HEGEL: Self-Consciousness and Freedom in the Phenomenology of Spirit

Course Description

From the end of the 18th century, a variety of European philosophers grappled with the challenge to see the modern self as the basis for the systematic understanding of all knowledge. Perhaps no other figure of nineteenth century idealism remains as often invoked and fiercely contested as that of GWF Hegel. For Hegel attempted to introduce a new philosophical system, and just as importantly, a new way of doing philosophy. Phänomenologie des Geistes (Phenomenology of Spirit, henceforth PhS) has captivated, frustrated, and inspired so many readers in great part because of the unique way in which the form of the argument demonstrates the substantive content of various positions.

This course will offer a close reading of this pillar of modern European philosophy. Special attention will be attended to Hegel’s analyses of the changing patterns of understanding and self-understanding and the ways in which Hegel’s readers experience these transitions and transformations while making their way through the book. In Hegel’s modern paradigm, the Subject and the Object of thought necessarily affect one another’s potential, essence, identity, and fate. And through a rational comprehension of role of Spirit (Geist) in thought and the world, Hegel attempts to reveal how both subject and object become inextricably bound together. Indeed, for Hegel, the dialectic between subject and object provides the very ground for the self-aware and free person uniquely suited to the ethical possibilities and demands of social, religious, and political life.

Learning Goals:
Students in Philosophy 167a will be introduced to fundamental debates regarding the construction of the Self in modern continental philosophy and especially within nineteenth century German idealism. Students will learn to critically read and engage a monumental philosophical text and develop; the ability to identify, articulate and evaluate philosophical claims and arguments. Students will also be asked to develop these skills in written form by developing interpretive and philosophical positions which emerge from the text.

Grading:
Undergraduate Students
1. Class Participation, 25% Students will be expected to participate having read and reflected about the assigned reading and study questions.
2. One two-page critical account of reading 5%.
3. Take Home Midterm Exam 30%.
3. An 8-10 page final paper due on **May 1**, 40%
Graduate Students will be expected to follow the same requirements but also incorporate at least two secondary sources into their final papers which will be 12-15 pages long.

**Required Texts**
• Hegel, G. F. W. *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Trans. by A. V. Miller, Oxford University Press. (PhS)
• Stern, R., *Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Hegel and the Phenomenology of Spirit*, NY (RG)
• All other readings posted on Latte website
• The original German of can be consulted by following the 1988 edition edited by Wessels and Heinrich Clairmont.

**Sources on Reserve to be consulted during the semester:**

**German Idealism**
• Henrich, Dieter, *Between Kant and Hegel, Lectures on German Idealism*, Harvard.
• Franks, Paul, *All or Nothing*, Harvard.
• Beiser, Frederick, *The Fate of Reason: German Philosophy from Kant to Fichte*, Harvard.

**Hegel**
• Martin Heideger, *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit* (1930-31 course), Indiana
• Hyppolite, Jean, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel's 'Phenomenology'*, Northwestern.

**Course Outline** (This schedule is subject to revision)

**Week Date Class Theme and Activities Assignment**
Week 1 Introduction

Review of Syllabus and Introduction to Hegel and PhS: German Idealism: Kantian Philosophy and the Self

Week 2 Entering the System from the Beginning and End
Hegel’s Preface in PhS
RG, pp., 1-29

Week 3 Consciousness
Introduction and Consciousness AI: Sense-Certainty

Week 4 Consciousness from Perception to Force and the Understanding
PhS, pp. 67-103

Week 5 Self-Consciousness
PS, 104-138

Week 6
Hegel’s Method: Radical Skepticism
PhS, § 73-89
RG, pp., 36-42

Week 7
Consciousness: Sense-Certainly and Perception
PhS, § 90-131
RG, pp., 43-59

Week 8
Transition to Self-consciousness
RG, pp., 59-70 (On Force and the Understanding)
PhS, § 166-177
RG, pp., 71-75

Week 9
Self-consciousness: Lordship and Bondage
PhS, § 178-196
RG, pp. 71-85

Week 9
Stoicism, Skepticism, and the Unhappy Consciousness
PhS, § 197-230
RG, pp., 85-96
Week 10
The Truth and Certainty of Reason; and
The Actualization of Rational Self-
Consciousness Through its Own Activity
PhS, § 231-239 and RG, pp., 97-102
PhS, § 347-359 and RG, pp., 114-119

Week 11
Active Reason: The Spiritual Animal Kingdom
and Deceit
PhS, § 394-418
RG, pp., 124-7

Week 12
The Critique of Kant and the Transition to
Spirit: Reasons as Lawgiving and as Testing
PhS, § 419-437
RG, pp., 127-133

Week 13
Spirit: The Ethical Order
PhS, § 438-477
RG, pp., 135-145

Week 14
Absolute Knowing
PhS, § 788-808
RG, pp., 195-201

Attendance Policy
Your presence in class is a minimum condition of your success in this course. Attendance as well as lateness will be noted and factored into your final grade, as follows:
4 absences: final grade lowered by ½ grade (e.g. from B- to C+)
5 absences: final grade lowered by a full grade (e.g. from B- to C-)
6 absences: failure; no credit given
In general, the distinction between “excused” and “unexcused” absences is not recognized (an absence is an absence). Repeated lateness in arriving to class will count as an absence.

Other Important Information
1. Unless otherwise noted readings, handouts, assignments, and other announcements will be posted on the course Latte page
2. The readings for this class are listed above by the week. If homework is not explicitly assigned in class, these readings are your homework. The reading schedule may change due to events. If it does I will update the schedule on the latte site.
5. Unless an arrangement is made with me, a paper will be penalized a whole grade if it is up to one week late. Thereafter, it will be penalized a whole grade each additional week that it is late. *I do not accept emailed papers unless I explicitly agree to it.*

**Policy on Academic Honesty**

Plagiarism involves presenting someone else’s work as your own. You need to be careful to avoid even the appearance of plagiarism. This means that if you ever use a phrase, a sentence, or an idea from a text, you must provide a citation. If it is something we read for the class, it is acceptable to give the source and page number. If you don’t provide appropriate citations, this will affect your grade. IF you have any questions regarding these policies, refer to the Rights and Responsibilities Handbook, or contact the office of Student Development and Conduct.

**Students with Disabilities**

If you have a disability that may have some impact on your work in this class and for which you may require accommodations, please contact the office for students with disabilities and provide the appropriate documentation. Once you have received your accommodation letters, please meet with me to discuss the provisions of those accommodations as soon as possible.