

## PHIL 411/511.001: Hegel

Hegel's massive, sprawling philosophical system is centered on what he calls his "logic" (which itself is something quite different from classical bivalent and/or formal logic). His first magnum opus, the 1807 *Phenomenology of Spirit*, arguably is a "ladder" that concludes by leading up to the initial point of entry into the realm of the logical. And, the entirety of the ground Hegel covers after composing the two versions of his logic (the *Science of Logic* [1812-1816] and the *Encyclopedia Logic* [1817, 1827, 1830]), a vast terrain including his discussions of art, history, nature, politics, and religion (among other topics), is organized and parsed by him according to the concepts and categories of his logical apparatus. A true and proper appreciation of Hegel's "dialectical"/"speculative" philosophy is impossible without a comprehension of its logic as delineating his core epistemological and ontological commitments. This seminar will focus on the *Encyclopedia Logic* and 1831 Berlin *Lectures on Logic*.

**PHIL 442 — PHIL 542.001 — REL 447.001**

**Sem: Buber's Mystic Philosophy**

**Course Description**

The German-Jewish philosopher Martin Buber (1878-1965) has been largely forgotten despite the acute relevance of his thinking for us today. Informed by the Jewish tradition, both mystic-orthodox and worldly-political, his thinking is too intricate to be pinned down to partisan politics, religious fundamentalism, and philosophical ideologies. Buber defies academic categorization and rejects for himself the quick application of generalizing labels, such as “philosopher” and “theologian”. He shuns political co-option.

His instinctive loyalty to authenticity liberates him toward a spiritual creativity that is genuinely safe from religious-political aberrations. Consequently, Buber is not uncontroversial. Challenged by paradoxes and seeming contradictions, he stands firm in his rejection of the monotheistic 3<sup>rd</sup>-person god. Instead, he adopts the 2<sup>nd</sup>-person god of relation. Buber assumes Israeli citizenship despite his criticism of Jewish nationalism and his opposition to the unilateral creation of Israel as a *Jewish* – not *bi-national* – state. Could it be that Buber was both a mystic believer *and* an enlightened atheist? To what extent is Buber’s cultural Zionism *also* a nationalism? How does his “Hebrew humanism” call for the political inclusion of the other as an equal?

His most famous philosophical work *I and Thou* points to his dialogical principle to search for answers. Before this can be done, we need to do the groundwork and recognize Buber’s anti-modernism rooted not only in the Jewish tradition of Hasidism, but also firmly situated within the existentialist tradition of Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, who both influenced him immensely.

In our *exegetical* work we will discover in Buber’s linguistic-ontological craftsmanship an unusual affinity to the idiosyncratic writing of another German philosopher, ten years his junior, Martin Heidegger (1889-1976). We will explore the ontological foundation of their philosophical resemblance.

Given these challenges, it is our task to struggle with Buber through his writing, thinking, and speaking to come to terms with the mysticism that (in)forms his philosophy and politics. The seminar aims at being an “encounter” (*Begegnung*) with Buber in the hope of foregoing the likelihood of any “Vergegnung”, i.e., the dissonance of any alienating dis-encounter. Thus, we may hope this seminar will open the door to the possibility of being an event (*Ereignis*).

Consequently, the seminar is open to students of other academic and professional disciplines.

**PHIL 457/557: American Pragmatism**  
Wednesdays 4–6:30pm  
Fall 2026

American pragmatism is a philosophical movement that has long attracted criticism from influential philosophers on both sides of the analytic–continental divide, including Bertrand Russell, Martin Heidegger, and Ludwig Wittgenstein, who have disparaged it as confused about truth, inattentive to fundamental ontology, or philosophically misguided in its appeal to practice. The main target of these critiques has been the idea, first expressed by Charles Sanders Peirce, that our conception of an object is defined by its practical effects. William James was inspired by this to claim that “the true is only the expedient in the way of our thinking.” In this seminar, we will situate the pragmatist conceptions of truth and belief within the broader philosophical visions in which they arise, approaching American pragmatism as positioned between realism and idealism.

In the first part of the course, we will read Peirce alongside the earlier American philosopher, Ralph Waldo Emerson. While Peirce’s pragmatism is motivated by scientific concerns, with a distinct focus on methodological and epistemological questions, Emerson offers an idealist backdrop that inspires the later pragmatist tradition—an idealism that is at once metaphysical and ethical. We will then consider the pragmatism of William James and John Dewey, whose work is, in part, a response to Peirce and Emerson. We will read James’s version of pragmatism and explore his radical reflections on consciousness and the world, in which subject and world emerge from a unity of experience. Finally, we will read Dewey’s writing on knowledge, education and democracy, examining how Dewey’s pragmatism unfolds both as a scientific program in psychology and as an idealist vision of civic life and education.

### Requirements

Students are expected to attend class regularly, having completed the assigned readings. Each student will write one response paper to be shared with the class on one or two of the readings. In addition, students will be asked to comment on the work of a peer once or twice over the course of the semester.

Participation (understood to include attendance, preparation, the response paper, and engagement with peers) will count for 25% of the final grade. The remaining 75% will be based on a final paper (15–20 pages), which students will pitch to the professor in advance.

### **Philosophy 457/554: Education, Intelligence, Ideology.**

This seminar aims to open an inquiry into the meaning of education, under contemporary conditions, as it intersects and interrelates with philosophy as a range of practices and modes of the conduct of life. Our inquiry will not be confined to “philosophy of education” in a narrow sense but will aim to interrogate some of the multiple dimensions (for instance political, ideological, ethical, technological) in which education in philosophy and philosophical conceptions of education inform, and are informed by, the contemporary problems of individual and global life. This semester, we will focus in particular on the deep sources and contemporary philosophical implications of the idea and value of “intelligence,” both as developed within the philosophical tradition and deployed in educational practices and institutions today.

What are the roles of philosophy and philosophical education in the understanding, communication, and transmission of prevalent conceptions of meaning, practice, belief, intellectual capacity, culture, or value? How does philosophical education interact with the functions of power and authority in preserving and reproducing, or criticizing and questioning, existing conceptions of thinking and of intellectual power or ability, both in conformity with and against contemporary widespread structures of dominance, ideology or technology? In what way, if any, can philosophical education or a philosophy of education be liberating or emancipatory, and how does a philosophical practice of education offer to provide or promote distinctive terms, bases, or forms for the pursuit of social and political critique and transformation? We will pursue these questions, among others, with a view to interpreting and reflecting specifically on the possible meanings and value of the ideas of individual or collective intelligence and intellectual capacity in the history of philosophical reflection on mind and life, as well as in actual educational practice today.

Readings from: Plato, Aristotle, Rousseau, Montessori, Freire, Nietzsche, Emerson, Derrida, Wittgenstein, and Cavell (among others).

### **PHL 458/558: Seminar: Early Confucian Ethics**

In this seminar, we will read some of the classics of early Chinese ethical theory, focusing mainly on the Confucian philosophers in pre-Qin China, Kongzi, Mengzi, and Xunzi, as well as some of their critics and interlocutors. We will also read contemporary philosophical work in Confucian ethics. Themes will include the role of ritual in ethical life, the connections between morality and the family, the value (or disvalue) of civility, the value of spontaneity in a good life, and the roles of emotions (especially grief and joy) in ethics. This will be a writing-intensive and discussion-heavy class.

## Phil 469/ 569: Recent French Phenomenology

This course aims to provide advanced philosophy students with a grounding in the recent history of a major movement in contemporary philosophy. Phenomenology has, since its inception in the work of Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), attempted to do justice to the first-person experience. Experience was to be described by the phenomenologist exactly as “intended” in the act of consciousness, “bracketing” the question of the metaphysical existence of the phenomenal object. This meticulous attention to first-person experience was designed to foreground, not the subject as it perceives itself in reflection (as in the constructivism and idealism of the Neo-Kantians), but rather the “thing itself,” as it originally “gives” itself in immediate consciousness. While Husserl hoped to use phenomenology as a rigorous method to set philosophy at last upon the sure path of a science, the most influential of his successors saw in phenomenology a means of acknowledging and recovering aspects of the plenitude of being that are overlooked, ignored, or systematically denied in the abstractive and reductionist methods of the modern sciences. In particular, inspired by Husserl’s great student Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), the first generation of French phenomenologists, including such luminaries as Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980), Emmanuel Levinas (1906-1995), and Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961), sought to recover through phenomenology the concrete, embodied, existential, and historical situation of the human being. In its “first wave,” French phenomenology was characterized by an intense ethical and political concern, but one with a strongly atheistic tenor. That all began to change with the succeeding second and third generations of French phenomenologists. The leading figures in the later French phenomenological tradition – Jean-Luc Marion (b. 1946), Michel Henry (1922-2002), Jean-Louis Chrétien (1952-2019), and Jean-Yves Lacoste (b. 1953) – have pursued phenomenology in a manner that unabashedly shows an interest in issues, concepts, and questions from the Western theological (especially Christian) tradition. As with their predecessors, these philosophers start from the concrete, lived experience of the existing human being. However, unlike them, the younger phenomenologists in France are prepared to acknowledge and recover the religious dimension of this experience, as it gives itself “originally” in consciousness. Religion thus reemerges within a properly phenomenological practice, one that sets aside questions of personal faith or metaphysical speculation in favor of the meticulous description of concrete, lived religious experience. Specific phenomena with a religious coloring or flavor, such as revelation, the gift, charity, embodied truth, being-as-life, redemptive suffering, radical rebirth, the call of being and its response, transcendent hope, liturgy and the parousia (or “coming”) come to the fore in their work. The result is arguably the richest and most productive strain of phenomenological research in the last several decades, which has come to be known as the “theological turn” in phenomenology. In this course, we will examine representative writings from these recent French phenomenologists within a seminar setting. While there are no specific prerequisites, students are encouraged to have a basic familiarity with twentieth-century continental philosophy before starting the class. Grades will be based upon attendance and participation, preparatory questions on the reading, a short analytical-critical essay, a proposal and brief presentation of planned research, and a longer independent research project.