GHENT UNIVERSITY

Course Specifications

Valid as from the academic year 2026-2027

Analysis of Texts from Modern and Contemporary Philosophy: Continental Tradition (A005207)

Course size *(nominal values; actual values may depend on programme)*

Credits 5.0 **Study time 150 h**

Course offerings in academic year 2027-2028

A (semester 2)	Dutch	Gent

Lecturers in academic year 2027-2028

Keymeulen, Kobe	LW01	lecturer-in-charge
Bollaert, Iben	LW01	staff member
Kolen, Filip	LW01	staff member

Offered in the following programmes in 2027-2028	**crdts**	**offering**
Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy	5	A

Teaching languages

Dutch

Keywords

- Continental Philosophy
- Modern Philosophy
- Contemporary Philosophy
- German Idealism
- Ontology
- Universality
- Systematic Philosophy
- Textual Analysis

Position of the course

In this course, we thoroughly discuss several original texts from the Continental philosophical tradition, spanning from late modernity to the present. Central to the course is learning how to read, analyze, interpret, and historically/contextually situate various 'systematic' structures of thought. The critical potential of these texts in light of contemporary social conditions is discussed extensively during classes. As we mainly work with interactive discussion sessions (via the Octavian method), this course also emphasizes analytical and communication skills essential for developing a personal, philosophical interpretation of a classical text.

Contents

The selected texts mainly concern the lesser-known side of the more dominant narrative of Continental philosophy. It is common to describe this 19th- and 20th-century tradition as 'anti-metaphysical,' where the "thinkers of suspicion" (per Ricoeur, such as Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud) disrupted European thinking—replacing the age-old, 'traditional' philosophical questions with a more local, cultural, and political analysis. However, such an account tells only half of the story. This course focuses on the other half. Even today, thinkers within the Continental tradition continue to engage with major traditional philosophical questions - albeit in unique and different ways.

In previous years, for example, we read Hegel's *Science of Logic* (1812/1831) in the first part of the course. In the second part, we examined weekly texts by important 20th- and 21st-century thinkers. Each selection directly reflected on the previous studied passages (for example by Hegel) but interprets them in different

ways. This approach reconstructs how these philosophical traditions deal with (onto)logical and metaphysical questions. A previous selection included texts by C. L.R. James (on Marxism and anti-colonialism), Alain Badiou (on mathematics and subtractive philosophy), Catherine Malabou (on deconstruction and plasticity), and Alenka Zupančič (on psychoanalytic philosophy).

In parallel with the lectures, students are asked to independently read a section of a central work in the Continental tradition in reading groups ("cartels"). Previous assignments included, for example, the first eight paragraphs of Martin Heidegger's *Being and Time* (1927) or the opening of Edmund Husserl's *Cartesian Meditations* (1929). During the catch-up week, several inter-cartel meetings are organized, where the cartels engage in discussion. These discussions are moderated by the instructor(s).

Initial competences

Successful completion of the course "History of Modern Philosophy" or equivalent competencies are required.
General philosophical knowledge and/or completion of the course "Contemporary Ethics: Continental Tradition" is recommended.
Active mastery of Dutch and English is required; some mastery of French and German is recommended.

Final competences

1 To be able to situate and comment in detail on key concepts from central texts in the Continental tradition.

2 To have an informed view in the history of philosophy, on the basis of an orientation of the most important problems and research traditions.
3 To be able to articulate the relevancy of philosophical critique for scientific and societal problems.
4 To be able to construct and compare the argumentative thread of the philosophical texts under study, and to be able to assess the own interpretative position in relation to it.
5 To adequately analyse and synthesise the philosophical texts, if possible in the language in which they were originally published.

6 To acquire a sense of philosophical critique as engaged and subjected to permanent revision, through the confrontation between the own study, the interpretation of fellow students and lecturer, and relevant secundary literature.
7 To grasp the variations in ways of addressing problems through the confrontation of various epistemological and metaphysical backgrounds and contexts on the basis of which the studied texts are situated.
8 To be able to start a philosophical research by formulating and testing one or more philosophical hypotheses and to confront it with or incorporate it in existing research
9 To communicate in oral form about the questions and acquired insights.
10 To discuss constructively about various possible interpretations and to weigh the critical potential, the constraints and the possibilities, of philosophical viewpoints for approaching scientific and societal problems.
11 To be able to transpose important historical philosophical discussions to a variety of contexts.

Conditions for credit contract

Access to this course unit via a credit contract is unrestricted: the student takes into consideration the conditions mentioned in 'Starting Competences'

Conditions for exam contract

This course unit cannot be taken via an exam contract

Teaching methods

Seminar, Lecture

Extra information on the teaching methods

Lectures (10h): Introduction, historical and systematic contextualization, explanation of key concepts in the texts.
Seminars (30h): Interactive discussion of the texts; Octavian method discussions if group size allows. Students may be asked to prepare the assigned readings more thoroughly (e.g., formulating critical questions, summarizing the text, etc.).
Reading groups ("cartels") and group discussion (inter-cartel day) (5h).
No lecture recordings will be provided.

Study material

None

References

Relevant primary and secondary literature is shared annually via Ufora.

Course content-related study coaching

Availability of instructor and assistants for intensive support of reading groups, selection of secondary literature, and guidance in research.

Assessment moments

end-of-term and continuous assessment

Examination methods in case of periodic assessment during the first examination period

Oral assessment

Examination methods in case of periodic assessment during the second examination period

Oral assessment

Examination methods in case of permanent assessment

Participation, Assignment

Possibilities of retake in case of permanent assessment

examination during the second examination period is possible in modified form

Extra information on the examination methods

- Period-bound: Oral exam without written preparation. Students receive questions from a pre-distributed list. Notes may be brought to the exam.
- Non-period-bound: Participation during seminars (including required preparation) and the inter-cartel session.

Failure to attend the oral exam, required preparations, or inter-cartel moment will result in failure for the course. Exceptions (e.g., replacement assignments) must be discussed in advance. If the student fails the non-period-bound evaluation, a compensatory assignment can be offered between the first and second exam periods.

Calculation of the examination mark

50% Period-bound evaluation
50% Non-period-bound evaluation

Facilities for Working Students

Possible exemption from attendance (alternative assignment provided). Attendance is recommended for successful completion.
No online/digital facilities (classes are on-campus without recordings).
Feedback via email, phone, or appointment during office hours.
For more information concerning flexible learning: contact the monitoring service of the faculty of Arts and philosophy.