*, *Beyond Good and Evil*, and *Twilight of the Idols*. The remaining four sessions of the seminar will explore the historical background, in Greek literature and philosophy, the reception of Greek culture in German philosophy and by Nietzsche, and in the seminal work of his colleague Burckhardt. The ultimate goal is to reconstruct Nietzsche’s view from a philosophical point of view and, as importantly, in light of the historical context. *Open to philosophy PhD students without permission and to others with permission; those seeking permission should e-mail Leiter with a resume and a detailed description of their background in philosophy (not necessarily in the study of Nietzsche). In the event of demand, preference will be given to J.D. students with the requisite philosophy background.*

Requirements:

- (1) Attendance at *all* classes.
- (2) One 10-15 page paper on a topic chosen in consultation with the instructor(s) (longer for JD students seeking writing credit—please consult Leiter).

Required: Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality*, Clark & Swensen (Hackett, 1998) (“GM”); Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy & The Case of Wagner*, Kaufmann (Vintage, 1967) (“BT”); Jacob Burckhardt, *History of Greek Culture*, Hilty (Dover, 2002); Nietzsche, *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*, M. Cowan (Gateway/Regnery, 1999).

Recommended: Brian Leiter, *Nietzsche on Morality*, 2nd edition (Routledge, 2015) (“NOM”)

Tentative list of reading assignments (we have 9 sessions):

January 8, 2019: Nietzsche in context: the PreSocratics, Schopenhauer, Lange, naturalism

Required readings:

Preface to GM

Schopenhauer, sections 54-59 of *The World as Will and Representation, Volume I* (Payne trans.) (on Canvas)

Leiter, “The Truth is Terrible” (TLS essay on-line:

<https://www.the-tls.co.uk/articles/public/friedrich-nietzsche-truth-terrible/>)

Recommended readings:

Leiter, NOM, Chapters 1-5

Joshua Fox, “Schopenhauer and the Strong Pessimism of the Painful Life,” unpublished manuscript (on Canvas)

Other relevant literature:

Christopher Janaway, *Schopenhauer* (Oxford, 1994)

Christopher Janaway (ed.), *Willing and Nothingness: Schopenhauer as Nietzsche’s Educator* (Oxford, 1998) (the introduction is especially useful)

Leiter, “Nietzsche’s Naturalism Reconsidered,” in K. Gemes & J. Richardson (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Nietzsche* (2013) (on Canvas)

January 15, 2019: The Slave Revolt, Ressentiment, Free Will

Required readings:

GM I

Daybreak, section 109 (on Canvas)

Beyond Good and Evil, sections 195, 197-198, 201-203, 260 (on Canvas)

Twilight of the Idols, “The Four Great Errors” (on Canvas)

Recommended reading:

Leiter, NOM Chapters 6

Leiter, *Moral Psychology with Nietzsche* (Oxford, 2019), Chapter 5 (on Canvas)

Other relevant literature:

Rüdiger Bittner, “Ressentiment,” in R. Schacht (ed.), *Nietzsche, Genealogy, Morality* (U of California Press, 1994).

Christopher Janaway, *Beyond Selflessness* (Oxford, 2007), Chapter 5.

Scott Jenkins, “Ressentiment, Imaginary Revenge, and the Slave Revolt,” *Philosophy & Phenomenological Research* 96 (2018): 192-213.

Leiter, “The Paradox of Fatalism and Self-Creation in Nietzsche,” in C. Janaway (ed.), *Willing and Nothingness: Schopenhauer as Nietzsche’s Educator* (Oxford, 1998); also reprinted in J. Richardson & B. Leiter, *Nietzsche* (Oxford Readings in Philosophy, 2001).

Donald Rutherford, “Freedom as a Philosophical Ideal: Nietzsche and His Antecedents,” *Inquiry* 54 (2011): 512-540.

Avery Snelson, "The history, origin and meaning of Nietzsche's slave revolt in morality," *Inquiry* 60 (2017): 1-30.

R. Jay Wallace, "Ressentiment, Value and Self-Vindication: Making Sense of Nietzsche's Slave Revolt," in B. Leiter & N. Sinhababu (eds.), *Nietzsche and Morality* (Oxford, 2007).

January 22, 2019: Bad Conscience and Guilt

Required readings:

GM II

Daybreak, sections 9, 16, 18 (on Canvas)

Recommended reading:

Leiter, NOM Chapter 7

Other relevant literature:

Christopher Janaway, *Beyond Selflessness* (Oxford, 2007), Chapter 8

Bernard Reginster, "The Genealogy of Guilt," in S. May (ed.), *Nietzsche's On the Genealogy of Morality: A Critical Guide* (Cambridge, 2011).

Mathias Risse, "The Second Treatise in *On the Genealogy of Morality*: Nietzsche on the Origin of Bad Conscience," *European Journal of Philosophy* 9 (2001): 55-81.

January 29, 2019: The Ascetic Ideal

Required readings:

GM III

The Gay Science, Preface and sections 344 and 357

Recommended reading:

Leiter, NOM Chapter 8

Leiter, "Knowledge and Affect: Perspectivism Reconsidered," in M. Kusch et al. (eds.), *Relativism in Late 19th- and Early 20th-Century German Philosophy* (London: Routledge, forthcoming 2019). (Either the proofs or copy-edited version will be available **on Canvas**). (This essay criticizes Janaway's account, and revises my own earlier views on this topic.)

Other relevant literature:

Maudemarie Clark, *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy* (Cambridge, 1990), esp. Chapters 2-4 (on Nietzsche's evolving views about truth), and Chapters 6 (on the ascetic ideal) and Chapter 7 (on will to power).

Christopher Janaway, *Beyond Selflessness* (Oxford, 2007), Chapters 11-13 (on perspectivism, the will to truth and the ascetic ideal)

February 5, 2019: An Introduction to Nietzsche and the Greeks

Required reading:

Burckhardt, *History of Greek Culture*, Chapters 1, 4, 9.1, 11.7, 13, 15 & 16

Nietzsche, "Homer's Contest" (on Canvas)

Other relevant literature:

Jessica Berry, "Nietzsche and the Greeks," in K. Gemes & J. Richardson (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Nietzsche* (2013).

February 12, 2019: Nietzsche on the Presocratics

Required reading:

Nietzsche, *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*, in its entirety

February 19, 2019: Tragedy, Dionysos vs. Apollo, Socrates, Christianity

Required reading:

The Birth of Tragedy, in its entirety

Other relevant literature:

M.S. Silk & J.P. Stern, *Nietzsche on Tragedy* (Cambridge, 1981)

February 26, 2019: Nietzsche on Socrates and Plato

Required reading:

Twilight of the Idols, “The Problem of Socrates,” “Reason in Philosophy” and “How the ‘True World’ Finally Became a Fable” (all on Canvas)

March 5, 2019: An aesthetic “justification” of existence?

Required readings:

BT, “Attempt at Self-Criticism” (the 1886 Preface)

The Gay Science, section 341 (eternal recurrence) (on Canvas)

Leiter, “The Truth is Terrible,” *Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 49 (2018): 151-173 (on Canvas)

Recommended reading:

Ken Gemes, “Nihilism and the Affirmation of Life,” *European Journal of Philosophy* 16 (2008): 459-466 (on Canvas)

Stephen Halliwell, “Justifying the World as an Aesthetic Phenomenon,” *The Cambridge Classical Journal* 64 (2018): 91-112 (on Canvas)

Other relevant literature:

Maudemarie Clark, *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy* (Cambridge, 1990), Chapter 8 (on eternal recurrence).

Bernard Reginster, *The Affirmation of Life: Nietzsche on Overcoming Nihilism* (Harvard, 2006).

Tamsin Shaw, “The ‘Last Man’ Problem: Nietzsche and Weber on Political Attitudes to Suffering,” in M. Knoll & B. Stocker (eds.), *Nietzsche as Political Philosopher* (de Gruyter, 2014).

Learning outcomes include:

- Demonstrate an understanding of the interdisciplinary nature of law and the contributions that other disciplines can make to the study of law.