

Psych 527 - Ethics/Law and Phenomenology – Claire LeBeau, M.A., L.M.H.C.
Spring Quarter 2012

Class: M & W 3:45 to 5:00 Office Hours: Wed. 3:00 to 3:45 and by email appointment

Levinasian Mission Statement for Psychology

Levinas (1972/1987) writes, “The relationship with the Other puts me into question, empties me of myself and empties me without end, showing me ever more resources. I did not know I was so rich, but I no longer have the right to keep anything for myself” (p. 52). Levinas writes that, like Moses, we are called first to serve God through the people of God, to act without self-interest but as an absolute orientation towards the Other, to act with faith without any certainty of one’s own redemption, “to act without entering into the Promised Land.” (pp. 49-50) From this point of departure, I strive always to be present, responsive, and responsible, to put the Other first, to question myself and hold myself accountable, seeking not my own Promised Land but theirs.

Levinas, E. (1972/1987). *Meaning and Sense*. In A. Lingis (Trans.), *Collected philosophical papers* (pp. 75-107). Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press.

Course Description:

This course is designed to test the limits and ground of ethical understanding and engagement as practiced in and through the psychotherapy relationship. In this process, we will explore Levinas’ opus, *Totality and Infinity*, while reflecting deeply upon our own philosophical presuppositions as well as the dominant paradigms and discourses within the field of psychology.

We will draw richly from the formidable pedagogical example of the founder of Seattle University Masters of Arts in Psychology, Dr. George Kunz. As such, the thesis for this course that Dr. Kunz outlines is this: “*ethical responsibility grounds both pathology and therapy.*” He writes, “isolating oneself in suffering and self-obsession, totalizing others as ‘nothing more than...,’ and turning away from responsibility provide the ground for pathology. The face of the Other, however, introduces infinity as ‘always more than...’ and can resuscitate and inspire the dormant psyche to transcend itself to be good and healthy. The client is infinitely distant (always more than a diagnostic), and infinitely close (always here calling for understanding and responsibility). This is a difficult philosophy, with its extravagant claim of the priority of the Other over the self. But it offers a foundation for a psychology for the Other: the study of psyche, breath, the inspiration of soul into each other.”

Texts:

Levinas, E. (1961/1969). *Totality and Infinity* (A. Lingis, Trans.). Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press.

(handouts)

Requirements: Two take home exams – one mid-term and one final (each 30%), 3 one page reflection papers (10% total), and one paper on the implications of Levinas’ philosophy for understanding pathology and therapy (20%).

Calendar:

- Mar 26 – Introduction to the course. “The Usefulness of Insomnia”, “The Proximity of the Other”
28 – *Totality and Infinity* – “Introduction” by John Wild and case studies
- April 2 – *Totality and Infinity*, Preface, by Levinas
4 – T & I – Section I, A, 1 & 2 –

9 – T & I – Sec. I, A, 3, 4, 5
11 – T & I – Sec. I, B, 1, 2, 3 - **First Reflection Paper Due**

16 – T & I – Sec. I, B, 4,5,6,7 – **Take Home Midterm Exam Out**
18 – T & I – Sec. I, C, 1,2,3

23 – T & I – Sec. I, D – **Take Home Midterm Exam Due**
25 – T & I – Sec. II, A, 1,2,3,4,5,6
- April 30 – T & I – Sec. II, B, 1,2,3,4,5
- May 2- T & I – Sec. II, C, 1,2,3 – **Second Reflection Paper Due**
- May 7- T & I – Sec. II, D, 1,2,3,4,5,6
9- T & I – Sec. II, E, 1,2,3 and Sec. III, A

14- T & I – Sec. III, B, 1,2,3
16- T & I – Sec. III, B, 4,5,6,7,8 – **Third Reflection Paper Due**

21- T & I – Sec. III, C, 1,2,3,4,5 – **Take Home Final Exams Out**
23- T & I – Sec. IV, Beyond the Face
- No Class May 28 – Memorial Day
30 – Ned Farmer, M.A. and Washington State WAC regulations -
<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/wac/default.aspx?cite=246-810>
Final Papers Due
- June 4 – Ned Farmer, M.A. – application of ethics in psychotherapy practice
6- Celebration and discussion of papers with each other in the class - **Take Home Final Exam Due**