

Professor Karin Bauer, Dept. of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures—German Studies
email: karin.bauer@mcgill.ca MW 11:32am -12:55pm
virtual office hours (Zoom): by appointment, signup will be available

Fall 2020 GERM 355: Nietzsche and Wagner

Mode of Delivery & Technical Requirements

All activities and assessments are done remotely. There will be no in-person activities or assessments and no assessment of fixed Zoom class meetings. Within a set timeframe you will have the flexibility to complete the readings, activities, and assignments at a time of your choosing. Please see due dates on syllabus and calendar on myCourses for specific deadlines. You are asked to complete the modules in the sequence indicated.

All participants are required to have access to a computer, the internet, and a microphone. We will use Zoom as one mode of communication (see below for instructions to set up Zoom).

You will receive a Zoom invitation for our first meeting on September 2 at 11:35 am EST. Our next Zoom meeting will be on September 16, 11:35am (see syllabus and calendar for the other meeting dates). The Zoom meetings are the only class activity on a fixed schedule; all Zoom class sessions will be recorded and posted on myCourses for the benefit of those who cannot join live. Joining Zoom meetings is recommended but not required or assessed.

Introductory video:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1NjnPXBUzioT40Sir0PoKs-PBHO2Z565o/view?usp=sharing>

Content

This course examines the complex relationship between the philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche and the composer Richard Wagner. Focusing on issues of cultural modernity, it investigates how their work reflects in different ways the ambiguities of modern art, music, and thought. Beginning with Wagner's and Nietzsche's early writings, the course situates the two men in their historical context and analyzes the similarities and difference of their styles and thought, including their views of art, music, and philosophy. Their years of friendship and shared hope for the renewal of art provide the basis for understanding the increasing tension between the two men, which led to a break in their friendship. The "deadly insult" that Wagner supposedly inflicted upon Nietzsche aside, the critique of Wagner becomes synonymous with Nietzsche's critique of modernity and decadence; Wagner serves as a case study for a diagnosis of the modern condition.

The readings focus on analyses of Wagner's revolutionary impulses, the notion of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, the problem of anti-Semitism, Nietzsche's world-shattering ideas, styles and use of irony. Consideration will be given to the reception of Wagner and Nietzsche from the late 19th century, early 20th Century and postmodernism.

We will also read Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice*, a novella that interweaves several Nietzschean and Wagnerian themes and that has special relevance today, a destabilizing period of history marked by the anxieties of a global pandemic.

Objectives

The objectives include in-depth knowledge of some of Nietzsche's major works related to his critique of Wagner, modernity, decadence, morality, and aesthetics; a good understanding of Nietzsche's philosophical project; in-depth knowledge of selected Wagner texts and a music drama; a good understanding of Wagner's aesthetics and early revolutionary politics; a solid grasp of issues related to anti-Semitism in relation to Wagner and the 19th and 20th centuries; a good understanding of the importance of 'becoming', self-affirmation, and self-fashioning in Nietzsche; a good understanding of Thomas Mann's novella, especially in relation to the work of Nietzsche and Wagner. You should be able to expand your critical vocabulary and further develop analytical skills to reflect on and discuss issues related to the course's topics and themes.

Importantly, Nietzsche's ground-breaking work aims to overthrow norms and beliefs, confronting readers with their own presuppositions and prejudices and asking them to look at phenomena from new and multiple perspectives. Nietzsche challenges readers to change the way they think. In many ways, Wagner serves as a foil for these Nietzschean confrontations, and it is thus of lesser interest whether Nietzsche's interpretation of Wagner was 'right' or 'wrong.' More interesting are questions about the different ways in which Nietzsche deploys his critique, the different functions it takes, and what it might mean for our understanding of the struggles of modernity and modern subjectivity.

Approach

Nietzsche wanted his readers to practice reading as an art. In the preface to *Genealogy of Morality* he states: "One thing is necessary above all if one is to practice reading as an *art* in this way, something that has been unlearned most thoroughly nowadays [...] something for which one has almost to be a cow and in any case *not* a 'modern man': *ruminatio*." *Ruminatio* is a complex creative process and should not be mistaken as one that takes place solely at the desk, behind the computer. Implying movement and repetition, it asks for a mobile critical engagement-- Nietzsche himself went for long walks. Close reading and reflection take time. However limiting and isolating our current situation might seem to be, it also offers us a unique opportunity to reevaluate priorities and focus on things that truly matter to us intellectually and otherwise. While using online learning and communication tools, this course asks you to focus on the material and practice *ruminatio*; it asks you to block out distractions and read, reflect on, and creatively engage with the course material.

For Nietzsche, the worst readers are superficial readers who fail to critically reflect on a text, those who "plunder" a text without respect for its integrity and multidimensionality. The *art* of reading envisions the reader as a co-creator of the text. Readers must not just appropriate ideas but think for themselves. The art of reading precipitates emancipation. "One repays a teacher badly if one always remains nothing but a pupil." While primarily a solitary activity taking place between reader and text, the process of *ruminatio* can be enriched by a critical exchange of ideas, by voicing dissent, engaging in ancient practices of *agon*, and experimenting with new ideas, perspectives, and styles. *Ruminatio* requires freedom and self-overcoming and cannot be accomplished through a superficial comprehension of facts or thought processes regulated by institutional, societal, and moral norms. "One must still have chaos in oneself to be able to give birth to a dancing star," Nietzsche writes in *Zarathustra*. It is in this spirit of readerly insurgency that we approach Nietzsche's, Wagner's, and Thomas Mann's works and ideas.

Course requirements

Close reading of and critical engagement with the assigned texts; active participation in discussion groups and forums; completion of quizzes, a project, and a paper (for further details please see *Formats and Criteria* on myCourses)

Required texts

All required and optional course materials are posted myCourses and/or see the links embedded in the syllabus. No purchase is necessary.

Should you wish to purchase an edition of Nietzsche's works, I recommend *The Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, translation by Walter Kaufmann. It is widely available at libraries and for purchase in print and electronic form. Kaufmann's edition set the standard for Nietzsche translations. *The Basic Writings of Nietzsche* will give you nearly 700 unabridged pages of Nietzsche's writings at a decent price. Other standard translations/editions of high quality are by R.J. Hollingdale and Stanford University Press. *The Nietzsche Reader*, eds. Keith Ansell-Pearson and Duncan Large is a good choice for those students who prefer lengthier introductions to abridged texts.

Thomas Mann: *Death in Venice*: Any version: if you have the choice, choose a more recent translation. The 1930 version is available on myCourses.

Nietzsche texts in translation are available here <http://www.thenietzschechannel.com/works-pub/text-pub.htm> and here <http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/author/779>

Wagner's writings are available at <http://users.belgacom.net/wagnerlibrary/prose/index.htm>

Assessment

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|---|-----|
| 1. Contributions to module discussion forums on myCourses | 10% |
| 2. Reflection on self-organized group or partner discussions, 1-2 pages, 1.5 spaced, 12ft | 10% |
| 3. Six quizzes: the quiz with the lowest grade will be dropped (6%each) | 30% |
| 4. Research project (8-12 slides w/ audio or 10-15min video) | 25% |
| 5. Paper (5-6 pages, 1.5 spaced, 12-pt font) | 25% |

Zoom class meetings and Zoom group discussion meetings will not be evaluated.

For specific information, instructions, and evaluation criteria for graded and ungraded class activities and assignments see myCourses/content *Formats and Criteria*

Modules

You are asked to complete a sequence of seven modules posted on myCourses. Except for Module 6, you have 2 weeks to complete each module. Each module consists of

1. Video: I introduce the module and provide an overview of objectives and questions to be asked
2. Required readings, videos, and podcasts
3. PowerPoint presentation: contextualize the topic, close reading of text passages etc.
4. Optional readings and audio-visual material to deepen your understanding of the text(s), issues, and context and to explore different avenues of inquiry
5. Study guide and questions to guide your reading and to self-test your understanding of the material
6. Discussion forums on myCourses: responses to discussion prompts and to student comments and questions
7. Zoom class meeting: will be recorded and posted
8. Quiz

Module 1: Nietzsche and Wagner—Works, Themes, Friendship, Truths

Week 1-3: Sept 2-18

Some keywords: Historical-philosophical context— life and times of Nietzsche and Wagner— their shared interests and ideals— overview of Nietzsche’s and Wagner’s works and themes— reflection on friendship— inquiry into Nietzsche’s perspective on the linguistic construction of truth— truth vs truths.

Watch

Video (Karin Bauer)

PowerPoint (Karin Bauer)

Access through McGill Library:

Wilhelm Richard Wagner: A Concise Biography, Academy Media, 2005

https://fod-infobase-com.proxy3.library.mcgill.ca/p_ViewVideo.aspx?xtid=44013

Friedrich Nietzsche: Beyond Good and Evil, Digital Classics Distribution, 1999.

https://fod-infobase-com.proxy3.library.mcgill.ca/p_ViewVideo.aspx?xtid=10098

Nietzsche and Truth, Skepticism and The Free Spirit

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YXlJbziiQfY&list=PLAYxecbGotUyqiNRXY_VrUvF952rLmyNl&index=9

Read

Bernd Magnus/Kathleen Higgins, “Nietzsche’s Works and Their Themes”

Friedrich Nietzsche, “On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense” (1873)

Zoom class meeting September 2 and 16, 11:35pm EST

Quiz1 due by September 18, 5 pm EST

Optional:

Read

Keith Ansell-Pearson, "General Introduction." *The Nietzsche Reader* (2006)

Jacques Derrida, "Politics of Friendship" (1993)

Watch

Richard Wagner, docufilm, 1998: Harmonics: The Innovators of Classical Music

https://fod-infobase-com.proxy3.library.mcgill.ca/p_ViewVideo.aspx?xtid=30003

Nietzsche, BBC Worldwide Learning, 1987.

https://fod-infobase-com.proxy3.library.mcgill.ca/p_ViewVideo.aspx?xtid=7289

Module 2: Richard Wagner: Culture – Art – Politics

Week 4-5: Sept 21-Oct 2

Some keywords: Wagner's writings in the context of his time—Wagner's exile—Wagner's patron—the importance of Greek art—folk art—renewal of art—revolutionizing music and opera: the artwork of the future—the artist of the future—music drama—Jews and music—Anti-Semitism—Wagner reception—*Gesamtkunstwerk* (unified work of art)

Watch

Video (Karin Bauer)

PowerPoint (Karin Bauer)

Read

Richard Wagner, „Art and Revolution“ (1849)

Wagner, from „The Art-Work of the Future: Artist of the Future“ (1849): p. 23-89, although you are encouraged to read the entire text.

Wagner, „Judaism in Music“ (1850)

Zoom class meeting September 30, 11:35pm EST

Quiz 2 due by October 2, 5 pm EST

Research topics: sign up by email between Sept. 21- 25, 5pm EST. Please consult the list of topics on myCourses/content *Research Project Topics*

Optional:

Watch

Wagner's Jews, First Run Features, 2014@ McGill Library.

https://fod-infobase-com.proxy3.library.mcgill.ca/p_ViewVideo.aspx?xtid=142135

Read

Charles Baudelaire, "Richard Wagner et Tannhäuser à Paris" (1861)

https://fr.wikisource.org/wiki/L%E2%80%99Art_romantique/Richard_Wagner_et_Tannh%C3%A4user_%C3%A0_Paris

"The Revue wagnérienne, Symbolism, Aestheticism, and Germanophilia J. K. Huysmans, Teodor de Wyzewa, Edouard Dujardin," (Steven Huebner, intro 2009)

Lydia Goehr, "From Opera to Music Drama: Nominal Loss, Titular Gain" (2009)

Theodor W. Adorno, *In Search of Wagner* (1952)

Marc Weiner, “Lingering Discourses: Critics, Jews, and the Case of Gottfried Wagner” (2007)
Brian Leiter, “Nietzsche’s Hatred of ‘Jew Hatred’”
<https://newramblerreview.com/book-reviews/philosophy/nietzsche-s-hatred-of-jew-hatred>

Module 3: The Birth of Tragedy Out of the Spirit of Music

Week 6-7: Oct 5-16

Some keywords: Nietzsche’s early texts—importance of and inspiration drawn from Greek art—Dionysian and Apollonian—Socrates—art and the encroachment of theoretical culture—renewal of art—death and rebirth of tragedy—amor fati—suffering—hopes invested in Wagner

Watch

Video (Karin Bauer)

PowerPoint (Karin Bauer)

Nietzsche and Dionysus, Tragedy and the Affirmation of Life

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w9zSQ2uGCoI&list=PLAYxecbGotUyqiNRXY_VrUvF952rLmyNI&index=5

Read

Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy Out of the Spirit of Music* (1872)

For abridged version from *Nietzsche Reader* see myCourses; reading the entire text, included in *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, is encouraged

Listen

Classical Philosophy Podcast (2020) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ao3UIyU-LKM>

Zoom class meeting October 14, 11:35pm EST

Quiz3 due October 16, 5 pm EST

Optional:

Read

M.S. Silk and J.P. Stern, *Nietzsche on Tragedy* (1983)

Daniel Come, “The Aesthetic Justification of Existence” (2006)

David Allison, *Reading the New Nietzsche* (2001; temp access to ebook through McGill Library)

James Porter, “Nietzsche and Tragedy” (2005)

Module 4: Wagner Crawls to the Christian Cross—The Deadly Insult

Week 8-9: Oct 19-30

Some keywords: Parsifal and its sources—myth—revivals of medieval sources—Parsifal and Christianity—performing Parsifal—the implied politics of Parsifal

Watch

Video (Karin Bauer)

PowerPoint (Karin Bauer)

After completing the reading below, watch *Parsifal* (1992 Otto Schenk/James Levin or 2013 François Girard/Daniele Gatti). Watch the version of your choice: the 1992 is a more classic, traditional version and the 2013 production is more modern. Go in Met Opera on Demand

through the McGill Library. Search composers; under Wagner you will find videos of these two performances. You will also find other videos of Wagner operas that may be of interest to you.

<https://metopera-org.proxy3.library.mcgill.ca/season/on-demand/>

Read:

Wagner, *Parsifal* (1882)

Carole M. Cusack, “Wagner’s Parsifal: Christianity, Celibacy, and Medieval Brotherhood as Ideal in Modernity” (2017)

Derrick Everett, “Nietzsche breaks with Wagner: the mortal insult” (2004)

Zoom class meeting October 28, 11:35pm EST

Quiz4 due October 30, 5 pm EST

Optional:

Read

Edouard Dujardin, “Amfortas: Paraphrase Moderne,” in “The Revue wagnérienne: Symbolism, Aestheticism, and Germanophilia J. K. Huysmans, Teodor de Wyzewa, Edouard Dujardin,” (Steven Huebner, intro 2009)

Anthony Winterbourne, *A Pagan Spoiled: Sex And Character In Wagner's Parsifal* (2003 temp access to ebook through McGill Library).

Module 5: The Critiques of Modernity, Decadence, and Morality

Week 10-11: Nov 2-13

Some keywords: Nietzsche’s critique of Wagner—the *case* of Wagner—the role of Parsifal in Nietzsche’s critique—critique of modernity—Decadence—Romanticism—genealogy—reevaluation of all values—origin and utility—materialist conception of values—asceticism—the will to power

Watch

Video (Karin Bauer)

PowerPoint (Karin Bauer)

Lecture by Brendan Graham Dempsey and Daniel McGrew, “Twilight of the Gods: Nietzsche, Wagner, and the Idea of Decadence”

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=80RC_vewOe8

Read

Nietzsche, *The Case of Wagner* (1888)

For abridged version from *Nietzsche Reader* see myCourses; reading the entire text, included in *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, is encouraged

Nietzsche, *Nietzsche contra Wagner* <http://www.thenietzschechannel.com/works-pub/ncw/ncw.htm>

Nietzsche: from *On the Genealogy of Morals* (1887)

Group Discussion Report due November 6, 5pm EST

Zoom class meeting, Wednesday, November 11, 11:35am EST

Quiz5 due November 13, 5 pm EST

Optional:

Watch

Friedrich Nietzsche—JP Stern. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nlqdLHK2K-s>

Read

C. Bernheimer, T. Kline, NS Jefferson, “Nietzsche’s Decadence Philosophy” (2002)

Andrew Huddleston, “Nietzsche on the Decadence of Individuals and Cultures” (2019)

Listen

Nietzsche’s Genealogy of Morality—discussion with Stephen Mulhall, Fiona Hughes, Keith Ansell-Pearson (2017)

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b087rt4z>

Module 6: Death in Venice

Week 12: Nov 16-20

Some keywords: The work of Thomas Mann—modes of interpretation—the themes of *Death in Venice* in relation to Nietzsche and Wagner—the role of classical Greece—the Dionysian and Apollonian—tragedy—the figure of the artist—decadence—disease

Watch

Video (Karin Bauer)

PowerPoint (Karin Bauer)

Read

Thomas Mann, *Death in Venice* (1912)

Zoom class meeting Wednesday, November 18, 11:35am EST

No quiz: *DiV* will be included in next quiz

Research Project due November 20, 5 pm EST (please consult *Formats and Criteria* on myCourses/contents)

Optional:

Read:

Ritchie Robertson, “Classicism and Its Pitfalls: *Death in Venice*” (2001)

Watch

Lucchino Visconti, *Death in Venice* (1971) Access McGill Library

https://media3-criterionpic-com.proxy3.library.mcgill.ca/htbin/wwform/006?T=W71013&ALIAS=W71013_ECC.KF&M=0_r98znmrp&DSTYLE=0#multimedia_resources_W71013

Ulrich Schwarz, *Thomas Mann: His Life and Work* (1992) Access McGill Library

https://fod-infobase-com.proxy3.library.mcgill.ca/p_ViewVideo.aspx?xtid=7811

Listen

Benjamin Britten, *Death in Venice* (2007, eMusic, McGill Library)

Module 7: Irony and How to Become What One Is

Week 13-14: Nov 16-Dec 3

Some keywords: Irony in rhetoric and philosophy—self-affirmation and self-overcoming—identity construction—Zarathustra, the masses, and the *Übermensch*—individuality vs collectivity—fiction and autobiography—writing oneself

Watch

Video (Karin Bauer)

PowerPoint (Karin Bauer)

Béla Tar, *The Turin horse* (*A torinói ló*, Hungary 2011)

Read

Nietzsche, from *Ecce Homo* (1888)

Nietzsche, “The Three Metamorphoses” from *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*

Alexander Nehamas: “The Most Multifarious Art of Style”

Zoom class meeting Monday, November 30, 11:35am EST

Quiz6 due December 3, 5 pm EST (quiz covers *Death in Venice* and Module 7)

Paper due December 15, 5pm EST (please consult *Formats and Criteria* and *Guidelines for Paper* on myCourses)

Optional:

Read

Nicholas D More, “Ecce Homo as Satire: Analysis and Commentary” (2014)

Robert Pippin, “Nietzsche: Thus Spoke Zarathustra” (2012)

Setting up Zoom

Please do the following before you join the course:

Create a basic account by clicking on the following link: <https://mcgill.zoom.us/> You must sign in with your McGill username/password.

Read this article on [getting started](#). If the link does not work, go to:

<https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/201362033-Getting-Started-on-Windows-and-Mac>

Contact me if you lack the technological capability to participate fully in the seminar, so that we can find a solution together and make appropriate accommodations.

Remote Learning Resources

Since learning remotely is a new skill that we all have to acquire, I would encourage you to look at the resources that McGill’s Teaching and Learning Services compiled:

<https://www.mcgill.ca/tls/students/remote-learning-resources>

Consider looking at all the tips, particularly the following points:

[5 Strategies for Success](#)

[Study Tactics](#)

[Learning Strategies Inventory](#)

[Learning with Zoom](#)

Statements

McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see [McGill's guide to academic honesty](#) for more information).

L'université McGill attache une haute importance à l'honnêteté académique. Il incombe par conséquent à tous les étudiants de comprendre ce que l'on entend par tricherie, plagiat et autres infractions académiques, ainsi que les conséquences que peuvent avoir de telles actions, selon le Code de conduite de l'étudiant et des procédures disciplinaires (pour de plus amples renseignements, veuillez consulter le [guide pour l'honnêteté académique de McGill](#)

In accord with McGill University's Charter of Students' Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded. This does not apply to courses in which acquiring proficiency in a language is one of the objectives.

Conformément à la Charte des droits de l'étudiant de l'Université McGill, chaque étudiant a le droit de soumettre en français ou en anglais tout travail écrit devant être noté (sauf dans le cas des cours dont l'un des objets est la maîtrise d'une langue).

As the instructor of this course I endeavor to provide an inclusive learning environment. However, if you experience barriers to learning in this course, do not hesitate to discuss them with me and the [Office for Students with Disabilities](#), 514-398-6009.

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McGill University is on land which has long served as a site of meeting and exchange amongst Indigenous peoples, including the Haudenosaunee and Anishinabeg nations. We acknowledge and thank the diverse Indigenous people whose footsteps have marked this territory on which peoples of the world now gather.