

Szymon Wróbel

SEMINAR: Philosophy in the Process of Making Concepts: Wondering about Materialism

Author:	Prof. dr hab. Szymon Wróbel Philosophy in the Process of Making Concepts: Wondering about Materialism	
	WINTER Semester	SPRING Semester
HOURS	30	30
FREQUENCY	4 x 45 every two weeks	4 x 45 every two weeks

THE COURSE CORRESPONDS TO TOPICS: Contemporary philosophy, history of philosophy, history of ideas, social philosophy, political philosophy.

ASSESSMENT:

- The course is available to all students (General course open to all students)
- The course to be conducted in English
- Credit requirements: active participation in classes
- Time of classes: Monday
- Begins: 17:00
- Duration: 17:00-20:00 (4 x 45 minutes) every two weeks (for a total of 60 hours)
- Commencement date: November 8th
- The seminar will be held on the Zoom platform

COURSE AIMS AND CONTENT:

The question – what is materialism today? – seems to be extremely important because we do not have any uniform concept of matter and we do not have a uniform concept of materialism. During the seminar, the question about matter will be asked from three perspectives. First, from a historical perspective, we ask: what does it mean to be a “historical materialist”. Is historical materialism possible at all? Perhaps historical materialism is doomed to an alternative: it is either materialism or historicism? What does it mean that “matter” has historical form? Second, what is the relation between matter and information? The physicist John Archibald Wheeler proposed the radical *it from bit* (all from bit) hypothesis, according to which information underlies all matter, and every “it,” that is, every particle or energy field, is an organization of differences and therefore information. Are we ready to accept this hypothesis? Finally, we ask about the subject in the world of “intelligent matter”. What does it mean that matter is capable for self-organization? What does it mean to be a subject in the word of intelligent matter?

KNOWLEDGE TO BE ACQUIRED:

Participants are expected to acquire two types of knowledge: (1) orientation in the philosophy, (2) orientation in contemporary ways of interpreting series of concepts such as idea, concept, technique of thinking, rationality, argumentation, discussion, public debate.

EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES:

Knowledge:

- Improved knowledge on the place and role of the humanities, the social, exact and natural sciences in early and contemporary culture;
- Comprehensive understanding of the terminology of the humanities and social sciences and knows how to use it;
- Knowing in depth the relationships among different humanities disciplines studying works of art in culture and the sociological context of cultural activity;
- Knowing and understanding the main methods of analysing and interpreting products of culture in conjunction with tradition;
- Having good organized knowledge on the main trends in philosophical and social thought in a historical and contemporary perspective.

Skills:

- Selecting and interpreting information from different textual, iconographic and electronic sources;
- Analysing artistic, philosophical and sociological texts using the appropriate research tools, and presenting the results of such work;
- Basic research skills enabling the formulation of research problems from the humanities, philosophy, literature, and arts;
- Basic skills in using interdisciplinary research methods and tools to analyse phenomena of contemporary culture;
- The capacity to take part in conferences, symposia and discussions on literary, artistic and philosophical topics.

Social Competence:

- Understanding the dynamics of scientific, cultural and social development and keeping up with new research methods and paradigms;
- Understanding the principles of tolerance and cultural differences;
- Understanding the importance of Europe's cultural diversity and heritage;
- Participating actively in cultural and social life taking advantage of all forms offered by media, the arts and science

TIME & VENUE ROSTER:

IFiS PAN (Staszic Palace) – Department of Logic and Cognitive Science, room 231, Monday: 16.00-17.00.

DESCRIPTION OF THE CLASSES AND CORRESPONDING LITERATURE:

1. “Metabolism” as cause of exhaustion of labour-power and natural resources?

Readings: Friedrich Engels, *The Dialectics of Nature*, New York: International Publishers, 1940; Ryuji Sasaki, *A New Introduction to Karl Marx: New Materialism, Critique of Political Economy, and the Concept of Metabolism*, Springer International Publishing: 2021.

2. **The Capitalization of Nature, or, the Limits of Historical Nature**

Readings: Jason W. Moore, *Capitalism in the Web of Life. Ecology and the Accumulation of Capital*, London: London New York: Verso 2015.

3. **Alternative genealogy of materialism?**

Readings: Dimitris Vardoulakis, *Spinoza, the Epicurean: Authority and Utility in Materialism*, Edinburgh University Press: 2020.

4. **Subjectivity in times of (new) materialisms**

Readings: Slavoj Žižek, *Absolute Recoil: Towards a New Foundation of Dialectical Materialism*, London: Verso, 2014. *Subject Lessons: Hegel, Lacan, and the Future of Materialism*, Russell Sbriglia, Slavoj Zizek (editor), Northwestern University Press: 2020

5. **Money as a mirror of reflection or head and hand in labour**

Readings: Alfred Sohn-Rethel, *Intellectual and Manual Labour A Critique of Epistemology*, Brill: 2020.

6. **Incorporeal materialism**

Readings: Elizabeth Grosz, *The incorporeal: ontology, ethics, and the limits of materialism*, Perseus Books, LLC; Columbia University Press: 2017.

7. **History of the substance**

Readings: Cat Moir, *Ernst Bloch's Speculative Materialism: Ontology, Epistemology, Politics*, Brill: 2019.

8. **On the way to a new materialism**

Readings: Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010. Manuel DeLanda, *Intensive Science and Virtual Philosophy*, New York: Continuum 2002.

9. **Meillassoux's Non-Euclidean Philosophy**

Readings: Graham Harman (eds), *The Speculative Turn: Continental Materialism and Realism*, Melbourne: re.press, 2011. Quentin Meillassoux, *After Finitude: An Essay on the Necessity of Contingency*, Bloomsbury Academic UK: Continuum, 2009.