Theocrit 9652: What is Philosophy? Philosophy and Theory from the Late Eighteenth- to Twentieth Century

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Course Description
This course takes up the role of philosophy in Theory, the invention of Theory in the cross-fertilization of Idealist and Romantic philosophy, and at times the resistances of “philosophy” and “Theory” to each other. We will begin with Kant’s modest proposal for protecting a place for philosophy in the university and with the way he saw the place of philosophy in relation to other disciplines. We will then move on to Hegel’s attempt to make philosophy a meta-discipline, through his attempt to construct an encyclopedia of all the “philosophical sciences,” and will read Hegel together with Schelling’s experimentation with the form and potential diversity of philosophy, and the complex relations between the empirical and transcendental that this geo- and biodiversity of philosophy create.

The radical opening up of thought that thus occurs sees the emergence of something like “Theory” within philosophy, but also results in several attempts, from the mid-century to the modern period, to close off this opening. These include a shift away from philosophy as the umbrella discipline for knowledge, for instance in the positivism of Comte. In philosophy itself these foreclosures include neo-Kantianism, neo-Hegelianism, Husserl’s transcendental phenomenology, and logical positivism: in other words, they occur in “continental” as well as analytic philosophy. The course cannot cover all of these developments, but will push towards the question of whether philosophy, as a result, migrates out of philosophy strictly speaking. As Zizek says, “often other disciplines,” such as aesthetics or sciences, “take over (at least part of) the ‘normal’ role of philosophy,” which results in the “‘proper’ space” for “authentic philosophical thought” being “these very gaps and interstices in the social edifice,” where philosophy is led outside itself. It is in this displacement and the aftermath of German Idealist and Romantic philosophy that we can situate “Theory,” as a mode of thinking that develops, initially at least, through the migration of philosophy into aesthetics/literature. The course will return to the issue with which it began, namely the role of philosophy in relation to other domains, but now at a point when philosophy is no longer a rising force, as in Idealism, but is increasingly marginalized within current neo-liberal organizations of knowledge. Here, we will explore both the need for philosophy in Theory now, and the possible differences between Theory and philosophy.

Readings (most of these will be made available as selections of pdfs; an asterisk * indicates a text ordered at the bookstore; I may retain or change these slightly depending on interests of class members).

Immanuel Kant: The Contest of Faculties (selections); Critique of Pure Reason (brief selections); “To Perpetual Peace”
G.W.F. Hegel: Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences in Outline ("Preface"); selections from The Philosophy of Nature (“Organics”) "Introduction" to Aesthetics (section 5), other selections on Symbolic and Romantic art; possibly the History of Philosophy (selections).
Friedrich Schelling: *First Outline of a System of the Philosophy of Nature; “On the Nature of Philosophy as Science”; Ages of the World 1815 (selections)
Auguste Comte: brief selections from Course of Positive Philosophy
Friedrich Nietzsche: The Birth of Tragedy (sections 1-17)
Walter Benjamin: The Origin of German Tragic Drama (selections); or, Georg Lukacs: Theory of the Novel (selections)
Edmund Husserl: Encyclopedia article; brief selections from The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology
Michel Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic* (selections), Raymond Roussel (selections), *The Order of Things*
Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition; The Differend* (selections: Preface and Kant section); maybe an essay from *The Inhuman*.
Post-Heideggerian Philosophy: selections from Nancy, Levinas or Agamben, tbd

There will also be other background readings.

**Assignments.**
Depending on the size of the class, everyone will do an oral presentation but not everyone will do a seminar. Those not doing a seminar will present a preliminary version of their final paper in a “conference” to be arranged at the end of term. There are therefore two options:

**Option A: Seminar + research paper.**

i) **seminar on an assigned topic** - 30%
A seminar of 25 minutes (not including discussion), on the model of a paper presented at a professional conference, to be graded on clarity and effectiveness of presentation as well as content. While the class may be assigned a limited reading, the presenter MUST read the text(s) being considered in their entirety. Since your seminar will have a respondent, please ensure that a close to final version of the seminar reaches your respondent by the Friday before class. The seminar must be written up as a paper (roughly 10pp. + Works Cited), and should be handed in in hard copy 2 weeks after being delivered. The written version should take into account class discussion, and should not be identical to the oral version. Failure to give the seminar when scheduled will result in a penalty (see below).

ii) **Response and Participation:** 10%
*Response:* Each student doing a seminar will provide a brief (5-8) minute response to a conference paper. The response may offer another point of view, or take up an aspect of the topic not covered in the seminar, but must offer something substantive, and raise discussion points. The respondent is also responsible for reading the whole text being covered in the seminar, or a substantial selection as prescribed. *Participation:* Attendance in class is a minimum condition of participation. Assessment of participation will include quality of class participation, and the effort and thought put into the course, which may not always be obvious from direct verbal participation. However, anyone who misses more than two classes or persistently comes late without a reasonable explanation may forfeit the participation grade entirely.

iii) **Research paper:** 60% - due December 20th
A research paper of 6,000-7500 words, on a different theorist from the one covered in the seminar. Papers may cover work by theorists not covered in class. As long as you take up the topic of the course and stay within the chronological parameters of the course (1880-2000), I am open to your writing on other theorists, but since the field is potentially much vaster than that of some other courses, please be mindful that I cannot read a new corpus in order to read your essay: thus, for reasons of my own ignorance, Nancy, Esposito or Malabou are alright, but Badiou is not. Heidegger is banned, except in relation to some other theorist. Papers must not overlap with those submitted in other Centre courses (tus, for instance, you should not do a paper if you are also enrolled in the Derrida course). The paper should contain a bibliography, should show evidence of secondary reading and original research, and should follow either the MLA or Chicago Style format for references.

**Due date for final paper:** Dec. 20th. All essays must be submitted in hard copy, and either left for me at the English Department (AHB, ground floor), or dropped off at my house (870 Wellington Street, SE corner of Wellington and Grosvenor). Students whose seminar falls in December, may have till December 27th to submit their major paper. After these dates there will be a late penalty of 2% per day. All essays
should also be e-mailed to me so that I can be sure of when they were submitted. I cannot accept late essays after Jan. 2nd (penalty of 12%-26% as applicable) as I will be leaving for a conference and the grades meeting will be immediately afterwards.

**Option B: Short paper + “conference” version of research paper + final research paper.**

i) **Short paper- 30% (due Oct. 24th)**
   In lieu of the seminar students will submit a short paper of about 10 pages. This paper must take up some aspect of a text or theorist covered in class. It should include a Works Cited and should involve the reading of criticism and commentary as relevant.

ii) **Response and Participation: 10%**
   As above. Students using this option will respond to one of the seminars.

iii) **“Conference” version of research paper + full version of research paper- 60%**
   Students will present a preliminary (20-25 minute) version of their final paper at a “conference” in the last week of classes. The final paper (see above) should be submitted in hard copy by December 20th, and should take account of discussion at the conference.

**Late Penalties and Incompletes**

--Failure to give a seminar on the assigned date: 10% deduction from grade, and the seminar must be handed in in writing within a week.
– Late submission of short essay due on Oct. 24th: 2% will be deducted per day
– Failure to deliver conference paper: 10% deduction from grade
– Late submission of research paper: 2% will be deducted per day.

--Incompletes: Although you should inform the instructor, Incompletes must be requested from the Director, subject to appropriate documentation.

**Academic Offences**

As part of university policy we are required to stress that Scholastic offences, including but not limited to plagiarism (whether of direct wording or arguments), are taken seriously. Students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Website: http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/scholastic_discipline_grad.pdf

In addition, please note (with apologies for saying this if it is unnecessary) that a graduate course that draws on the professor’s published and unpublished research is not like an on-line undergraduate course which organises existing information that is “in the public domain.” Any arguments that you take from this course, which are not common knowledge, and which you use outside this class (e.g. in a thesis, conference paper or article) must be duly acknowledged.