

SEMINAR: Interpreting and constructing – working with a philosophical text.

INSTRUCTORS:	dr Mikołaj Ratajczak (IFiS PAN), dr Marta Olesik (ISP PAN), Mitchell Atkinson III (GSSR, assistance) Under the supervision of dr hab. Andrzej Leder (IFiS PAN).	
HOURS:	WINTER Semester 30	SPRING Semester 30
FREQUENCY:	3 hours every two weeks: 2 hours seminar + 1 hour tutoring	
PLACE	On-line: zoom. In case the seminar moves on-site: Staszic Palace, Nowy Świat 72, 00-330 Warsaw	

THE COURSE CORRESPONDS TO TOPICS: Theory of Interpretation, Theory of Writing, Rhetoric, Contemporary Philosophy.

ASSESSMENT:

- The course is available to all students (general course open to all students)
- The course to be conducted in English
- Prerequisites: knowledge in modern and contemporary philosophy; the level of master degree.
- Credit requirements: attendance, participation and the submission of an original essay are necessary for the credit. You can miss one meeting in a semester.
- Time of classes: Alternate Fridays, 13.00–15.00.
- Tutorial hours: The same Fridays, 15.00–16.00.
- Duration: 13.00–16.00 (4 x 45 minutes) every two weeks (for a total of 60 hours). First class: October 22.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Interpreting and constructing philosophical texts are prerequisites for any scholar preparing a thesis in philosophy, social theory, and many other areas of humanities. The focus of the course is to develop the skills necessary to analyse and interpret a philosophical / theoretical article as well as to construct and write one's own paper. These include an ability to locate the text on the map of contemporary academia, to reconstruct and understand the author's intention and to comprehend how the context of the reception of a given work determines the language and the argument of the text. The skills necessary to construct and prepare a paper encompass a capacity to delineate the

theoretical field in which one operates and to consciously use conceptual instruments allowing to elaborate the main argument. Every participant of the course will develop these skills by working collectively with the lecturers and other course participants in a workshop form. The stages of the collective work will be twofold: in the first semester the participants will reconstruct the main ideas of a selected philosophical / theoretical text; in the second semester every participant will write and present her own essay based on the interpretative work done in the previous stage.

First semester - Interpreting

The objective of the first semester is to prepare and present a detailed reconstruction of a selected text from the field of contemporary philosophy / theory. Every participant chooses one text under the supervision of one lecturer and analyses it according to the following algorithm:

1. What is the philosophical domain the text belongs to (metaphysics, epistemology, political philosophy, etc.)?
2. What is the subject of the text?
3. Who are the thinkers that are targeted in the text?
4. What is the text's general aim?
5. What are the most important concepts and categories building the text's argumentation?
6. How the concepts and categories are applied in the text?
7. What is the final position in the text?
8. Are there other texts / authors who would have a similar position?
9. How the style of the text influences its logic?

Second semester - Constructing

The objective of the second semester is to prepare a publishable draft of an article based on the interpretative work done in the first semester. The general guideline for every participant is to approach the first-semester text from a chosen different conceptual/methodological perspective. The outcome should be a text that criticizes, deconstructs, outlines the limits of, re-elaborates etc. the source-text. Unlike the guidelines for the first-semester presentation, they do not need to be followed linearly but should be reflected in the overall construction of the publishable draft:

1. Consider the source-text as a material for your own argumentation. Identify the specific problem you want to concentrate on, it can be conceptual, methodological, logical, etc.
2. Analyse the structure of the problem. Identify the key concepts used and argumentative choices making up the main structure of the argumentation in the source-text.

3. Think on how you wish to modify this structure – do you want to concentrate on the weak points, identify a paradox/conceptual inconsistency, support the argumentation differently than the author of the source-text does, shift the emphasis of the argument from one problem/concept to another, strengthen the overall argument or tone, etc. There are many possible options – straightforward critique is only one of them.

4. Choose text/s, author/s, school you will use as a tool to modify the source-text.

5. Identify the areas of the secondary-material which you'll be focusing on. Reconstruct their conceptual and argumentative structure, having in mind the specific purpose you'll be using them for. Identify both differences and overlapping points with the source-text.

6. Consider your methodology - *how* will you apply the “secondary” material to the source-text – again, straightforward comparison and critique need not limit your choices.

7. Go back to the structure of the source-text and identify your entry points - *where* you propose to begin the application of the secondary-material. Consider how your argumentation will follow from these entry points and how this will affect the logic of both your sources. Consider how the two sets of concepts/problems/methods interact with one another - staging and performing this interaction is the principal work of your essay.

8. Think on how the initial perspective changed as a result of your intervention. Locate yourself, the narrator, within the text and in relation to the two perspectives you have chosen.

Each participant will first present an early version of the text in a class and gather notes from all other participants and the lecturers. Those should be taken into consideration in the preparation of the final version of the publishable draft, which is to be handed over by the end of the second semester.

Learning outcomes likely to be achieved.

Students shall develop their capacity to understand and analyze texts of the contemporary humanities. They will train the skill of matching different paradigms and theoretical sources, but with care not to make categorical errors. They will prepare their own propositions and essays. As always the discussion of texts written by them will be an important element of common effort.

Knowledge:

- Awareness of the tools of philosophical – and more generally theoretical – analysis and interpretation.
- Understanding of their importance when constructing texts.

Skills:

- Capacity to ask the crucial questions when reading a philosophical (theoretical) text.
- Capacity to locate the text on the map of propositions put forward nowadays.
- Capacity to understand the author's intention and comprehend how the context of the reception of his work determines the fate of his ideas.
- Capacity to delineate the theoretical field in which the student will operate when writing.
- Capacity to consciously use such instruments that will allow the student to elaborate his/her rationale.
- Capacity to construct an original essay with a clear hypothesis and an adequate argumentation.

Social Competence:

- Ability to expose the prepared philosophical pronouncement to a group of listeners (skills of a lecturer).
- Skills in directing fruitfully a theoretical discussion.
- Skills in constructively participating in a theoretical exchange of ideas (academic dispute).

Basic bibliography

1. Edmund Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, pp. 40-131, transl. J.N. Findlay, Routledge & Kegan Paul, NY, 1970.
2. Martin Heidegger *Letter on Humanism*, transl. Timothy Quigley, in: *Basic Writings*, ed. David Farrell Krell, New York, Harper & Row, 1977.
3. Giles Deleuze, Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus. Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, transl. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, Helen R. Lane. University of Minnesota Press, 1983.
4. Max Horkheimer, Theodor W. Adorno, "The Concept of Enlightenment", "Odysseus or Myth and Enlightenment". In: *Dialectic of Enlightenment. Philosophical Fragments*. Trans. Edmund Jephcott. Stanford: Stanford University Press 2002, p. 1-62.
5. Jürgen Habermas, "An Alternative Way out of the Philosophy of the Subject: Communicative versus Subject-Centered Reason". In: *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity. Twelve Lectures*. Trans. Frederick Lawrence. Cambridge: Polity Press 1990, p.294-326.
6. Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility: Second Version". Trans. Edmund Jephcott, Harry Zohn. In: *The work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility and Other Writings on Media*, ed. Michael W. Jennings, Brigid Doherty, Thomas Y. Levin. Cambridge MA-London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press 2008, p. 19-55.
7. Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle*. Trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith. New York: Zone Books 1994, p. 11-46.
8. Louis Althusser, „From *Capital* to Marx's Philosophy". In: Louis Althusser et. al., *Reading Capital. The Complete Edition*. Trans. Ben Brewster, David Fernbach. London-New York: Verso 2016, p. 15-61.
9. Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man. Studies in the ideology of advanced industrial societies*. London-New York: Routledge 2002, p. 127-203.

10. Jacques Derrida, *Limited Inc.* Trans. Samuel Weber. Evanston IL: Northwestern University Press 1988. Together with: John Searle, "Reiterating the Differences: A Reply to Derrida". *Glyph*, vol. 1 1977: 198-208.
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12. Saul A. Kripke, *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language. An Elementary Exposition*. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press 1982.
13. Willard Van Orman Quine, "Two dogmas of empiricism". In: *From a Logical Point of View. 9 Logico-Philosophical Essays*. New York: Harper Torchbooks 1963, p. 20-46.
14. Robert Brandom, *Between Saying and Doing: Towards an Analytic Pragmatism*. New York: Oxford 2008, p. 1-55.
15. John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice. Revised Edition*. Cambridge MA: The Belknap Press of HUP, p. 102-168.
16. Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution*. London: Penguin Books 1965, p. 21-114.
17. Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*. Trans. George Schwab. Chicago: Chicago University Press 2005.
18. Ernesto Laclau, Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*. London-New York: Verso, p. 93-148.
19. Theodor W. Adorno. "The Experiential Content of Hegel's Philosophy". *Hegel: Three Studies*. Trans. Shierry Weber Nicholse. Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1993, p. 53-88.
20. Jacques Derrida. "Shibboleth: For Paul Celan". Trans. Joshua Wilner. *Sovereignties in Question: The Poetics of Paul Celan*. Ed. Thomas Dutoit and Outi Pasanen. New York: Fordham University Press, 2005, p. 1-64.
21. Jacques Derrida. "The Pit and The Pyramid: An Introduction to Hegel's Semiology". *Margins of Philosophy*. Trans. Alan Bass. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1986, p. 69-108.
22. Michel Foucault. *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*. London – New York: Routledge, 1989, p. XVI-XXIV, 3-18.
23. Martin Heidegger. *Nietzsche*. Vols. 3 and 4. Trans. Joan Stambaugh, David Farrell Krell, Frank A. Capuzzi. New York: HarperCollins, 1991, p. 3-9, 53-100.
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25. Frédéric Lordon. *Willing Slaves of Capital: Marx and Spinoza on Desire*. Trans. Gabriel Ash. London – New York: Verso, 2014, Excerpts.
26. Jean-Luc Nancy. "Of Being Singular Plural". *Being Singular Plural*. Trans. Robert D. Richardson and Anne E. O'Byrne. Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 2000, 1-100.
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