

Syllabus

Course Description

This seminar will be an introduction to the work of Søren Kierkegaard. No previous acquaintance with Kierkegaard's work will be presupposed. The bulk of the seminar will be devoted to a careful reading of portions of *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* by Johannes Climacus. Johannes Climacus is one of Kierkegaard's pseudonymous authors. In an addendum to the work authored by Kierkegaard himself, Kierkegaard insists that it would involve the greatest possible misunderstanding of the work to attribute anything in it directly to Kierkegaard himself. One of the goals of the seminar will be to try to understand why Kierkegaard says this and what it might mean for someone to write a book of which he is not the author.

We will begin by reading several writings that are authored by Kierkegaard himself (rather than one of his pseudonyms) in order to gain some orientation in Kierkegaard's thought and some sense of the philosophical concerns underlying his strategy of pseudonymous authorship. We will then turn to a careful reading of the *Postscript* itself, to which most of the seminar will be devoted.

The format of the seminar will be a discussion of the weekly reading assignment among the participants. There will be no lectures and it will make no sense for anyone to attend who is not doing the reading carefully.

Course Requirements

The only requirement for the course will be a seminar-length paper due at the end of the quarter.

Readings

The following books are for sale at the Seminary Co-op and are required for the course:

Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, Vol. I

Kierkegaard, *The Diary of Søren Kierkegaard*

There is also a course packet of readings for sale in the Classics Building Copy Center and all of the readings in it are required for the course.

The following additional books are also for sale at the Seminary Co-op and are recommended but not required:

Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, Vol. II

Kierkegaard, *The Point of View for My Work as an Author*

Kierkegaard, *The Two Ages*

Reading Assignments

All items marked with an asterisk are in the Course Packet of xeroxed readings.

All page references to *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* are to the edition ordered for the course. We ordered that edition because it is the only one in print. The previous translation of the *Postscript* (also published by Princeton) by Walter Lowrie is arguably superior and certainly more readable. Students who wish to are welcome to use that edition instead.

September 26:

Introductory Meeting

October 3:

Required:

The Diary of Søren Kierkegaard, §§ 126-8, 133-4, 139, 146, 148, 150-159, 163, 179

Items 8 & 9 (in the Course Packet)*

Recommended:

The Diary of Søren Kierkegaard, the rest of the book

Plato, *Theatetus*, 149b-151e*, *Apology*, *Crito*, *Phaedo* 114d-118

Gregory Vlastos, "Socratic Irony"

- October 10: *The Present Age** & item 7 (in the Course Packet)*
- October 17: *Point of View**
- October 24: *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*: “Appendix: An Understanding with the Reader” (pp. 617-623 in the Hong edition); “A First and Last Explanation” (pp. 625-630 in the Hong edition); Footnote on *Philosophical Fragments* (pp. 270n-277n in the Hong edition)
- October 31: *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*: Preface; Introduction; Part One, Chapter One, § 1 (pp. 5-34 in the Hong edition)
- Gotthold Ephriam Lessing, “On the Proof of the Spirit and of Power”*
- November 7: *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*: Part One, Chapter One, §§ 2 & 3; Part One, Chapter Two (pp. 34-57 in the Hong edition)
- November 14: *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*: Part Two, Section One, §§ 1-3 (pp. 59-106 in the Hong edition)
- F. H. Jacobi and G. E. Lessing “The Spinoza Conversations”*
- November 21: Thanksgiving (class will not meet)
- November 28: *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*: Part Two, Section One, § 4; Part Two, Section Two, Chapter One (pp. 106-188)
- December 5: *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, selection to be announced

Course Packet Contents

1. F. H. Jacobi and G. E. Lessing “The Spinoza Conversations”
2. Søren Kierkegaard, *Point of View for my Work as an Author*, selections.
3. Søren Kierkegaard, *The Present Age*. [pp. 33-86]
4. Gotthold Ephriam Lessing, “On the Proof of the Spirit and of Power”
5. Plato, *Theatetus*, 149b-151e.
6. Gregory Vlastos, “Socratic Irony”
7. Handout of re-translation of passages.
8. Handout of quotations on Socrates.
9. Handout on irony.

Giving Kierkegaard the Last Word

When I am dead there will be something for the university lectures to poke into. The abject scoundrels! And yet, what's the use, what's the use? Even though this be printed and read again and again, the lecturers will still make a profit out of me, maybe adding a comment like this: “The peculiar thing about this is that it cannot be taught.”

Diary, § 179