

2021-2022 Seminar Descriptions

Fall 2021

Lotz PHl 810/820/850: Seminar in Continental Philosophy

Topic: Marx, Grundrisse

In this seminar we will closely read one of Marx's mature later works. In only 4 months Marx feverishly produced around 1000 pages, now entitled *Grundrisse* (1858). The *Grundrisse* deviate in important respects from *Capital* (1867), but they are, overall, more philosophical and contain famous sections, such as the introduction in which Marx outlines methodological considerations and the "machine fragment" which is one of the most often cited passage in contemporary receptions of Marx's philosophy, such as accelerationism, postoperaism (Negri) and critical theory (Postone). We will closely read the *Grundrisse*, paying less attention to its extensive historical reflections, and read major essays about the *Grundrisse* by contemporary philosophers.

Evaluation: Protocol, Presentation, Final Paper

Fall 2021

Kant's Political Philosophy (PHL 810: seminar in history of philosophy)

Fall 2021, Wednesdays, 6-9 pm, South Kedzie 530

Prof Fred Rauscher, Dept. of Philosophy

Seminar open to graduate students in Philosophy, Political Science, and other related disciplines. Advanced undergraduates in these areas may ask instructor for approval.

Description: Immanuel Kant's social and political philosophy. Kant applied his "critical" philosophical methodology emphasizing the a priori foundation of knowledge to practical philosophy. He defended a universalist morality based on a conception of the nature of human beings as rational, freely-deliberative beings. The part of morality that dealt with specifiable external duties is governed by right (German "*Recht*", roughly a combination of right, justice, and law). Right is based on the freedom of each rational being in contrast to any political goal of happiness, prosperity, or power. Kant strove to present an a priori political philosophy but also discussed what we might today call "social" philosophy, roughly concerning practices and institutions independent of the state, e.g. religious institutions, gender and race, education, and the economy. That social philosophy as well as some of the political philosophy clearly incorporate empirical elements, and one theme of the course is whether Kant is able successfully to provide a "pure" a priori political philosophy. We will also discuss Kant's relation to Locke, Hobbes, Rousseau, Achenwall, Beccaria, and others.

Specific topics include:
relation to moral theory
freedom as basis of right

nature of the social contract
freedom of speech and religion
republicanism and representative democracy
property and contract rights
gender, sex, and household
historical progress and human nature
penal law and punishment
obedience, resistance, rebellion
international law and institutions
race and colonialism
cosmopolitan right and world citizenship

Texts: Two volumes in the series Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant:

Kant, *Practical Philosophy*, ed. and trans. Gregor (Cambridge U Press). Contains most of the relevant published work by Kant in political philosophy

Kant, *Lectures and Drafts on Political Philosophy*, ed. Rauscher, trans. Rauscher and Westphal (Cambridge U Press). Contains material unpublished by Kant, including notes, course lecture student transcripts, and drafts of published material.

Other relevant material will be available as PDF documents or as optional purchases.

More info:

About the course: contact Prof. Rauscher – rauscher@msu.edu

About Kant's political philosophy:

Rauscher's summary article <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/kant-social-political/>

Spring 2022

Lotz Phl 421: Topics in Continental and European Philosophy

Topic: Kierkegaard and Continental Philosophy

In this 400-level class we will read advanced works in existentialist philosophy by focusing on Kierkegaard's conceptions of self, anxiety, despair, faith, and individuality in order to reconstruct more advanced existentialist issues. In addition, we will read and discuss essays on Kierkegaard by European philosophers, such as Lukacs, Adorno, Sartre, Buber, Schmitt, Derrida, and Theunissen. Texts to be read and discussed: *Sickness unto Death*, *The Concept of Anxiety*, *Fear and Trembling*, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*.

Note: this is an upper-level academic seminar and, as such, a reading intensive course. If you are not willing to get engaged with the texts of one of the most important existentialist philosophers, then do not take this class.

Evaluation: Presentation, Weekend Assignments, Final Paper

Dr. Megan Dean

Spring 2022

PHL 840 Seminar in Value Theory: Ethics of Food and Eating

This course explores philosophical work on the ethics of food and eating. We will read classic work in food ethics alongside more contemporary work from a variety of philosophical traditions, including feminist, analytic, and Continental/European philosophy. Topics will include the relationship between eating and the construction of the self, including gender, race, and class identities, the ethics of eating non-human animals, food justice and sovereignty, and dieting and eating disorders. Evaluations will include class presentations, short written assignments, and a conference-length paper (3000 words) that will be workshopped throughout the semester.

Dr. Todd Hedrick

PHL 850, Spring 2022,

Seminar in Social and Political Philosophy

This seminar examines the connection between critical social theory and psychoanalysis; e.g., how have ideas such as repression, identification, and instinct been employed in descriptive social theory to explain both conformity and resistance to established social orders? What are the prospects for normatively grounding a critical stance on society using notions such as sublimation, recognition, and play? Authors include: Sigmund Freud, Melanie Klein, Donald Winnicott, Jacques Lacan, Jessica Benjamin, Theodor Adorno, Herbert Marcuse, Axel Honneth, Slavoj Žižek, and Amy Allen (units will involve pairings between critical theorists and the psychoanalytic thinkers they draw on, e.g., Adorno and Freud, Honneth and Winnicott, Klein and Allen, etc.).