Kierkegaard: The Individual in Global Society
University of Copenhagen Department of Theology
Summer 2017

Class Meetings: Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays 13:15-16:30

Location: Karen Blixens Plads 16, 2300 Copenhagen S.

Language: English

15 ECTS credits

Course Instructor: K. Brian Soderquist, Ph.D. in philosophical theology, University of Copenhagen, 2005; M.A.R. in philosophy of religion, Yale University, 1994; B.A. in philosophy and natural sciences, Utah State University, 1990.

Office: Søren Kierkegaard Research Centre
       Faculty of Theology
       Karen Blixens Plads 16, 6B-1-20
       2300 Copenhagen S

Email: kbs@sk.ku.dk

Course Content: A study of the works of Copenhagen’s most radical author, the ‘father of existentialism,’ Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1855). Kierkegaard’s entire authorship is centered around the existential project that every human being is confronted with: to become oneself and none other than oneself. And as he sees it, becoming oneself does not happen passively and is never achieved once and for all, but requires constant effort. He thus often describes this project as one of taking responsibility for “choosing,” “gaining,” or “becoming oneself.”

This course examines his witty, humorous, but also deeply earnest exploration of the psychology of self identity. Kierkegaard’s thoughts about the struggle for personhood take us through perhaps unexpected territories: beginning with the breakdown of culture-specific ethnic and religious that have traditionally defined the self, he explores the culturally destructive power of Socrates’ irony, the art of seduction, theories of beauty and boredom, a scathing critique of religious culture and politics, religious demands that conflict with ethical duty, the joy of being embodied here and now, and finally, love.

We will remain especially attentive to the ways in which Kierkegaard’s thought is critical of inherited ethnic and cultural definitions of self, and why he nonetheless considers human relationships to be absolutely essential to understanding oneself and one’s obligations to other human beings.

Requirements: Undergraduate requirements: a) Active class attendance (75% attendance as documented in the attendance record). b) Familiarity with a reading list (primary and secondary literature) of 1,200-1,500 pages. c) A written paper of 10-12 pages with 1.5 line spacing, based on 400-500 pages of primary literature. The paper will receive a letter grade, evaluated by an internal grader.

Masters requirements: a) Active class attendance (75% attendance as documented in the attendance record). b) Familiarity with a reading list (primary and secondary literature) of 1,200–1,500 pages. c) A written paper of 15-20 pages with 1.5 line spacing, based on 800–1,000 pages of literature. The paper will receive a letter grade, evaluated by an internal examiner.
Computer policy: No surfing or texting during class.

Primary Literature:
Books (to be purchased before arriving in Copenhagen):

Photocopied material (passed out in class):
  Selections from On the Concept of Irony.
  “The Lily in the Field and the Bird of the Air” from Without Authority.
  Selections from Works of Love.

Optional Secondary Literature:

Course Outline

1. Wed. July 5
   Historical Introduction: Kierkegaard’s biography and authorship.

2. Fri. July 7
   The Truth and Untruth of Irony.
   Reading: photocopied text from On the Concept of Irony:
   - “Symposium” chapter, pp. 78-89 (Danish: SKS 1, 102-113).
   - “The Conception Made Necessary,” pp. 222-240 (Danish: SKS 1, 244-268).
   Optional Reading:
   - “Irony” in Oxford Handbook of Kierkegaard.

   Sat./Sun. July 8-9
   Walking tour of Kierkegaard’s North Sjælland (rain or shine)

3. Mon. July 10
   Either/Or I: Aesthetics and Actuality
   Reading:
   - “Preface” to Either/Or by Victor Eremita, pp. 27-37 (Danish: SKS 2, 11-22).

4. Wed. July 12
   Either/Or I: Boredom and Nothingness.
   Reading:
   - “Crop Rotation” in Either/Or, pp. 223-241 (Danish: SKS 2, 271-289).
5. **Fri. July 14**

*Either/Or II: Taking Ownership of Choice.*

Reading:

**Sat. / Sun. July 15-16**

Bike tour of Kierkegaard’s North Sjælland (rain or shine)

6. **Mon. July 17**

*Either/Or II: Taking Ownership of Oneself.*

Reading:

7. **Wed. July 19**

*Sickness Unto Death: The Self as a Synthesis.*

Reading:
- *Sickness Unto Death*, pp. 43-72, (Danish: SKS 11, 115-157)

8. **Fri. July 21**

*Sickness Unto Death: Not to Want to be a Self and to Want to be a Self.*

Reading:
- *Sickness Unto Death*, pp. 72-105, (Danish: SKS 11, 157-187)

9. **Mon. July 24**

*Sickness Unto Death: Despair is Sin.*

Reading:
- *Sickness Unto Death*, pp. 109-165 (Danish: SKS 11, 189-242)

10. **Wed. July 26**

Silence, Obedience, Joy – and Love and The Socratic Kierkegaard.

Reading:
- *The Lily in the Field and The Bird of the Air* (Danish: SKS 11, 7-48).
- “My Task” in *The Moment 10* (Danish: SKS 13, 404-411).

**Final Paper due Mon. Aug. 14**