

## PHIL341-01A: Continental Philosophers: Heidegger

2-4-6, 2:40 – 3:50, Quad 343

Dennis Beach, OSB

Office hours: 1-3-5: 1:00-4:30; 2-4-6: after class  
afternoons & evenings (Mary Hall 229) by appointment

### 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:

- ❑ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*. Translated by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1962 (1927).
- ❑ William Blattner. *Heidegger's Being and Time: A Reader's Guide*. London: Continuum, 2007. (Not required. It has just been reprinted, and I have ordered a copy for the library reserve).

### Additional Resources:

- ❑ I have put several books on reserve in Alcuin Library that may be helpful in understanding Heidegger's ideas and presentation. These are not a substitute for the text of *Being and Time*!
  - Dreyfus, Hubert L. *Being-in-the-World : A Commentary on Heidegger's Being and Time*, Division I. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991.
  - Gelven, Michael. *A Commentary on Heidegger's Being and Time*. DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 1989.
  - Inwood, M. J. *Heidegger*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.
  - Kaelin, Eugene Francis. *Heidegger's Being and Time: A Reading for Readers*. Tallahassee: Florida State University Press, 1988.
  - Kisiel, Theodore J. *The Genesis of Heidegger's Being and Time*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993.
  - Mulhall, Stephen. *Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Heidegger and Being and Time*. London: Routledge, 1996.
- ❑ Additionally, Professor Hubert Dreyfus's Fall 2007 lecture course on *Being and Time*, Division I (through §44) is available free as an archived podcast, either through iTunes (search for "Philosophy 185: Heidegger" in iTunes) or as streaming/downloadable audio files here: [http://webcast.berkeley.edu/course\\_details.php?seriesid=1906978475](http://webcast.berkeley.edu/course_details.php?seriesid=1906978475).

### 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. 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 – 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 vocabulary 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. 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 Friedrich 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...” (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 pen or 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 to make sure you know what Heidegger has introduced or emphasized or summarized in each paragraph – 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. If necessary, unannounced quizzes may be used to ascertain that students are keeping up with reading as well as to assess initial 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 the course Moodle site:

<https://moodle.csbsju.edu/course/view.php?id=382>

### **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, February 18 (30% of final grade); Thursday, April 10 (30%); and Wednesday, May 9, at 8:00-10:00 AM (15%). The Final exam will be somewhat shorter in scope than the two previous exams to allow time for work on the final paper.
- ❑ Final Paper: 20% (more details to follow).
- ❑ Quizzes, electronic postings, etc.: 5%.
- ❑ 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.