

GRADUATE SEMINAR DESCRIPTIONS
2022-2023

AUTUMN QUARTER

PHL 515: Hegel I [H-II]
The Encyclopedia Logic

Kevin Thompson
Thursdays, 3:00-6:15

This course examines the central issues and ideas of the Encyclopedia version of Hegel's *Science of Logic* [1817, 1827, & 1830]. In this work, Hegel presents the fundamental categories and structures of a post-critical metaphysics. Accordingly, we will explore the major topics of the Logic—being, essence, and concept—through a close reading of the text, with an underlying concern to set out and evaluate its overarching argumentative structure.

However, the course will begin, following Hegel, by addressing the question: How can we be introduced, that is, led into, a system of absolute knowing, one that claims not to possess nor require any presuppositions?

PHL 525: Nietzsche[H-II]
Nietzsche on History: Tragedy, Philology, Historiography

Sean D. Kirkland
Tuesdays, 3:00-6:15

Nietzsche closes the preface of his essay, “On the Use and Disadvantage of History for Life,” the second of his *Untimely Meditations* (1873-1876), with the following statement: “I do not know what meaning classical studies could have for our time if they were not untimely—that is to say, acting counter to our time and thereby acting on our time and, let us hope, for the benefit of a time to come.” That is, for Nietzsche, the past is to be considered always and only as *our* past, or as the past of *the present*, i.e., as the historical figures, texts, and events that have generated our own concepts, principles, and values, all of which are still determining and setting the horizon for our experience of and our thinking about our world and ourselves. Our task in taking up our history is not to arrive, then, at the objective truth of what occurred or what a given author had in mind in some now long dead historical moment. Rather, as we shall come to see, with Nietzsche we are called upon to access the past as text and read through it to its sources, to the complex play of forces that subtend the text and give rise to it. And that project, Nietzsche insists here, can be “untimely,” in that it can have a disruptive and even a destructive influence on the present. But it is precisely here that we encounter a certain tension in Nietzsche's thinking of history and we will attend to that tension this quarter.

For we will ask, how is it that the past, which delivers up the historical content that is passed down to us and determines our present, can *also* be the source of impulses or insights that serve to disrupt that very present? What explains this fundamentally ambivalent power of history? How can our history be both oppressive and the ultimate source of our liberation? Indeed, what is the role of truth in the Nietzschean relation to history—as will become very clear, even if Nietzsche rejects the value of historicism's exhaustive, scientific mastering of the past, he rejects any irresponsible fictionalization of the past as well. Finally, in what sense is Nietzschean philology/history/genealogy is most of all related neither to the past nor to the present but to the future, insofar as it incorporates a certain openness and indeterminacy into the thinking it grounds and the creative comportment it hopes to encourage. These are the questions we will be posing this quarter, investigating the various characterizations of the project, from Nietzsche's radicalized ‘philology,’ to his radicalized ‘history,’ to his radicalized ‘genealogy,’ each of these being ‘radical’ in the precise sense of pushing the tasks and methods that these terms name down to their *radix* or ‘root, source,’ in such a way that they become utterly transformed.

We will read some preliminary texts the first week: Aeschylus's *Oresteia* and Euripides' *Ion*, Schopenhauer's “On the Metaphysics of Music,” and Richard Wagner's “Art and Revolution,” to understand the three threads that Nietzsche is weaving together in his first book, *The Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Music*, which we will read in weeks three and four. We will then turn to *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*, “On the Utility and Liability of History for Life,” and the *Genealogy of Morals*, which we will tackle in weeks five through ten.

One note: For our reading of the *Birth of Tragedy*, we will be using the forthcoming translation by myself and Andrew J. Mitchell, soon to appear with Stanford University Press as Volume I of their *Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche* series.

**PHL 661: Topics in Feminist Theory [NP]
Singularity, Vulnerability, Narration: Cavarero, Hartman, and Sharpe**

**Fanny Söderbäck
Wednesdays, 3:00-6:15 (online)**

This course offers an introduction to Italian feminist philosopher Adriana Cavarero's philosophy of singularity, as it relates to the work of some key contemporary figures in Black feminist thought—most prominently Saidiya Hartman and Christina Sharpe.

If philosophy has been concerned with naming the *what* of universal abstract Man, Cavarero turns to narration as a kind of discourse that holds the promise of teasing out the *who* of singular embodied individuals. But the telling of our life-stories, Cavarero argues, depends entirely on others, the spectators and onlookers who bear witness to our life as it unfolds, in large part unbeknownst to us, retrospectively and from the outside. Her philosophy of singularity is thus necessarily also a philosophy of vulnerability, relationality, inclination, and care.

We will begin by elucidating the importance of Cavarero's work for developing a framework for understanding selfhood in relational terms, and for challenging Western assumptions about the intrinsic value of autonomous-universal subjectivity. We will then imagine an arch from Cavarero's philosophy of singularity to Black feminists' attempts to give voice to the archives of Black women's singular experience in the wake of slavery – narration as a critical response to the gaps, erasures, and silences produced by anti-Black violence. We will focus, in particular, on Hartman's work on critical fabulation, counter-narrative, and close narration, as well as Sharpe's elaboration of wake-work as a form of narrative care. We might also venture beyond these thinkers to engage additional important voices in women of color feminisms.

The course, which will be run as a discussion-based seminar, will be taught synchronously via Zoom. Dr. María del Rosario Acosta López—a former member of our community—will join us as a guest lecturer for one session.

**PHL 557: Topics in Continental Philosophy [CE]
Sigmund Freud: Everything you always wanted to know but were afraid to ask**

**Elizabeth Rottenberg
Mondays, 3:00-6:15**

This class will be an introduction to the early work of Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) and, specifically, to what has been called the "logic of the unconscious." We will begin at the very beginning with "Some Points for a Comparative Study of Organic and Hysterical Motor Paralyses" (1893) and *Studies on Hysteria* (1893-1895) before proceeding to the two books considered "canonical" with regard to the unconscious—*The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900) and *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* (1901); these, we will read alongside Freud's more popularizing *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* (1916-1917 [1915-1917]). Finally, toward the end of the quarter, we will read several essays— "Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming" (1908 [1907]); "Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of his Childhood" (1910); "The Moses of Michelangelo" (1914)—in which the logic of the unconscious is inseparable from questions of creativity.

WINTER QUARTER

PHL 435: Descartes [H-II]

Richard Lee
Tuesdays, 3:00-6:15

The seminar will focus on Descartes' *Meditations on First Philosophy*. We will start from the presumption that the title is descriptive of the content in at least two ways: (1) it is in the genre and history of meditations and (2) it is a text related to metaphysics and not epistemology. We will keep in mind that the purpose of the text is not to separate the mind from the body, to worry about certitude, nor to erect the individual subject as the ground of all philosophy. In addition to the *Meditations*, we will also read most of the Objections and Replies.

PHL 500: Special Topics in the History of Philosophy [H-II] **Nietzsche as History: Bataille, Foucault, Derrida, Irigaray, etc.**

Sean D. Kirkland
Mondays, 3:00-6:15

In the second seminar in this series, we will turn to some of the most important 20th century thinkers influenced by Nietzsche. We will most likely be reading selections from Georges Bataille's *Inner Experience* and *On Nietzsche*, Michel Foucault's "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," Gilles Deleuze's *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, Luce Irigaray's *Marine Lover of Friedrich Nietzsche*, Jacques Derrida's *Spurs: Nietzsche's Styles*, and Judith Butler's *The Psychic Life of Power*. In each case, we will be asking how these thinkers variously deal with the fundamental ambivalences and futurity/indeterminacy of Nietzsche's thought, uncovered the quarter prior. (We will not wade into Heidegger's monumental, multi-volume engagement with Nietzsche, unfortunately, for that would require an entire quarter all on its own...and that seminar would be led better led by Professor McNeill, rather than myself!)

PHL 657: Topics in Social and Political Thought [NP] **The Myth of Modernity**

Rafael Vizcaíno
Wednesdays, 3:00-6:15

This course will focus on the decolonial critique of modernity. After a brief general introduction to decolonial thinking, we will study some of the works of Enrique Dussel and Sylvia Wynter. These two contemporary figures have put forth powerful decolonial critiques of the philosophical discourse of modernity from different points of departure and with distinct aims. More specifically, however, this course will explore how such decolonial critiques problematize the secularity of modernity, which is to say, the triangulation between politics, religion, and secularization as the hallmark of modernity. For this reason, the course will also dedicate serious attention to European figures who have addressed such triangulation, such as Carl Schmitt and Hans Blumenberg. Therefore, this course could also be seen as a comparative (North-South) exercise that puts these four figures into a much-needed conversation on what for short could be called "the politico-theological."

**PHL 590: Trends in Contemporary French Philosophy [CE]
Deleuze and the Concept of Experience I**

**Peg Birmingham
Thursdays, 3:00-6:15**

The two quarter Deleuze seminar will be organized around the concept of experience in Deleuze and Guattari. In the winter quarter, we will read *Anti-Oedipus*, following Elizabeth Rottenberg's fall seminar on psychoanalysis; in the spring quarter, we will read *The Logic of Sense*.

SPRING QUARTER

**PHL 410: Plato I [H-I]
Plato's Frenemies: Of Sophistry, Poetry, & Rhetoric**

**Michael Naas
Tuesdays, 3:00-6:15**

This course will focus on two of Plato's greatest "frenemies"—poetry and rhetoric. Our working hypothesis will be that in the dialogues of Plato philosophy not only *defends* itself against the discourses of poetry and rhetoric but also actually *defines* itself in opposition to them, often using the very terms of poetry and rhetoric in order to distinguish itself from these other discourses. The seminar will thus revolve around the *themes* of poetry (in *Ion* and in excerpts from *Republic* and *Laws*) and rhetoric (in *Phaedrus* and *Gorgias*) in Plato, but it will also aim to elucidate several aspects of Plato's *methodology* more generally, including the strategy of going behind "frenemy" lines in order to coopt, defeat, and replace opposing discourses. We will thus see Plato in the above dialogues distinguishing philosophy from poetry and rhetoric only in order then to reform, remark, and reinscribe them within a philosophical register of language where philosophy becomes the only true and reformed version of these discourses and the philosopher the only true practitioner of them, the only "real poet" or "true rhetorician" (just as the philosopher turns out to be the true statesman in the *Statesman*, the real physician in the *Charmides*, the true lover in *Alcibiades I* and *Symposium*, the real navigator in the *Republic*, the true lawgiver in the *Laws*, and so on). We will thus conclude that poetry and rhetoric—arts that, like philosophy, work only through language—present at once two of the greatest threats to Plato's philosophical ambitions and two of the greatest opportunities for them.

**PHL 557: Topics in Continental Philosophy [CE]
Phenomenology and the Body**

**Mary Jeanne Larrabee
Mondays, 3:00-6:15**

Introductory material on Husserl's notion of consciousness, his understanding of the genetic processing of experiencing, temporalizing, intersubjective constitution of meaning, and the critique of modern science will provide a context for investigating "the Body" as conceptualized, embodiment as lived, inter-processing as the normal contexts of living within a social world. Auxiliary texts will include Merleau-Ponty's late work, Foucault (a claimed non-phenomenologist), and Eugene Gendlin's A Process Model and related practices. The course will continue with the application of phenomenological analysis applied critically to two or three themes concerning how individuals or groups live out their bodies, for example, in the racializing and genderizing codes of bodily comportment, in the decoration and/or performance of their bodies, or with the integration or disintegration of the material/psychological/mental/spiritualized/or "othered" elements of the person's embodiment and their individualized or socialized lived experiencing (Erleben).

PHL 522: Social and Political Philosophy [NP]

Race, Nature, and Progress in Latin America: Tracing a Line from Alexander von Humboldt to Santiago Castro-Gómez

Elizabeth Millán Brusslan
Wednesdays, 3:00-6:15

Within the Latin American philosophical tradition, many harms were committed in the wake of colonization and the notion of progress developed therefrom. Our focus shall be upon the late 18th/early 19th century, especially on positivism, which was a movement carried out in the name of “progress,” based on the notion of elevating culture, indeed, of “civilizing” it and so of keeping the disruptive, “barbaric” forces of nature at bay. As we focus upon the dimension of coloniality that relates to the constitution of the sciences, especially, the natural sciences, we will study the work of Alexander von Humboldt, a scientist whose presentation of the landscape of Latin America did not succumb to the typical Eurocentric views of America prevalent during the late 1700s and early 1800s. We shall put Humboldt’s work into dialogue with the work of the contemporary Colombian thinker, Santiago Castro-Gómez, whose, *La Hybris del Punto Cero. Ciencia, raza e ilustración en la Nueva Granada (1750-1816)/ Zero-Point Hubris. Science, Race, and Enlightenment in Eighteenth-Century Latin America*, presents an important new way to consider dimensions of coloniality that we are still trying to understand.

PHL 629: Seminar on Contemporary Problems [NP]
Deleuze and the Concept of Experience II

Peg Birmingham
Thursdays, 3:00-6:15

See the description for the WQ session of this seminar.