PL233 Value and its History

Module: Ethics and Moral Philosophy
Seminar Leader: Frank Ruda
Course Times: Mon 11:00-12:30, Fri 15:15-16:45
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Course Description
The concept of value is crucial for a wide range of areas of knowledge and experience, including theories of economic production and exchange, art, morals, and politics. The concept has a complex history. A major tension in this history concerns an opposition between "objective" (mathematically measurable, calculable) forms of valuation, and less quantifiable but nevertheless pressing, putatively "subjective" claims. Our exploration of this tension begins with Aristotle’s distinction between a healthy communal economy and the dangerous effects of chrematistics (the mere accumulation of wealth). Examining readings from John Locke, Adam Smith, and Max Stirner, we address key turning points in the notion of value, for instance Nietzsche’s proposal for a transvaluation of all values, and his contention that it is impossible to evaluate "life" as such. We will also confront Marx’s attempt to offer an analysis of the very process by which “objective” values are produced, and explore contemporary discussions of value in economic theory (Harvey, Jameson), political philosophy (Negri, Chomsky) and ethics (Agamben, Badiou). Our central, guiding question will be: how do we justify the very concept of value itself?

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

Requirements
Attendance at every class is essential, as is full advance preparation of the course readings for each session of the seminar. More than two absences in a semester will significantly affect the course grade.

Writing Assignments
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 possible 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, 22 March 23:59)
Final essay: 25% (Deadline: Sunday, 17 May 23:59)
Seminar grade: 50%
Schedule

Monday, 26 January - Introduction

Friday, 30 January – Plato: Values, Instrumental and Intrinsic
.frequency { font-size: 0.8em; color: gray; } - Plato, Republic (Book II), Indianapolis / Cambridge: Hackett Publishing 2004, 357a-383c.

Monday, 2 February - Aristotle: Communal and Individual Value

Friday, 6 February – John Locke: Value and Labor I

Monday, 9 February – Immanuel Kant I: The Value of Autonomy and Heteronomy
.frequency { font-size: 0.8em; color: gray; } - Immanuel Kant, Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals (Second Section), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1997, 19-51.

Friday, 13 February – Immanuel Kant II: Freedom as Unconditional Value
.frequency { font-size: 0.8em; color: gray; } - Immanuel Kant, Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals (Third Section), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1997, 52-67.

Monday, 16 February – Adam Smith I: Value and Money
.frequency { font-size: 0.8em; color: gray; } - Adam Smith, The Wealth of Nations (Book I), Petersfield: Harriman House 2007, 3-35.

Friday, 20 February – Adam Smith II: What’s the Measure?
.frequency { font-size: 0.8em; color: gray; } - Adam Smith, The Wealth of Nations (Book I), Petersfield: Harriman House 2007, 36-64.

Monday, 23 February – Max Stirner: Only I Do Count
.frequency { font-size: 0.8em; color: gray; } - Max Stirner, The Ego and its Own (The Unique One), New York: Tucker 1907, 484-500.

Friday, 27 February – Friedrich Nietzsche I: Genealogy of Value
.frequency { font-size: 0.8em; color: gray; } - Friedrich Nietzsche, The Will to Power (Origin of Moral Valuations, Biological Value of Knowledge), New York: Random House 1968, 146-156, 322-324.

Monday, 2 March – Friedrich Nietzsche II: Transvaluation of All Values

Friday, 6 March – Karl Marx I: Value and Labor II

Monday, 9 March – Karl Marx II: Value and Surplus Value
.frequency { font-size: 0.8em; color: gray; } - Karl Marx, Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, Vol. I (The General Form of Value, The Money

**Friday, 13 March – Martin Heidegger: Truth and / or Value I**


**Spring break: March 16 - March 20**

**Monday, 23 March – Gilles Deleuze / Félix Guattari: The Value of Concepts and Other Things**


**Friday, 3 April: Federal Holiday**

**Monday, 6 April: Federal Holiday**

**Friday, 10 April – Fredric Jameson: The Value of Art**


**Monday, 13 April - Noam Chomsky: Intellectual Values**


**Friday, 17 April --: Antonio Negri: Value and Affect**

* _Antonio Negri, “Value and Affect”, in: boundary 2, Vol. 26, No. 2 (Summer, 1999), 77-88.*

**Monday, 20 April - David Harvey: Devaluation**


**Friday, 24 April - Agamben: Beyond Value**


**Monday, 27 April - Maurice Dobb: Theorizing Value**


**1 May: Federal Holiday**

**Monday, 3 May – Christine M. Korsgaard: Distinguishing Good from Good**

Friday, 7 May: Annual Conference

Friday, 15 May – Alain Badiou and others: Truth and / or Value II


Monday, 18 May (09:00-12.15) – Slavoj Žižek: Value Today