

GRADUATE SEMINARS 2016-17

FALL 2016

Phil275: Proseminar – Harmer: Composition, Identity, and Persistence)

This course will investigate responses to the following question from both early modern (i.e. 17th & 18th century) and contemporary philosophers: In what case do some things compose some other thing? *For example*: when do some bricks compose a house? When do some cells compose a plant? When do some organs, bones, etc. compose an animal? Further, what relation does a thing bear to the parts of which it is composed? Is a house an entity in its own right? Or, is it merely many bricks standing in certain relations to one another? Should we answer this question one way in the case of artifacts, such as houses, and another way in the case of living things, such as human beings? Finally, under what conditions does an object persist? What kinds of loss or addition of parts are compatible with the persistence of an object? If an object is nothing but a certain arrangement of parts, can it persist at all? We will examine the answers to these sorts of questions given by John Locke, Gottfried Leibniz, Peter van Inwagen, Trenton Merricks, and Theodore Sider among others.

Phil280-001: Seminar – Keller: Kant’s Pluralism, Hegel’s Phenomenology and the Historical A Priori

We will explore a reading of German idealism (including Kant) in terms of our embeddedness in a natural-social process that is intrinsically systematic and normative. The temporal significance of signs is taken to be pervasive and is articulated in consequence in terms of the systematic difference that they make to us as self-conscious agents who engage in social cooperation, competition and dialogue. We will focus on the general and systematic conception of normativity that emerges out of our temporal self-constitution as social and purposive agents in the world in Kant’s conception of the conditions for the possibility of experience. It will be shown that Kant ties the conditions of the possibility of experience to the conditions for our social-practical agency in history. It will be argued that Kant’s transcendental philosophy comes to its full articulation only in the conception of the “History of Pure Reason” with which it ends. Kant’s conception of nature and of thought, especially of science as a process that unpacks itself in time and history is taken up by Hegel in the *Phenomenology* and *Encyclopedia* (and later by the Neo-Kantian tradition through which it comes to influence Husserl, Heidegger, Koyré and Kuhn). On my reading, Foucault and others such as Cassirer, Heidegger and the late Husserl have not overhistorized Kant, but have if anything underestimated the deep roots of Kant’s conception of the a priori in the very possibility of a social and cultural history of humanity. It is recommended that you read Kant’s first Critique and the last two of Kant’s works, the *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* and the *Conflict of the Faculties*. You might also find it eye opening to read at least some of the selections in the Sebastian Luft (ed.) *Neo-Kantian Reader*. If you want to start reading Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit* that is good too, but understanding the argument has taken me a life-time, so I don’t mind if you wait until the course.

Phil283-001: Seminar – Wettstein: Bugbee’s *Inward Morning*

A couple of years back I did a seminar on Martin Buber’s *I and Thou* and we (I) profited from a careful reading with in-depth discussion. This time we turn to Henry Bugbee’s journal, an important if relatively unknown work of philosophy, also a text in which analytic philosophy meets phenomenology. Bugbee works out a distinctive path through life, one

informed by profound philosophic reflection. Philosophy becomes a way of enriching the human way in the world.

Phil283-002: Seminar – Macnamara: Moral Address

It is widely thought that moral blame is a form of moral address. In this class, we will consider what it means to say that moral blame is a form of address. We will also use speech act theory to explore just what kind of address blame is.