

## GRADUATE COURSE DESCRIPTIONS 2015-2016

### AUTUMN 2015

#### **PHL 601 (AQ) & PHL 515 (WQ) Seminar on German Aesthetics: Kant, Schiller and Hegel**

María Acosta

**W 3:00-6:15 (AQ)**

**M 3:00-6:15 (WQ)**

This is a two-quarter seminar on the philosophical foundations of Aesthetics and the important turn at the beginning of 19th century from aesthetics to Philosophy of Art. Over the course of twenty weeks, we will carefully read three of the most influential philosophical works in German Aesthetics: Kant's First Part of the Critique of the Power of Judgment, Schiller's Aesthetic Letters (together with his previous Kallias Letters and some of his essays on tragedy and the sublime) and Hegel's Lectures on Aesthetics (together with the more recent edition of his Berlin Lectures on the Philosophy of Art). We will complement these readings with important precursors such as Winckelmann, Hume, and Baumgarten, and we will also introduce, if time permits, contemporary continental approaches to these authors.

#### **PHL 656 (AQ) & PHL 657 (WQ) HANNAH ARENDT AND POLITICAL IMMORTALITY:**

##### **TOWARD A POST-THEOLOGICAL CONCEPT OF THE POLITICAL**

Peg Birmingham

**TH 3:00-6:15 (AQ & WQ)**

This two-quarter seminar on Hannah Arendt's conception of the political will be organized around Arendt's rethinking of the concept of political immortality, a rethinking, I argue, motivated by what she views as the failure of the political in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century, failure that she locates in the rise of modern secularization which caused the death of immortality. Pointing out that the Greeks and Romans understood politics as the *activity* of immortalizing, Arendt claims that the modern rise of secularization meant that life, world, and politics had become "perishable, mortal, and futile." Certainly this claim is also made by Carl Schmitt for whom modern secularization is the root cause for what he views as the contemporary age of "neutralization and depoliticization." In the 1934 preface to the Second Edition of *Political Theology*, Schmitt responds to the claim that "without a concept of secularization, we cannot understand our history of the last centuries," with his well-known claim that "All significant concepts of the modern theory of the state are secularized theological concepts." Schmitt's claim is not only historical, but normative: for him there is no concept of the political without a political theology. In his essay, *The Concept of the Political*, dedicated to his friend August Schaetz of Munich "who fell in battle in the assault on Moncelu on August 28, 1917," Schmitt recovers a theological foundation of the political by developing a conception of political immortality that grafts the image of the immortal body of the theological kingdom onto that of the sacrificial, violent space of the nation-state. Significantly, and this is the concern of the seminar, Arendt's response to the depoliticization of modern secularism proceeds along significantly different lines. This seminar will explore how Arendt's conception of political immortality, rooted in the conditions of history, law, earth, life, and worldly appearance, as well her concepts of power, authority, action and freedom, allows her to develop a post-theological concept of the political.

During the fall quarter we will read closely three of Arendt's major, early works: *Origins of Totalitarianism*, *Between Past and Future*, and *The Human Condition*. During the winter quarter, we will focus on three of her later works: *On Revolution*, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, and *Life of the Mind*.

Throughout the two quarters, students will present on several of Arendt's important essays that accompany and illuminate these major works. Again our readings and discussions will be focused on Arendt's attempt to develop a new concept of the political from out of a post-theological concept of political immortality.

## **PHL 520 Marx I: Materialism (AQ)**

**Richard Lee**

**M 6:00-9:15**

It seems as if everyone knows that Marx was a materialist. However, as soon as one begins to ask just what materialism is, in general, and for Marx, in particular, things start getting extremely messy very fast. At first glance, it seems that materialism is a philosophical position that holds that matter must take precedence, it has a certain priority. But priority over what? Well, it seems, priority over thought. But then a fundamental methodological problem rears its ugly head--materialism is precisely the thought of matter and, therefore, seems to give a certain precedence to thought. Working through this basic methodological problem is not easy.

However, it was a problem that Marx saw very clearly and to which he had a response. In this quarter, we will be looking at Marx's reflections on materialism, as well as the attempts to take those reflections seriously by subsequent Marxist thinkers. We will begin with a reading of Marx's Introduction to his Contributions to a Critique of Political Economy, where he raises this problem most directly and thoroughly. We will then read a large part of Volume One of Capital. In this latter text, we will be primarily interested in Marx's idea that "ghost-like objectivities" are really effective in the actual world and that materialism is the critique of that operation. We will then turn to Louis Althusser's contribution to Reading Capital to see how he understands Marx on this question. Our investigation of Althusser will lead us to two essays from For Marx, "Contradiction and Overdetermination" and "On the Materialist Dialectic." We will then turn to Theodor Adorno, focusing on the last part of his Negative Dialectics, "Reflections on Metaphysics." Finally, we will end with Walter Benjamin's "On the Concept of History" in order to see how the question of materialism is a necessarily historical one. Here, we will be primarily concerned with the ways in which materialism in, for Benjamin, inextricably linked to the messianic.

Along the way, we will have opportunity to think through these issues in relation to "speculative realism" or "object oriented ontology," we will try to avoid any talk of Badiou, and we will discuss Finkl Steel, my aunt Betty, and her husband, my drunk uncle Eugene.

## **PHL 470: LATER PHILOSOPHY OF LUDWIG WITTGENSTEIN (AQ)**

**Patricia Werhane, Professor**

**Tuesday: 3-6:15.**

One of the seminal thinkers in Anglo-American philosophy of the 20th century was the Austrian-British philosopher, Ludwig Wittgenstein. Wittgenstein started his philosophical career as a logician. But it is his later work, exemplified in his book, Philosophical Investigations, that is most commonly cited. In that work he criticizes most of traditional Anglo-American philosophy including his earlier writings in logic. His non-systemic approach to philosophical problems and his preoccupation with the centrality of language in human thinking and philosophical arguments are ideas for which he is best known. In this seminar we will focus on this later work and the innumerable secondary sources on his thinking. We will also take time to compare his thinking to some important thinkers in continental philosophy.

BOOKS: Ludwig Wittgenstein, PHILOSOPHICAL INVESTIGATIONS with German and English text, 1991 Wiley Blackwell.

Marie McGinn, ROUTLEDGE GUIDEBOOK TO WITTGENSTEIN'S PHILOSOPHICAL INVESTIGATIONS, 2nd edition, 2013: London and New York: Routledge.

### **PHL 410 Plato I: The Invention of Real Life (AQ)**

**Michael Naas**

**M 3:00-6:15**

“On Life” [περὶ βίου or περὶ ζῴων]: though there is no Platonic dialogue with this subtitle, no dialogue that poses directly the question “what is life?” we will argue in this seminar that almost everything in Plato’s dialogues can and should be read through the theme of life. From the question of what distinguishes human life from other kinds of life—whether that of plants, others animals, or the gods—to the question of how best to live a uniquely human life, almost all of Plato’s epistemological, ethical, and political concerns are centered around the theme or question of life. Even Plato’s ontology is, as we will see, inflected by this theme, insofar as both Being and the Good are commonly characterized by Plato in terms of life, life as opposed to death, to be sure, but also life as opposed to becoming, phenomenality, corporeality, and so on. We will thus want to ask in the course of the seminar whether the life that Plato privileges in so many of his most important dialogues is not in the end a life beyond or in excess of life, a life beyond what we call life, and, thus, a life to which our finite human existences have but limited access.

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### **WINTER 2016**

#### **PHL 557 An Introduction to *Daseinsanalyse* (WQ)**

**Elizabeth Rottenberg**

**W 3:00-6:15**

As Françoise Dastur and Philippe Cabestan remind us in the Introduction to their book *Daseinsanalyse*, philosophy was never simply a speculative or theoretical enterprise. Whether we turn to the Greeks for whom the meaning of philosophy was fundamentally existential, or to Plutarch for whom philosophy and medicine formed “a single field,” or to Descartes who likens philosophy to a form of therapy that can treat the “diseases of the mind,” or, more recently, to Foucault who devoted the third volume of *The History of Sexuality* to the “care of the self,” philosophy always implied a practice, an exercise or training, an *askesis* in the etymological sense of the word.

This course is an attempt think philosophy and psychoanalysis together starting from what is called *Daseinsanalyse* or Daseinsanalysis. Suffering can be understood differently, such would be the premise of this course, depending on whether one takes the sufferer to be a neuronal being, a psyche dominated by unconscious conflicts, or a *Dasein*. So how are we to read *Daseinsanalyse* and psychoanalysis together? What would it mean to understand the dream, for example, not only as a psychological phenomenon but also as an ontological one, as Binswanger does in *Dream and Existence* (1930)? Or another way of asking this question: what do you get when you cross Heidegger with Freud?

This course will be both historical and thematic in scope. We will begin by exploring the origin, history, and specificity of *Daseinsanalyse* beginning with the psychiatric phenomenology of Karl Jaspers and Eugène Minkowski. We will then turn to the work of Ludwig Binswanger and Medard Boss; we will focus in particular on their understanding of the dream. In the second part of the course, we will juxtapose a reading of Heidegger's *Zollikon Seminars* with Freud's writings on the unconscious, repression, and the drive. If there is time, I would also like to read a very early text by Derrida entitled "Phenomenology and Psychoanalysis."

**PHL 510: Kant- Critique of Pure Reason (WQ)**

**Avery Goldman**

**T 3:00-6:10**

In this course we will read through major sections of Kant's Critique of Pure Reason, emphasizing methodological questions, in an attempt both to distinguish Kant from his precursors and to respond to his critics. Central to this class will be an attempt to interpret what Kant means by terms like transcendental, experience [Erfahrung], cognition [Erkenntnis], understanding [Verstand], and reason [Vernunft], etc. We will read large sections of Kant's text (referring both to the 1781 and 1787 editions), as well as those of a wide variety of commentators, including Allison, Guyer, Henrich, and Heidegger.

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**SPRING 2016**

**PHL 500 Special Topics in the History of PHL: Interrogating Power: Ancient Perspectives on the Nature of Power (SQ)**

**Daryl Koehn**

**W 3:00-6:15**

Moises Naim in his recent book *The End of Power* claims that power is shifting from large institutions (church, government, corporations) to individuals. Whether that claim is true depends crucially on what we mean by "power". This class will consider the nature of power as the concept was understood by Plato, Aristotle, Epictetus, Sophocles, and Euripides. Texts include Plato's *Apology*, excerpts from Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* and *Politics*, Epictetus' *Enchiridion*, Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, and Euripides' *Medea*. The class will focus on close textual readings and will explore various problems associated with each author's understanding of power. We also will relate each ancient author's claim to Naim's thesis with a view to examining whether and/or in what sense power may be shifting today to a different class of agents.

**PHL 559: FOUCAULT: FOUCAULT: ON METHOD (SQ)**

**Kevin Thompson**

**Tuesdays, 3:00-6:16**

This seminar is an examination of Foucault's distinctive historical method. All of Foucault's major works are undoubtedly histories, but they are all just as undoubtedly unconventional histories. What makes them unique is their object of

investigation. They seek to uncover a stratum of experience that eludes those concerned solely with what has been said, what has been done, and what has been endured, the collection of arbitrary facts we typically call human history. Foucault designated this stratum with a variety of terms or phrases throughout his career: the concrete a priori, the epistème, the historical a priori, the dispositif (deployment, apparatus), the form of problematization, and the game of truth. Yet he consistently defined this stratum as the historically changing requirements that forms of knowledge and ways of acting had to fulfill in order to be counted as valid instances of knowing and acting and that the objects and events involved in these modes of knowledge and action had to meet in order to be counted as existing entities and occurrences at all. In this sense, what Foucault's historical studies tracked were the necessary structures by virtue of which thinking, doing, and being become possible. In a word, then, the rules that Foucault sought were transcendental.

But to say that a set of structures is transcendental has traditionally meant that the conditions in question are not only necessary, but universal and timeless as well. Foucault's coupling of the terms 'a priori' and 'historical' thus appears to render his central methodological concept self-contradictory. How, then, can a set of conditions be at once the operative structures by virtue of which thought and action are what they are and at the same time be mutable forms that set down the boundaries of acceptability for what is knowable and doable within a specific age? That is to say, how can they be at once transcendental and historical and how can they be grasped as such?

The seminar will explore this fundamental problematic and the central questions of historiography that it raises—selection (of source materials and evidence), periodization, and justification of interpretation—through a reading of Foucault's principal statements of his unique methodology (The Archaeology of Knowledge, "The Order of Discourse," The History of Sexuality, Volume I, "What is Critique?," The History of Sexuality, Volume II, and "What is Enlightenment?") together with one of his most instructive historical inquiries, his exploration of the birth of modern medicine (The Birth of the Clinic and a set of public lectures delivered in Rio de Janeiro).

### **PHL 589 Community and Cohesiveness in Early German Romanticism (SQ)**

**Elizabeth Millán Brusslan**

**M 3:00-6:15**

Through a close study of three prominent Friedrichs of the post-Kantian period: Friedrich Schlegel, Friedrich von Hardenberg (Novalis), and Friedrich Hölderlin, we will explore the role of community in the early German romantic conception of philosophy. In particular, we will consider the role of social cohesiveness in the early German romantic philosophical project. As we shall see, the romantic focus on community expanded the range of issues included under their philosophical lens: as the borders between art, philosophy, and science fused, philosophy became more inclusive. In the seminar, we will examine the romantic fusing of borders and the inclusiveness born of such fusion.

### **PHL 550 Heidegger I: Origin of the Work of Art (SQ)**

**Will McNeill**

**TH 3:00-5:15**

This course will offer a close examination of Heidegger's influential 1936 essay "The Origin of the Work of Art." We shall situate it in relation to the following texts: Being and Time (1927); the first Hölderlin lecture course, on "Germania" and "The Rhine" (1934-35); the first two versions of "The Origin of the Work of Art" (1934-35); and the essay "Hölderlin and the Essence of Poetry" (1936). The focus of our reading will be the conflict or strife between "world" and "earth."