

PHL 577.101 (course # 14293)**Derrida I*****The Beast and the Sovereign***

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 T: 6:00-9:15
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 (or by appointment)

Description and Objectives

In this course we will focus on Jacques Derrida's final two seminars, given during the academic years 2001-2002 and 2002-2003 under the title *La bête et le souverain, The Beast and the Sovereign*. First delivered in Paris at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, these two seminars at once continue many of Derrida's earlier analyses of sovereignty and the question of the animal and lead them in some rather new and unexpected directions. After a brief introduction (in the first session) to the overall project of publishing and translating Derrida's seminars, we will try to put *The Beast and the Sovereign* seminars into the context of Derrida's prior work on the theme of the theologico-political by providing a summary of the two seminars on the death penalty that immediately preceded the seminars we will be reading. We will then turn (in the second session of the course) to Derrida's main theses and arguments in the first volume of *The Beast and the Sovereign* regarding the systematic subordination of "the animal" to humans throughout the history of Western philosophy. From this point on the course we focus almost exclusively on the second volume of *The Beast and the Sovereign*, with a few backward glances at *Aporias* and *Of Spirit*. We will look not only at the arguments and themes of what turned out to be Derrida's very final seminar but at its rhetoric, its tone, and its rhythm. We will try to understand just how it happened that this singular seminar was able to become—or at least this will be our working hypothesis—an *event*, and why Derrida was led to consider there not only the nature of political sovereignty and its relationship to the question of the animal but everything from Heidegger's understanding of originary violence and Robinson Crusoe's obsession with being eaten by wild beasts to the contemporary alternative between being buried or cremated, the invention of the wheel, war, world war, and the end of the world.

Required Reading

BS 1 *The Beast and the Sovereign*. Volume 1, Seminar of 2001-2002. Trans. Geoffrey Bennington. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009. [*La bête et le souverain, Volume 1, 2001-2002*, édition établie par Michel Lisse, Marie-Louise Mallet et Ginette Michaud. Paris: Éditions Galilée, 2008.]

BS 2 *The Beast and the Sovereign*. Volume 2, Seminar of 2002-2003. Trans. Geoffrey

Bennington. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010. [*La bête et le souverain, Volume 2, 2002-2003*, édition établie par Michel Lisse, Marie-Louise Mallet et Ginette Michaud. Paris: Éditions Galilée, 2009.]

Supplementary Reading

- Ap* *Aporias*. Trans. Thomas Dutoit. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1993. [*Aporias*. Paris: Éditions Galilée, 1996.]
- OS* *Of Spirit: Heidegger and the Question*. Trans. Geoffrey Bennington and Rachel Bowlby. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991. [*De l'esprit: Heidegger et la question*. Paris: Éditions Galilée, 1987; also published in *Heidegger et la question: De l'esprit et autres essais*. Paris: Flammarion, 1990, 9-143.]

Tentative Schedule*

- Session 1 13 September 2011: Introduction to Derrida's Seminars; brief presentation on Derrida's "Death Penalty Seminars"
- 20 September 2011: No class. (Read *The Beast and the Sovereign I* and "Derrida's Flair" [handout])
- Session 2 27 September 2011: *The Beast and the Sovereign I*. Brief presentation, "Derrida's Other Corpus." Discussion.
- Session 3 4 October 2011: Reading of Session I of *The Beast and the Sovereign II*.
- Session 4 11 October 2011: Reading of Sessions II-V of *The Beast and the Sovereign II*.
- 18 October 2011: No class. Roundtable on Foucault, 3-7 PM, Student Center 220.
- Session 5 25 October 2011: Heidegger's *Walten*, Part I.
- Session 6 1 November 2011: Reinventing the Wheel (Auto-affection and Prosthesis)
- Session 7 4 November 2011 (Friday): *French Theory in Translation: The Question of the Archive*, mandatory attendance at the session on *The Beast and the Sovereign*, 1:30-4:10, Cortelyou Commons, 2324 N. Fremont Street.
- Session 8 8 November 2011: The Phantasms of Inhumers and Cremators
- Session 9 15 November 2011: Heidegger's *Walten*, Part II.

Session 10 22 November 2011: Derrida and the Question of the Archive; Wrap-up

* This schedule is “tentative,” and so is subject to change. If you miss a class, be sure to check with a classmate to see what you missed and what we will be treating the following week.

Requirements

1. A final 10 page research paper due at noon on the Friday following our final class. No extensions will be given for this paper. (Also, no title pages, cover sheets, or plastic binders are needed for these papers; just hand in 10 pieces of paper with your name on the top right, stapled or paper-clipped on the top left.) Feel free to use the abbreviations suggested above to refer to Derrida’s works (e.g., *BS I 67*).

2. Every student will be expected to come to class with at least three brief comments and/or questions to be presented to the class. I will call on 2-3 students per class to initiate discussion through these comments and questions.

3. Attendance: everyone is allowed one absence for the quarter. Any more than one absence will result in the lowering of the final grade. Two late arrivals *for* class, or early departures *from* class (for example after the break), will count for one absence.

Class attendance, attention, and participation are, therefore, *extremely* important, so come tired, come with a hangover, come with a friend if you like, but come.

Grades

The final paper will count for 75% of the final grade. Class participation (including the comments and questions prepared for each class) and attendance will make up the balance of the grade. (More than one class absence could result in the lowering of the final grade one to two notches—e.g., from A- to B+ or even B.) There will be no incompletes for this class. If you have not completed your paper by noon on the Friday after our last class meeting, then you should come to the department anyway and I will give a final exam topic for you to write on from 12-2 PM.