

HUMA 5900 Comparative Philosophy
Topic: Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, and Intercultural Philosophy
Thursday 12:00-14:50, Spring Semester 2025

Course Instructor: **Eric S. NELSON** (Professor, Philosophy, HUMA)
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 Office and office hours: room 2383, Fri 13:00-15:30 and by appointment.
 Instructional Language: English, no other language requirements.

Course Description

Schopenhauer and Nietzsche are two original and internationally impactful nineteenth-century philosophical writers. Their philosophies continue to be widely discussed in global intercultural and comparative contexts. In this course, we will discuss key texts and ideas from Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, and other nineteenth-century German pessimists from an intercultural perspective in relation to South and East Asian philosophical and religious sources. We will explore their respective uses of Indian and Buddhist ideas and images in their works, the conceptual contrasts and comparisons drawn between their thought and South and East Asian philosophies in comparative studies, as well as the reception and adaptation of their works in East Asian and other contexts.

Course Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs)

1. Develop an introductory understanding of philosophy and its motivations and argumentative, interpretive, and rhetorical strategies through two pivotal philosophers.
2. Learn different approaches and perspectives to philosophical issues in the context of their works and further develop one’s own philosophical perspective.
3. Improve abilities in recognizing, evaluating, and discussing ideas, interpretations, and arguments.
4. Cultivate skills in the critical interpretation of textual sources and in scholarly communication.

COURSE OUTLINE

Dates	Topics
1. Feb 6	Introduction to the Course and to German and Intercultural Philosophy
I. Schopenhauer	
2. Feb 13	Knowledge as representation, will as nature, and the “veil of Maya” – selections from the <i>Upaniṣads</i> and Schopenhauer, <i>The World as Will and Representation</i> .
3. Feb 20	Human nature, sympathy, and negative ethics – selections on Buddhist ethics and from Schopenhauer, <i>The World as Will and Representation</i> and <i>The Two Fundamental Problems of Ethics</i>
4. Feb 27	1. Art & Music; the Beautiful & the Sublime - selections from Schopenhauer, <i>The World as Will and Representation</i> . 2. Student presentations on Schopenhauer (topics can include such as animals, Indian sources, East Asian receptions, etc.)
II. Nietzsche	
5. March 6	Nietzsche, <i>The Birth of Tragedy</i> – selections on the Dionysian and Apollonian, tragic spirit vs Euripides and Socrates, cultural decision between models of ancient Greece, Israel, and India
6. March 13	1. Nietzsche, <i>Untimely Meditations</i> – selections on history and the

	import of Schopenhauer. 2. German pessimism and the legacy of Schopenhauer (Hartmann, Mainländer, Olga Plümacher)
7. March 20	Nietzsche, <i>Thus Spoke Zarathustra</i> – selections
8. March 27	Nietzsche, <i>Thus Spoke Zarathustra</i> – selections
April 3: no class	
9. April 10	Nietzsche, <i>The Genealogy of Morals</i> – selections on power, <i>ressentiment</i> , ascetic ideals – implications for Asian philosophy and religion
10. April 17	Nietzsche, <i>Twilight of the Idols</i> – selections no critique of substance and self in Nietzsche and Buddhist sources
11. April 24	Nietzsche, <i>The Will to Power</i> – questions of pessimism, nihilism and “European Buddhism”
May 1: no class	
12. May 8	Student Presentations on Nietzsche

Planned Assessment Tasks (100% of final grade):

1. One final research paper = 50%
2. Two presentations or one presentation and one reflection paper = 25%
3. Attendance and Direct in-class participation and discussion = 25%

Notes on Assignments

1. Each class you attend will increase your attendance and final grade.
5. Each class in which you make comments and pose questions will increase your participation grade.

Please note Course Requirements

By taking this course, students agree that they required to:

1. Note and keep track of announcements and changes in class and on canvas.
2. Not commit any type of plagiarism. The HKUST has a no plagiarism policy.
3. Read assigned readings.
4. Maintain regular class attendance.
5. Complete all assignments on-time for full grade.

See Canvas for selected readings