This course will take up German Idealism’s attempt to elevate philosophy to a metadiscipline that provides the organizing principle for all other “philosophical sciences” (as Hegel calls them).

It will explore the way in which this imperialism of philosophy ends by exposing it to what Derrida calls “the margins of philosophy,” reconfiguring the very identity of philosophy and its writing, and thus creating a place for the emergence of theory. Two organizing premises of the course are Derrida’s notion of “autoimmunity,” wherein systems have a tendency to compromise themselves by destroying their “own immunitary protections”; and Foucault’s idea of “countersciences,” which lead in the opposite direction from established sciences (or forms of knowledge) and expose the latter to their unthought. In structuring the course around organizations of knowledge and their dis-intergration, and around (inter)disciplinarity, we will try to bring out both the critical and creative potentials of this interdisciplinarity, thinking from and beyond as well as through Idealism.

The course will begin with Kant’s view of the relation between faculties and disciplines, and his attempts to delimit the place of philosophy. Though Kant may want to establish the grounds of reason and the boundaries between faculties, the problems of the empirical vs. the transcendental that Foucault sees as surfacing in his work place Kant at the origins of “Theory.” We will similarly study Hegel in terms of an interdisciplinarity that constantly exposes the philosophical cogito to its unthought. We will thus look at how Hegel’s philosophical project is disrupted by his work in the life sciences and aesthetic: how his work on bodies and organisms unsettles the self-identity of philosophy; how the history of art is the history of the subject’s failing to become a classically bounded ego; and how the increasingly powerful discipline of “history” impacts philosophy. Finally we will take up these and similar issues in the work of Schelling, focusing on the relations between his transcendental idealism and philosophy of nature; his concepts of absolute and unconditional knowledge; his radical theorization of “freedom”; and the various forms of his writing and thinking, particularly in First Outline of a System of the Philosophy of Nature and Ages of the World (1815), as experimental texts that resemble what Deleuze calls the “great work” that we can enter from different points and develop in different directions through relations of “explication, implication, and complication.”

While there is no time in a half course to do case studies of the way Kant, Hegel and Schelling (not to mention Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, and Kierkegaard) have been taken up by numerous contemporary theorists such as Derrida, Deleuze, Foucault, Lyotard, Zizek, Habermas, Adorno, Nancy etc., these later thinkers will orient the way Idealism is approached. Students can write their final paper on one of these connections.