

UC Center Program Courses - Fall 2005

PCC 126. PHILOSOPHY IN THE STREETS: 1968 AND AFTER

Lecture

Prof. [Oliver Feltham](#)

Wed 9 - noon

Section

Section Tutor [Kristen Irwin](#)

Thu 4 - 5 pm

*This course is an introduction to post-war French philosophy for undergraduates with no or little prior knowledge in philosophy. It explores the different tendencies of French thought in their historical and political contexts, and in relation, specifically, to the "events" of 1968, a date with mythic significance in French society and culture. The course focuses on the multiple relations between philosophy and politics in and around 1968, and on the fate of both in France today. [Philosophy, History, Political Science, Communications, French Studies], meets twice a week, **6.0 credits**.*

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The ambition of the course is to encourage students to formulate their own questions about contemporary French philosophy and its historical context by relating this philosophy to one of the most spontaneous and enigmatic outbursts of political energy in the twentieth century: the events of May 68.

The course, thus, has three aims:

1. To present a historically grounded overview of post-war French philosophy
2. To focus on the events of May '68 and to examine their effects on French philosophy (and French philosophers)
3. To consider how French philosophical thought has been transformed as it travelled, especially to the United States, under the names of 'post-structuralism', 'postmodernism', 'French theory', and 'cultural politics'.

COURSE MATERIALS

- Eric Matthews, *Twentieth Century French Philosophy*, Oxford University Press, 1996
- Course Reader ([CR] hereafter)

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

- class attendance and participation (20%)
- weekly writing assignments (2 page reaction papers): 25%
- midterm: 25%
- final exam: 30%

COURSE SCHEDULE

Part I: The Ends of Man

Week 1. September 12-16

Introduction: the Background to May '68, the Political and Philosophical Stakes

Week 2. September 19-23

Sartre and Existentialism

- Selection from Sartre, "[Existentialism is a Humanism](#)"
- Eric Matthews, "Sartre" in *20th Century French Philosophy*, pp. 58-82

Week 3. September 26-30

Althusser and Marxism

- K.Marx & F.Engels, [The Communist Manifesto](#)
- Louis Althusser, "On the Materialist Dialectic" (selection) in *For Marx*, Verso, 1986, pp. 161-217 [CR]
- Eric Matthews, "Three French Marxists" in *French Philosophy*, pp. 126-134

Week 4. October 3-7

Levi-Strauss and Structuralism

- Claude Levi-Strauss, "Structural Analysis in Linguistics and Anthropology" in *Structural Anthropology*, Basic Books, 1963, pp. 31-54 [CR]

Part II: Under the Paving Stones, the Beach

Week 5. October 10-14

May '68: the Events and the Action Committees

- Kristin Ross, "Forms and Practices" in *May '68 and its Afterlives*, University of Chicago Press, 2002, pp. 65-79 [CR]
- Marguerite Duras, "20th May 68': Description of the Birth of the Students-Writers Action Committee" in *Literary Debate: Texts and Contexts*, New Press, 1999, pp. 397-403 [CR]

Week 6. October 17-21

May '68: Events and Ideas

- Roland Barthes, "Writing the Event" in *Literary Debate*, pp. 404-409 [CR]
- Jean-Paul Sartre, "France : Masses, Spontaneity, Party" & "The Communists Are Afraid of the Revolution" in *Between Existentialism and Marxism*, Pantheon Books [CR]

MIDTERM EXAM

Week 7. October 24-28

Guest Lecture

Etienne Balibar (Emeritus Professor) presents “In 1968 Philosophers Dispute the Revolution”

FALL BREAK

Part III: Philosophy after the Event

Week 8. November 7-10

Foucault and Power

- Foucault, “Two Lectures” in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*, Pantheon Book, 1980, pp. 78-108 [CR]
- Eric Matthews, “Lacan and Foucault” in *French Philosophy*, pp. 147-156

Week 9. November 14-18

Deleuze and Guattari

- Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari, “The Desiring-Machines” (selection) in *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, University of Minnesota Press, 1983, pp. 1-22 [CR]
- Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari, “Deleuze and Guattari Fight Back” & “On Capitalism and Desire” in *Desert Islands and Other Texts 1953-1974*, Semiotexte, 2004, pp. 216-229 & pp. 262-273 [CR]

Week 10. November 21-15

Kristeva and the Semiotic

- Julia Kristeva, “The System and the Speaking Subject” in *The Kristeva Reader*, Blackwell, 1996, pp. 24-34 [CR]
- Eric Matthews, “Recent French Feminists” in *French Philosophy*, pp. 194-200

Week 11. November 28-December 2

Derrida and Difference

- Jacques Derrida, “Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences” in *Writing and Difference*, University of Chicago Press, 1978, pp. 278-293 [CR]
- Jacques Derrida, “Interview with Jean-Louis Houbedine” (selection) in *Positions*, Continuum, 2002, pp. 37-63 [CR]
- Eric Matthews, “Levinas, Derrida and Lyotard” in *French Philosophy*, pp. 165-178

Week 12. December 5-9

Badiou and the Event

- A. Badiou, “Philosophy and Politics” in *Infinite Thought: Truth and the Return to Philosophy*, J. Clemens & O. Feltham eds. & trans., Continuum, 2003, pp. 69-78. [CR]

- A.Badiou, "Politics as Truth Procedure" in *Theoretical Writings*, Continuum, 2004, pp. 153-160. [CR]

Week 13. December 12-16

Review and Conclusion

- A.Badiou & P.Hallward, "Politics and Philosophy: an Interview with Alain Badiou" in *Angelaki: Journal of the Theoretical Humanities*, vol.3, n.3, 1998, pp. 113-133 [CR]

FINAL EXAM