Hegel’s Philosophy of Right

Seminar Leader: Frank Ruda
Times: Monday 9:00 – 10:30  
Wednesday 13:30 – 15:00
Email: f.ruda@berlin.bard.edu

Course description

After Plato’s *Republic*, Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* might be said to be one of the most controversial and important works in the history of political thought. It has been attacked on a variety of grounds. Some commentators claim that it functions merely as an idealizing defence of the Prussian state as it was being reconstituted at the time of the text’s writing. Others argue that it opposes representative democracy and ultimately promotes totalitarianism. Further criticisms contend that it diminishes the role of individual freedom and presents a substantialist, proto-nationalist account of communal organization. Finally, and most paradoxically, it has been thought to represent the claim that philosophy has no role to play in deciding political questions. The course will chart a path through the theses that the Hegelian text provokes and contextualize them adequately. We begin with the well-known preface where Hegel equates the movement of philosophy with the flight of the “owl of Minerva” (which commences “only at the falling of dusk”) and end with the passage from the state in its totality to the movement of history. To properly clarify the progress of thought that Hegel presents, we will often highlight Hegel’s complex arguments by making recourse to supplementary readings (of other texts by Hegel himself or by contemporary Hegelians from Robert Pippin to Slavoj Žižek).

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.

Essay Deadlines

Friday, 25 October; Friday, 20 December

Grading

Mid-term essay: 25%
Final essay: 25%
Seminar grade: 50%

Syllabus

**Monday, 2 September**

Introduction: The Philosophy of Right and Absolute Spirit

**Wednesday, 4 September**

Hegel: Hic Rhodus, Hic Saltus


**Monday, 9 September**

Hegel: Right, Free Will, Determination I


**Wednesday, 11 September**

Hegel: Right, Free Will, Determination II


**Monday, 16 September**

Robert Pippin: On Hegel’s Notion of Freedom


**Wednesday, 18 September**

Hegel: Subjective Ends


**Monday, 23 September**

Hegel: Abstract Right I. Property

Wednesday, 25 September

Hegel: Abstract Right II. Contract and Wrong


Monday, 30 September

Jeanne Lorraine Schroeder: On Hegel’s Notion of Property and Abstract Right

  Text will be made available to participants via Email.

Wednesday, 2 October

Hegel: Morality I. Purpose, Responsibility, Intention and Welfare


Fall Break: 7 October – 11 October

Monday, 14 October

Hegel: Morality II. Good and Conscience


Wednesday, 16 October

Rebecca Comay: Hegel And Morality as Terror

  Text will be made available to participants via Email.

Monday, 21 October

Hegel: Ethical Life I. Family

Wednesday, 23 October

Hegel: Love

- G.W. F. Hegel, “Love”, in *Early Theological Writings*, University of Illinois 1971, pp. 302-308. Text will be made available to participants via Email

Monday, 28 October

Hegel: Ethical Life II. Civil Society and System of Needs


Wednesday, 30 October

Hegel: Ethical Life III. Civil Society And the Administration of Justice


Monday, 4 November

Hegel: Ethical Life III. Civil Society, The Police and The Corporation


Wednesday, 6 November

Hegel: Ethical Life IV. Right Within the State


Monday, 11 November

Hegel: Ethical Life V. The Internal Constitution and the Monarch


Wednesday, 13 November

Hegel: Ethical Life VI. Executive and Legislative Power

**Monday, 18 November**

Hegel: Rights Between States and War


**Wednesday, 20 November**

Slavoj Žižek: On Hegel's Monarch

- Relevant excerpts of Texts by S. Zizek will be provided to the participants via Email.

**Monday, 25 November**

Karl Marx I: How To Criticize Hegel

- Karl Marx, “A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's “Philosophy of Right”. Introduction”, in *Critique of Hegel's “Philosophy of Right”*, Cambridge University Press 1970, pp. 129-142. Text will be made available to the participants via Email.

**Wednesday, 27 November**

Karl Marx II: Hegel's State I


**Monday, 2 December**

Karl Marx III: Hegel's State II


**Wednesday, 4 December**

Karl Marx IV: Hegel's State III


**Monday, 9 December**

Slavoj Žižek: Hegel's Limits I

Wednesday, 11 December

Slavoj Žižek: Hegel’s Limits II


Monday, 16 December

Completion Week

Wednesday, 18 December

Completion Week