

Revised August 18, 2009

CONTEMPORARY CONTINENTAL TRADITION

PHIL 4090/6090 – Fall 2009

INSTRUCTOR: Dr. Beth Preston

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OFFICE HOURS: Monday & Wednesday 11:00 am – 12:00 noon

REQUIRED TEXTS

Richard Rorty	<i>Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature</i>
Jean-François Lyotard	<i>The Postmodern Condition</i>
Jean Baudrillard	<i>Simulation and Simulacra</i>

These books are available at the UGA Bookstore. You may also be able to find them at the off-campus bookstores on Baxter Street.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

‘Continental’ is contrasted with ‘analytic’ or ‘Anglo-American’ to designate an approach to philosophy that is particularly characteristic of 20th and 21st century French and German philosophers. Continental philosophers try to generate philosophical insight as much through phenomenological description and exegesis of texts as through argument. In contrast, the Anglo-American approach is much more exclusively focused on argument. This is a *methodological* contrast concerning how philosophy is done and written in these two contemporary traditions. There are also important contrasts with regard to the *content* of the philosophy itself. One of the most striking of these concerns the reception and treatment of Descartes’ philosophy. In the Anglo-American tradition the practice has been to accept Descartes’ basic assumptions and then to try to solve some of the problems they generate, such as the mind-body problem in metaphysics and skepticism in epistemology. In contrast, the Continental tradition has been increasingly anti-Cartesian in its orientation, rejecting Descartes’ basic assumptions and replacing them with a quite different set of assumptions that do not generate the standard Cartesian problems. This is why many Continental philosophers are referred to as—or refer to themselves as—*postmodern*. In this course we will focus in particular on the epistemological strand of this anti-Cartesian movement.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

- **Papers:** Three papers (minimum 8 pages, maximum 10 pages if double spaced; minimum 5 pages, maximum 7 pages if single spaced). Each paper will count for 25% of your final grade.
- **Discussion posts:** Three discussion posts. Discussion posts will count for 25% of your final grade.

Graduate students will be held to higher standards of scholarship than undergraduates on papers and discussion posts. 'Higher' in this context means better quality, not longer.

PAPER EXTENSIONS

Papers are to be handed in on the date and at the time specified in the Course Outline. If circumstances beyond your control (e.g., illness or a family emergency) make this impossible, you *must* ask for an extension. You may do this by e-mail, by phone, or in person. Extensions will not normally be granted a) retroactively, b) on the day the paper is due, or c) more than once during the semester. Documentation of the circumstances related to your request for an extension may be required.

POST REASSIGNMENTS

Posts are to be made according to a schedule to be drawn up during the first week of the course. Extensions of time will not be given for required posts, because the point of having posts is to benefit class discussion, and this benefit is heavily dependent on your classmates having the time to read and consider the posts before class. However, if circumstances beyond your control make it impossible for you to post on one of your assigned days, you may request reassignment to another day. You may do this by e-mail, by phone, or in person. Reassignments will not normally be granted a) retroactively, b) on the day the post is due, or c) more than once during the semester. Documentation of the circumstances related to your request for a post reassignment may be required.

LATE PAPERS

If you hand in a paper late without an extension, you will be penalized one half grade for every 24 hour period or fraction thereof beyond the date and time it is officially due. ***Papers that are more than three days late (72 hours, counting from the date/time the paper is due) will not be accepted, and you will be withdrawn from the course for failure to complete required work (see below).***

LATE DISCUSSION POSTS

If you post late on one of your assigned days you will be penalized one letter grade for every six hour period or fraction thereof beyond the assigned day and time. Required posts made after class time on Friday will not be accepted, and you will be given an F for that post. This grade will be averaged in with your other post grades at the end of the semester.

FAILURE TO COMPLETE REQUIRED WORK

If you fail to turn in a paper due *before* the midpoint withdrawal deadline (Thursday, October 22nd) you will be administratively withdrawn from the course with a WP. If you fail to turn in a paper due *after* the midpoint withdrawal deadline you will be administratively withdrawn from the course with a WF. The University does not allow WP's to be assigned after the midpoint withdrawal deadline. Failure to turn in a paper includes turning a paper in too late to be accepted (see Late Papers above).

Please note that the University has a new policy limiting the number of WP's you may receive in your time at UGA to *four*. This withdrawal policy and other information about withdrawals is explained at <http://www.franklin.uga.edu/students/withdraw.htm>.

Failure to complete a required post will result in an F for that post. It will be averaged in with your other post grades at the end of the semester. Failure to complete a required post includes posting too late to be accepted (see Late Discussion Posts above).

GRADING POLICIES

- *Papers* will be given letter grades, optionally followed by + or - .
- *Discussion posts* will receive whole letter grades (i.e., A, B, C, D or F). F's will be given for failure to post as required and on schedule.

At the end of the semester all the letter grades will be converted into their numerical equivalents, weighted appropriately and averaged. The average will then be converted back into a letter to obtain the final grade. The following letter-number conversions will be used in grading.

Letters to Numbers		Numbers to Letters	
A	4.0	3.8-4.00	A
A-	3.7	3.5-3.79	A-
B+	3.3	3.2-3.49	B+
B	3.0	2.8-3.19	B
B-	2.7	2.5-2.79	B-
C+	2.3	2.2-2.49	C+
C	2.0	1.8-2.19	C
C-	1.7	1.5-1.79	C-
D+	1.3		
D	1.0	0.5-1.49	D
D-	0.7		
F	0	0-0.49	F
WF	0		

LECTURE AND DISCUSSION

There are two 50 minute lectures each week on Monday and Wednesday. Reading assignments from the required texts are listed in the Course Outline. There is a 50 minute discussion period on Friday for critical appraisal of the week's readings. The reading assignment for Friday is to read the posts for that week, available after 5:00 pm on Thursday.

ATTENDANCE

Attendance is required as a matter of University policy. Attendance will be taken in each class by means of a sign-up sheet. You are expected to arrive on time for class and leave only when the whole class is dismissed.

Administrative drops: The Instructor reserves the right, at her discretion, to withdraw administratively and without notice any student who accumulates six or more unexcused absences at any point during the semester. If it is before the midpoint of the semester, you will be given a WP. If it is after the midpoint the University automatically assigns a WF.

ACADEMIC HONESTY

You are expected to abide by the standards for academic honesty established by the University of Georgia. If you have not already done so, you should familiarize yourself with these standards by reading *A Culture of Honesty*, a manual on the University academic honesty policy. You can find this online, along with a number of other useful documents pertaining to academic honesty at the University of Georgia, at http://www.uga.edu/honesty/ahpd/culture_honesty.htm. You are encouraged to work together by discussing the reading material and the paper topics with other people, and in particular with other students in the course. This constitutes an acceptable and commendable level of cooperation. However, all written work must be produced by each student independently of others. Here are some examples of activities which are *not* acceptable, and will be regarded as violating the academic honesty standards:

- Writing a paper or discussion post for another student to use, or allowing another student to write one for you.
- Collaborating with other students in the actual writing of a paper or discussion post for all the collaborators to use.
- Plagiarism – this includes but is not limited to:
 - Copying from a book, journal, or other written work without indicating that it is a quotation or acknowledging the source.
 - Copying from another student's written work without acknowledging the source.

- Paraphrasing passages from a book, journal, or other written work without acknowledging the source.
- Using other people's ideas, opinions, theories, data or statistics without acknowledging the source (unless the ideas or information in question are common knowledge).

If you have any questions about what activities constitute violations of the standards for academic honesty, either in general or with regard to this course in particular, please ask.

GUIDELINES FOR PAPERS

- **Format**
 - May be typed either single or double spaced. If single spaced, the minimum length is 5 pages and the maximum is 7 pages. If double spaced, the minimum length is 8 pages and the maximum is 10 pages. You may print double-sided if you wish.
 - Please number your pages.
 - Please make sure that spelling, punctuation and grammar in your paper are correct and consistent, otherwise it will be returned to you to be corrected before being graded.
 - Please staple or paper clip your paper. *Do not* put it in any sort of binder or folder.
 - Please make sure your name is on your paper at the top of the first page. *Do not* include a cover page.
 - Citations and bibliography must be included, and must be correctly and consistently formulated in accordance with some standard formatting style. Style sheets are available from the library. Bibliographies should be at the end of your last page rather than on a separate page.
 - Electronic submissions will *not* be accepted unless they have been approved in advance. They will ordinarily be approved *only* if documented circumstances exist which make it impossible for you to turn in a hard copy of your paper.
- **Content:** The content is specified in the paper topics. So what is really important is that you respond to the topic as written. This should be done as clearly and straightforwardly as possible. The topics are designed to be answered on the basis of the class texts and lectures alone. If you bring outside material into your paper, you do so at your own risk. Paper topics will be available about two weeks before each paper is due (see Course Outline below).
- **Evaluation:** Criteria will include, but are not necessarily limited to:
 - Understanding of material
 - Organization
 - Clarity of exposition
 - Quality of evaluation.

GUIDELINES FOR DISCUSSION POSTS

Discussion posts are to provide a basis for class discussion on Friday. So your job as a poster is to provide a critical appraisal of some part of the week's readings. You may raise a question, articulate a problem, extend an analysis, articulate a connection to previous readings, or the like. You should do this in one or two paragraphs, i.e., 150-250 words (minimum and maximum, respectively). The idea is to produce a carefully thought out and carefully written short piece that your fellow classmates may benefit from and respond to, not just a loose, stream of consciousness commentary.

Posts must be made by 5:00 pm on Thursday in order to give your classmates time to read them before class on Friday. If you are not one of the official posters for the day, but wish to make an optional post or comment on a post, you may do so up to class time on Friday. Regardless of whether your post is an optional or a required one, please bring a copy of it to class so that you may read it to the class if necessary.

COURSE OUTLINE

Aug 17	Introduction to the course
Aug 19	Rorty, Chapter I, sections 1, 2 and 3
Aug 21	Discussion Reading assignment – Dr. Preston's post, which will be sent by email this week.
Aug 24	Rorty, Chapter I, sections 4, 5 and 6
Aug 26	Rorty, Chapter II, sections 1, 2 and 3
Aug 28	Discussion: Reading assignment – student posts on WebCT
Aug 31	Rorty, Chapter II, sections 4, 5, 6 and 7
Sept 2	Rorty, Chapter III, sections 1 and 2
Sept 4	Discussion: Reading assignment – student posts on WebCT
Sept 7	LABOR DAY
Sept 9	Rorty, Chapter III, sections 3 and 4
Sept 11	Discussion: Reading assignment – student posts on WebCT Paper topics for Paper #1.
Sept 14	Rorty, Chapter IV, sections 1, 2 and 3
Sept 16	Rorty, Chapter IV, sections 4 and 5
Sept 18	Discussion: Reading assignment – student posts on WebCT
Sept 21	Rorty, Chapter VI, sections 1, 2 and 3
Sept 23	Rorty, Chapter VI, sections 4, 5 and 6
Sept 25	Discussion: Reading assignment – student posts on WebCT
Sept 28	Rorty, Chapter VII, sections 1 and 2 Paper #1 due in class.
Sept 30	Rorty, Chapter VII, sections 3 and 4
Oct 2	Discussion: Reading assignment – student posts on WebCT
Oct 5	Rorty, Chapter VIII, sections 1, 2 and 3
Oct 7	Rorty, Chapter VIII, sections 4 and 5
Oct 9	Discussion: Reading assignment – student posts on WebCT

Oct 12	Baudrillard, 1-14
Oct 14	Baudrillard, 14-27
Oct 16	Discussion: Reading assignment – student posts on WebCT Paper topics for Paper #2.
Oct 19	Baudrillard, 27-42
Oct 21	Baudrillard, 43-57
Oct 22	MIDPOINT WITHDRAWAL DEADLINE
Oct 23	Discussion: Reading assignment – student posts on WebCT
Oct 26	Baudrillard, 59-73
Oct 28	Baudrillard, 75-94
Oct 30	FALL BREAK
Nov 2	Baudrillard, 95-109 Paper #2 due in class.
Nov 4	Baudrillard, 111-127
Nov 6	Discussion: Reading assignment – student posts on WebCT
Nov 9	Baudrillard, 129-148
Nov 11	Baudrillard, 149-164
Nov 13	Discussion: Reading assignment – student posts on WebCT
Nov 16	Liotard, Introduction and Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5
Nov 18	Liotard, Chapters 6, 7 and 8
Nov 20	Discussion: Reading assignment – student posts on WebCT
Nov 23-27	THANKSGIVING BREAK
Nov 30	Liotard, Chapters 9, 10 and 11 Paper topics for Paper #3.
Dec 2	Liotard, Chapters 12 and 13
Dec 4	Discussion: Reading assignment – student posts on WebCT
Dec 7	Liotard, Chapter 14 and Appendix
Dec 8	Discussion: Reading assignment – student posts on WebCT (Please note that UGA is operating on a <i>Friday</i> class schedule today.)
Dec 9	Reading Day
Dec 14	Paper #3 due at 10:00 am.

PLEASE NOTE

An electronic copy of this syllabus is available on the Philosophy Department web site (<http://www.phil.uga.edu>) under Courses, and also on the class WebCT site. This syllabus is intended for guidance only, and is subject to change. Changes will be announced in class and a revised version of the syllabus will be posted on WebCT and on the Philosophy Department web site.