

PHI 365/LEH 300 The Humanities:

And we have killed Him? Modernity, Faith, and the Denial of God

Dr. Rosalind Carey

Phone: 718-960-8332

Office: Carman 367

Email: rcarey@lehman.cuny.edu

Hours: Tues/Thurs 12-12:30; Tues. 4:30-6:00 *Writing Intensive*

Overview of the problem:

Nietzsche famously proclaimed that God is dead? And we have killed Him. It is a mistake to interpret this as a celebratory remark. Rather, Nietzsche is ringing an alarm; he is diagnosing what he sees as the central challenge of the modern era: the rise of atheism, and the demise of religion. While on the face of it, his worry seems simplistic, religion is on the rise in America, for one thing--this course assumes that he is right at least in seeing that religion is belief versus unbelief; it is a defining characteristic of the modern era. In this course, then, we will attempt to trace the outlines of the impact of faith and atheism on other characteristically modern views, such as humanism, individualism, democracy, freedom, power, and responsibility. We will draw our readings from philosophy (Hegel, Nietzsche, Russell), philosophical anthropology (Feuerbach), psychology (Freud, James), biology (Darwin), economics/political philosophy (Marx, Engels), and literature (Dostoyevsky).

Required Texts (in bookstore):

1. Course pack
2. Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*
3. Marx and Engels, *On Religion*

Expectations and Evaluation:

Attendance: You start the class with 100 points (an A) and every absence takes away 5 points from that grade. In a real emergency, seen or unforeseen, I make an exception, but only with proof. You do, however, get one personal day; use it wisely.

Reading and Writing (in class): 25%. You must read the texts IN ADVANCE of the class meeting. You will also write about the readings and read new material in each class. These writing assignments will be collected that day, or periodically.

Notes: 25%. On your own, you will take notes (to be kept together in a folder and called your ?journal?, and to be collected periodically, graded and returned) in which you reflect on your reading. The whole set will receive a grade at the end of the semester, though you may ask at any time how you are doing on your notes.

Independent work: 35%. You are expected to do one of the following: A) you can commit (for at least 2 weeks) to some organization of your choice (choir, rationalist society, soup kitchen, church group, youth outreach, Unitarian services, etc.); or B) you can locate a person or group (homeless, clergy, athlete, housewife, business man, etc.) whom you think might hold and/or illustrate a view of religion or a-religion.

In the first case you will keep detailed notes (you can consider this part of your journal?

as well) of your experiences (I will provide guidelines) and eventually write an 8-14-page paper in which you discuss your observations and relate it to the issues raised in this course. You may not use a group to which you already belong.

In the second case, you are to have a conversation with the person or group (I will provide guidelines) and relate what you discover about her/his beliefs to the issues raised in this course. You may not interview your family or friends.

Before midterm you must turn in a typed 1-page proposal for this paper and defend it to the class (presentation worth 5%, independent of the 40%). After that, you will begin your independent work (choices A or B above). The paper itself will be due near the end of the semester.

Final Exam: 10%. You are to take some work you've done for this class and rework it (revise the content, edit the order of the ideas, correct the spelling, grammar, etc.) in the computer lab until you are satisfied.

August/September:

Introduction: the scope and limits of the course

Hegel and Hegelianism (Course pack, pp. 1 - 12)

Feuerbach: The Essence of Christianity, Preface - Ch. III (Course pack, pp. 13 - 44)

_____ : Ch. III-VI (Course pack, pp. 44 - 60)

_____ : Ch. XV-XVI (Course pack)

Dostoevsky: Notes from the Underground (Course pack, pp. 107 - 178)

October:

Marx/Engels: Feuerbach?End of Classical German Philosophy (Book, pp. 213 - 268)

_____ : Theses on Feuerbach (pp. 69 - 72), German Ideology (pp. 73 - 81),

Communist Manifesto (pp. 88 - 89) (All readings are in Marx/Engels Book)

_____ : Das Capital, Anti-Duhring, Bruno Bauer, Hist of Early Christianity (Book)

Darwin: The Origin of Species. (Course pack, pp. 217 - 241)

Dostoevsky: The Grand Inquisitor/Brothers Karamazov (Course pack, pp. 66-76)

November:

Dostoevsky: Rebellion (Course pack, pp. 63 - 66)

Nietzsche, The Anti-Christ: (Course pack, pp. 179 ? 214)

Freud: The Future of an Illusion (pp. 5 - 30, Freud Book)

_____ : Ibid. (pp. 31 - 57, Freud Book)

_____ : Ibid. (pp. 58 - 71, Freud Book)

December:

Bertrand Russell, Why I Am Not a Christian (pp. 3-23, Handout)

_____ : Ibid. (pp. 24-47, Handout)

Bertrand Russell, The Conquest of Happiness (Handout)

Dostoevsky: Life of Elder Zossima; Conversations with?(Course pack, pp. 76-104)

Final exam date: TBA