Continental Philosophy Today

Seminar Leader: Frank Ruda
Times: Monday 10:45 – 12:15
       Wednesday 09:00 – 10:30
Concentration Requirements: Ethics and Politics, Literature and Rhetoric

Course Description
The academic study of philosophy is largely concerned with the work of thinkers who belong to another historical moment than our own, and who are considered part of a specific "tradition." Yet during the last decade in Europe a series of thinkers have emerged who have exercised a strong influence—one that promises to endure—on contemporary debates in politics and in the arts. These thinkers provide new conceptions of the connections between the distinct spheres in which they are active (for instance, the very relation between aesthetics and politics). They undertake a reformulation of central concepts of Western thought that have a wide significance across the realms of artistic and social transformation (for example, the categories of "potentiality," "action" or "the subject" and "subjectivity"). On many occasions, their work challenges the disciplinary framework of philosophy, drawing on the interpretation of literary forms and on film, and proclaiming the centrality of narrative, poetry, and aesthetic engagement to the active pursuit of philosophy. Above all, they shape positions and perspectives that elaborate a new poetics rather than a "system." The course will nevertheless aim to identify and examine key tendencies and preoccupations in contemporary continental philosophy, as well as the conclusions that can be derived from its deployment of non-philosophical sources and objects. We consider texts by, among others, Giorgio Agamben, Alain Badiou, Antonio Negri, Jacques Rancière and Slavoj Žižek, pinpointing their implications and uses for both cultural analysis and political diagnosis.

All texts will be made available as to the students of the class as PDFs via email.

Requirements
Attendance at every class is essential, as is full advance preparation of the course readings for each session of the seminar. There will be two essays, the first of 1800-2500 words or 5-7 pages, and the second of 8-10 pages, or 2800-3500 words, as well as in-class presentations which form part of the participation grade.

Policy on Late Submission of Papers
Essays that are up to 24 hours late will be downgraded one full grade (for example, from B+ to C+). Instructors are not obliged to accept essays that are more than 24 hours late, and when a late essay is accepted, it must be submitted within four weeks of the deadline and cannot receive a grade of higher than C. After that, the student will receive a failing grade for the assignment.
Grade Breakdown
Mid-term essay: 25% (Deadline: Sunday, 29 March 23:59)
Final essay: 25% (Deadline: Sunday, 18 May 23:59)
Seminar grade: 50%

Schedule
WEDNESDAY, 29 JANUARY - INTRODUCTION

MONDAY, 3 FEBRUARY - AGAMBEN I: RETHINKING POTENTIALITY

WEDNESDAY, 5 FEBRUARY - AGAMBEN II: PHILOSOPHY AS PARADIGMATOLOGY

MONDAY, 10 FEBRUARY - AGAMBEN III: ECONOMIC THEOLOGY

WEDNESDAY, 12 FEBRUARY - BALIBAR: EGA LIBERTÉ

MONDAY, 17 FEBRUARY - LACLAU: THE POLITICS OF EMPTY SIGNIFIERS

WEDNESDAY, 19 FEBRUARY - JAMESON I: DEFENDING DIALECTIC I

MONDAY, 24 FEBRUARY - JAMESON II: DEFENDING DIALECTIC II

WEDNESDAY, 26 FEBRUARY - NANCY I: CHRISTIANITY AND DECONSTRUCTION

MONDAY, 3 MARCH - NANCY II: MIT-SEIN

WEDNESDAY, 5 MARCH - MALABOU I: THINKING THE BRAIN I
MONDAY, 10 MARCH - MALABOU II: THINKING THE BRAIN II

WEDNESDAY, 12 MARCH - MEILASSOUX: NECESSARY CONTINGENCY
- Quentin Meillassoux, “Potentiality and Virtuality”, in: *Collapse* II (2007), 55-81

THURSDAY, 13 MARCH (replacement SESSION AT 15:15) - DOLAR: WHAT’S IN A VOICE

Spring Break: 17 March – 21 March

MONDAY, 24 MARCH - ZUPANČIČ: COMIC UNIVERSALITY

WEDNESDAY, 26 MARCH - ESPOSITO I: IMMUNITAS

MONDAY, 31 MARCH - ESPOSITO II: THE IMPERSONAL

WEDNESDAY, 2 APRIL - NEGRI I: EMPIRE

MONDAY, 7 APRIL - NEGRI II: REVOLUTION

WEDNESDAY 9 APRIL - VIRNO: MULTITUDE

MONDAY, 14 APRIL - RANCIÈRE I: DISAGREEING

WEDNESDAY, 16 APRIL - RANCIÈRE II: FROM POLITICS TO AESTHETICS

21 April: Federal Holiday

WEDNESDAY, 23 APRIL - BADIOU I: EVENT

MONDAY, 28 APRIL - BADIOU II: RETURNING TO PHILOSOPHY

WEDNESDAY, 30 APRIL - BADIOU III: MATHEMATICS
MONDAY, 5 MAY - ŽIŽEK I: CONTEMPORARY HEGELIANISM


WEDNESDAY, 7 MAY - ŽIŽEK II: REPEATING MARX & ENJOYMENT AND IDEOLOGY