PHIL 589: **"Narratives on Community:**
Nancy, Esposito, Agamben"
M 6:00-9:15
Arts & Letters Hall, Room 204

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Description In this seminar we will explore the different ways in which a certain trend in contemporary political philosophy —the so called "impolitical" or "inoperative" communitarianisms, represented mainly by J.L. Nancy, R. Esposito and G. Agamben— has attempted to rehabilitate the question of community as a central question for re-thinking the political today. We will study how, for these authors, "community" must be thought anew in the light of a critical revision of the Western philosophical tradition and its metaphysical categories. According to these authors, such categories permeate the way we conceive and define the political today. Moreover, the persistence of these categories in our political thinking leads ultimately to a totalitarian practice of the political which has not only pervaded the experience of totalitarianisms in the XXth century but also grounds our current conceptions of democracy. We will read in detail Jean-Luc Nancy's *The Inoperative Community*, Roberto Esposito's *Communitas* and Giorgio Agamben's *The Coming Community,* along with a selection of chapters and papers that will help to give philosophical context to their proposals. Participants will be asked to reflect on the appeal in these texts for a rehabilitation of community as an interruption of what they describe as the "violence" of metaphysical Modern Western thought. We will also explore the limits and possibilities involved both in this way of reading the history of (political) philosophy and in the attempt to point to a "way out" of this history through an ontological rethinking of community.

Required Readings

Agamben, Giorgio [CC] *The Coming Community*, trans. Michael Hardt (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993) / *La comunità che viene* (Torino: Bollati Boringhieri, 2001).

Agamben, Giorgio. [P] "On Potentiality", in *Potentialities: Collected Essays in Philosophy*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1999): 177-184 / *La potenza del pensiero* (Vicenza: Neri Pozza, 2005). PDF

Agamben, Giorgio. [MWE] "Form-of-Life"; in *Means Without End: Notes on Politics*, trans. Cesare Carino and Vincenzo Binetti (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000): 3-12 / *Mezzi Senza Fine* (Torino: Bollati Boringhieri, 2013, Second Printing). PDF

Agamben, Giorgio. [WM] "The Work of Man," trans. Kevin Attell in *Giorgio Agamben: Sovereignty and Life*, ed. Matthew Calarco and Steven DeCaroli (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2007), 1-10. / *"L'opera dell'uomo*," in *La potenza del pensiero* (Vicenza: Neri Pozza, 2005), 372-384. PDF

Benjamin, Walter. "Critique of Violence," in *Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (New York, Shocken Books, 1982). PDF

Esposito, Roberto. [M] "Mito," in *Confines de lo político. Nueve pensamientos sobre política*, trans. Pedro Luis Ladrón de Guevara (Madrid: Trotta, 1996): 95-114/ *Nove pensieri sulla politica*. Bologna: Il Mulino, 1993. PDF

Esposito, Roberto. [C] *Communitas: The Origin and Destiny of Community*, trans. Timothy C. Campbell (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010) / *Communitas: Origine e destino della comunità* (Torino: Einaudi, 1998).

Esposito, Roberto and Jean-Luc Nancy, [D] "Dialogue on the Philosophy to Come," trans. Timothy Campbell. *The Minnesota Review* 75 (2010), 71-88. / "Dialogo sulla filosofia a venire" in *Essere Singolare Plurale*, trans. Davide Tarizzo (Torino: Einaudi: 2001), vii-xxix. PDF

Esposito, Roberto. [TP] "The Law of Community", "Melancholy and Community" and "Community and Violence"; in *Terms of the Political: Community, Immunity, Biopolitics*, trans. Rhiannon Noel Welch (New York: Fordham UP, 2013): 14-36, 123-134.

Heidegger, Martin. [BT] Introduction to *Being and Time*; in *Basic Writings*, trans. David Farrel Krell (San Francisco: Harper, 1993): 41-87. PDF

Heidegger, Martin. [IP] *Introduction to Philosophy* (lecture course 1928-29), trans. Will McNeill (unpublished), §18, 19 and 20. PDF

Lévinas, Emmanuel. "Ethics as First Philosophy"; in *Levinas Reader*, ed. Sean Hand (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989): 75-88. PDF

Nancy, Jean-Luc. [IC] *The Inoperative Community*, trans. Peter Connor (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991) / *La communauté désoeuvrée* (Paris: Christian Bourgois Editeur, 1986).

Nancy, Jean-Luc. [Cm] "The Compearance: from the Existence of 'Communism' to the Community of 'Existence,'" trans. Tracy B. Strong in *Political Theory* 20:3 (1992), 371-398. / "La comparution," in *La comparution: politique à venir*, Jean-Luc Nancy and Jean-Christophe Bailly (Paris: Christian Bourgois Editeur, 1991). PDF

Nancy, Jean-Luc. [BSP] "Of Being Singular Plural," in *Being Singular Plural*, trans. Anne E. O'Bryne and Robert D. Richardson (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000): 1-99 / *Être singulier pluriel* (Paris: Galilée, 1996).

Nancy, Jean-Luc. [CC] "The Confronted Community," in *Postcolonial Studies*, 6:1 (2003): 23-36. / *La Communauté affrontée* (Paris: Galilée, 2001). PDF

Nancy, Jean-Luc. [BW] "The being-with of being-there," *Contintental Philososphy Review* 41 (2008): 1-15. PDF

Nancy, Jean-Luc. [C] "Conloquium," trans. Janell Watson, in *The Minnesota Review* 75 (2010), 101-108. PDF

Nancy, Jean-Luc. [CD] *La communauté désavouée* (Paris: Galilée, 2014), Chapters 1,2 and 5. PDF

Schedule (subject to change)

3.30 **Introduction**: Heidegger BT, Levinas, Benjamin.

4.6 **Nancy I**: Nancy BSP, BW & Heidegger IP

4.13: **Nancy II**: Nancy IC Chap.1, CC [and Cm]

4.20 **Nancy III**: Nancy IC Chap. 2 [and Esposito M]

4.27 **Nancy and Esposito**: Nancy C, Esposito D; C, Introduction, Appendix [TP].

5.4 **Esposito I**: C, Chapters 1, 2 and 3

5.11 **Esposito II**: C, Chapters 4 and 5

5.18 **Agamben I**: WM, P and MWE

5.25 **Agamben II**: CC

5.29 Juan Manuel Garrido (Lecture on Nancy) and video conference with Nancy: [Nancy CD]

6.1 **Nancy on Blanchot** CD

6.15 Final paper

Grading
Protocol: 20%
Presentation: 40%
Final paper: 40%

Protocol The protocol is a short summary of the main discussion and debates that took place during the previous session. It is <u>not</u> a detailed description of what was said and the order in which it was said. It is rather a reorganization and edition of the arguments, and it should gather the main questions that remained open for the sessions to come. We will read it at the beginning of the session. Hence it should not be more than two pages single-spaced, and copies should be brought for all.

Presentation The success of a seminar depends in a great deal on the quality of the presentations. Presentations should be written in the same format of final papers. That is, besides giving an account of the main arguments of the text(s) assigned for the session, they should also give a proper philosophical context for these arguments and offer an introduction to the main concepts needed to understand the author's proposal. You should also take a position in your presentation, be it critical or exegetical, and risk some thesis and questions you want to propose for debate and discussion during the session. You can also recommend to the class an additional reading for your session, or suggest a particular emphasis related to the readings assigned, but please do so with <u>enough time</u> in advance and in consultation with me.

Presentations should be around 5-7 pages long (single-spaced), and they should be sent to everyone in the seminar via email on Friday before the session. <u>Everyone must read and prepare the presentation</u>, along with the readings assigned, and I expect full and active participation from everyone during every session. It is of particular importance for me that you learn to read each other and pose critical questions to one another, besides engaging critically with the texts and authors assigned.

Final paper Final papers can be the continuation and re-elaboration of your presentation for the class, but they do not have to be so. If you want to work on something else, I would like to see a proposal for your final paper the 8th week of classes at the latest. Feel free to talk to me about your ideas any time during the quarter. Final papers are due on Monday, June 19, at <u>five pm</u>. Please send them via email. <u>No late papers will be accepted</u>, and I will give <u>no incompletes</u>.

Secondary Bibliography (recommended) Part of your responsibility as a participant of the seminar is to research and find the appropriate secondary bibliography for your presentation and final paper. However, I have listed below some of the articles that I have found more helpful in relation to the topics we will be discussing. I have listed only bibliography in English. If you are interested in bibliography in other languages I also have a list of articles and chapters available. I would also encourage additional readings of the work of Nancy, Esposito and Agamben, in particular for the elaboration of the final papers.

On Nancy

Bernasconi, Robert. "On Deconstructing Nostalgia for Community within the West: The Debate between Nancy and Blanchot," in *Research in Phenomenology* 23 (1993), 3-21.

Bird, Greg. "Community beyond Hypostasis: Nancy Responds to Blanchot," in *Angelaki* 13(1) (2008), 3–26.

Critchley, Simon. "With Being-With?: Notes on Jean-Luc Nancy's Rewriting of Being and Time," in *Studies in Practical Philosophy* 1, no. 1 (1999), 53-67.

Elliot, Brian. "Community and resistance in Heidegger, Nancy, and Agamben," in *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 37, no. 3 (2011), 259-271.

Gratton and Morin. *Jean-Luc Nancy and plural thinking : expositions of world, ontology, politics, and sense* (SUNY, 2012).

Naas, Michael, "Lyotard, Nancy, and the Myth of Interruption," in Silverman, Hugh (ed.), *Lyotard: Philosophy, Politics and the Sublime* (Routledge, 2002)

Watkin, Christoph, "A Different Alterity: Jean-Luc Nancy's 'Singular Plural'," in *Paragraph* 30:2 (2007): 50-64.

On Esposito

Special issues on Roberto Esposito:

> Timothy Campbell (ed.), *diacritics* 36(2) (2006)
> Greg Bird and Jon Short (eds), *Angelaki* 18(3) (2013)

Bosteels, Bruno. "Politics, Infrapolitics, and the Impolitical: Notes on the Thought of Roberto Esposito and Alberto Moreiras," in *The New Centennial Review* 10: 2 (2010): 205–238.

Lemm, Vanessa. "Biopolitics and Community in Roberto Esposito," in Esposito, *Terms of the Political* (cf. supra): 1-14.

On Agamben

Special issue on Giorgio Agamben:

> Alejandro Vallega (ed.), *Epoché: a Journal for the History of Philosophy* 16(1) (2011)

Calarco Matthew and Steven DeCaroli (eds.), *Giorgio Agamben: Sovereignty and Life*, ed. (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2007)

Durantaye. *Giorgio Agamben: A Critical Introduction* (Stanford UP, 2009)

OConnor, Patrick, "Redemptive Remnants: Agamben's Human Messianism," *Journal for Cultural Research* 13:3-4 (2009): 335-352

Norris, Andrew (ed.), *Politics, Metaphysics, and Death: essays on Giorgio Agamben's Homo Sacer* (Duke UP, 2005)

Whyte, Jessica. "'A New Use of the Self': Giorgio Agamben on the Coming Community,"
Theory and Event 13(1) (2010)