Kierkegaard: The Individual in Global Society
University of Copenhagen Department of Theology
Summer 2018

Classes: Section A: Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, 13:15-16:30
         Section B: Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday, 13:15-16:30

Room: 7C.1.7, Karen Blixe 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 can be purchased at:
Academic Books
KUA 2 on South Campus

Pdf material (linked to Absalon):
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.
Selections from The Moment.

For students who read Danish:
Kierkegaard’s samlede værker, Søren Kierkegaards Skrifter (SKS), findes på nettet: www.sks.dk. I have provided references to SKS for every reading (e.g., Danish: SKS 4, 148-181) in this reading plan. (Note: To see page breaks, place a checkmark in the middle box, next to SKS, on the top left-hand side of the screen).

Optional Secondary Literature:

Course Outline

1. Wed. July 4 (sections A and B)
Historical Introduction: Kierkegaard’s biography and authorship.

2. Thurs. July 5 (section A) / Fri. July 6 (section B)
On the Concept of Irony: The Truth and Untruth of Irony.
Reading:
- On the Concept of Irony: “The Conception Made Necessary” and “Irony after Fichte,” pp. 222-240, 293-302 (Danish: SKS 1, 244-268, 311-321).
- Oxford Handbook of Kierkegaard, chap. 18, “Ironic.”

Sat. / Sun. July 7-8
Walking tour of Kierkegaard’s North Sjælland (rain or shine)

3. Mon. July 9 (sections A and B)
Either/Or I: Aesthetics and Actuality
Reading:
- “Preface” to Either/Or by Victor Eremita, pp. 27-37 (Danish: SKS 2, 11-22).

Either/Or I: Boredom and Nothingness.
Reading:
- “Crop Rotation” in Either/Or, pp. 223-241 (Danish: SKS 2, 271-289).

5. Thurs. July 12 (section A) / Fri. July 13 (section B)
Either/Or II: Taking Ownership of Choice.
Reading:

Sat. / Sun. July 14-15
Walking tour of Kierkegaard’s North Sjælland (rain or shine)

6. Mon. July 16 (sections A and B)
Either/Or II: Taking Ownership of Oneself.
Reading:

7. Tues. July 17 (section A) / Wed. July 18 (section B)
Sickness Unto Death: The Self as a Synthesis.
Reading:
- Sickness Unto Death, pp. 35-72, (Danish: SKS 11, 115-157; [“Preface,” “Introduction,” “A. That Despair in the Sickness unto Death,” “B. The Generality of the Sickness,” and part of “C. The Forms of the Sickness,” i.e., section “A, Despair Considered without Regard for its being Conscious or Not”; stop before reading section “B. Despair Viewed under the Aspect of Consciousness”])

8. Thurs. July 19 (section A) / Fri. July 20 (section B)
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 [B. “Despair Viewed Under the Aspect of Consciousness,” up to the end of Part One])

9. Mon. July 23 (sections A and 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 [all of Part Two]).
  Guest Lecturer: Anna Strelis Söderquist

Silence, Obedience, Joy – 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 Tues. Aug. 14*