THE SELF: PHILOSOPHIC AND PSYCHOANALYTIC EXPLORATIONS
(A GENERAL CAPSTONE COURSE)

Introduction (1 class)

PART I: Self


First take-home assigned

Simone de Beauvoir (1908-1986) Diary of a Philosophy Student (selections) (1926-27) (2 classes)

Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) Civilization and Its Discontents (1930) (2 classes)

First paper assigned

PART II: Self (continued)

Freud "Two Principles in Mental Functioning" (1911), "A Note on the Unconscious in Psychoanalysis" (1912), “On Narcissism” (1914), "Instincts and their Vicissitudes" (1915), “Repression” (1915) (from General Psychological Theory) (1 class)

Sartre Being and Nothingness (selections) (1943) (86 - 116) (127 - 133, 347 - 352, 707 - 711) (2 classes)

Beauvoir The Second Sex (selections) (1949) (introduction and chapters 1-3) (chapters 16, 21, 25) (2 classes)

Second paper assigned

PART III: Self and other
Freud    "Mourning and Melancholia" (1917),   (1 class)
"The Libido Theory" (1923), The Ego and the Id (1923)

Sartre    Search for a Method (selections) (1960)    (1 class)

Third paper assigned

PART IV: Case studies

Freud    “Rat Man: Notes Upon a Case of Obsessional Neurosis” (1909) (Ernst Lanzer)    (2 classes)


Jean Améry (1912-1978) At the Mind’s Limits (esp. “On the Necessity and Impossibility of Being a Jew”) (1964)    (2 classes)

Fourth paper assigned

PART V: Self and other (continued): object relations theory


Fifth paper assigned

PART VI: For the other


Totality and Infinity (selections) (1961)    (2 classes)

Second take-home assigned

Conclusion  (1 class)

**COURSE TOPIC:** philosophic and psychoanalytic approaches to the relation between self and other

**COURSE GOALS:** through readings in philosophy and psychoanalytic theory, students will achieve familiarity with some central ways of conceiving the relation between self and other; in class discussions and papers, students will learn to analyze, explain, compare and evaluate those views

**COURSE TEXTS:** the texts are available from the university bookstore unless otherwise noted; many of the texts also can be purchased on the internet at moderate cost

**PART I:**
Sartre, “Existentialism is a Humanism” (handout)
Beauvoir, *Diary of a Philosophy Student* (selection) (handout)

**PART II:**
Freud, *General Psychological Theory* (Simon & Schuster)
Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* (Simon & Schuster)
Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (Random House) (the new, improved, translation)

**PART III:**
Freud, *General Psychological Theory* (Simon & Schuster)
--------, *The Ego and the Id* (Norton)
Sartre, *Search for a Method* (selections) (1960)

**PART IV:**
Freud, *Three Case Histories: The ‘Wolf Man’, The ‘Rat Man’ and The Psychotic Doctor Schreber* (Simon & Schuster)
Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (Richard Philcox translation) (Grove/Atlantic)
Améry, *At the Mind’s Limits* (Indiana)

**PART V:**
Winnicott (selections) (handout)

**PART VI:**
Levinas, “Philosophy and the Idea of Infinity” (handout)
--------, *Totality and Infinity* (Duquesne)
Derrida, *Adieu* (Stanford)
SILVER CORE CURRICULUM: This course satisfies Core Objective 13 [CO13] ("Integration and Synthesis").

Brief description of CO13: Students will be able to integrate and synthesize Core knowledge, enabling them to analyze open-ended problems or complex issues.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES: As a result of taking this course, students will be able to:

1. State a thesis about the self and its relationship to others, and critically analyze evidence and argument for the thesis drawing from the psychoanalytic and philosophical literatures.

2. Explain some of the principal concepts associated with different psychological and philosophical accounts of the self.

3. Identify different elements in the concept of the self as understood in more than one cultural or intellectual tradition.

4. Show how psychoanalytic theory is relevant to a philosophical understanding of the self, and indicate how case studies may have philosophical implications.

PREREQUISITES: Junior or senior standing, and completion of all General Education courses that build Core Objectives 1-3 and satisfy Core Objectives 4-8.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:
Readings as assigned
Participation in class discussions
Class attendance
Two take-home written assignments
Five papers (5 to 7 pp.)

TAKE-HOME ASSIGNMENTS: The take-home assignments will be short essays.

PAPERS: The papers will be essays (not research papers). They will be five to seven pages long. Papers are due as scheduled on the course outline.

You need use no books other than the course texts to write the papers. In an essay, you state a thesis, explain it and argue for it. The basic structure of an essay is: an introduction in which you state your thesis, the body of the essay in which you explain and argue for your thesis, the conclusion in which you summarize or highlight what you have done in the essay.

Essays will be typed or word processed, double-spaced and in ten or twelve point type. They will have a title and a title page. The pages will be numbered. There will be no extra spaces
between paragraphs. They will be in finished form and without errors in grammar, spelling and punctuation. All quotations will be accompanied by a reference in parentheses. For example:

“Man is nothing else but what he makes of himself,” Sartre asserts (271).

Teenaged Beauvoir asks, “Certainly, I am very individualistic, but is this incompatible with the devotion and disinterested love of others?” (63).

According to Freud, in Civilization and Its Discontents, "what we call our civilization is largely responsible for our misery" (38). Civilization, far from being an unalloyed good according to him, is the source of our neuroses: "a person becomes neurotic because he cannot tolerate the amount of frustration which society imposes on him in the service of its cultural ideals" (39).

Winnicott thinks the capacity to be alone is a sign of psychological health: "this capacity is one of the most important signs of maturity in emotional development" ("The Capacity to Be Alone," 29). He also thinks that our ability to be with others is crucial: "Maturity of the human being is a term that implies not only personal growth but also socialization" ("From Dependence Towards Independence," 83).

Derrida’s memorial piece on Levinas reflects Levinas’s concern with a way of speaking that is about the other, not about the self. In it, he maintains that “all language that returns to the self, to us, would seem indecent” (2).

Levinas wants to know how we can relate to another person without simply subsuming him or her: “But how can the same, produced as egoism, enter into relationship with an other without immediately divesting it of its alterity? What is the nature of this relationship?” (38).

Fanon cries out in response to the objectification of the black man, “I came into this world anxious to uncover the meaning of things, my soul desirous to be at the origin of the world, and here I am an object among other objects” (89).

Améry’s ironic situation is the “necessity and impossibility of being a Jew” (82).

In the concentration camp, Améry says, resistance was the way to dignity: “I gave concrete form to my dignity by punching a human face” (91).

Block indent passages that are more than three lines long. When you block indent, you do not need quotation marks (the block indentation serves to show that the passage is a quotation). In addition, block indented quotations do not need to be in italics. In general, put the author's ideas in your own words, and then cite the passage in which you find those ideas, for example:

Freud thinks we are attracted to another person solely for the pleasure he or she can give us:

At this point we may even venture to touch on the question: whence does that necessity arise that urges our mental life to pass on beyond the limits of narcissism and to attach the
libido to objects? The answer which would follow from our lines of thought would once more be that we are so impelled when the cathexis of the ego with libido exceeds a certain degree (66).

In "Mourning and Melancholia," he appears to have changed his mind. Speaking about the process of mourning, he indicates that we have difficulty accepting the loss of another:

The testing of reality, having shown that the loved object no longer exists, requires forthwith that all the libido shall be withdrawn from its attachments to this object. Against this demand, a struggle of courses arises--it may be universally observed that man never willingly abandons a libido-position, not even when a substitute is already beckoning to him" (166).

In general, you should have very few ellipses in quotations. In addition, quotations should include complete sentences. Here's an example of what not to do: Freud says that the testing of reality "requires forthwith that all the libido shall be withdrawn...a struggle...man never willingly abandons" (166).

Do not start your paper with a broad general claim about the paper topic, for example: "The topic of the self has been discussed by human beings since the beginning of history." Such statements do not further your goals in writing an essay, namely, to state, explain and argue for a claim. Every sentence in an essay, from the beginning to the end, fulfills one of those functions. So, jump right in at the beginning and start fulfilling those functions and, at the end, make sure every part of your essay clearly fulfills one of those functions.

Essays will be evaluated on the following basis:

1. Do you have the parts mentioned above (introduction, body, conclusion)?
2. Do you fulfill the functions mentioned above (state thesis, explain it, argue for it, summarize or highlight)?
3. Is the thesis you are writing about an interesting and important one?
4. Does your explanation of the thesis show that it is an interesting and important one? Does your explanation make the basic concepts and terms in your essay clear to the reader?
5. Are your arguments clear and convincing to the reader?
6. Do you use specific examples from the text you are writing about to make your arguments stronger? Do you use direct quotations from the text you are writing about to make your arguments stronger?
7. Does your conclusion add something to the essay as a whole?
8. Is the essay typed or word processed, double-spaced and in ten or twelve point type? Does it include a title and a title page? Are the pages numbered? Does the essay have no extra space between paragraphs? Is it in finished form and without errors in grammar, spelling and punctuation? Are all quotations accompanied by a reference in parentheses? Do you follow the other instructions regarding format given above?
EVALUATION: Grades will be based on the take-home assignments and papers, weighted equally (1/7 each). Excellent class participation may raise your grade somewhat over the mathematical average, at the discretion of the instructor.

Late papers and take-home assignments will lose a letter grade for each class session they are late. **Papers will be turned in not e-mailed.** There are no make-up examinations except in the case of illness, emergency or religious holiday.

The grading scale is: 94-100, A; 90-93 A-; 87-89 B+; 84-86 B; 80-83 B-; 77-79 C+; 74-76 C; 70-73 C-; 67-69 D+; 64-66 D; 60-63 D-; below 60, F.

It is the instructor's policy that cheating, plagiarism or submission of written work for this course which was submitted in another course merits a course grade of 'F'.

ATTENDANCE: Much of the important work in this course goes on in class. Students are expected to be in attendance except in cases of illness, emergency or religious holiday. Students are expected not to make appointments that conflict with class sessions.

Attendance is required and will be taken at the beginning of each class session. Students may miss three classes without penalty. Five points will be subtracted from the final grade for the fourth class missed and two points for each class missed after that. Exceptions will be made in the case of illness, emergency or religious holiday. A written excuse must be provided for exceptions to be made.

If you miss class, contact one of your fellow students to find out what we did in your absence and to get notes on the class you missed. Once you have done that, you are invited to talk to the instructor, either during office hours or before or after class, about what you missed. **Please do not e-mail the instructor to find out what you missed in class.**

COURSE LINKS: The course outline and class assignments can be accessed through my homepage: <www.unr.edu/~achten>. They will also be distributed in class. My homepage can also be accessed through the Department of Philosophy website <www.unr.edu/philosophy> or by means of a search engine such as Google: <www.google.com> (search for: “Deborah Achtenberg” homepage).

USE OF THE INTERNET: Use of the internet for research purposes is appropriate. However, students should use their own ideas in papers they write. In addition, they should be aware that papers plagiarized from internet sources can easily be detected through the use of a search engine such as Google.

INTERNET RESOURCES (see online course outline for links):

Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy (the on-line edition of Routledge's encyclopedia of philosophy)
Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (another good on-line encyclopedia of philosophy, this one from Stanford University)

Guidelines on Writing a Philosophy Paper (In addition to suggestions I will make in class, you may find this webpage from Jim Pryor at NYU's Department of Philosophy helpful.)

Webster's Unabridged Dictionary (the electronic version of Webster's Third New International Dictionary, Unabridged, published in 1961, with updates)

Oxford English Dictionary (the electronic version of the OED with the latest new and revised entries)

Freud: Conflict and Culture (Library of Congress)

PLAGIARISM: Plagiarism is a serious offense. You plagiarize when you use someone else’s words or ideas without attribution. When you do this, you are putting forward someone else’s work as if it were your own.

Changing a few words in a phrase or sentence is not enough to avoid plagiarism. (1) Instead, when you utilize someone else’s exact phrases, put them in quotation marks and cite in parentheses the person whose words you have used. (2) It is fine to paraphrase someone, but when you do, you must say so. You can make it clear by saying “As Beauvoir says...” or “According to Winnicott...”. (3) Finally, do not utilize even short phrases from another person’s work without a citation. If you follow these three guidelines, you will find it is easy to use sources in your own writing without being academically dishonest.

CLASS FORMAT: The class will be a combination of lecture and discussion. The discussion will be, generally, guided discussion rather than general discussion or general debate.

Students will be asked to respond to questions asking them to reflect on the texts and the issues raised, to speculate in a thoughtful way when not sure, and in general to participate in discussion. Each student is expected to make at least one in-class comment in every class session.

Lectures and discussions will refer to course texts. Students will need to bring the relevant course texts to class if they are to benefit from lectures and discussions.

Web surfing and sending or reading e-mail or text messages during class are not allowed. In addition, please refrain from carrying on extensive side conversations during class discussion, and from eating during class. Please silence cell phones before class.

STUDYING: Many students will find that they do better work in this course if they study together with other students.
DISABILITY POLICY: The Department of Philosophy is committed to meeting the special needs of students with disabilities. If you suffer from a disability and need to request accommodations, please contact me as soon as possible.

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My office hours are Tuesdays, 2:30 - 3:30 p.m., and Thursdays, 11:00 a.m. - noon (EJCH 231), or by appointment. Please feel free to come by to discuss the course topics or your progress in the course. I am happy to meet with you at some other time if it is more convenient. If you wish to make an appointment to see me at some other time, please see me before or after class, or call: 784-6742 (my office in Philosophy). If you try to get in touch with me and cannot, leave a note with your phone number so that I can call you.

My e-mail address is: <achten@unr.edu>. I invite you to e-mail me when appropriate. Keep in mind that, due to time delays, e-mail can be an unsuccessful medium for making appointments or for taking care of other time-sensitive matters. In addition, e-mail is an inappropriate medium for discussion of grades. Finally, I prefer to do almost all advisement and discussion in person rather than by e-mail.