

Philosophy 315

Hegel

General Information

Instructor	Dr. Kenneth A. Lambert
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Class Period and Location	M/W/F 9:05-10:00, Early Fielding 114
Office Hours	M/W/F 10:10-11:10, or by appointment

Course Description

This course introduces the philosophy of Hegel, through a close reading of his *Phenomenology of Spirit*. We pay particular attention to Hegel's highly original project of reconciling various dichotomies of modern thought, including reason and faith, sensibility and understanding, freedom and necessity, nature and mind, and what is and what ought to be.

Specific topics include perception, mastery and slavery, stoicism, skepticism, observational reason, ethical life, the discipline of culture, the moral view of the world, religious representation, and absolute knowing.

Course Objectives

1. Students will be able to understand and critically assess the major ideas and arguments in Hegel's philosophy.
2. Students will be able to describe the major problems and issues to which Hegel's ideas and arguments respond.

Required Texts

G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, A.V. Miller translation, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979 (Galaxy Books edition, ISBN 978-0-19-824597-1).

Michael Allen Fox, *The Accessible Hegel*, Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 2005 (ISBN 978-1-59102-258-9).

Robert Stern, *Routledge Philosophy GuideBook to Hegel and the Phenomenology of Spirit*, New York: Routledge, 2002 (ISBN 978-0-415-21788-0).

Other resources, such as bibliographies, will be available on the course Sakai site.

Required Work for the Course

Written work for the course consists of three parts:

1. You will provide a well-formed question related to a current topic from the readings at the beginning of each class. I will post these questions on the course Sakai site.
2. You will write brief commentaries, of at most two pages in length, which are due in class on each Friday, except for the first Friday, the last Friday, and the reading day Fridays of the term (September 9, October 14, November 4, and December 9).
3. You will write a term paper of no less than 8 pages and no more than 15 pages, which is due on the last day of class.

Participation in classroom discussion is also required. You should be prepared to show that you not only have read the current material, but you have developed a reasoned position on it and can respond to it critically (see the suggestions on how to read philosophy and write philosophical criticism at the end of this syllabus). Each student will be given an opportunity to participate equally in classroom discussion.

Your grade will be calculated as follows:

Daily questions: 10%

Weekly commentaries: 50%

Term paper: 30%

Class participation: 10%

Tentative Schedule of Readings

Day	Hegel	Commentary
Sept 12	Preface, 1-23 (to paragraph 40)	Stern, 1-42; Fox, 15-35
Sept 14	Preface, 23-45	Fox, 37-55
Sept 16	Introduction, 46-57	Fox, 57-86
Sept 19	Sense Certainty, 58-66	Stern, 43-50
Sept 21	Perception, 67-79	Stern, 51-59
Sept 23	Force and Understanding, 79-103	Stern, 59-66
Sept 26	Self-Certainty, Life, and Desire, 104-111	Stern, 66-83
Sept 28	Lordship and Bondage, 111-119	Stern, 83-85; Fox, 119-127
Sept 30	Stoicism and Skepticism, 119-126	Stern, 85-91
Oct 3	Unhappy Consciousness, 126-138	Stern, 91-96
Oct 5	Observational Reason: Nature, 139-180	Stern, 97-109

Oct 7	Observational Reason: Logic and Psychology, 180-210	Stern, 110-119
Oct 10	Pleasure and Necessity, 211-221	Stern, 119-120
Oct 12	The Law of the Heart, the Frenzy of Self-Conceit, and Virtue and the Way of the World, 221-235	Stern, 120-124
Oct 14	Reading Day1	
Oct 17	The Spiritual Animal Kingdom, 236-252	Stern, 124-127
Oct 19	Reason as Law Giver, 252-262	Stern, 127-133
Oct 21	Transition to Spirit, 263-266	
Oct 24	Human and Divine Law, 267-278	Stern, 135-145; Fox, 127-141
Oct 26	Guilt and Destiny, 279-294	
Oct 28	Legal Status: Personhood, 290-294	Stern, 145-147
Oct 31	Self-Alienated Spirit: Culture, 294-321	Stern, 147-151
Nov 2	Faith and Insight, 321-328	Stern, 151-157
Nov 4	Reading day 2 (instructor away)	
Nov 7	The Enlightenment, 328-355	
Nov 9	Absolute Freedom and Terror, 355-363	Stern, 157-168
Nov 11	The Moral View of the World, 364-374	Stern, 168-178
Nov 14	Duplicity, 374-383	
Nov 16	Conscience and the Beautiful Soul, 383-397	Stern, 178-182
Nov 18	Evil and Forgiveness, 397-409	
Nov 28	Natural Religion, 410-424	Stern, 183-186
Nov 30	Religion in the Form of Art, 424-453	Stern, 186-190
Dec 2	Revealed Religion, 453-478	Stern, 190-194
Dec 5	Absolute Knowing, 479-493	Stern, 195-198; Fox, 87-102
Dec 7	Post-phenomenological philosophy	
Dec 9	Post-Hegelian Philosophy	Fox, 145-163

How to Read Philosophy

Philosophy texts, if they are saying anything significant, must be read more than once. Reading a piece of philosophy is not like surfing the Web or reading a magazine or a newspaper, where the primary purpose is to receive information. Reading philosophy is much more like reading literature, where other things, such as aesthetic engagement and self-discovery, are happening as well.

Your approach to reading a philosophy text should consist of at least two passes through the text. On the first pass, your reading should be receptive, but not passive. Try to suspend your own opinions and preconceptions. Let the author, or rather the terms and ideas of the text, speak to you. Make a note of new or unusual terms and the ways in which they are related. Try to isolate those terms or ideas, if any, to which the author returns again and again as the essential terms or ideas of the text.

The second pass should be a more active reading. Try to articulate how the essential terms or concepts fit together to form a coherent whole. Are there one or two central concepts around which the text is organized? Is there a single thread that ties together the main ideas of the text? Can you put that thread into your own words? You will rarely find an explicit argument (a set of premises and a conclusion) in terms of which these concepts are developed and presented. Try to tease an argument out of the central body of ideas. Are the premises of the argument true, and do the conclusions of the argument follow from its premises? Or, if you cannot find an argument, does the presentation of the ideas enhance your understanding of related ideas? Now confront your preconceptions with these central ideas. Are your preconceptions shifting, being overturned, or remaining firmer than ever? What fundamental question(s) does the text raise for you?

How to Write Philosophical Criticism

Just as literary criticism goes well beyond mere plot summary, writing about philosophy does more than summarize or even restate the main ideas of a text. There are many criteria for judging a piece of philosophy: Are the arguments (if any) sound? Are the claims of fact consistent with those of science and common sense? Do claims that seem to go beyond common sense or the scientifically verifiable make sense and enhance your understanding of the world? Are statements consistent with each other, and do they give a coherent picture of the world? What is the text really driving at, and how do you respond (intellectually, aesthetically, morally)? How do things stand with your preconceptions about the text's central ideas?

Guidelines for Writing Papers

Your paper must be typed and 1½ spaced, with left and right margins no more than 1.25” each. Papers are due in class on the due date given by me, although I will accept a paper earlier if you have finished it. Late papers will not be accepted without a medical excuse.

Each paper should address a question, problem, theme, or topic from the reading or from classroom discussion on the reading that interests you or provokes you. One good way to get started is to pick a passage from the text and “pick on it.” Restate its basic concepts, issues, or arguments in your own terms and then develop your own critique of these. Your critique can raise questions about a topic, analyze a basic concept, and/or assess the author’s argument in support of any important claim. Your aim should be to show understanding and critical insight.

Criteria for grading are as follows, working from the bottom up:

F – Any or all of the following: this paper is riddled with spelling, punctuation, and/or grammatical errors. The paper demonstrates little or no attempt to understand the material or no critical examination of it. The paper is turned in late.

B – This paper has very few spelling, punctuation, or grammatical errors. The paper demonstrates an acceptable understanding of the material and a reasonable attempt to critically examine it.

A – This paper has no spelling errors and practically no punctuation or grammatical errors. The paper demonstrates excellent understanding of the material and a well-developed critical examination of it.

When you cite an author from the required readings in a short paper, you can simply mention the page number from the text in square brackets. For example, “Blah blah blah ...” [Hegel, p. 67]