GERMAN INTELLECTUAL HISTORY

[3 credits]

M/W/F 1:00–1:50
108 Kuhn Hall
Fall 2010

INSTRUCTOR: Mirko M. Hall
305F Carmichael Hall
☎ x9109
✉ mirko.hall@converse.edu • Skype: mirkohall
Office Hours: M/W 2:00–4:00 and by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This interdisciplinary seminar investigates some of the key intellectual discussions—surrounding critique, praxis, and emancipation—in the German-speaking world since the Enlightenment. Focusing on short theoretical texts from Kant to Habermas (many of which decisively influenced today’s Humanities and Social Sciences), we will explore prominent issues in aesthetics, philosophy, and politics as well as the narrative and rhetorical strategies of knowledge production. This course also provides a general outline of the major developments in German cultural history during this period. Finally, we will investigate the continued relevance of these texts in the new millennium.

Although there are no prerequisites for this seminar, the successful completion of an upper-division course in German Studies, History, Philosophy, or Politics is helpful.
COURSE OBJECTIVES:

In this seminar, you will:

• explore key thinkers, ideas, and events in modern German intellectual history;
• engage the German tradition of philosophical critique in the areas of subjectivity, representation, material culture, and technology;
• develop a critical-analytical toolkit for understanding, discussing, and responding to complex philosophical texts.

REQUIRED TEXT:

• Digital Course Reader, available as individual documents [.pdf] under Public Folders/Course Discussion Groups/PHI 340.

RECOMMENDED TEXTS:


COURSE FORMAT AND EXPECTATIONS:

This upper-division seminar is a reading intensive course that requires your faithful attendance, daily preparation, and active participation. We will spend the majority of our class time—in an open, participatory forum—analyzing philosophical texts from the perspectives of both thematic content and argumentative style. Our class sessions will typically consist of a few introductory remarks, extended discussion, and several interactive activities in critical commentary. Because we will cover a significant amount of material during a relatively short period of instruction, it is essential that you complete your reading and writing assignments on time. You can best prepare for our sessions by carefully reading each text and being familiar with its key concepts and arguments. Throughout the semester, I will provide you with a variety of study sheets to help focus your preparation. I will always do my best to respond to your questions and observations and to suggest alternate ways for understanding our texts. I look forward to our lively, productive, and, hopefully, provocative discussions. I care about you and your learning; if you need any assistance with this course, please contact me!

➢ If I believe that you are not satisfactorily preparing for our seminar, I reserve the right to give unannounced quizzes on our assigned readings (as part of your overall participation/preparation grade).

Note: Some of our readings are extremely challenging. You are not expected to understand these texts in their entirety the first time you read them—or, perhaps, even during the course. Your active participation and preparation in this seminar does not imply elucidating every textual minutiae, but rather contributing to our sessions in a meaningful and sustained way. Our task as readers will be to accommodate our understanding to the texts and to respond to them honestly. In making a sincere commitment to our seminar, you will do just fine!

Organizational Tip: In this seminar, you will encounter a dazzling array of new philosophical terms, methods, and practices. To help facilitate your organization and recollection of this information, and to follow the pedagogical practice of many German university students, I recommend that you develop and maintain a course portfolio. Carefully prepared in a three-ring binder, this portfolio can serve as a valuable record of your academic work: from class notes to course handouts and study guides.
COLLEGE POLICIES:

The Honor Tradition of Converse College is based on the premise that you have the responsibility to uphold the highest standards of personal integrity (including respect for other students’ dignity, rights, and property) and to help foster a civil and productive learning environment. Therefore, your coursework must conform to the college’s policy on academic integrity. All instances of suspected dishonesty (e.g., cheating, plagiarism, collusion, and fabrication) will be reported to the Honor Board. For detailed information on these policies, see your Student Handbook [http://www.converse.edu/student-life].

If you have a documented disability that requires special assistance, please contact me privately and Tania McDuffie, the Director of Academic Accommodations [206D Montgomery Hall; x2028]. All information and documentation regarding your disability will remain strictly confidential.

ASSIGNMENTS:

Protokoll: I would like you and another colleague to prepare the minutes of one of our class sessions for distribution to the entire seminar. This document should be approximately 1–2 pages in length, single-spaced, word-processed, and spell-checked.

Précis: I would like you to prepare a précis—i.e., a critical-analytical summary—of five different readings. These documents should be approximately 2 pages in length, double-spaced, word-processed, and spell-checked. Based on my critical feedback, you may be asked to fine-tune each of your prédcs for resubmission.

Final Examination: This take-home, open-book exam will consist of identification, short-answer, and essay questions based on our readings and seminar discussions.

I will provide you with a detailed description of these assignments at a later date. No late work will be accepted or make-up exams given, except in cases of illness, family emergency, or a college-excused absence. Please submit your written assignments electronically as email attachments by the due date [.doc, .pdf, or .rtl format only].

The peer tutors at the Writing Center offer free one-on-one consultations on a variety of writing needs, such as grammar tips, organizational strategies, and proofreading techniques. For more information, visit the center at 204 Mickel Library [x9613].

GRADE DISTRIBUTION:

- Participation/Preparation [30%]
- Protokoll [10%]
- Précis (5) [40%]
- Final Examination [20%]

GRADING SCALE:

A 100–90%  B 89–80%  C 79–70%  D 69–60%  F 59–0%
TENTATIVE SCHEDULE:

In order to maintain a degree of investigative flexibility in our discussions, I will distribute a detailed reading schedule at the beginning of each thematic block. I may also need to slightly adjust our schedule to reflect the actual progress of the seminar. I will announce any changes to the syllabus with as much advance notice as possible.

WEEK 1: COURSE INTRODUCTION

What is intellectual history?
What are the aesthetic foundations of modern subjectivity?

WEEK 2–3: THE EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY

- Kant, *What is Enlightenment?* [1784]
- Anonymous, *The Oldest Systematic Program of German Idealism* [1796]
- Novalis, *Soliloquy* [1798]
- Schlegel, *Athenaeum Fragment 116* [1798]

Critchley, *Continental Philosophy*, 1–11.

» Due: Précis I [17 Sep]

WEEK 4–6: THE NINETEENTH-CENTURY

- Hegel, *Who Thinks Abstractly?* [1808]
- Heine, *On the History of Religion and Philosophy in Germany* (Book II–III) [1835]
- Marx, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* (Selections) [1844]
- Marx and Engels, *The German Ideology* (Selections) [1845]
- Schopenhauer, *Of Women* [1851]
- Nietzsche, *On Truth and Falsity in Their Ultramoral Sense* [1873]

Critchley, *Continental Philosophy*, 12–32.

Special Skype Guest: J.D. Mininger [Vytautas Magnus University, Lithuania]

» Due: Précis II [08 Oct]

WEEK 7–12: THE TWENTIETH-CENTURY

- Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility* [1936]
- Marcuse, *The Affirmative Character of Culture* [1937]
- Heidegger, *The Age of the World Picture* [1938]
- Freud, *An Outline of Psychoanalysis* (Selections) [1940]
- Benjamin, *On the Concept of History* [1940]
- Horkheimer/Adorno, *The Cultural Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception* [1944]
- Arendt, *On Humanity in Dark Times* [1959]
- Marcuse, *A Note on Dialectic* [1960]
- Habermas, *The Public Sphere* [1964]

Critchley, *Continental Philosophy*, 54–75.

» Due: Précis III [29 Oct], IV [12 Nov], V [29 Nov]

WEEK 14: COURSE CONCLUSION

Can philosophy (still) change the world?

» Due: Final Examination [08 Dec]