

Fall 2018 Graduate Course Descriptions

Antimony Paralogism & Aporia

Rodolphe Gasché

COL 705

A: 018402/23604

B: 018401/23603

Tuesdays 12:30-3:10

640 Clemens

Over the last decades the notions of antinomy, paralogism, and aporia have been at the center of much of Continental, especially French philosophical thought, not accidentally connected to a renewed interest in Kant's critical philosophy. This interest has replaced the previous focus on "contradiction" in association with Hegelian and Marxist dialectical thought. The seminar will start out with a discussion of the concept of contradiction in dialectical thought, and its instrumental role in the conception of "totality," before beginning a detailed reading of the parts in Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* devoted to paralogisms, and "The Antinomy of Pure Reason." Following this we will explore the use Jean-François Lyotard makes of the notion of paralogism in his account of postmodernity; the role that the notion of the antinomy plays Jean-Luc Nancy's evaluation of contemporary philosophical thought; and devote the remainder of the seminar with again a close reading of Derrida's book on *Aporias*.

Kristeva in Context: French Feminism & Beyond

Ewa Ziarek

COL 703

A: 018398/23599

B: 018397/23598

Wednesdays 12:30-3:10

640 Clemens

Having arrived in France from Bulgaria in the 1960s, Julia Kristeva is neither quite French nor quite feminist, and yet, she has been regarded as one of the most influential of the so-called French feminists. With the approaching 50th anniversary of the publication of *Revolution in Poetic Language*, this course will reconsider Kristeva's contributions to feminism, psychoanalysis, modernism, affect theory, visual arts and poetics, as well as the philosophy of language. Beginning with *Revolution in Poetic Language*, in the first part of the course we will discuss the possibilities and the limits of her aesthetic, political, and psychoanalytical notions of revolt in such books as *The Powers of Horror*, *Intimate Revolt*, and *The Sense and Nonsense of Revolt*. We will follow with the analysis of strangeness and feminism in such classical essays as "Women's Time" and "Stabat Mater," and ask whether the notion of revolt is still relevant to feminisms today. By reading together *Strangers to Ourselves* with her detective novel, *Murder in Byzantium*, we will also consider Kristeva's notion of strangeness in the context of immigration, Orientalism, and cultural political suppression of Eastern Europe, not to mention the multicultural legacy of Byzantium, in the Western imaginary. We will finish with her more recent meditation on the cultural/political imaginary of decapitation and its depiction in visual arts. We will also consider some of the most influential of Kristeva's critics, from Kelly Oliver to Gayatri Spivak. By engaging above topics in the context of their own research interests, students

will have an opportunity to submit their final projects to the annual Kristeva Circle conference (or other conferences). Requirements will include seminar presentations, participation in class discussions, and the final research paper (12pp conference style).

Bergson: On Virtuality & the Imagination

David Johnson

COL 704

A: 018400/23601

B: 018399/23600

Tuesdays 3:30-6:10

640 Clemens

In this seminar we'll read Henri Bergson's *Matter and Memory* and *Creative Evolution*, as well as some of his shorter essays. The goal of the course will be to understand Bergson's concept of "virtuality" and the place and function of the imagination in his philosophy. To be sure, we'll have to take up the problems of time and memory. My intention will also be to read Deleuze's *Le Bergsonisme* and perhaps a couple of his other engagements with Bergson (2 essays from *L'isle Déserte*).

Individuation: Medieval & Contemporary

Jorge Gracia

COL 680

A: 018389/21841

Tuesdays 4:00-6:40

NSC 228

This seminar will explore several related fundamental problems in metaphysics and in particular what are known as the problem of universals and the problem of individuation. The first problem includes such questions as what are the necessary and sufficient conditions for two 2x4 cards to be, and be known as, two 2x4 cards? The second problem includes such questions as what are the necessary and sufficient conditions of one 2x4 card to be, and to be known, as this 2x4 card? The course will discuss good and bad ways of formulating and dealing with these problems, and some related ones. Although materials from various periods of history will be discussed, the course will concentrate on the medieval period.

Travel, Gender & Empire

Shaun Irlam

COL 706

A: 018404/23606

B: 018403/23605

Thursdays 12:30-3:10

640 Clemens

Spring 2019 Graduate Course Descriptions

Forms of Knowledge

Rodolphe Gasché

COL 711

A: 018437/23280

B: 018436/23279

Tuesdays 12:30-3:10

640 Clemens

The focal text of this seminar will be Plato's dialogue Theaetetus, the founding text of Western philosophy about the nature of knowledge, but foundational also insofar as it does not furnish a definitive answer to the question what knowledge is. Especially in the current context in which the idea of one true knowledge has been put into question on the basis that there are plural kinds, or forms of knowledge that either form an in-different manifold, or that are heterogenous, and at war with one another, this dialogue, precisely because of its aporetic nature, is more topical than ever. Indeed, how to avoid relativism, in the shape of historicism, or culturalism, if there are only forms of knowledge? How is one to know that one is still speaking of knowledge, and not of opinion, if it is not established what knowledge is in the first place? Where would one particular form of knowledge find its criteria to be able to distinguish itself from other forms, and claim irreducibility to them, without orienting itself within a horizon of universal knowledge? Precisely because the Theaetetus does not offer a definitive answer to what knowledge is, this dialogue by keeping this question alive, provides one with some of the elementary tools to critically orient oneself within the current debates concerning knowledge, truth, and universality. In addition, this seminar will be an opportunity to clarify distinctions such as those between true belief, opinion, and knowledge, the difference between knowledge and sense perception, the relation of knowledge to judgment, and many more. The course's objective is not only to learn how to practice close readings of philosophical texts by developing critical and analytical skills, but also to become familiar with the writings of a thinker and philosopher whose work is not only foundational for Western thought, but also instrumental to the questioning of the epistemological and ethical implications of this thought itself. Course requirements: Attendance is mandatory. A final research, or argumentative paper of ca. 12-15 pages is required for students, who take the course intensively (A section); a three page paper, for those who take the course extensively (B section).

Derrida and Literature

David Johnson

COL 712

A: 018438/23278

B: 007955/23277

Tuesdays 3:30-6:10

640 Clemens

In *Dissemination*, Derrida famously remarks, "There is very little, almost no, literature." In this seminar we will read what Derrida has to say about literature, not least his interest in literature's "noematic structure." To that end we will begin by reading Derrida's Introduction to Husserl's "The Origin of Geometry," paying particular attention to his analysis of the various reductions (eidetic, phenomenological, transcendental), the role of language in the constitution of an

objectively ideal object, and the relation between univocity and equivocality (thus homonymy). From here we will take up sections of his 1992 interview with Derek Attridge, "That Strange Institution Called Literature," as well as *Passions: An Oblique Offering*, "Literature in Secret," and, if we have time, his two essays on James Joyce, "Ulysses Grammophone" and "He War: Two Words for Joyce." Ultimately, the seminar seeks to understand the "as if," its relation to the world and what might be called constitutive fiction. Requirements: One 15-20 page seminar paper

Judgment, 'the Tyranny of Metrics' and the Evisceration of the Public Sphere

Ewa Ziarek

COL 710

A: 018435/23282

B: 007954/23281

Wednesdays 12:30-3:10

640 Clemens

We are confronting right now a new and unforeseeable in its consequences transformation of the public sphere, in which the possibilities and limitations of human judgments are being replaced by the power of algorithms. What is the task of humanists faced with these transformations? Whether we describe historical formations or normative presuppositions (how they should work in democracy) of public and counter public spheres, the communication of our judgments to others has been a key component of public debate and contestation. Because human judgments are limited, faulty, subject to distortions and power relations, and thus open to contestation, they are more and more frequently regarded with suspicion. In place of such contingent intersubjective basis of decision-making, algorithms appear to be more neutral, reliable, and efficient means of evaluation (or more precisely, "assessment") of performance and accountability in the realms as diverse as education, law enforcement or classification and dissemination of information. In this course we will first analyze some of the classic formulations of the role of judgment and humanities in the formation of the public sphere by reading such a diverse writers as Kant, Foucault, Arendt, Anderson, and if time allows, Habermas. Subsequently, we will focus on three case studies assessing the power of algorithms and their "impact" on public sphere: *The Tyranny of Metrics*, by Jerry Muller; *Algorithms of Oppression: How Search Engines Reinforce Racism*, by Safiya Umoja Noble; and the new algorithms to predict the precise time of death in terminally ill and dying patients. We will reflect on these dilemmas as responsible members of the public sphere, accountable to others, rather than as computer experts, although computers experts are most welcome to this course. Requirements: participation in class discussion, class presentations, and a conference format research paper.

Literature &/of Human Rights

Shaun Irlam

COL 709

A: 018434/23285

B: 007953/23283

Thursdays 12:30-3:10

640 Clemens

A prominent dimension of the novel since its inception has been the drama of human suffering as

well as championship of the persecuted and dispossessed. In the 18th century, an iconic instance of this was Richardson's heroine, Clarissa; in the 19th century, the social protest novels of Charles Dickens, George Eliot and others charted the horrors of industrialization in Victorian Britain while Zola's Rougon-Macquart cycle did the same for the French underclasses. Across the Atlantic, a large corpus of slave narratives and novels such as Uncle Tom's Cabin served a similar purpose for the abolitionist movement. In each successive century, the ambit of attention has widened, from the family to community to nation and finally, to sufferings and persecutions of the human family, wherever those abuses might arise. In short, the 'novel of human rights' has emerged in diasporic and postcolonial literatures as heir to those earlier formations of a *littérature engagée* [Sartre's phrase] to pose once more the urgent questions of the relationship between politics and aesthetics, truth and fiction, life and story and the responsibilities of writer and reader to the pressing social injustices of their times. This emergent sub-genre in the recent history of the novel exhibits a number of enduring traits and responds to some compelling ethical and aesthetic challenges: i) how to take the portrait of trauma; ii) how to represent political violence; iii) how or whether an ethic of fictionalization and aestheticization impinges upon the integrity and authority of the witness (Adorno on Auschwitz); iv) how, in Sontag's phrase, "to regard the pain of others"; theories of moral sentiment, tragedy and the impulse to aid others; v) how to map the degrees of intimacy and responsibility that bind those who only hear their stories from afar to the tragic fates of those who suffer. Texts will be selected from the following: Frederick Douglass, Conrad, Heart of Darkness, Multatuli, Max Havelaar, Chris Abani, Song for Night, Coetzee, Waiting for the Barbarians, Courtemanche, Sunday at the Pool in Kigali, Danticat, The Farming of Bones, Dorfman, Death and the Maiden, Eggers, Zeitoun, Ondaatje, Anil's Ghost, Stone, The True Sources of the Nile, Lawrence Thornton, Imagining Argentina. In addition we will read theoretical texts by Adorno, Agamben, Sartre, and Derrida. Some background history of human rights will also be provided; Andrew Clapham's Human Rights: A Very Short Introduction is one place to get started.