Totality and Infinity

Seminar Leader: Tracy Colony
Times: Monday 09:00 – 10:30
       Wednesday 13:30 – 15:00
Email: t.colony@berlin.bard.edu

Course Description
This elective will be devoted to a close reading of Emmanuel Levinas' Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority. Published in 1961, it is one of the most important works in European philosophy. In a number of respects, it marks an absolute break with earlier philosophies in its reinterpretation of the role of ethics in understanding subjectivity, language and time. In this course, we will focus on the themes of visibility and form and ask how these relate to Levinas' understanding of the Other. In addition, we will contextualize this work in relation to the philosophies of Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger from which it explicitly departs and also trace its later reception in the work of Jacques Derrida and Catherine Malabou. All texts will be read and discussed in English, but simultaneous readings in the original French will be supported and encouraged.

Requirements
Attendance
Attendance is required at all classes. Lateness can ruin a class and will therefore not be tolerated. Absences are registered in all classes, and lateness is registered as absence. Illness leading to inability to attend classes, or submit work, must be reported to the College Registrar; a medical note should be submitted to the Registrar within one week of the absence. Bard College Berlin cannot offer credit for any course in which a student has missed more than 30% of classes, whether the absences are on documented medical grounds or not.

Assessment and Writing Assignments
There will be specific reading assignments for each meeting. Everyone is expected to have done all assigned reading in advance. There will be one midterm essay of 2500 words due at 23:59 March 14th. There will be one final essay of 4000 words due at 23:59 on May 21st. Each person will be required to give one 15 minute in class presentation introducing the specific reading for that meeting.

Policy on Late Submission of Papers
As the Student Handbook states, essays that are up to 24 hours late will be downgraded one full grade (from B+ to C+, for example). Instructors are not obliged to accept essays that are more than 24 hours late. Where an instructor agrees to accept a late essay, it must be submitted within four weeks of the deadline and cannot receive a grade of higher than C. Thereafter, the student will receive a failing grade for the assignment.
Grade Breakdown
Midterm Essay 20%
Final Essay 30%
Presentation 20%
Participation 30%

Schedule
January 29
Introduction (no readings)

February 3

February 5

February 6

February 10

February 12

February 17

February 19

February 24

February 26
March 3

March 5

March 10

March 12

March 24

March 26

March 31

April 2

April 7

April 9

April 14

April 16

April 21 (Holiday, Class to be rescheduled)

April 23
April 28

April 30

May 5

May 7