

Phil 3080*01: History of Modern Philosophy from Kant

Instructor: John Russon

Office: Mackinnon 338; Hours: Thursdays, 2:30-3:30, or by appointment.

Course meets: Tuesdays and Thursdays 4:00-5:20, Mack 225.

Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit from 1807 is a work of overwhelming philosophical significance. Drawing on the dual legacies of the Kantian philosophy and of the ancient philosophies of Plato and Aristotle, Hegel's Phenomenology re-defined the philosophical terrain, and set the terms for subsequent 19th- (and 20th-) Century philosophical investigation in Europe. Hegel's project is to describe experience "from the inside," and his rigorous deployment of this method leads to a comprehensive account of the dynamism and the range of human experience. The core of our class will be a study of this book, as we investigate the nature of knowledge, the nature of interpersonal life, and the nature of politics. We will supplement our primary study of this work with study of Marx's political writings, which develop some of the central themes of Hegel's German Idealist philosophy. We will then consider how Kant's Critique of Judgment and Nietzsche's Beyond Good and Evil, reveal further possibilities for personal and social experience that are opened up in light of the German Idealist revolution.

Objectives.

This course, like any university course, serves a number of different functions, and the advance of your own education will come in part through your reflecting on these functions, and recognizing *why* this study is worthwhile. Here are some of the most prominent goals of this study.

(1) Most obviously, it is the goal of the course to introduce you to a few specific works of a few specific philosophers. This by itself is quite an important function because these are among the small group of works that have been the most influential in the shaping of the discipline of philosophy and of our culture. These are the great works of philosophy: generations of great thinkers have been educated by these works, and the profundity of the insights in these works continues to inspire new thinkers. You can be confident that you are studying works of great inherent philosophical value.

(2) In addition to learning the weighty philosophical thoughts of these individuals, though, this course is an occasion for you to develop your own philosophical insight. Just as important as the accurate learning and appreciation of the philosophical positions of these others is the development of your own critical philosophical judgment. (For that reason, there will be both assignments that test the accuracy of your understanding of these works and assignments that test your own ability at independent critical thinking.)

(3) Aside from their intrinsic philosophical merit, these works are also historically important, and in studying these works you are also learning something about the route that human history has travelled. These are works from the time of the French Revolution and its aftermath: the time, in other words, of the real birth of our modern, industrial, liberal Western world. In reading these works you are also developing a basic "literacy," so to speak, in your own culture.

(4) Finally, this is a course in the liberal arts, and is an important opportunity for you to improve your abilities with reading, writing, speaking and thinking in general. One important remark about this last point: this course is designed to facilitate the development of *your abilities* of reading, writing and independent thought; it is not a "research" course geared towards the passing on of "information"; for that reason, *I do not want you to turn to secondary literature (books, websites, etc.) on this material*, but instead to keep focused on making sense of the primary texts *through your own efforts*. I have ordered one work—*Reading Hegel's Phenomenology*—as a "Companion" to support your efforts at independent study, should you desire that.

--In sum, the study of these works of Late Modern Philosophy can be rewarding in many ways. It is your contribution of serious effort that will unlock these rewards. I hope you will take the opportunity to benefit from what this course has to offer.

Schedule:

Do the readings *in advance* of class meetings, and come to class prepared to discuss the specifics of the texts, ideas and arguments. Make sure you bring your text to class.

NB: for the first six weeks, while we study Hegel's text, our meetings will alternate between lectures that explain the main argument of the text and classes in which we look with greater care at the details of the text. These are equally essential studies: if you don't attend the lectures, you will be lost in reading the text, and if you don't participate in our textual studies, you will not be able to carry out the assignments.]

Sept 5 (Thursday) Introduction: What's Happening Now?

I. Dynamic Intersubjectivity

Sept 10, 12: Hegel, Phenomenology of Spirit

Tues: "Table of Contents," "Sense Certainty." **Lecture**

Thurs: "Sense-Certainty" **Quiz on table of contents**

Sept 17, 19: Hegel, Phenomenology of Spirit

Tues: "Perception"

Thurs: "Understanding"

Sept 24, 26: Hegel, Phenomenology of Spirit

Tues: "Independence and Dependence of Self-Consciousness" M178-88 **Lecture**

Thurs: "Independence and Dependence of Self-Consciousness" M189-196

Oct 1, 3: Hegel, Phenomenology of Spirit

Tues: "Freedom of Self-Consciousness," **and M231 (Ch. V) Lecture**

Thurs: **Test**

II. History and Politics

Oct 8, 10: Hegel, Phenomenology of Spirit

Tues: "Ethicality," **M437** "a. Ethical Substance," "b. Ethical Action." **Lecture**

Thurs: "Ethicality," "c. Legal Status."

Oct 15, 17: Hegel, Phenomenology of Spirit and Marx, Selected Writings

Tues: **M488-491** and "Absolute Freedom and Terror"

Thurs: Marx, Communist Manifesto Pt. 1, pp 158-169.

Oct 22, 24: Marx, Selected Writings

Tues: Marx, German Ideology, pp 107-112

Thurs: Marx, "Alienated Labour," from Economic and Philosophic MSS, pp 58-68

III. Judgment and Creativity

Oct 29, 31: Kant, Critique of Judgment

Tues: §IV, §§1-2, 6, 8-9, 11, 13, 15; pp 79-80 (from §17). **Essay**

Thurs: §§18-22, 40-41

Nov 5, 7: Kant, Critique of Judgment

Tues: §§23-28

Thurs: "General Comment" (pp 126-140) and §§59-60

Nov 12, 14: Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil

Tues: §§1-4, 9, 16-17, 19, 23, 36

Thurs: §§20, 24, 26, 28-30, 32, 42-44

Nov 19, 21: Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil

Tues: §§257-261, 195, 197; handout from Genealogy of Morals (§16)

Thurs: §§203, 208-213

Nov 26: **Test**

Texts:

Required:

Hegel, Phenomenology of Spirit, (Oxford).

Kant, Critique of Judgment, (Hackett).

Marx, Selected Writings, (Hackett).

Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil, (Vintage).

Recommended:

Russon, Reading Hegel's Phenomenology, (Indiana)

Assignments:

In addition to reading the assigned texts and regularly attending and participating, you are required to complete the following assignments.

In-class Quiz: Thursday September 12 5%

You are required to memorize the Table of Contents for Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit, and on Thursday September 12 you will be quizzed on this in class.

In-class Test: Thursday October 3 30%

You will be given 2 passages from Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit, and you will be required to explicate the argument being made in them. The 2 passages will be ones I have selected from a number (about 6) that I will have identified for you in advance.

Critical Essay: Tuesday October 29 35%

You must write a critical essay, 8 pages in length, on a topic in Hegel and/or Marx. I will give you a list of possible topics.

In-class Test: Tuesday November 26 30%

You will be required to write two essays in response to 1 question each on Kant and Nietzsche. I will give you the questions in advance.

NB: Any work you submit must be your own. Submitting the work of others as if it were your own is plagiarism, a form of fraud, and it will be treated as the serious academic offence that it is. Since this course is primarily about you learning to work with the course texts on your own, you have no reason to consult outside work. If you in fact do so however, make sure your use of that work is properly documented in your assignments.

Two Observations on the Class:

1. *The books are hard.*

The books we will be reading in this course are among the hardest that our culture has produced. They cannot be read casually, but require study, and this study takes a lot of mental effort and a lot of patience. EVERY first-time reader of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit finds the book to be virtually impenetrable; those who persist in their efforts, though, are rewarded: the book does start to make sense and many students of philosophy find that their experience of reading this book has a significant, transformative effect on their whole orientation towards reading and study: after reading this book, they find that, in addition to having their thinking transformed, they are also much better able to read and study other works that formerly seemed difficult. I hope this will be your experience. This is a hard, hard book, but you will find that persistence does pay off, and that you will learn from this incredibly rich and rewarding work. Something similar is true of Kant's Critique of Judgment. This work is particularly marked by great precision, and learning to read such a precise work will significantly enhance your ability to be precise in your own thinking. If you are serious in your interest in philosophy, these works of Hegel and Kant are both essential works to study. *Perhaps most importantly, you should remember that these books offers an education that you cannot get anywhere else.* The books by Marx and Nietzsche are much easier to read than either of these other two, but still quite demanding. Indeed, I expect that you will find them welcome relief after reading Kant and Hegel; (don't be fooled, though—they still require rigorous and disciplined thought if they are to be appreciated).

2. *Attend and be Prepared.*

The best--indeed the only--way to succeed in this class is to attend regularly and to come prepared. You will not be graded on attendance, but you should recognize that it is only through your committed participation that you can learn the material that will allow you to do well in the course. I will be talking in class about the material in the reading. I will be presuming that you have done the readings and I will be speaking as if to people who are trying to make sense of what they read. If you have worked on the reading, you should find that the things I say clarify and develop the ideas in the text, and, further, that you will be able to return to the text afterwards and have it make more sense. My lectures are not intended as a substitute for the readings: you are responsible for the words of Kant, Hegel and Marx, not just my words. The more effort you put into the reading, the better you will learn this material. I strongly encourage and expect your informed participation in the classroom. As well as reading, attending, and participating, you will also have a number of writing assignments—a test and 2 essays--over the course of the semester. Your work will involve your accurate explanation and critical assessment of difficult and profound ideas. That means you need to spend time contemplating and digesting those ideas. This means you cannot do good work on these assignments if you leave them to the last minute. This is especially true with the essay. You will need to be engaged in an ongoing way with the material if you are going to be able to formulate a strong interpretive response to it. Here again, doing the reading and actively thinking on your own about its relevance will be the best preparation. You might remember that *there is no other situation in which you can be taken through the study of this material*: the university offers a strong and supportive learning environment that is not easily reproduced anywhere else in our society. I hope you will take advantage of it.

College of Arts Standard Statements:

E-mail Communication

As per University regulations, all students are required to check their <uoguelph.ca> e-mail account regularly: e-mail is the official route of communication between the university and its students.

When You Cannot Meet a Course Requirement

When you find yourself unable to meet an in-course requirement because of illness or compassionate reasons, please advise the course instructor (or designated person, such as a teaching assistant) in writing, with your name, id#, and e-mail contact. See the Undergraduate Calendar for information on regulations and procedures for Academic Consideration:

<http://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c08/c08-ac.shtml>

Drop Date

The last date to drop one-semester Fall 2013 courses, without academic penalty, is **Thursday October 31**. For regulations and procedures for Dropping Courses, see the Undergraduate Calendar: <http://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c08/c08-drop.shtml>

Copies of out-of-class assignments

Keep paper and/or other reliable back-up copies of all out-of-class assignments: you may be asked to resubmit work at any time.

Student Rights and Responsibilities

Each student at the University of Guelph has rights which carry commensurate responsibilities that involve, broadly, being a civil and respectful member of the University community. The Rights and Responsibilities are detailed in the Undergraduate Calendar:

<http://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c14/c14-strightsrespon.shtml>

Academic Misconduct

The University of Guelph is committed to upholding the highest standards of academic integrity and enjoins all members of the University community – faculty, staff, and students – to be aware of what constitutes academic misconduct and to do as much as possible to prevent academic offences from occurring. The Academic Misconduct Policy is detailed in the Undergraduate Calendar:

<http://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c08/c08-amisconduct.shtml>

Recording of Materials

Presentations which are made in relation to course work—including lectures—cannot be recorded in any electronic media without the permission of the presenter, whether the instructor, a classmate or guest lecturer.

Resources

The Undergraduate Calendar is the source of information about the University of Guelph's procedures, policies and regulations which apply to undergraduate programs. It can be found at: <http://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/>

If you find yourself in difficulty, contact the undergraduate advisor in your program, or the BA Counselling Office: <http://www.uoguelph.ca/baco/contact.shtml>