PHIL5340/PHIL7340 Seminar on Modern Western Philosophy: Hans-Georg Gadamer's hermeneutics

Course Outline

Mode of Teaching: Face-to-face Teaching

Term: 2026-27 Term 1

Time：Wednesday 18:30-21:30 **Location：YIA LT8**

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 and, in particular, in philosophical hermeneutics. 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 the 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.

4. Develop critical and exegetical skills by means of reading and interpreting Gadamer's works.

5. Improve your skills of presenting philosophical arguments in written and oral form.

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 various assignments (essays, quizzes and tutorial presentations);
- attend lectures/tutorials to participate in discussion.

Activities and workload:

In-class (mandatory):

1. Lectures will be conducted in a seminar fashion: 3 hours each week.
2. Reading: approximately 3 hours on the basic and suggested readings each week.
3. Assignments: regular readings and thinking about the course material will help you prepare for the tutorial presentation, essay and quizzes.

Assessment scheme

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

Task nature	**Description**	**Weight**
Attendance and participation	Discussions in class and tutorials	10%
Tutorial presentation	Preparation of a written report, 10-minute-long presentation, followed by 10 minutes Q/A	30%
Reading quiz	10 questions to be answered in class	10%
Lecture quiz	10 questions to be answered in class	10%
Final essay	The basis of the essay will have to be written at home. The essay will need to be further developed in class.	40%

Grade Descriptor

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

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

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

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

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

On Gadamer:

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

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

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

Dostal, Robert L. 2022. *Gadamer's Hermeneutics: Between Phenomenology and Dialectic*. Evanston, Ill: Northwestern UP.

Forster, Michael. (ed.). 2018. *The Cambridge Companion to Hermeneutics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

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

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

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

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

AI tools usage guide

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Course schedule

Week	***Topics***	***Required reading and Assignments***
Sep 9	Introduction to Philosophical Hermeneutics	"The Universality of the Hermeneutical Problem" (I)
Sep 16	Sensus Communis, Judgment, Taste	"The Universality of the Hermeneutical Problem" (II) and TM: 3-37
Sep 23	The Ideal of Beauty, the Aesthetics of Genius and Experience (*Erlebnis*)	TM: 37-70
Sep 30	Aesthetic Consciousness and the Fundamental Concept of Play	TM: 70-87 and 102-119
Oct 7	The Picture, the Occasional and the Decorative, The Sign and the Symbol	TM: 119-138
Oct 14	Romantic Hermeneutics	TM: 175-195
Oct 21	Historicism, Science, Life Philosophy	TM: 214-235
Oct 28	Husserl, Count Yorck, Heidegger	TM 235-254
Nov 4	The Circle of Understanding, Rehabilitation of Prejudices, Romanticism and Enlightenment	TM: 268-306
Nov 11	Horizon, Application, and Historically-Effected Consciousness	TM: 306-356
Nov 18	Language	TM: 385-426
Nov 25	Concept Formation	TM: 427-453
Dec 2	Final essay (in class)	

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

Teacher's Name:	Prof. GENIUSAS Saulius Haroldas
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TA's Name:	
Email:	

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.