Schelling and the Vicissitudes of Freedom in German Idealism

Seminar Leader: Dr. Jan Völker
Course Times: Tue 13:30- 15:00, Fri 13:30 - 15:00
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Course Description
Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling was not only one of the main proponents of German Idealism; along with Fichte, Hegel and Hölderlin he was also one of the first and most stringent critics of the philosophy of Immanuel Kant and his “subjective Idealism.” He has been read as a precursor to Marx, on the grounds that he sought a systematic means of overturning Idealism itself. Schelling’s thought therefore straddles the boundary between idealism and materialism. This course will follow the main stages of Schelling’s philosophical development, and trace the ways in which the concept of freedom in particular compels him to re-articulate and revise his system. To this end, we will read not only Schelling’s famous treatise on human freedom, but his late Berlin lectures on positive philosophy. In addition, we consider contemporary readings of his work, from Manfred Frank, Dieter Henrich, Slavoj Žižek and others, to illuminate the breathtaking abysses that one may face when thinking the notion of freedom.

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.

Attendance
Attendance at ALL classes is expected. More than two absences (that is absences from two sessions of 90 minutes) in a semester will significantly affect the grade for the course.

Essay Deadlines
Mid-term essay: deadline Friday, 17 October.
Final essay: deadline Monday, 15 December.

Writing Assignments
Mid-Term Paper 1800-2500 words, 5-7 pages.
Final paper 2800-3500 words, 8-10 pages.

Policy on Late Submission of Papers
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
Mid-term essay: 20%
Final essay: 30%
Seminar grade: 50% (20% presentation, 30% participation)

Syllabus

Tuesday, 2 September
- Introduction

Friday, 5 September

Tuesday, 9 September

Friday, 12 September

Tuesday, 16 September

Friday, 19 September

Tuesday, 23 September

Friday, 26 September

Tuesday, 30 September
Friday, 3 October: Federal Holiday

Tuesday, 7 October

Friday, 10 October

Tuesday, 14 October

Friday, 17 October

Fall break: 20 October – 24 October

Tuesday, 28 October

Friday, 31 October
- No Class – this session will be rescheduled in the completion week.

Tuesday, 4 November

Friday, 7 November

Tuesday, 11 November
- No Class – this session will be rescheduled in the completion week.

Friday, 14 November

Tuesday, 18 November

Friday, 21 November
Tuesday, 25 November


Friday, 28 November


Tuesday, 2 December


Friday, 5 December


Tuesday, 9 December


Friday, 12 December


Two last sessions will be rescheduled in the completion week, as make up sessions for 31 October and 11 November.


Completion Week 15 December – 19 December