CONTEMPORARY CONTINENTAL PHILOSOPHY:

Identity and Deformation: Contemporary Theories of Socialization and Subjectivity

Spring 2009

Kalamazoo College

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Kalamazoo College
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Offices Hours:
1) Tuesday: 2:30 - 4:00
2) Thursday: 2:30 – 3:30
3) By Appointment

Teaching Assistants:
- Tom Lederer
- Sean Wolf

COURSE GOALS:

This course introduces students to the European-Continental tradition of Philosophy. More specifically, we examine two great antithetical figures of the 19th-century philosophy, Hegel and Nietzsche, comparing and contrasting their radically opposing views on agency, identity, philosophy, culture, and modernity. What is fascinating about the Hegel/Nietzsche contrast is that both endorse and re-appropriate Kant’s radical notion of freedom, which he develops in his famous three critiques between 1781 and 1790. In short, Hegel and Nietzsche offer different interpretations of how to understand Kant’s radical discovery of freedom, his “Copernican revolution” in modern philosophy. Hegel offers philosophy as a “phenomenology of spirit,” a historical-developmental account of how reason – the essence of human life – both arises from and challenges modern society and culture. Hegel’s phenomenology of spirit is a theory of modernity, and it contrasts sharply and dramatically with Nietzsche’s historical-genealogical account of how the will to power –
the essence of human life – both arises from and challenges modern society and culture. Both Hegel and Nietzsche offer a critique of modernity, then, and both affirm the necessary possibility of becoming “free” agents in contemporary circumstances, but their respective views on how freedom appropriates itself appear radically and irreconcilably opposed.

The first part of the course is devoted, then, to this retrospective 19th-century prelude because – and this is a fundamental claim of the course – this contrast between Hegelian developmental and Nietzschean genealogical accounts of how humans secure freedom defines the contemporary agonistic debate between “modernist” and “post-modernist” thinkers. In my estimation, the most precise and intense articulation of the contemporary “modernism/post-modernism” debate is between the Hegel-inspired developmental account of agency offered by the critical theorist Juergen Habermas and Axel Honneth, on the one hand, and the Nietzsche-inspired genealogical account of agency offered by Jacques Lacan, Judith Butler, and Slavoj Zizek, on the other. What is so fascinating and provocative about the contemporary debate, however, is that Honneth and Zizek locate this agonistic tension between modernism and post-modernism in their different readings of a single figure: namely Hegel. In short, Hegel's account of reason and history is itself a radically unstable constellation that can be “gestalted” or “seen” as either modernist or post-modernist!

While Honneth reads Hegel developmentally through Habermas’s staunch defense of a constructive account of reason, Zizek read Hegel genealogically through Lacan’s uncompromising psychoanalytic deconstructive account of reason. In short, the modernism/post-modernism debate is dramatically displayed in the contest between “rationalist” and “anti-rationalist” interpretations of a single figure: namely Hegel. What’s even more fascinating and provocative about these diametrically opposed readings of Hegel is that recent scholarship locates this “rationalist” and “anti-rationalist” tension even more deeply in the Romantics’ contested readings of Kant. According to Andrew Bowie, the Romantics demonstrated that Kant’s notion of reason rests upon non-rational dimensions of human life that rendered human agency “split,” “divided from itself,” “tragic,” beset by irreconcilable tensions, or, as Kafka might say, “on trial.” In short, the tension between modernism and postmodernism resides in the origins of Kant’s account of how human reason rests upon non-intellectual, “intuitive,” “sensible,” or “perceptual” conditions or human life.

To air this remarkable historical tension between rationalist developmental and non-rationalist genealogical readings of Hegel, we will read about Hegel’s and Nietzsche’s appropriation of Kant in Robert Pippin’s Modernism as a Philosophical Problem. We will then read Andrew Bowie’s account of how the Romantics (Jacobi, Schlegel, Schleiermacher, and Novalis) read Kant, which is presented in From Romanticism to Critical Theory: The Philosophy of German Literary Theory. Both Pippin and Bowie emphasize the importance of the 20th-century figure Marin Heidegger as consolidating, radicalizing, and defending the Romantic criticism of a developmental account of human reason. Heidegger sets the stage for the most
sustained and developed contemporary analysis of the Hegel/Nietzsche contrast – Elliot Jurist's *Beyond Hegel and Nietzsche: Philosophy, Culture, and Agency* – which frames the contemporary debate in terms of Honneth’s psycho-analytic appropriation of Hegel and Butler’s psycho-analytic appropriation of Nietzsche. Jurist helpfully focuses our contrast, then, in competing psychological conceptions of agency and identity formation. We then sharpen and intensify this contrast between developmental and genealogical accounts of the psychology of agency and identity by focusing upon diametrically opposed readings of Hegel that are filtered through Heidegger’s analysis of human being. Honneth offers a Heidegger-inspired reading of Hegel in *Reification* to endorse a developmental account of human agency as rationally structured. Zizek, in contrast, offers a Heidegger-inspired reading of Hegel in *Tarrying with the Negative* to endorse a genealogical account of human agency as structured by non-rational drives.

**EVALUATION:**

Students will be evaluated on the basis of class participation, vocabulary quizzes, midterm examinations and a final paper.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class Participation</th>
<th>Seminar presentations and discussion</th>
<th>25%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Midterm Essays</td>
<td>2 @ 15% each</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quizzes</td>
<td>4 @ 5% each</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Paper</td>
<td>10-15 pages</td>
<td>25%</td>
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**POLICIES:**

Open, respectful and critical discussion is the life-blood of this course. Quizzes offer students and teacher the opportunity to identify and to clarify central terms/concepts. The midterm examinations test comprehension of key philosophical issues, and the final paper offers students the opportunity to respond in depth to a single topic. The final paper is due on the day scheduled for the final examination. 3 unexcused absences will result in a full grade reduction.

**TEXTS:**

1) Bowie, Andrew. *From Romanticism to Critical Theory: The Philosophy of German Literary*


8) Axel Honneth (Selected Essays):

**GERMAN ACROSS THE CURRICULUM COMPONENT:** Selected texts may be read in the German original. GAC students will be given alternative assignments and weekly tutorials.

**BRIDGE READING COMPONENT:** Students interested in linking course material to their major course of study will be given special readings and assignments. Tutorial meetings are required, and the final paper must be completed in consultation with professor in home department.

**Psychology:** Students interested in exploring the philosophical foundations of developmental psychology will be given readings that link the course to the works of Jean Piaget, Lawrence Kohlberg and Carol Gilligan. Students interested in issues of identity formation in self-psychology and psychoanalysis will be given a different set of readings. See Psychology Bridge-Readings (Philosophy Homepage).

**Political Science:** Students interested in examining the philosophical roots of current debates in political theory and feminist philosophy will be given readings by contemporary political thinkers.

**READING SCHEDULE**
PART ONE: TWO RESPONSES TO THE QUESTION, WHAT IS FREEDOM IN MODERN TIMES: HEGEL'S DEVELOPMENTAL PHENOMENOLOGY OF REASON AND NIETZSCHE'S DECONSTRUCTIVE GENEAOLOGY OF THE WILL:

WEEK ONE

Tuesday:
· Introductory Lecture.

Wednesday Evening Movie: *Sex, Lies, and Videotapes*

Thursday:
· Introduction, from *Modernism as a Philosophical Problem*
· Chapter 1, “Modernity and Modernism,” *Modernism as a Philosophical Problem*
· Chapter 2, “Idealism and Modernity,” *Modernism as a Philosophical Problem*.

WEEK TWO

Tuesday:
· Chapter 4, “‘Nihilism stands at the door’: Nietzsche, *Modernism as a Philosophical Problem*.
· Chapter 5, “‘The Age of Consummate Meaninglessness’: Heidegger, *Modernism as a Philosophical Problem*.

Thursday:
· Chapter 6, “The Death of God and Modern Melancholy,” *Modernism as a Philosophical Problem*.

PART TWO: THE ROMANTIC REJECTION OF A SELF-INCLOSED REASON: THE NON-RATIONAL GROUND OF RATIONALITY:

WEEK THREE

Tuesday:
· Introduction: Renewing the Theoretical Canon, *From Romanticism to Critical Theory: The Philosophy of German Literary Theory*.
· Chapter 1, “Philosophical Origins: Kant, Jacobi, and the Crises of Reason,” *From Romanticism to Critical Theory: The Philosophy of German Literary Theory*. 

http://kzoo.edu/phil/CONTEMPORARY CONTINENTAL PHILOSOPHY.html

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Wednesday Evening Movie: *La Femme Nikita*

Thursday:

**WEEK FOUR**

Tuesday:
- Chapter 4, “Interpretive Reasons,” From Romanticism to Critical Theory: The Philosophy of German Literary Theory.

**PART THREE: HEIDEGGER’S ONTOLOGICAL CRITIQUE OF A SELF-INCLOSED REASON:**

Wednesday Evening Movie: *Read Window*

Thursday:
- Chapter 6, “Being True: Dilthey, Husserl, and Heidegger (1),” From Romanticism to Critical Theory: The Philosophy of German Literary Theory.

**PART FOUR: THE PSYCHOLOGICAL RENEGOTIATION OF REASON AND WILL: NARCISSISM AND RELATEDNESS IN HUMAN DEVELOPMENT:**

**WEEK FIVE**

Tuesday:
- Introduction, *Beyond Hegel and Nietzsche: Philosophy, Culture, and Agency*.
- Chapter 1, “The Culture of Philosophy,” Beyond Hegel and Nietzsche: Philosophy, Culture, and Agency.
- Chapter 3, “Ancient Greek Culture,” Beyond Hegel and Nietzsche: Philosophy, Culture, and Agency.

Thursday:
- Chapter 4, “Modern Culture,” Beyond Hegel and Nietzsche: Philosophy, Culture, and Agency.
- Chapter 5, “On the Concept of Agency,” Beyond Hegel and Nietzsche: Philosophy, Culture,
and Agency.

· Chapter 6, “Recognition and Agency in Hegel,” Beyond Hegel and Nietzsche: Philosophy, Culture, and Agency.

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**WEEK SIX**

**Tuesday:**

· Chapter 7, “Recognition in the Phenomenology of Spirit (I),” Beyond Hegel and Nietzsche: Philosophy, Culture, and Agency.
· Chapter 8, “Recognition in the Phenomenology of Spirit (II),” Beyond Hegel and Nietzsche: Philosophy, Culture, and Agency.
· Chapter 9, “Hegelian Agency,” Beyond Hegel and Nietzsche: Philosophy, Culture, and Agency.

**Thursday:**

· Chapter 10, “Nietzsche’s Ambivalence toward Agency,” Beyond Hegel and Nietzsche: Philosophy, Culture, and Agency.
· Chapter 11, “The Will to Power and Agency in Nietzsche,” Beyond Hegel and Nietzsche: Philosophy, Culture, and Agency.
· Chapter 12, “Self and Other in Nietzsche,” Beyond Hegel and Nietzsche: Philosophy, Culture, and Agency.

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**PART FIVE: THE PSYCHIC LIFE OF POWER: RECOGNITION AS INTERPOLLATIVE VIOLENCE:**

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**WEEK SEVEN**

**Tuesday:**

· Chapter 13, “Nietzschean Agency,” Beyond Hegel and Nietzsche: Philosophy, Culture, and Agency.
· Epilogue, Beyond Hegel and Nietzsche: Philosophy, Culture, and Agency.
· The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection.

**Wednesday Evening Movie: Pirates of the Caribbean**

**Thursday:**

· Reification and Recognition: A New Look at an old Idea.
· The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection.

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**WEEK EIGHT**

**Tuesday:**

· Introduction, Tarrying with the Negative: Kant, Hegel, and the Critique of Ideology.
· Chapter 1, “Cogito: The Void Called Subject,” Tarrying with the Negative: Kant, Hegel, and
the Critique of Ideology.


**Thursday:**
- Chapter 2, “Cogito and the Sexual Difference,” *Tarrying with the Negative: Kant, Hegel, and the Critique of Ideology*.

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**PART SEVEN: GREEK TRAGEDY AGAIN: THE RETURN OF REPRESSED REASON AS THE FATE OF SPIRIT AND THE FUTURE PERFECT OF “STRUCTURED REFLECTION”**.

**WEEK NINE**

**Tuesday:**

- Chapter 4, “Hegel’s ‘Logic of Essence’ as a Theory of Ideology, *Tarrying with the Negative: Kant, Hegel, and the Critique of Ideology*.

**Wednesday Evening Movie: *Bladerunner***

**Thursday:**

- Chapter 3, “‘Reality’ and the Real: Culture as Anamorphosis,” *Zizek: A Critical Introduction*.

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**WEEK TEN**

**Tuesday:**


**Thursday:**