

Kierkegaard: The Individual in the Global Society

University of Copenhagen Department of Theology
Summer 2017

Lecture hours:

Group A+B (collective lectures):

Wednesday 5 July from 1:15 PM to 4:30 PM

The subsequent Mondays (10th, 17th, 24th of July) from 1:15 PM to 4:30 PM

Group A: Wednesdays from 1:15 PM to 4:30 PM

Fridays from 1:15 PM to 4:30 PM

Group B: Tuesdays from 1:15 PM to 4:30 PM

Thursdays from 1:15 PM to 4:30 PM

Location: Room 8B.1.14 (1st floor)
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.

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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):

Either/Or, trans. Alastair Hannay, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1992.

Sickness unto Death, trans. Alastair Hannay, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1989.

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*.

“Irony” in *Oxford Handbook of Kierkegaard*, ed. by John Lippitt and George Pattison, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.

Optional Secondary Literature:

Karsten Harries, *Between Nihilism and Faith*, Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010 (177 pages).

George Pattison, *The Philosophy of Kierkegaard*, Chesham: Acumen Press, 2006 (205 pages).

Course Outline

1. Wed. July 5 (Group A+B)

Historical Introduction: Kierkegaard’s biography and authorship.

2. Thu. July 6 (Group B) and Fri. July 7 (Group A)

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 (Group A+B)

Either/Or I: Aesthetics and Actuality

Reading:

- "Preface" to *Either/Or* by Victor Eremita, pp. 27-37 (Danish: SKS 2, 11-22).
- "The Unhappiest One" in *Either/Or*, pp. 209-221 (Danish: SKS 2, 211-223).

4. Tue. July 11 (Group B); Wed. July 12 (Group A)

Either/Or I: Boredom and Nothingness.

Reading:

- "Diapsalmata" by "A," in *Either/Or*, pp. 39-57 (Danish: SKS 2, 25-52).
- "Crop Rotation" in *Either/Or*, pp. 223-241 (Danish: SKS 2, 271-289).

5. Thu. July 13 (Group B); Fri. July 14 (Group A)

Either/Or II: Taking Ownership of Choice.

Reading:

- "The Equilibrium Between the Aesthetic and the Ethical" by Wilhelm, in *Either/Or*, pp. 475-492 (Danish: SKS 3, 155-174).

Sat. / Sun. July 15-16

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

6. Mon. July 17 (Group A+B)

Either/Or II: Taking Ownership of Oneself.

Reading:

- "The Equilibrium Between the Aesthetic and the Ethical" by Wilhelm, in *Either/Or*, pp. 542-556, (Danish: SKS 3, 239-253).

7. Tue. July 18 (Group B); Wed. July 19 (Group A)

Sickness Unto Death: The Self as a Synthesis.

Reading:

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

8. Thu. July 20 (Group B); Fri. July 21 (Group A)

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 (Group A+B)

Sickness Unto Death: Despair is Sin.

Reading:

- *Sickness Unto Death*, pp. 109-165 (Danish: SKS 11, 189-242)
- "Love Seeks Not Its Own" in *Works of Love* (Danish: SKS 9, 263-277).

10. Tue. July 25 (Group B); Wed. July 26 (Group A)

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