Course Description

During the late 19th and 20th centuries, mainstream academic psychology sought to elucidate the “laws” governing mental faculties like intelligence, perception, memory, language acquisition, etc. The objectification of human behavior that this approach entails poses a number of challenges for psychotherapists. From a clinical point of view, one can be thoroughly versed in these “laws” of behavior, yet utterly incapable of developing a rapport with another human being, or of understanding the nuances of clinical interaction when problems arise. That being so, some clinicians require a philosophical framework that articulates what it means to be human, and that enables us to grasp – or at any rate, to glimpse - the human condition in all its depth and variety, so that the suffering or symptoms of this particular patient (or client) make sense in broad human terms, rather than in terms of mathematical abstractions or relationships between discrete or isolated entities.

The notion of psychology as a “human science” dates back to Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911), but our survey takes us back further, to Descartes and Pascal, who was arguably the first existentialist. In fact, we spend about half of our course exploring significant themes and thinkers the emerged before the year 1900 – a fact which baffles and disappoints some students, many of whom expected to start their survey sometime in the 1950’s or sixties. Why? Starting in the early or middle of the 20th century would foreshorten our philosophical horizons, and give students a somewhat impoverished idea about the human science tradition’s philosophical roots and ramifications, which are rooted deep in the Western intellectual. Our emphasis in the first half of this course is on the early history of phenomenology, existentialism and psychoanalysis. So before addressing their application to treatment, we
reflect on a number philosophical issues, including the concepts of self-knowledge, self-deception, inner and interpersonal conflict, the nature of reason, and the relationship between reason and other mental faculties, including faith, imagination, intuition and will. These perennial topics take on new depth and meaning in light of the (19th c) concepts of the unconscious, and of alienation and alterity, authenticity, ressentiment and so on; ideas which set the stage for most of what follows.

**Course Goals**

The overarching goals of this course are to

1) explore the philosophical roots and ramifications of several human science approaches to the practice of psychotherapy – to open and alert you to the richness and complexity of the tradition, and
2) introduce you to some primary sources in this tradition

**Course Objectives**

At the end of this course, you should be able to:

1) Trace the origins of the human science approach to reactions to positivism and idealism in 19th and 20th philosophy;
2) Differentiate between rationalist and irrationalist, religious and irreligious, utopian and tragic, modern and postmodern modes of thought;
3) See how these modes of thinking apply across disciplinary boundaries (i.e. Philosophy and Psychology) across time;
4) Appreciate the social and political roots and ramifications of many of the ideas in question;
5) Be conversant with at least one primary text by a leading philosopher, and appreciate its impact/relevance to a specific approach to psychotherapy;
6) See psychotherapy as a socially and historically embedded practice, in which a therapist’s fundamental assumptions about society, human nature and interpersonal relationships color both the goals and methods of practice.
**Grading**

Your final grade will be based on classroom participation (25%), a mid-term paper, (25%) and a final paper (50%). Classroom participation is a broad category that includes regular attendance, reading the requisite materials in preparation for class, participating in classroom discussion, and doing a 20-30 minute presentation on a theme or thinker of your choice.

Your mid-term paper must be 10-15 pages, and must explore some aspect of the 16-19th century philosophical background – i.e. Descartes to Dilthey and Husserl. Specific topics will be suggested in class, and/or negotiated with Prof. Burston. Despite our initial emphasis on philosophical foundations, you are requested to keep the (actual and potential) relevance of philosophical ideas to clinical theory and practice in mind, and to address them in some measure if you can. If you are not satisfied with your mid-term grade, you may elect to re-write your mid-term paper in light of the feedback provided for you by Dr. Burston.

Your final paper must be 15-20 pages, and must address the relationship between (philosophical) theory and (clinical) practice more explicitly than your mid-term did. Extensions are never automatic and require a plausible excuse and/or medical documentation accompanying the departmental “I” grade form.

**ESSAY GRADING GUIDELINES:**

The fundamentals of good writing can be sub-divided into four component parts: content, form, style and mechanics. (Content refers to what you say. Form, style, etc., describe how you say it.

**Good content:** The information in your paper, including your research, your reflections or analysis of the data, and so on, should be accurate and relevant to the question(s) at hand. It should be well documented and/or referenced. Factual errors, lengthy digressions on irrelevant (or barely relevant) items, or arguments that are not supported by logic or evidence count against you in this category.
**Good form** refers to the organization of your paper. Every paper should have an *introductory paragraph* with a clear and definitive thesis statement that indicates what is in store for the reader, and a *concluding paragraph* that ties together the various threads of argument or analysis it makes use of along the way. As far as possible, it should also be *free of excessive redundancy and repetition*.

**Good style** refers to the *clarity* and *coherence* of your writing. Avoid awkward, vague or elliptical sentences which seem to hint at sophistication or profundity. More often than not, they suggest that your ideas are not yet fully formed or articulated—that you have not processed them sufficiently to defend them well, and are therefore hiding behind an impressive façade. When summarizing another person’s ideas or attitudes, do not repeat them verbatim for long, but use brief quotes and skillful paraphrases to keep things lively.

**Mechanics** refers to grammar, spelling and punctuation. To avoid unnecessary errors like these *proof read your paper several hours after it is finished*, or better yet, ask *someone else to proof read it for you*.

Each of these four criteria play a role in the grade you get for a specific paper, as follows.

**A Excellent.** This paper shows originality and a strong capacity for critical thinking. It is squarely on topic, contains no major factual errors, has been carefully proof read, and has very few (if any) grammatical or typographical errors. It is well organized, and free of redundancy or repetition. The author has a firm grasp of the issues at hand, and as a result, the central thesis or argument is crystal clear, and based on well documented evidence and/or arguments that are cogent and persuasive. The author makes excellent use of the required texts and supplementary readings in making his (or her) case.

**A- Very good.** The author shows a firm grasp of the issues, shows originality and a capacity for critical thinking, but the paper was not proof read properly, or contains significant factual errors, or fails to document sources or use supplementary research, etc.

**B+ Good.** This paper covers the required reading and the overall subject matter competently, but suffers from repetition, redundancy, poor introductory or concluding paragraphs, absent or inconsistent use of
references, citations, too many factual or typographical errors, etc., often
despite evidence of some originality and critical thinking. Alternatively, this
may be an A or A- paper that fails to meet minimum page length
requirements, or veered slightly “off course,” and does not really address the
issues at hand.

**B Pass.** Same as above, but the content is weaker, the thesis sketchier, and
there is very little evidence of supplementary research, critical thinking or
originality of perspective. Alternatively, the paper may have some of the
qualities of a somewhat better paper, but fails to meet the minimum page
length requirements and/or strays far from the questions or issues at hand.

**Academic Integrity:**

Penalties for plagiarism are severe, and enforced in an impersonal
manner. This means that any professor who is aware of plagiarism – or other
infringement on academic integrity – must report it immediately, and must
enforce university rules and policies automatically, regardless of the
individual students motives or circumstances. The following statements
regarding academic integrity were culled from the University’s official
policies.

. . . each student’s grade should reflect only that student’s achievement . .
. .Therefore, it is the responsibility of the student to maintain academic
integrity with regard to class assignments, examinations, and any other
course requirements, such as term papers, theses and the like. Thus,
cheating, plagiarism and knowingly assisting others to violate academic
integrity are each and all violations of academic integrity.

Violations of academic integrity are subject to disciplinary action, including
(but not limited to) lowering of grades, course failure, or suspension or
dismissal from the class or from the University. Violations of academic
integrity include but are not limited to the following:

- cheating on examinations, whether giving or receiving assistance or
  using prohibited material as a test aid (prohibited material includes, but is
  not limited to, notes or other written documents, unauthorized calculators
  and/or formulas, programs, software, data, and text stored in calculators.
  When in doubt, the student is responsible for ascertaining whether a given
  model of calculator is permitted and what information may be stored in the
  calculator),
submitting a research paper, thesis, dissertation, or work for publication which includes work which is not one’s own and which fails to give proper attribution to the actual source of the work,

submitting any document without proper attribution composed of sources (including, but not limited to) from either the World Wide Web, the Internet, any electronic source, or purchased or copied from another, and which is represented as one’s own work,

furnishing false information to any University instructor, official, or office with intent to deceive,

forgery, alteration, or misuse of any University document, record or instrument of identification (written or computerized),

knowingly assisting another in any of the above.

Course Format

Week One: Philosophy and Psychotherapy
an overview (no readings)

Week Two: Truth, Method and the Masters of Suspicion Reason and Emotion; Nature and Limits of Knowledge (Epistemic Hubris and Epistemic Humility)
Reading: Burston and Frie, chapter one.
Josselson, hermeneutics paper.

Week Three: From Descartes to Hegel
The Enlightenment and the Idea of Progress: 19th century Positivism and Idealism; Alienation and Human History: The Role of Labor in Human Ontology
(readings from Burston and Erich Fromm)

Week Four: Kierkegaard and Nietzsche
Radical Individualism; Irrationalism and Faith; Conformity, Individuality & The Unconscious
(readings from Burston and Frie; Maurice Friedman; Karl Jaspers)
Week Five: *Dilthey and Husserl*
*Methodology and the Giestesswissenschaften; Psychology as a Human Science*  
(readings from Burston and Frie; John Scanlon, Maurice Friedman)

Week Six: *Freud*
*Psychoanalysis & Politics*  
(Burston and Frie; Burston, 2002; Forrester, 2003; Brunner, 2003)

Week Seven: *Jung*
*Depth Psychology and Politics*  
(Burston, 1997; Burston, 2002; Josselson)

Week Eight: *Jaspers & Scheler*
*Phenomenology and Psychoanalysis; Science, Faith and Democracy*  
(Burston and Frie, Maurice Friedman, Jaspers)

Week Nine: *Heidegger and Boss*
*Heidegger and Husserl; Heidegger and the Nazis; Daseinsanalysis & Psychoanalysis*  
(Burston and Frie; Maurice Friedman; Boss, 1988; Condrau, 1986)

Week Ten: *Buber & Binswanger*
*I & Thou; modes of relatedness; the interhuman*  
(Burston and Frie; Frie, 1997; Friedman, 2003;)

Week Eleven: *Sartre and Laing*
*Existential Psychoanalysis; Psyche and Social Context*  
(Barnes, 2003; Burston and Frie; Burston, 2003; Maurice Friedman, 1993)

Week Twelve: *Fromm and the Frankfurt School*
*Marx, Freud and Critical Theory; Essence and Existence; Modes of Authority*  
(Burston and Frie; Burston, 1991; Burston 2008)

Week Thirteen:  
*Humanism, Existentialism and Postmodernism*  
(Richardson 2003, Brinkmann, 2006; Burston 2007)

Week Fourteen:
Revisiting the Hermeneutics of Suspicion
(Josselson, 2005; Whitebook, 2007)

**Required Reading:**


Solomon, R. 1987. *From Hegel to Existentialism,* Oxford University Press (selected chapters.)


**Recommended reading:**


**Web resources**

**Human Nature: Justice versus Power** (Noam Chomsky debates with Michel Foucault, 1971) transcript.

Chomsky/Foucault video clip

http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=-1634494870703391080

BBC: Human, All to Human: Heidegger

http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=-858369328131624007

Derrida on Heidegger and biography

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mkDOyui0jSI&feature=related

BBC: Human, All too Human: Sartre

http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=-