Kierkegaard: The Individual in Global Society
University of Copenhagen Department of Theology
Summer 2019

Classes: Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, 13:15-16:30

Room: 6B.0.22, 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 can be purchased at:

**Academic Books**
Øster Farimagsgade 5
1014 Copenhagen K

**Opening hours:**
Monday - Thursday: 9.00-16.00
Friday: 09.30-16.00
Saturday, Sunday and public holidays: Closed

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

For students who read Danish:
Kierkegaards 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 3**
   Historical Introduction: Kierkegaard’s biography and authorship.

2. **Fri. July 5**
   *On the Concept of Irony*: The Truth and Untruth of Irony.
   Reading:

   **Sat. / Sun. July 6-7**
   Walking tour of Kierkegaard’s North Sjælland (rain or shine)

3. **Mon. July 8**
   *Either/Or I*: Aesthetics and Actuality
   Reading:

4. **Wed. July 10**
   *Either/Or I*: Boredom and Nothingness.
   Reading:

5. **Fri. July 12**
   *Either/Or II*: Taking Ownership of Choice.
   Reading:

   **Sat. / Sun. July 13-14**
   Bike tour of Kierkegaard’s North Sjælland (rain or shine)

6. **Mon. July 15**
   *Either/Or II*: Taking Ownership of Oneself.
   Reading:

7. **Wed. July 17**
   *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. **Fri. July 19**  
*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,” which brings you to the end of “Part One”])

9. **Mon. July 22**  
*Sickness Unto Death*: Despair is Sin.  
Reading:  
- *Sickness Unto Death*, pp. 109-165 (Danish: *SKS* 11, 189-242 [all of “Part Two”]).  

10. **Wed. July 24**  
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 Thur. Aug. 15*