

PHIL5340 Seminar on Modern Western Philosophy

Course Outline

Mode of Teaching: face-to-face teaching

Time : Wednesday 18:30 – 21:30

Place: YIA 503

Course overview (as shown on CUSIS)

This course aims at an in-depth discussion of selected works of major philosophers in modern Western philosophy such as Descartes, Hume, Kant and Hegel. The specific content of the course may vary from semester to semester. Students may repeat the course for credit, provided that two courses with identical course codes are not elected in the same semester.

Course Outline

This graduate seminar will introduce you to one of the most important traditions in contemporary Continental philosophy, philosophical hermeneutics, by way of a careful study of Hans-Georg Gadamer's *Truth and Method*. Gadamer (1900-2002) was a leading hermeneutic philosopher of the twentieth century and his *magnum opus*, *Truth and Method*, is one of the most important works in recent Continental philosophy, in general, and in philosophical hermeneutics in particular. In our careful reading of this text, we will focus on such questions as: what is understanding and interpretation? What are the foundations of the human sciences? Is science the only domain within which we can speak of truth? What is the relation between truth and method? Can one speak of truth in art? What is historical consciousness? What roles do prejudice, authority, and tradition play in understanding? What is a hermeneutic circle? What is a hermeneutic theory of language?

Learning outcomes (as shown on CUSIS)

1. Demonstrate a solid grasp of the issues discussed.
2. Analyze and critically interpret some significant primary texts in modern Western philosophy.
3. Demonstrate an enhanced ability to conduct independent research on the topics covered and related issues.

Topics

1. The Foundations of philosophical hermeneutics
2. Interpretation and understanding
3. Hermeneutic critique of positivism
4. Aesthetic consciousness, art, and truth
5. Hermeneutic theory of play
6. Historically-effected consciousness
7. The Rehabilitation of Prejudices
8. Dialectic and dialogue
9. Fusion of horizons
10. Hermeneutic theory of language

Learning activities

In this course, you are expected to

- read and think about the assigned readings;
- develop the skills mentioned in the course outcomes through philosophical discussion and writing (essays, take home exams, and critical summaries of tutorial readings);
- attend lectures/tutorials to participate in discussion.

Activities and workload:

In-class (mandatory):

1. Lectures will be conducted in a seminar fashion: 2 hours each week.
2. Reading: approximately 2-3 hours on the basic and suggested readings each week.
3. Writing assignments: an average of 1 hour each week on preparing and writing essay assignments throughout the term. You should try to design a schedule that allows you to apportion more time on writing and discussing your essay with your teacher two to three weeks before each essay is due.

Assessment scheme

The assessment methods are designed to encourage participation and learning through argumentative writing and active participation.

Task nature	Description	Weight
Participation in Discussions	Discussions	15%
Three Reflective Summaries	Each around 1000 words	45%
Term paper	Around 2000 words	40%

Backup plan for assessment in case face-to-face teaching and assessment is not possible due to the pandemic (no need to fill in if the class and related assessments are to be conducted online)

Task nature	Description	Weight
Participation in online class discussions	Discussion	20%
Two Take Home Exams	Short answers in essay form to a set of questions	40%
Term paper	Around 2000 words	40%

Remarks:

1. Participation in Lectures/Seminars: Grading is based on meaningful participation in discussions. Absence will damage your grades.
2. Reflective Summaries: Your essay should be approximately two single-spaced typewritten pages. You are supposed to a) provide at least a one page long summary of the assigned readings (or longer), b) identify what you consider to be the most important point(s) in the readings (philosophically, with argumentation) (at least one paragraph), c) identify what in the readings raises most questions for reflection (philosophically, with argumentation, one paragraph). Your critical summary should be approximately 1000 words long.

3. The term paper: you may choose to write on any philosophical problem addressed in this course. You will be asked to submit a preliminary statement on a chosen topic. You will be expected to do some independent research, to formulate a central thesis as well as to develop arguments in support of it. The due date of this assignment will be announced in class towards the end of the semester.

Grade Descriptor

Please refer to: http://phil.arts.cuhk.edu.hk/~phidept/UG/Grade_descriptors.pdf

Details of course website

Relevant announcements and course documents will be posted on Blackboard.

Required text

Gadamer, H.G. *Truth and Method*. 2nd rev. edition. Trans. J. Weinsheimer and D. G. Marshall. New York: Crossroad, 2004.

Recommended literature

By Gadamer:

Gadamer, H.G. *Philosophical Hermeneutics*. Trans. and ed. by David Linge. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976.

Gadamer, H.G. *The Gadamer Reader: A Bouquet of the Later Writings*. Ed. by Richard E. Palmer. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2007.

Gadamer, H.G. *Philosophical Apprenticeships*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1985.

Gadamer, H.G. *Reason in the Age of Science*. Trans. by Frederick Lawrence. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1981.

Gadamer, H.G. *Praise of Theory*. Trans. Chris Dawson. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998.

On Gadamer:

Arthos, John. *The Inner Word in Gadamer's Hermeneutics*. South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2009.

Davey, Nicholas. *Unquiet Understanding: Gadamer's Philosophical Hermeneutics*. New York: SUNY Press, 2007.

Dostal, Robert L. ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Gadamer*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

Grondin, Jean. *The Philosophy of Gadamer*. trans. Kathryn Plant. New York: McGill-Queens University Press, 2002.

Malpas, Jeff, and Santiago Zabala (eds), *Consequences of Hermeneutics: Fifty Years after Truth and Method*, (Northwestern University Press, 2010).

Weinsheimer, Joel. *Gadamer's Hermeneutics: A Reading of "Truth and Method"*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985.

Wierciński, Andrzej. *Gadamer's Hermeneutics and the Art of Conversation* Germany, Münster: LIT Verlag, 2011.

Course schedule

<i>Week</i>	<i>Topics</i>	<i>Required reading and Assignments</i>
1	Introduction to Philosophical Hermeneutics	“The Universality of the Hermeneutical Problem” (I)
2	Sensus Communis, Judgment, Taste	“The Universality of the Hermeneutical Problem” (II) and TM: 3-37
3	The Ideal of Beauty, the Aesthetics of Genius and Experience (<i>Erlebnis</i>)	TM: 37-70
4	Aesthetic Consciousness and the Fundamental Concept of Play	TM: 70-87 and 102-119
5	The Picture, the Occasional and the Decorative, The Sign and the Symbol	TM: 119-138
6	Romantic Hermeneutics	TM: 175-195 First Take Home Exam (Submission due date: Oct. 9th)
7	Historicism, Science, Life-Philosophy	TM: 214-235
8	Husserl, Count Yorck, Heidegger	TM 235-254
9	The Circle of Understanding, Rehabilitation of Prejudices, Romanticism and Enlightenment	TM: 268-306
10	Horizon, Application, and Historically-Effectuated Consciousness	TM: 306-356
11	Language	TM: 385-426 2nd Take Home Exam (Submission due date: Nov. 20th)
12	Concept Formation	TM: 427-453
13	Conclusion	TM: 453-484

Contact details for teacher(s) or TA(s)

Teacher	
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TA	
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Academic honesty and plagiarism

Attention is drawn to University policy and regulations on honesty in academic work, and to the disciplinary guidelines and procedures applicable to breaches of such policy and regulations. Details may

be found at <http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/>

For assignments in the form of a computer-generated document that is principally text-based and submitted via VeriGuide, the statement, in the form of a receipt, will be issued by the system upon students' uploading of the soft copy of the assignment. Assignments without the receipt will not be graded by teachers. Only the final version of the assignment should be submitted via VeriGuide.