

PHIL 6203: SEMINAR IN ETHICS
Spring, 2005

The Ethics of Inauthenticity

Syllabus

Meeting time: Monday, 7:00-10:00 PM, 607 Dale Hall Tower
Instructor: Zev Trachtenberg, 610 DaHT, 325-6324
ztrachtenberg@ou.edu
Office hours: M 3:30-4:30, T 9:30-10:30; and by appointment

Course goals:

This seminar will explore the ethical implications of the human ability to conceal one's "true" self. The goal of the seminar is to show how the notion of self-concealment prompts an array of further questions, e.g. about knowledge of self and others, and about human identity, among many others. I hope that over the term we will be able to articulate clearly and specifically the web of ideas connected to self-concealment.

The seminar has two additional goals. First, we shall work through four influential and difficult books by prominent thinkers who have tried to grapple with deep problems in rather sweeping ways. Thus, we shall try simply to grasp the points of view these books express. Second, a recurring theme in each book is the role of literature in ethical thinking. Thus, we shall consider how each author presents the relationship between philosophy and literature. This is particularly important because the issue of self-concealment is prominent in much literature, in particular in works of drama. I hope that as we discuss that issue we will be able to incorporate discussions of literary works – and that we will be guided by our main readings to do this in sophisticated and interesting ways.

Course work and grading:

Your main work for the course will consist of an APA-style conference paper (3000 words max.) and an APA-style comment (1000 words max.). Students will present their papers and comments in APA-style sessions during the last three weeks of the term. After the presentations you will have the opportunity to revise your paper for final submission to me.

In order to keep to the schedule of presentations, and to allow students time to prepare their comments, I will not accept late conference papers. Although I

encourage you to submit your revised paper by the end of the exam period, I will grant Incompletes to students for whom this is impossible.

In addition, for each class you will submit a summary of an assigned passage from the reading for that day (250-300 words). The purpose of the summary is to reveal the main points of the author's argument; I will ask you to begin the class discussion of the passage by presenting your summary. I will not accept late summaries; however, you may submit yours even if you have to miss class, as long as I receive it by class time.

The grade for your conference paper will count for 50% of your final grade. Your comment will count for 25%. The remaining 25% of your final grade will be based on the number and quality of your paraphrases and the regularity and quality of your participation in class discussions.

University policies:

Academic conduct

I will rigorously enforce the University's policies on academic conduct, as set forth in the Student Handbook. In written work you must cite all the sources you consult. However, respect for academic honesty is consistent with discussing the ideas of the course with others. I urge you to discuss the issues of the course outside of class--but you must do your written work on your own, and must cite any assistance you receive from others. Please ask me if you have any questions about academic honesty in general, or about specific situations that might arise during this course.

Religious observances

It is the policy of the University to excuse the absences of students that result from religious observances and to provide without penalty for the rescheduling of examinations and additional required classwork that may fall on religious holidays. If any assignment in this class conflicts with your religious observance, or if you have any questions on this matter, please contact me.

Reasonable accommodation

If you have a disability that may prevent you from fully demonstrating your understanding of the material in this course you should contact me personally as soon as possible so we can discuss accommodations necessary to ensure your full participation and to facilitate your educational opportunities. Students with disabilities must be registered with the Office of Disability Services prior to receiving accommodations in this course. The Office of Disability Services is

located in Goddard Health Center, Suite 166, phone 405/325-3852 or TDD only 405/325-4173.

Assigned texts:

Stanley Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, Oxford University Press, ISBN 019513107X
Martha Nussbaum, *Love's Knowledge*, Oxford University Press, ISBN 0195074858
Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, Harvard University Press, ISBN 0674824261
Lionel Trilling, *Sincerity and Authenticity*, Harvard University Press, ISBN 0674808614

Week-by-week schedule:

- Jan. 24: Introduction to the course
- Jan. 31: Trilling, I-III
- Feb. 7: Trilling, IV-VI
- Feb. 14: Cavell, IX-XII
- Feb. 21: Cavell, pp. 327-411
- Feb. 28: Cavell, pp. 411-496
- March 7: Taylor, 1-4
- March 21: Taylor, 5-11
- March 28: Taylor, 18-21, 25
- Apr. 4: Nussbaum, 1-2
- Apr. 11: Nussbaum, 5, 6, 11
- Apr. 18: Presentations 1-3
- Apr. 25: Presentations 4-6
- May 2: Presentations 5-9