Continental Philosophy:
The Self and the Fate of the Subject
this course was designed for a dual-listed graduate/advanced undergraduate seminar

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Office Hours: xxxx
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Course Description
This course will survey some major ideas and figures in 19th and 20th-century continental philosophy by focusing on one important theme: the self and the fate of the subject. While we will have occasion throughout the semester to discuss and historically situate a number of important thinkers in the continental tradition, our emphasis will be on tracing various threads of this theme as they twist and turn through the history of the period, rather than covering any individual thinker or sub-period extensively. It is hoped that the taste for the great variety of continental thought offered in this survey will whet your appetite for further study, and that the lines of thought we trace can help to orient any future work on continental thought.

We begin with the transcendental conception of the subject in Kant’s first Critique, and then turn to the reconceptualization of this notion in Hegelian idealism. We then briefly look to several reactions to Kant and Hegel’s views on the subject later in the 19th century: Marx’s dialectical materialist account of the production of consciousness; Nietzsche’s problematizing of the relationship between the subject, language, and truth; and Freud’s exploration of the depths of the self through the notion of the unconscious. In the next part of the course, continuing our historical trajectory, we turn to the revival and revisions of the transcendental tradition in Husserl and the critiques and revisions of this notion in the early Heidegger. We then turn to the critique of such totalizing conceptions of subjectivity through the examination of identity, society, and the self-other relation in critical theory (Adorno and Horkheimer), postcolonialism (Fanon), and French feminism (Beauvoir and Irigaray). We conclude the course by looking at one more important thread: the “death” of the subject and the turn to language in hermeneutics (Ricoeur), post-structuralism (Barthes and Foucault), and deconstruction (Derrida).

Texts
The following books are required for the course:

Hegel, Phenomenology of Spirit (Trans. Miller; Oxford UP, 1977)
Heidegger, Being and Time (Trans. Macquarrie and Robinson; Harper Perennial, 2008)

All other texts will be made available online as PDFs, and you may have copies of many of them from previous courses.

Recommended secondary surveys on library reserves:
Carr, The Paradox of Subjectivity: The Self in the Transcendental Tradition
Solomon, Continental Philosophy Since 1750: The Rise and Fall of the Self

Assessment (undergraduate)
Attendance and participation 15%
VoiceThread responses 15%
4 Précis/Response Papers each 10% = 40%
Final Paper 30%
Assessment (graduate)
Attendance, participation, and VoiceThread responses: 10%
4 Précis/Response Papers each 10% = 40%
VoiceThread Facilitation Post 15%
Final Paper 35%

Grades will be posted via Blackboard. Students will receive letter grades for each form of assessment, weighed according to the percentages above to reach the final course grade according to the following scale:

- 93-100 = A
- 90-92 = A-
- 87-89 = B+
- 83-86 = B
- 80-82 = B-
- 77-79 = C+
- 73-76 = C
- 70-72 = C-
- 67-69 = D+
- 63-66 = D
- 60-62 = D-
- 0-59 = F

Class Participation and Discussion
The class will be conducted primarily as a group discussion. After some short remarks to introduce the material and to situate it in context, I will begin by posing a few general questions, or by calling on someone to summarize the issues and arguments he or she found most interesting in that day’s reading. While questions for clarification of the text are always welcome, students are also expected to raise issues to be discussed, and to respond to and constructively build off of the comments of one another. Reasoned disagreement and rigorous (but courteous) debate are encouraged. The ideal participant in class discussion will further the dialogue by offering his or her own views, with reference to the text, and listening to others with an open mind, in order to help us all arrive at a more nuanced and thoughtful understanding of the topics under discussion.

VoiceThread
We will be continuing our conversations outside of class through a course VoiceThread. VoiceThread is a web-based discussion board (linked through Blackboard) that allows you to post typed responses or recorded video or audio comments and to engage with the posts of your colleagues. Postings will serve as another form of engagement with the texts and ideas from the course and with each other, and as a record of our out-of-class conversations.

A) Facilitation Posts (graduate only)
Each graduate student will be required to sign up to record one facilitation post (5-8 minutes) in video format during the semester. These posts are effectively short, informal presentations on the day’s reading, and are intended to help set the stage for our class discussions by identifying key ideas, raising interpretive difficulties with the text(s), and suggesting a few questions to orient the discussion both on VT and in class. Facilitations must be posted at least 24 hours prior to the class in which we will be discussing the reading covered in the post. You are welcome to run ideas by me before posting. I will provide the first facilitation post as an example, and will also fill any open slots not selected by students.

B) Response Posts (undergraduate and graduate)
In addition, each student is required to make at least one response post (1-2 minutes or 150-300 words; video, audio, or text, as preferred) per week, including, for graduate students, the week in which she/he is providing the original post. These need not be done prior to the class in which the topic is discussed, but later posters are expected to respond to earlier posts in the thread, and posts must be made during the same calendar week the reading was discussed. Additional details of the project, specific procedures for posting, sign-up sheet for presentation posts, grading rubric, etc. will be posted on Blackboard and discussed in class at the beginning of the semester. We will begin using the VoiceThread the week of xx/xx.
Précis/Response Papers
For four reading assignments during the semester, each from a different unit of the course, you are expected to submit a précis (a highly concise, one-page prose summary of what you take to be the argument and most important points of the reading) followed by no more than one page of concise, critical discussion. You may choose the days/assignments for which to submit your précis, but each of them must treat a different author and each must be from a different section of the course. Graduate students: you should submit a précis for every section except the one in which you do a VoiceThread facilitation. Undergraduates: you are permitted (but not required) to submit a total of five of these assignments, one for each unit of the course. If you do so I will drop the assignment with the lowest score when calculating final grades. It is in your best interest to begin work on these early in the semester, as the feedback from the first one will be helpful in perfecting your skill for subsequent submissions. A separate handout explaining the précis assignment in more detail will be distributed at the beginning of the semester.

Final Paper
At the end of the semester, students will write a paper (graduate students: 12-15pp; undergraduates: 8-12pp), using what they learned in the course to investigate and reflect upon a more specific issue in continental philosophy, on a topic related to the course theme and cleared with me in advance (by the deadline noted on the course schedule below). The papers should evidence philosophical reflection and original thought, not mere textual summary, and should incorporate secondary literature as appropriate. The final paper will be due at the end of the exam period, by the date and time listed on the course schedule. I am happy to discuss questions related to your papers that arise in the writing process either during office hours or by email, but I will not respond to such requests initiated less than 72 hours before deadline.

Disability Assistance
[add official disability policy]

Plagiarism
[add official plagiarism policy]
Course Schedule

All readings should be completed prior to class time, and students are expected to bring copies of the day's text with them to each class. The schedule may be updated at any point during the semester, with advance notice.

I. ORIGINS OF THE TRANSCENDENTAL TRADITION AND THE QUESTION OF THE SUBJECT

meeting 1 Course Introduction, Syllabus, Introduction: Descartes, Kant and the Transcendental Tradition
Read prior to first class: Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, B Introduction B1-30 (16pp)

meeting 2 Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, B Deduction (B129-69) (24pp) (skim & compare A Deduction)

meeting 3 Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, Paralogisms (B406-32); 3rd antinomy (A444-51/ B473-80) (19pp)

meeting 4 Hegel, Phenomenology of Spirit, Introduction (10pp)

meeting 5 Hegel, Phenomenology of Spirit, Self-Consciousness: Lordship and Bondage (14pp)

meeting 6 Hegel, Phenomenology of Spirit, Self-Consciousness: Stoicism, Skepticism, and the Unhappy Consciousness (19pp)

meeting 7 Hegel, Phenomenology of Spirit, Absolute Knowing (14pp)

II. MASTERS OF SUSPICION: RE-THINKING SELF AND SUBJECT AFTER IDEALISM

meeting 8 Marx & Engels, The German Ideology, Feuerbach: Opposition of the Materialistic and Idealistic Outlook: History; Concerning the Production of Consciousness (40pp)

meeting 9 Marx, “Estranged Labor” (15pp)

meeting 10 Nietzsche, Gay Science §354; selected aphorisms on consciousness, ego, will to power

meeting 11 Freud, The Ego and the Id, Chapters 1-2 (18pp)

meeting 12 Freud, The Ego and the Id, Chapter 3 (30pp)

III. PHENOMENOLOGICAL APPROACHES TO SUBJECTIVITY

meeting 13 Sartre, “Intentionality: A Fundamental Concept of Husserl's Phenomenology” (2pp); Husserl, Cartesian Meditations, Introduction and Meditation One (26pp)

meeting 14 Husserl, Crisis §§12-21; 24-32 (40pp)

meeting 15 Husserl, “Phenomenology and Anthropology” (26pp)

meeting 16 Heidegger, Being and Time, §§5; 9-13 (29pp)

meeting 17 Heidegger, Being and Time, §§25-27; (24pp)

meeting 18 Heidegger, Being and Time, §§39-43; 45; 83 (36pp)
IV. CRITIQUE OF THE MODERN SUBJECT: SELF AND OTHER, IDENTITY, SOCIETY

meeting 19  Adorno, “On Subject and Object” (13pp);  
             Ellison, Prologue to Invisible Man (11pp)

meeting 20  Horkheimer, “Rise and Decline of the Individual” (33pp)

meeting 21  Fanon, Black Skin, White Masks, Introduction, Chapters 7-8 (31pp)

meeting 22  Beauvoir, The Second Sex, Introduction; II.1; Conclusion (34pp)

meeting 23  Irigaray, “This Sex Which is Not One” (10pp);  
             “Any Theory of ‘the Subject’ Has Always Been Appropriated by the ‘Masculine’” (13pp)

week 12  final week to meet with me to discuss final paper topics

V. AFTER THE SUBJECT? HERMENEUTICS, (POST-)STRUCTURALISM AND DECONSTRUCTION

meeting 24  Ricoeur, Freud and Philosophy, Chapter 2: “The Conflict of Interpretations” (16pp)

meeting 25  Barthes, “The Structuralist Activity” (8pp);  
             “The Death of the Author” (6pp)

meeting 26  Derrida, “Signature Event Context” (21pp)

meeting 27  Derrida & Nancy, “‘Eating Well,’ or the Calculation of the Subject” (interview) (22pp)

meeting 28  Foucault, “The Birth of a World” (interview) (5pp);  
             The Order of Things, Chapter 9, I-IV (20pp)

meeting 29  Foucault, The Order of Things, Chapter 9, V-VIII; Chapter 10, pp. 382-end (25pp)

meeting 30  Concluding discussion

xx/xx  final papers due