Philosophy of Right

Head of Workshop: Andrew Haas (Office Hours: Wed., 16:30-18:30 or by appointment).

Schedule: Rm TBA, Module 3; Wednesdays, 13:40—16:30pm; 13 Jan—16 March 2016.

Assessment:
30% class participation.
30% written paper (Due: 16 March, 16:30pm; 3-5 pages).
40% final oral exam (Questions to be determined and distributed two weeks prior to the exam).

Syllabus

Week 1: On the Possibility of Politics: Freedom and Equality, Right and Law
Plato, Republic, VII, 301; VIII, 540-557.

Week 2: The Impossibility of Politics
Derrida, Rogues, Part One.
Derrida, “Differance.”

Week 3: History and Justice
Hegel, Philosophy of Right (Introduction, and selections).

Week 4: Law, Justice, Force
Kant, Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals (selections).
Kant, Metaphysics of Morals, AA 6: (esp. 231-33).

Week 5: On the Metaphysical Origin of Politics and Ethics
Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics (selections).
Aristotle, Metaphysics (selections).

Week 6: The Political Animal: Reason and Responsibility
Aristotle, Politics, Bk. VI (esp. 1301a, 1317a).

Week 7: The Ontology of Freedom
Nancy, The Experience of Freedom (esp. Chapt. 7).

Week 8: Guilty Innocent, Accessory: On Responsibility and Implication
Schmitt, Political Theology (selections).

Week 9: The Problem of the Political: Friend, Foe, Stranger
Schmitt, The Concept of the Political.
Shakespeare, Macbeth. Banquo: “Who’s there?”
Camus, The Stranger.

Week 10: Concluding Discussion
**Further Suggested Reading:**
Derrida, *The Force of Law*
Derrida, *The University without Condition*
Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*
Foucault, *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*
Heidegger, *On the Essence of Human Freedom*
Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*
Kant, “Idea for a Universal History from a Cosmopolitan Point of View”
Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*
Pascal, *Pensées*

**Some Secondary Sources on Hegel:**

**Some Secondary Sources on Schmitt:**


**Some General Internet Resources in Philosophy:**

- HSE library website: http://library.hse.ru/
- Oxford University Library: http://solo.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/
- Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy: http://www.iep.utm.edu/
- Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: http://plato.stanford.edu/
- UCD Philosophy Subject Guide: http://libguides.ucd.ie/philosophy

**Course Methods:**

Lectures and discussions, presentations and exams, will be used to teach students how to read, write, argue and think philosophically with regards to course-content.

**Objectives and Competencies:**

Students will learn to avoid the following errors:

1. Confusing argument with *debate*, taking a strong, oppositional position on a topic and then trying to win points.
2. Mistaking *assertion* for argument—for even the most powerful rhetoric remains unconvincing, if not supported by clear evidence and logical reasoning.
3. Assuming that merely *describing* an issue or question is as good as arguing for a position.
4. Thinking in *simple* black-and-white terms, neglecting the nuances of argument.
5. Citing an *authority* with almost blind reverence, and ignoring other points of view.
6. Taking *opinion* for argument, writing papers that are subjective.
7. Constructing a *weakly-supported* or *poorly-reasoned* argument because it is, after all, their opinion, and they have a right to it.
8. Believing mere *comparing-and-contrasting* is an argument.
9. Relying on *structures* learned in school or university, which may not suit arguments or academic requirements in philosophy.
10. Not going from *facts* to an argument for the interpretation of the facts.

Thus, we will learn how to prepare a philosophy presentation with an original thesis, and a strongly-supported and well-reasoned argument based on textual evidence—not observation, data, information, opinion, examples, belief, experience or feeling. Students will learn how to be as accurate and as complete as possible (two major criteria).

**Students Learn How to:**

1. Do philosophical research.
2. From this research (reading, thinking), come to establish evidence.
3. From evidence, or its absence, make inferences.
4. Testing the validity of inferences, come to philosophical intuitions.
5. Taking those intuitions and develop a thesis.
6. Consider the thesis’ validity, and use evidence and reason to construct arguments.
7. Test the arguments to determine how convincing they are, and challenge the arguments of others by employing critical analysis.

The process is not linear; rather, as students learn to craft arguments, they will be encouraged to return to the evidence, draw new inferences and form new insights that, in turn, affect the arguments that we are making. If the goal of philosophical argument is knowledge, we need to begin with the assumption—like Socrates—that we do not know. We need to understand that our own premises and biases are not fact, that what we learned at school or university, from this expert or that authority, is not necessarily correct. We thus challenge our premises and biases. In this way, we can hope to discover and to challenge the premises and biases of others. In short, students will learn to be open to experiencing some shift in understanding, to being convinced by others, and so to arguing in such a way that others experience it and are convinced as well.

One way to facilitate this shift is to think in a way that moves back-and-forth between evidence and argument—while maintaining a clear and logical progression. Thus, students will learn to:

1. Know the difference between reliable and unreliable interpretations;
2. Be persistent to observe objectively and thoroughly, and to collect textual evidence;
3. See patterns or relationships in what we have observed or discovered in our reading;
4. Infer and assume carefully;
5. Form conclusions (and provisional conclusions) while keeping an open mind;
6. Create original and convincing arguments, understanding that these arguments are not the last word, but part of an ongoing debate in a scholarly process.

Students will learn how to construct a presentation and paper. Although there are many methods, we will concentrate on “the movement from thesis to analysis to synthesis” in order to:

1. Introduce the work in a way that catches the reader’s attention. A startling claim or a question that ends in a (hypo)thesis. (1/10 of the text.)
2. Gather and analyze the textual evidence: “See the trees for the forest.” Apply the criteria of “accuracy and completeness.” Analyze texts and logical reasoning; find ambiguities, questions, problems. Examine secondary sources. Consider translations. (4/5 of the text.)
3. Evaluate the evidence: immanent critique means “giving them enough rope to hang themselves.” Synthesize our arguments into a whole: “See the forest for the trees.” Use logical reasoning to make it convincing. Draw out and clarify the implications. Conclude that the hypothesis has been proven, but that questions remain. (1/10 of the text.)