# Late Modern Philosophy

## The End of Modernity from Hegel to Wittgenstein (1800-1950)

PHIL 3XX- Late Modern Philosophy: the 19th to 20th Century (Sample Syllabus)

J.W. Symington IV, Ph.D.
Department of Philosophy

# COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course examines the dissolution of modern philosophy's faith in reason, progress, and metaphysical unity. Beginning with Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit, we trace how nineteenth and twentieth century thinkers expose the limits of Enlightenment rationality and reimagine the meaning of existence, history, and language.

From Hegel's dialectical idealism to Marx's material critique, Kierkegaard's paradox of faith, Nietzsche's revaluation of values, Husserl's crisis of reason, Heidegger's question of Being, and Wittgenstein's analysis of language, we will explore how philosophy turns inward toward consciousness, experience, and expression and ultimately question whether or not it confronts its own historical end.

Key themes include the collapse of metaphysical systems, the problem of alienation, the crisis of meaning, and the transformation of thought from transcendence to immanence. The course concludes by asking: what remains of philosophy when its modern foundations give way?

# COURSE READING LIST

1.     G.W.F Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A.V. Miller (Oxford University Press, 1977).

2.     Karl Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, trans. Martin Milligan, (Prometheus Books, 1988).

3.     Søren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, trans. Alastair Hannay (Penguin Classics, 1985).

4.     Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality*, trans. Maudemarie Clark & Alan J. Swensen (Hackett, 1998).

5.     Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, trans. David Carr (Northwestern University Press, 1970).

6.     Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Joan Stambaugh, rev. Dennis J. Schmidt (State University Of New York Press, 2010). "The Question Concerning Technology," in *Basic Writings*, ed. David Farrell Krell (HarperCollins, 1993).

7.     Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, trans. David Pears & Brian McGuinness (Routledge, 1961). *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G.E.M. Anscombe, P.M.S. Hacker, & J. Schulte (Wiley-Blackwell, 2009).

# COURSE SCHEDULE

**Week 1:** Introduction, The End of Modernity; What is "Modernity" and has it ended? Overview of post- Enlightenment philosophy and continuities from the early modern period.

**Weeks 2-3:** Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Preface, Lordship and Bondage); Dialectic, self-consciousness, history as Spirit, freedom through recognition.

**Week 4:** Hegel's Legacy: the Dialectic in History. From Spirit to materiality.

**Weeks 5-6:** Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*; alienation, labor, materialism, critique of idealism and capital.

**Week 7:** Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling*; paradox of faith, individuality, subjectivity, and despair.

**Weeks 8-9:** Nietzsche's *On the Genealogy of Morality*; Nihilism, genealogy, the will to power, death of god, and revaluation of values.

**Week 10:** Husserl's *The Crisis of European Sciences*; phenomenology, lifeworld, rationality, and the loss of meaning.

**Weeks 11-13:** Heideggar's *Being and Time* and "The Question Concerning Technology"; the essence of modern technology, enframing, and the danger of representation.

**Weeks 14-16:** Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, and *Philosophical Investigations*; language-games, meaning as use, and the dissolution of philosophical problems with a final reflection on Kant and Herder.

# ASSIGNMENTS AND EVALUATION

- Reading Responses (15%): Short reflections linking each philosopher to the overarching theme of modernity's crisis.

- Midterm Essay (30%): Write a 5-8 page essay comparing two philosophers' approaches to history, reason, or existence (e.g., Hegel vs. Marx, or Nietzsche vs. Heidegger, etc.)

- Final Essay (30%): 8-10 page essay on the philosophical meaning of modernity's end (e.g., "From Being to Language: Heidegger and Wittgenstein").

- Participation (25%): Active engagement through attendance, discussion and textual interpretation.

# COURSE POLICIES

- Attendance: Required. More than three absences may affect your final grade.

- Late Work: Accepted with penalty unless arranged in advance.

- Academic Integrity: All writing must be original and properly cited. Plagiarism will result in failure for the assignment.

- Accessibility: Students with accommodations are encouraged to contact the instructor early in the semester.

- AI Use Policy: Generative AI tools may be used to assist brainstorming or structure but **NOT** to generate your analysis.