

Szymon Wróbel

SEMINAR: Philosophy in the Process of Making Concepts: Nothing but Matter.

Author:	Prof. dr hab. Szymon Wróbel	
	Philosophy in the Process of Making Concepts: Nothing but Matter.	
	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. The condition for passing is also writing an essay (15 pages of standardized typescript) related to the topic of the seminar. The essay is graded on a scale of 2 to 5.
- 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: October 17th
- The seminar will be held on the Zoom platform

COURSE AIMS AND CONTENT:

The seminar will be a continuation of the discussion on contemporary materialism. During the seminar we will try to analyse the most spectacular, prominent materialist theories, from Alain Badiou and Quentin Meillassoux to François Laruelle. In this context, we will analyse a whole series of concepts such as: material subtraction, contraction, potentiality, virtuality, necessity, contingency, superposition, the immanence of thought. The central issue will be a disturbing paradox of materialism. It is impossible to reflect on what matter is without confronting the materialist pretension: “everything that is, is matter”, or rather “being is *nothing but matter*”. Hence in effect we have the paradox: the assertion that “everything that is, is matter” is not yet materialist, one still requires the “nothing but”. We will want to reflect on the meaning of this “nothing but”. We will also wonder if we are not observing today in philosophy a certain “decline of materialism” in the name of hard to define matter, “matter” in quotation marks?

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

DESCRIPTION OF THE CLASSES AND CORRESPONDING LITERATURE:

1-2. Alain Badiou: Material Subtraction or Materialist Epistemology of Mathematics

Readings: Alain Badiou, *Being and Event*, trans. Oliver Feltham, New York: Continuum, 2005; Alain Badiou, *The Concept of Model: An Introduction to the Materialist Epistemology of Mathematics*, trans. Zachary Luke Fraser & Tzuchien Tho, Melbourne: re.press, 2007.

3-4. Quentin Meillassoux: Toward a Transcendental Materialism or Subtraction and Contraction

Readings: Quentin Meillassoux, *After Finitude: An Essay on the Necessity of Contingency*, trans. Ray Brassier, Continuum, 2008.

5-6. Ray Brassier: Transcendental Nihilism or the Paradox of Absolute Contingency

Readings: Ray Brassier, *Nihil Unbound: Enlightenment and Extinction*. Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan 2007.

7-8. Slavoj Žižek: Towards a Materialist Theory of Subjectivity or the Violence of the Beginning

Readings: Slavoj Žižek, *Absolute Recoil: Towards a New Foundation of Dialectical Materialism*, London: Verso, 2014.

9-10. Frank Ruda: Materialism of the Idea or the Immanence of Thought

Readings: Frank Ruda, *For Badiou: Idealism without Idealism*. With a preface by Slavoj Žižek. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2015.

11-12. François Laruelle: Philo-fiction or Subtraction and Superposition

Readings: François Laruelle, *Anti-Badiou: The Introduction of Maoism in Philosophy*, trans. Robin Mackay, New York, Bloomsbury, 2013.

13-14. Graham Harman: Symbiosis or the Thing-in-Itself

Readings: Graham Harman, *Immaterialism: Objects and Social Theory*. Polity Press 2016.