Description:
The work of the German philosopher Martin Heidegger has changed the face of continental philosophy completely. Like Kant’s Critiques and Hegel’s Phenomenology at the end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th centuries, Heidegger’s Being and Time marks a watershed of thought: Everything that came before it appears in a new light, and everything that follows it has wrestled with its insights. Heidegger’s basic questions appear simple: “What is the meaning of Being?” and “What does it mean even to ask this question?” But Heidegger also tells us that he wants to work out the meaning of the question of Being concretely, not abstractly. Our task will be to follow Heidegger through the concrete development of this question, and to begin to understand how we humans, being-in-the-world, are uniquely those beings for whom this question of Being has ultimate significance.

Texts:
- I will put several texts on reserve that may be consulted for help in understanding Heidegger. Such texts will be a supplement to and not a substitute for daily reading and preparation.

Objectives:
Our main objective is to understand Heidegger, that is, to learn to think with him as he teaches himself and us how to think through the question of the meaning of being. At first blush, this means that we must strive to understand what Heidegger means by saying that “time is the possible horizon for any understanding whatsoever of Being.” However, we cannot jump straight to the conclusion. That goal—one of understanding Being in the horizon of Time—will require us to study and become familiar not only with traditional philosophical terms—substance, essence, truth, ontology, phenomenology, objectivity, subjectivity—but especially with the concrete terms Heidegger develops to think out his new philosophy: Dasein, being-in-the-world, care, being-with others, thrownness, falling, authenticity, being-towards-death, guilt, the concrete situation, the moment of insight, temporality and the ekstases of time, and so on. Our ultimate goal is to learn to think with Heidegger in new ways about the fundamental question of the meaning of existence.

Finally, we will practice the skill of what the philosopher Nietzsche has called “slow reading”: “This art does not so easily get anything done, it teaches to read well, that is to say, to read slowly, deeply, looking cautiously before and aft, with reservations, with doors left open, with delicate eyes and fingers...” (F. Nietzsche, Preface to Daybreak). We will learn to read slowly, think carefully, and question deeply.

Classroom Method and Daily Expectations:
The above remarks on slow reading are apropos of both methods we will employ in the classroom. Nietzsche is right on both counts: slow reading does not get much done yet it teaches to read well. Therefore we will employ it, but not exclusively, for we want not only to read well, but to get some Heidegger under our belts, or inside our heads. I will mix lecture and a more interactive technique of interpreting passages together and trying to flesh out ideas from our own experience of the world.
You should come to class having read the text carefully, with a questioning and venturesome spirit, ready to contribute to our common understanding. The specific sections assigned to be read through each day should not only be read but studied, prepared, complete with notes and questions. No serious philosophy student reads any other way—always with a notebook and pencil in hand. It will take some time—a lifetime!—to learn what best to write down, but one way to start is to check that you make sure what Heidegger has introduced or emphasized or summarized in each ¶—or sometimes several paragraphs taken together. Helpful, intelligent questions only emerge from such careful, questioning reading. I may assign short, written reflections on specific passages in order to prepare for class discussion; such assignments are due on the day assigned and by their very purpose cannot be made up or turned in late. At times, unannounced quizzes may be used to ascertain that students are keeping up with reading as well as to assess levels of understanding.

There is no formula or clinical procedure for doing such close reading: one simply begins and works at it. One thing to remark is that such study requires a spirit of generosity, both towards the writer and towards the reader— one has to assume that the thinker saw deeply into a problem and tried to illuminate it, and one also has to assume that this insight is accessible to the reader with an active and open mind.

I will also expect you to be able to communicate by e-mail, as I will send out various clarifications, study questions, exam reviews, etc., this way. The schedule of readings will be kept on the web:

http://employees.csbsju.edu/dbeach/phil341/reading.htm

Requirements and Grading:
The section on daily expectations outlines a good part of the requirements. I should add that one is expected to demonstrate the required preparation by active participation—not simple “presence-at-hand”—in class. The attendance policy is strict: I allow no freebies, will begin to harass you after the second unexcused absence, and will drop your participation grade to a “D” at the 3rd, and remove you from the class roster at the 4th. Absences may be excused if you contact me ahead of time, but only for illness or family emergencies. Doctor’s appointments are unexcused. All absences, whether excused or not, should be communicated to me ASAP, ideally before the absence; failure to do so makes the absence count double.

Grading will be based as follows. You must pass each of the graded parts to pass the course.

- Three Exams: Monday, October 10 (30% of final grade); Monday, November 21 (35%); and Tuesday, December 20, 8-10 AM (15%). The Final exam will be shorter in scope than the two previous exams to allow time for work on the final paper.
  *NB: We may revisit this schedule once we can assess our progress and ability to stay on course.
- Final Paper: 20% (more details to follow).
- Participation will act as a “ceiling” for your final grade; that is, participation at a “C” or “B” level will mean that the final grade can be no higher than this participation “ceiling.”

Missing an exam results in an automatic grade of F/zero.