

Nietzsche and the Thinking of History (Autumn 17)
PHL 525.101 (#16250)
W 3-6:15 pm
Arts and Letters 303

Sean D. Kirkland
2352 N. Clifton, 150.31
Office Hours: Th 3-5 pm & by appt.
skirkland@depaul.edu

Nietzsche closes the preface of his essay, “On the Use and Disadvantage of History for Life,” the second of his *Untimely Meditations* (1873-1876), with the following statement: “I do not know what meaning classical studies could have for our time if they were not untimely—that is to say, acting counter to our time and thereby acting on our time and, let us hope, for the benefit of a time to come.” That is, for Nietzsche, the past is to be considered always and only as *our* past, or as the past of *the present*, i.e. as the historical figures, texts, and events that have generated our own concepts, principles, and values, all of which are still determining and setting the horizon for our experience of and our thinking about our world and ourselves. Our task in taking up our history is not to arrive, then, at the objective truth of what occurred or what a given author had in mind in some now long dead historical moment. Rather, as we shall come to see, with Nietzsche we are called upon to access the past as text and read through it to its sources, to the complex play of forces that subtend the text and give rise to it. And that project, Nietzsche insists here, can be “untimely,” in that it can have a disruptive and even a destructive influence on the present. But it is precisely here that we encounter a certain tension in Nietzsche’s thinking of history and we will attend to that tension this quarter. For we will ask, how is it that the past, which delivers up the historical content that is passed down to us and determines our present, can also be the source of impulses or insights that serve to disrupt that very present? What explains this fundamentally ambivalent power of history? How can our history be both oppressive and the ultimate source of our liberation? That is the question we will be posing this quarter, investigating the various characterizations of the project, from radicalized ‘philology,’ to radicalized ‘history,’ to radicalized ‘genealogy.’ These are ‘radical’ in the sense of pushing the tasks and methods that these terms name down to their *radix* or ‘root, source.’ Finally, we will ask, in what sense is Nietzschean philology/history/genealogy is most of all related neither to the past nor to the present but to the future, insofar as it incorporates a certain openness and indeterminacy into the thinking it grounds and the creative comportment it hopes to encourage.

Required Readings (Available at the Lincoln Park Campus Bookstore)

1. **(HC)** Nietzsche, F. “Homer’s Contest.” In *The Nietzsche Reader*. Ed. K. A. Pearson and D. Large. London: Blackwell, 2006. (ISBN 978-0-631-22654-3)
2. **(GS)** Nietzsche, F. “Greek State.” In *The Nietzsche Reader*.
3. **(OTL)** Nietzsche, F. “On Truth and Lying in an Extra-Moral Sense.” In *The Birth of Tragedy*.
4. **(BT)** Nietzsche, F. *The Birth of Tragedy*. Ed. R. Geuss and R. Spiers. Tr. R. Speirs. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1872/1999. (ISBN 978-0-52163-987-3)
5. **(PTAG)** Nietzsche, F. *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*. Tr. M. Cowan. Washington, D.C.: Regnery Publishing, 1962. (ISBN 0-895-26-710-1)
6. **(UDHL)** Nietzsche, F. “On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life.” In *Untimely Meditations*. Tr. R.J. Hollingdale. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997. (ISBN 0-521-58584-8)
7. **(GM)** Nietzsche, F. *On the Genealogy of Morals*. Tr. C. Diethe. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997. (ISBN 978-0-521-69163-5)

All the above texts are also available in the library in the Reserves for this class.

Schedule (subject to change)

9.6 OTL, GS, and HC	10.11 UDHL
9.13 <i>BT</i>	10.18 UDHL
9.20 <i>BT</i>	10.25 <i>GM</i>
9.27 <i>PTAG</i>	11.1 <i>GM</i>
10.4 <i>PTAG</i>	11.8 <i>GM</i>

Final Essays Due
Monday 6.7, 5 pm, My Mailbox,
Dept. of Philosophy, 2352 N. Clifton
(No E-Submissions, No Late
Submissions)

Grade		
Class Presentation	20%	
Paper (12-15 pages)	60%	(DUE Friday 11.17, No Late Submissions)
Attendance and Participation	20%	= 100%

DO NOT BE LATE TO CLASS. DO NOT MISS CLASS. Obviously, plagiarism is frowned upon and one should steer well clear of it.

If any student has any condition or encounters circumstances that interfere with his or her timely completion of the assignments, please do let me know and we will endeavor to make arrangements.