

PH 8117
19th Century Philosophy

Ryerson University
Department of Philosophy
Mondays, 3-6pm
Fall 2010

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Course Description:

What are the ultimate standards that our knowledge must live up to in order to establish itself as absolute, true knowledge, and how can we come to know those standards *as* the ultimate ones? Is there any surefire philosophical method we can adopt that will both show us what these standards are, and establish them as the ultimate standards? Hegel claims to have found just such a method, and his *Phenomenology of Spirit* can be read as an extended demonstration of how this method works in practice. In this class we will be engaging in a concentrated study of significant selections of Hegel's *Phenomenology* with the goal of trying this method out, and of charting where it leads us.

Along the way, we will wrestle with Hegel's revolutionary idea that to determine what knowledge really is, we have to investigate not only such traditional topics as sensation, scientific observation, induction, and language, but also such things as our experience of desire and death, our experience of familial obligation and political activism, our experience of religious worship and forgiveness. For Hegel demonstrates that these basic experiences operate with their own, independent standards of what counts as truth and genuine knowledge, and so must be considered as legitimate candidates in our overall search for what true knowledge really is. Thus one of the most intriguing and far-reaching of the *Phenomenology's* ideas is that knowledge is ultimately rooted precisely in our practical and existential struggles with nature and with other human beings, such that epistemological questions are never wholly separate from ethical, economic, cultural and socio-political matters.

The idea that our practical lives as agents affords us a distinctive, and perhaps indispensable, access to the truth of reality—or, indeed, that we as agents, in our practical involvement with the concrete world, are in some sense involved in generating the nature and truth of this world—will be one of the central themes of the course. This focus on what we might call Hegel's "practical idealism" will lead us to pay particular attention to those sections of the *Phenomenology* in which Hegel investigates the nature of human agency and human action.

Required Text:

The only required text for this course is:

Hegel, G. W. F., *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Trans. A. V. Miller. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977.

Brief supplementary readings (excerpts from other of Hegel's works, excerpts from other philosophers, from literary works, and from historical documents, and any reading notes I provide) will be made available to you at no charge on photocopied hand-outs or in an electronic format.

Grade-Breakdown:

You will be required to write **four short explications** (2-3 double-spaced pages each) of particular, assigned passages of the *Phenomenology*, and **one final paper** (12-15 double-spaced pages in length) on a topic of your own choosing. The explications are each worth 10% of your final grade, and the final paper is worth 50% of your final grade. 10% of the final grade will be based on **participation**.

The explications are purely exegetical in nature: the goal is to give a clear, well-laid-out, and detailed presentation of the insights/arguments at work a given text in your own words. The explications call upon you to try to enter into and articulate some aspect of the movement and significance of Hegel's thought, but not yet to offer a critical evaluation of this thought, or to compare it with the work of other thinkers; the explications are meant to function solely as stepping stones on your way toward a more developed critical engagement with the text. A list of possible explication topics will be provided, from which you are required to choose four (you may choose to do up to six, and I will happily grade and comment on them all, but only the top four will count toward your final grade). Ideally, you would try to choose topics that might provide you with resources for the writing of your final essay. The final essay will be due on Friday, December 10th, 5pm.

Secondary Sources:

In general, I encourage you to focus your energies first and foremost on the study and interpretation of Hegel's actual text, and to consult secondary literature—if at all—only once you yourself have already established a developed, working relationship to the details of the primary text. A couple of general rules of thumb: 1) *never* consult a secondary source *prior* to reading/studying the portion of the Hegelian text that this source attempts to illuminate; and 2) always try to write at least the first draft of your explications *without* consulting any secondary sources.

That said, there is a long list of good books and articles focused on the *Phenomenology*, and you may find it useful to turn to them from time to time to supplement and/or deepen your study. I have provided a short list of some recommended books below, and they will all be on reserve at the Ryerson Library. A more extensive

bibliography of recommended literature will also be provided. Feel free to consult me if you would like further recommendations for secondary readings on particular topics.

Introductions to Hegel's Philosophy in General:

Houlgate, Stephen. *Freedom, Truth and History: An Introduction to Hegel's Philosophy*. London: Routledge, 1991.

Speight, Allen. *The Philosophy of Hegel*. Stocksfield: Acumen Publishing, 2008.

Book-Length Works on the Phenomenology in Particular

Flay, Joseph C. *Hegel's Quest for Certainty*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984.

Hyppolite, Jean. *Genesis and Structure of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. S. Cherniak and J. Heckman. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974.

Harris, H. S. *Hegel's Ladder (Volumes One and Two)*. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1996.

Kalkavage, Peter. *The Logic of Desire: An Introduction to Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*. Philadelphia: Paul Dry Books, 2007.

Moyar, Dean and Michael Quante (eds.). *Hegel's 'Phenomenology of Spirit': A Critical Guide*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

Pinkard, Terry. *Hegel's Phenomenology: The Sociality of Reason*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

Russon, John. *Reading Hegel's Phenomenology*. Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2004.

Stewart, Jon (ed.). *The Phenomenology of Spirit Reader: Critical and Interpretive Essays*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1998.

Westphal, Merold. *History and Truth in Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*. Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1992.

Schedule of Readings:

The following is a proposed schedule of topics and particular readings. Please note that the assigned readings refer to the **paragraph numbers** used in Miller's translation of the

Phenomenology. The paragraph numbers that are underlined are those that will be the core focus of class discussion, and you are asked to pay extra attention to them. You are, however, responsible for reading all of the paragraphs listed for each week.

Because the Thanksgiving holiday causes us to miss a week of class, I have added an extra, optional class on Monday, December 6th. Also, note that on Tuesday, November 16th, Allen Speight from Boston University will be visiting our class to talk about Hegel, and he will then present a talk to the department. You are expected to attend both the seminar and talk.

Sept. 13: -Introduction to the course.
 -The project of the *Phenomenology* and the method of immanent critique.
 -How to begin?
 -Experiencing singulars

Readings: 1) 'Introduction': 73-76, 77-89
 2) 'Sense-Certainty': 90-94, 95-99, 100-104, 105-110 (especially 107); 111-112

Sept. 20: -Consciousness vs. self-consciousness
 -Self-consciousness as desire
 -The central role of intersubjective recognition
 -The other self as challenge
 -Submitting oneself to the other

Readings: -The Truth of Self-Certainty: 166-170, 171-173, 174-177 (especially 175)
 -Independence and Dependence of Self-Consciousness: 178-196

Sept. 27: -The nature and liberating character of work
 -The experience of death
 -Stoic distance

Readings: -Independence and Dependence of Self-Consciousness: 178-196 (continued)
 -Freedom of Self-Consciousness
 -Stoicism 197-202

Oct. 4: -The inherently unreconciled character of subjectivity
 -Self-abnegation and self-transcendence
 -This world and the beyond
 -Empirical and transcendental ego

Readings: -Freedom of Self-Consciousness

- Skepticism: 203-206
- Unhappy Consciousness: 207-231

Oct. 11: No class

- Oct. 18:
- The nature of reason, and idealism
 - The individual and the universal
 - Finding reason in nature: observing animals and humans
 - The logical structure of expression: the "inner" and the "outer"
 - The acting self and its body

- Readings:
- The Certainty and Truth of Reason: 231-239
 - Observation of Nature (Life): 240-243, 253-262, 295-298
 - Observation of self-consciousness in its purity and in its relation to external actuality: 298-308
 - Observation of the relation of self-consciousness to its immediate actuality: 309-328

- Oct. 25:
- Practical reason and individual agency
 - Rational action as the realization of the individual self's unity with the world (ie. happiness)
 - The given world vs. the world to be accomplished

- Readings:
- The Actualization of Rational Self-Consciousness Through its Own Activity: 347-354, 355-6, 357-359
 - a. Pleasure and Necessity: 360-366
 - b. Law of the Heart: 367-380
 - c. Virtue and the Way of the World: 381-393

- Nov. 1:
- Action as self-expression, self-realization, self-creation
 - Individual agent as monad
 - Animality and the natural basis of human agency and autonomy
 - The world as action context

- Readings:
- Individuality Which Takes Itself to be Real In and For Itself: 394-396
 - Spiritual Animal Kingdom: 397-418

Nov. 8: -Hegel's critique of Kantian practical reason
-The necessity of living customs and unwritten laws
-The ethical world

Reading: -Reason as Lawgiver: 419-428
-Reason as Testing Laws: 429-437
-Spirit: 438-443, (plus 349-352)

Nov. 15: -The family and the state
-Sophocles' *Antigone*
-The tragic character of human action
-From Greek to Rome

Readings: 1) The True Spirit: The Ethical Order," 444-483, (plus 349-352)
2) It is recommended that you read Sophocles' play *Antigone*

** November 16, 2-3:30 pm: Seminar with Allen Speight, Boston University
Topic: TBA
-Speight Department Colloquium: 4-6pm.

Nov. 22: -Hegel on the Enlightenment
-Faith and knowledge: critique of superstition
-Nature as utility
-Reason and terror

Readings: -The struggle of the Enlightenment with
superstition: 538-540, 541-573
-The truth of Enlightenment: 574-581
-Absolute Freedom and Terror: 582-595

Nov. 29: -Hegel's engagement with the Kantian moral worldview (again)
-Concrete, situated reason
-Finitude, guilt, and the necessity of forgiveness

Reading: Spirit that is Certain of Itself. Morality: 596-598
-Moral view of the world: 596-615
-Dissemblance or duplicity: 616-631
-Conscience. The 'beautiful soul', evil and its
forgiveness: 632-671

- Dec. 6*: Extra Class:
- The phenomenology of religion: the self-reflection of the community
 - Religious/artistic action as essential parts of Hegel's theory of action
 - Language as the expression of spirit
 - Vorstellungen* and conceptuality

Readings: 1) Religion: 672-678, 679-683,
-Natural Religion 684-698
-Religion in the Form of Art 699-726
-Revealed Religion: 748-787

Final Essay Due Friday, December 10th, by 5pm

A Note on Plagiarism:

It is assumed that all the writing you hand in is in your own words, and that all the particular ideas contained in your writing are derived from your own thinking, unless you indicate otherwise (with a proper citation of the source text). If you derive any of the ideas contained in your essays from an external source (from the internet, from another person's essay, from an encyclopedia or journal), you must cite this source in your essay, and must indicate exactly what you are using from this source. Failure to do so is a serious matter, and could result in an academic dishonesty charge. For more information on academic dishonesty, consult me or see Ryerson's Academic Integrity website, at <http://www.ryerson.ca/ai/grads.html>.