

Fall 2020 Graduate Course Descriptions

COL 690: Dissertation Writing Workshop

Ewa Ziarek

Wednesdays 2:30-5:00

708 Clemens

The Dissertation Writing Workshop (DWW) is a one-credit hour, mandatory course for all COL PhD students to be taken in the fall semester immediately following the completion of the Oral Examinations. The DWW serves two basic purposes: 1) facilitates the transition from seminars and exam preparation to the writing of the dissertation; 2) professionalization and job market preparation. Requirement for the DWW include the following: 1) production of a substantial and complete draft of a chapter of the dissertation, which will be presented to the workshop participants for comments; 2) presentation of a shorter version of the chapter (40 -50 minutes, approximately 20 pages) during the session in which the longer chapter will be discussed; 3) reading and discussion of other workshop participants' work. Dissertation directors and other faculty will be invited to attend the oral presentations of the student's work. The DWW meets the first week of the fall semester to organize the schedule of presentations and any other meetings. In most cases, the DWW will reconvene during the second half of the semester in order to critique the work of the workshop participants. Student grades depend on successful completion of all requirements. Failure to complete successfully the requirements results in the student's having to repeat the DWW in the following fall semester.

COL 724: Althusser: Ideology & Philosophy

Rodolphe Gasché

Tuesdays 12:30-3:10

708 Clemens

The topic of this seminar is Louis Althusser's 'structuralist' Marxism. We will be primarily interested in working out the differences between the kinds of knowledge (or non-knowledge) characteristic of philosophy, the exact sciences, and the various forms of ideology. The guiding question for our reading of Althusser's work, concerns his emphasis on the philosophical dimension of Marxism, more broadly, on the fundamental role that philosophy must play within the sphere of the practical.

COL 723: Of Hospitality

David E. Johnson

Tuesdays 3:30-6:10

708 Clemens

What is at stake, today, at the border? How to think the migrant, the immigrant, the foreigner, the stranger, the citizen, and their place in the world? How to think the limit of the nation-state and its responsibility toward the other? What are the conditions of hospitality? Ought hospitality to be unconditional? What is the relation of hospitality to sovereignty? We will begin with Plato's *Laws* and Kant's "Perpetual Peace," but the largest part of the semester will be devoted to reading more recent engagements--anthropological, literary, philosophical, political-scientific--with the concept of hospitality: Pierre Klossowski (*The Laws of Hospitality*), Derrida (*Of Hospitality*), Michel Agier (*Borderlands: Towards an Anthropology of the Cosmopolitan Condition*), Guillaume Le Blanc & Fabienne Brugère (*La fin de l'hospitalité*) Benjamin Boudou (*Politique de l'hospitalité*). This seminar is "introductory" in the sense that it marks the beginning of a new research project, one that concerns the image of migration. It thus concerns the *moving* image, the "time" of the "negative," and what is

revealed and what is lost, what disappears, in the "instant"--how long is an instant?--of capture, in the moment of the *cliché*.

COL 704: Terrorologies & Jewish Law

Sergey Dolgopolski

A: 018400/24302

B: 018399/24301

Mondays 6:30-9:10

640 Clemens

The seminar explores "logics" of terror with an emphasis on the central role both the development and reception of Jewish Law plays in their formation. The focus will be on the notions of fear, horror, terror and earth in Jewish and Christian classical texts and in contemporary political and ethical thought. In reading these texts we will look more specifically into the role terror assumes in different ways of negotiating the relationships between law and rule in Jewish and Christian legal and theological traditions. We will pay an even closer attention to the ways of engaging earth as a foundation of terror, indeed as the core of these relationships between law and rule. On a meta-theoretical level we will ask, are terror and related notions best approached, understood and critically appraised in a framework of ethics or is a theory of the political better equipped for that task? Alternatively, can thinking of terror in terms of literary theory offer a third way? We will explore these questions through readings late ancient Rabbinic and Christian legal and literary texts as, and despite of how, they have been appropriated in contemporary theories of ethics, politics, and literature. We, more specifically, will follow a medieval transformation of the relationship between terror and earth into "logics" of fearing an omnipotent and omniscient deity; and explore the resurgence of the tension between the two "logics" in modern thinkers of terror -- from Kant's theory of sublime, to Heidegger's theory of horror, to Levinas's critique and appropriation of it in his ethics, to thinkers of the political post-Kant — Arendt, Agamben, Fromm, Schmitt, and Taubes. The concluding part of the seminar will apply the competing literary, ethical, and political perspectives to analyzing case-studies in current literature.

Spring 2021 Graduate Course Descriptions

COL 706

David Johnson

Mode: Hybrid

Tuesdays 3:45-6:25

A: 018404/23844

B: 018403/23837

Title: Derrida & the World

We will read Derrida's final seminar, *The Beast and the Sovereign, II* (2002-2003) in order to develop a clear understanding of his sense of the world and what he means when he says that the death of the other is "chaque fois unique, la fin du monde" (each time unique, the end of the world). In this last seminar, Derrida's analysis alternates between Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* and Martin Heidegger's 1929 seminar, *Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*. We will track these analyses. In addition, the last seminar instances Derrida's most sustained reading of the "as if" and the phenomenological "as such." Thus, we will be concerned with the faculty of imagination and the production of essence and truth. Seminar requirements are attendance (whether online or in person, as circumstances dictate) and a research/seminar paper of 15-20 pages devoted to a problem relevant to the seminar.

COL705

Rodolphe Gasché

Mode: Online

Tuesdays 12:45-3:25

A: 018402/23828

B: 018401/23827

Title: Theory & Praxis

This seminar will be primarily devoted to a reading of Jacques Derrida's seminar *Theory & Praxis* from 1975-76. Apart from discussing the origin of the distinction of theory and praxis in the thought of Plato and Aristotle, and raising the question of whether this distinction also plays a role in non-European thought, we will address texts by Louis Althusser, Immanuel Kant, and Martin Heidegger.

COL704

Krzysztof Ziarek

Mode: Online

Wednesdays 3:45-6:25

A: 018400/23826

B: 018399/23825

Comparative Thought in a Global World

In his essay, "Science and Meditation" ("*Wissenschaft und Besinnung*"), Heidegger speaks of "an inevitable dialogue with the East Asian world"—a dialogue made necessary by the rise of the European influenced global civilization. For Heidegger, for such a dialogue, Western (philosophical) thought has to transform itself through its often suppressed "poetic" dimension (*Dichten*). In this course, we will examine some of the conditions and possible avenues for such a dialogue, mostly with East Asian thought, a dialogue that can perhaps take the shape of what is sometimes called comparative thought or comparative philosophy. This change of perspective entails perhaps, as Dipesh Chakrabarty indicates, "provincializing Europe." To understand parameters of such a shift and what it would involve on the conceptual level, we will read a number of philosophical texts, as well as discuss poetry and artworks. Primary texts will include Chakrabarty,

Daodejing, Dogen, Ueda, Heidegger, Mignolo, Nancy, Ortega, Waters, as well further supplementary materials.

COL703

Shaun Irlam

Mode: Online

Thursdays 3:45-6:25

A: 018398/23824

B: 018397/23823

Writing Disaster

The new millennium has ushered in an epoch of massive environmental decline, destabilized weather patterns, waning resources, global economic calamity, atrocious human rights violations, global conspiracy theories and now, most notably, a devastating pandemic. Expanding ‘ecologies of fear’ (in Mike Davis’s phrase) and toxic bio-politics seem increasingly to be the natural habitat of the postmodern subject. Most recently, scientists have proposed a new name for this epoch that arguably begins with our massive combustion of the Mesozoic: the Anthropocene.

In this course, we will explore the thematic, rhetorical and representational strategies for writing disaster — in Blanchot’s phrase ‘writing the disaster,’ investigating the different ways in which literature evokes the rupture and trauma occasioned by the intrusion of the radically other. We will also frame this literature in terms of theoretical debates around biopolitics and the Anthropocene; however, rather than privileging any single theoretical discourse, our guide here will be the literary texts we explore. Starting from Blanchot’s *The Writing of Disaster*, and entertaining a broad and flexible conception of ‘disaster,’ that allows us to pass from Defoe’s *Journal of the Plague Year* to Camus’s *The Plague*, Duras’s, *Ravishment of Lol V. Stein*, Pynchon’s *Crying of Lot 49*, McCarthy’s *The Road*, and VanderMeer’s *Southern Reach Trilogy* (to name some possible choices), we will examine some of the common characteristics that draw these texts together.

COL525: French and Italian Contemporary Thought

Laura Chiesa

Mode: Online

Thursdays 3:55-6:35

LC: 018834/24006

In recent months, prompted by the spread of the COVID-19 virus, contemporary French and Italian philosophers have circulated timely critical observations about the pandemic on online platforms. The paradigm of biopolitics and related philosophical notions of immunity and autoimmunity, sovereignty, and global capitalism are effective conceptual territories in which to consider the unprecedented situation in which we are living. One of the first of these reflections came from Giorgio Agamben; many others have followed from, reacted to, or diverged from this beginning: Roberto Esposito, Jean-Luc Nancy, Bernard Stiegler, Paul Preciado, and Bruno Latour ; just to mention a few. The seminar’s aim is to unpack these philosophical territories ; starting with a selection of Michel Foucault’s writings on biopolitics, from *History of Sexuality* up to *The Birth of Biopolitics*. The seminar will be conducted in English.