

**SENIOR SEMINAR:**  
**THE AGENCY OF DESIRE AND LANGUAGE**

**Winter 2010**

**KALAMAZOO COLLEGE**

**PROFESSOR:** Chris Latiolais  
Philosophy Department  
Kalamazoo College  
Humphrey House #202  
Telephone # 337-7076  
Offices Hours:

- 1) Monday: 8:00 - 9:00/1:15 – 2:15
- 2) Wednesday: 1:15- 2:15
- 3) By Appointment.

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

The central purpose of the Philosophy Department Senior Seminar is to support seniors in their individual research projects. The Seminar begins with the reading and discussion of a body of literature selected to establish a common knowledge base to support seniors in their exchange, discussion, critical examination, and formal presentation of individual research papers and manuscripts throughout fall and winter terms. Seniors read, discuss, and write about the seminar's required texts *from the perspective of their own research*, using the conceptual resources developed in such common readings to support and deepen their own research manuscripts. The overall goal of the seminar is to establish an intensive, mutually supportive research group that gains expertise in a specific domain of contemporary philosophy pertinent to our own particular research activities. Seniors are required to read texts, write a brief précis of the arguments, and vigorously discuss the material during seminar times, both on its own terms and in light of its potential connection to his/her own research. The seminar is emphatically interactive.

The broad theme of this year's seminar is the linguistic dimensions of agency and identity. One of the central questions in contemporary philosophy is whether agency is the condition of language or, in contrast, language the condition agency. How one answers this question defines, to a great extent, one's very conception of what it is to do contemporary philosophy. Philosophy in the late 20<sup>th</sup> Century divides, roughly, into two camps: hermeneutic and neo-structuralist. Hermeneutic philosophers maintain the distinctive role of the speaking subject as the (potentially) conscious subject of meaning and truth – the subject understands, interprets, and therein transforms linguistic practices. In contrast, neo-structuralist philosophers maintain the view that the subject is the effect, the “play,” or the epiphenomenon of language as a system of structural differences: the subject comes into being as a mere nodal point in the circulation and exchange of anonymous signs or signifiers. The vaunted modernism/postmodernism debate is often reduced to just this polar opposition. Do we speak language or does language “speak us”? Are we active agents or passive sufferers within language? The famous French neo-structuralists of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century – e.g. Lacan, Foucault, Derrida, Lyotard, Bourdieu, and Butler – champion a post-modern turn that decries the pretensions of agency and autonomy vis-à-vis language. Neo-structuralists are committed to the thesis that the self is radically, fundamentally, and irreversibly *decentered* or “split” by language. In contrast, the German hermeneutic philosophers – i.e. early Heidegger, Gadamer, Habermas, Wellmer, Seel, and Honneth – continue to offer accounts of the complex relation between speaker and language that refuse to reduce the former to an effect of the latter. Hermeneuticists are committed to the thesis that the self is capable of grasping linguistic meaning, on the one hand, and its own involvement in ongoing social alteration of meaning, on the other, as a circular, dialogical, historical process. In this sense, speakers are

both products and yet initiators of language, both “decentered” by language and centered within it.

The central question raised in this seminar is this: Does this polar opposition turn upon a double deficit, a complementary deficit of an inadequate philosophy of language, on the one hand, and an inadequate history of German idealism (i.e. “subject philosophy”), on the other? This obviously rhetorical question sets up readings that answer this question in the affirmative: it’s time to take apart what may be a false dichotomy. The basic idea of the course is to review recent scholarship in the philosophy of language, on the one hand, and German idealism, on the other, for the purpose of re-examining this polarization of subjectivity and language. We begin by reading Paul Ricoeur’s account of the devastating blow that psychoanalysis and semiotic structuralism dealt to the transcendental subject of Kantian idealism and Husserlian phenomenology. In *Oneself as Another*, Ricoeur presents the outline of a positive “critical” hermeneutics of the self that incorporates, on the one hand, the psychoanalytic insight into how the subject is decentered in the unconscious and, on the other, the structuralist insight into how the subject is decentered in language. The narrative constitution of personal identity is the key to Ricoeur’s endeavor to move beyond the modernism/post-modernism impasse, and his account of “character” is a remarkably far-reaching concept that connects up with issues of embodiment and gender.

What makes the seminar distinctive, however, is that we review Ricoeur’s philosophy of agency and character by examining contemporary, empirically-oriented, psychological studies of agency, narrative, and identity. This research in narrative psychology provides a sort of empirical test of Ricoeur’s ideas, demonstrating the interdisciplinary nature of any contemporary study of agency. In both contexts narrative provides a dialectical mediation between selfhood and language. Many humanistic psychologists from the study-of-lives tradition understand identity as narratively constructed – that is, as a type of story that one tells oneself, at least implicitly, about one’s past affairs, present circumstances, and future prospects. The working assumption of such narrative psychology is that the study of narratives provides a methodological access to identity. The inevitable result of this methodological commitment is the fateful confluence of the most sophisticated study of narratives – namely literary criticism – with the empirical study of, and the clinical intervention into, identity formation. In my estimation, the most fascinating example of this remarkable confluence of literary criticism and psychology is the development of a psychological model of identity formation developed by using Bakhtin’s “dialogical” approach to literary criticism: namely, the “dialogical” model of identity, which has important normative implications about mental well-being and hence the clinical-therapeutic intervention in patients’ lives. To better understand the development of the sophistication of the dialogical model, we will compare and contrast the works of McAdams, Hermanns & Kempen, and Gregg. Here the issues of agency, language, and literature achieve a sharp, indeed *practical* formulation. Narrative psychology confronts, as well, critical ethical and political questions about whether conventional “literary” resources enhance or diminish agency and identity. Do the narrative models available within a particular society restrict or expand the scope of agent’s perception, the definition of her feelings, and the range of her agency? Is gender difference defined by different ways of assuming the position of narrator in our lives, and, if so, might a critical deconstruction of such narrative positions function, at least in part, as political emancipation? Are the stories we tell liberating or enslaving? Do we (actively) configure such narratives, or are we (passively) configured by them? Are we active authors or passive characters in our storied lives? The basic duality of agent or patient, activity or passivity, autonomy or heteronomy, pervade contemporary models of the narrative formation of identity, and the pressing critical or normative question raised in such contexts is whether the narrative patterns of identity formation enhance or diminish agency. Once these critical “normative” questions are raised within the field of narrative psychology – i.e. the norms of health and well-being – two broad competing approaches to clinical intervention emerge: namely, a constructive intervention that aims to strengthen the ego’s narrative construction of identity, on the one hand, and a deconstructive intervention that aims to weaken and dismantle the ego’s narrative self identification, on the other. Anyone trained in philosophy easily recognizes that this contrast between a future-oriented, constructive, revelatory narrative configuration as opposed to a backward-looking, de-constructive, suspicious narrative disfiguration recapitulates the distilled options of post-Kantian philosophy: namely, Hegel’s phenomenology of spirit, on the one hand, and Nietzsche’s genealogy of the will-to-power, on the other. We will explore whether Bakhtin’s account of polyphonic narrative offers a sort of mediation between this Hegelian, modern and Nietzschean, postmodern extremes.

It’s important to note that this contrast between constructive and deconstructive approaches in narrative psychology is, in fact, symptomatic of the entire breadth of the social sciences, which is polarized by radically different intuitions about whether social practices and institutions are enabling or disabling

to human thriving. The complex, messy, and sprawling, contemporary debates about language and agency are the legacy of two radically different appropriations of Kant's conception of human freedom and law: namely, that we are subject to only those laws for which we could consider ourselves the author. Famously, Hegel radicalized Kant's "Copernican Turn" to human freedom by offering a phenomenology of the social and historical experience (*Erfahrung*) of agency, his famous *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Oversimplifying drastically, Hegel considers shared social life – ethical life or *Sittlichkeit* – the enabling condition of being an individual, where self and society, the individual and the general, become reconciled. Nietzsche, in contrast, radicalized Kantian freedom by offering a contrary genealogy of social and historical experience of agency, his famous *Genealogy of Morals*. Against Hegel's views regarding potential reconciliation between self and society, Nietzsche advances the now prevalent view that modern social norms, languages, and institutions eviscerate, deform, and mortify human agency. Of course, this simplistic comic book depiction of Hegel as the champion of society – what psychologists call "relatedness" -- and Nietzsche as the champion of self – what psychologists call "narcissism" – distorts the subtly and sophistication of their respective accounts of the history of agency, but it's a helpful guide to the emphatically polarized field of contemporary research, which still resonates with the defenders of modernity associated with Hegel and detractors of modernity associated with Nietzsche, who call for a post-modern turn. Although we will not read Hegel and Nietzsche, we will read secondary literature that develops and deepens this polarity between a constructive phenomenology and a deconstructive genealogy of the modern social and linguistic dimensions of agency -- namely, a history of Post-Kantianian philosophy – but only after the following phase of the course.

In the third part of the course, we move to a survey of recent developments in the philosophy of language – the "direct reference revolution," methodological contextualism, and inferentialism – which provide a corresponding way of mediating the opposition between hermeneutic "meaning-oriented" and structuralist "system-oriented" approaches to language. We follow this with a survey of recent developments in the history of 19<sup>th</sup>-century post-Kantian philosophy – the works of Pinkard, Pippin, Brandom, Honneth, and Bowie – which provide a fascinating and complex account of the "autonomous subject" that seems to move beyond the polar opposition between the exalted subject of transcendental philosophy – from the modernist camp – and the humiliated or "decentered" subject of linguistic deconstruction – from the postmodernist camp. We will examine these recent developments in the philosophy of language and the history of German idealism for the express purpose of asking whether they provide a novel re-conceptualization of the ways in which language, literature, and agency intertwine that remains the modernism/postmodernism impasse.

We will not be able to explore either of these recent developments in depth; each has amassed a significant, extensive, and controversial body of literature that would require a series of different courses. Instead, we will survey recent developments in the philosophy of language and literature by reading summary encapsulations in Jose Medina's *Language: Key Concepts in Philosophy* and Andrew Bowie's *From Romanticism to Critical Theory: The Philosophy of Recent Literary Criticism*. What is fascinating about both domains – philosophy of language and German Idealism – is their shared conviction that the relationship between the "literary" dimensions of language and a philosophical conceptualization of truth has not been adequately developed. Contemporary philosophy of language appears to reverse the traditional priority of literal over figurative meaning by claiming that the type of analogical, reflective, and aesthetic thinking at work in understanding metaphor is the basis of understanding the literal meaning of situated speech acts. Contemporary scholars of German idealism emphasize how Kant's third critique, *The Critique of Judgment*, sparked a Romantic turn to aesthetic experience as more primary than theoretical understanding or practical reason. There is a convergence of areas of research upon the importance of aesthetic cognition, a convergence that may well provide a novel re-conceptualization the relationship between self and language.

Bowie argues that Kant's famous "Copernican" reflections upon the conditions for the possibility of truth – that is, truth from a human perspective – sparked a far-reaching, ongoing, and insurgent "Romantic reaction" that views art forms such as poetry, literature, and music as non-discursive media that reveal important truths about the human condition. The Romantics considered art forms privileged, though indirect, forms of truth, whose non-discursive or non-propositional mode of presentation offer crucial insights into how language and rationality function within a broader compass of human involvement in the world. For the romantics, art begins where philosophy fails in articulating how humans exist as embodied agents capable of speech and action. The thesis of Bowie's path-breaking book is that the contemporary modernism/postmodernism stand off originates within, and is still beholden to, the Romantic reaction

against Kant's conception of rational autonomy, and, moreover, that a review of the history of this debate in the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century allows us to move beyond the contemporary impasse. Interestingly enough, Bowie develops this argument by *using the conceptual resources of contemporary philosophy of language*, in essence showing how German Idealism anticipates many of the recent developments in semantics and pragmatics. By identifying this common theme – i.e. the renewed emphasis upon aesthetic experience – in the philosophy of language, on the one hand, and history of German idealism, on the other, we gain a new vantage point from to review the apparent interdependence of agency and language.

We end the course with a close and sustained reading of Robert Pippin's interpretation and defense of Hegel's concept of agency: *Hegel's Practical Philosophy: Rational Agency as Ethical Life*. The focus of the winter term is upon Hegel's account of agency as preparation for hosting a conference on February 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> devoted exclusively to this most recent publication. We will also examine Slavoj Zizek's competing, Lacanian psychoanalytic reading of Hegel, which inverts the standard reading of Hegel a conservative apologist of the modern nation state.

### **REQUIRED TEXTS:**

- 1) Bowie, Andrew. *From Romanticism to Critical Theory: The Philosophy of Recent Literary Criticism*. New York, NY: Routledge, 1997.
- 2) Medina, Jose. *Language: Key Concepts in Philosophy*. London, England: Continuum Press, 2005.
- 3) Pippin, Robert. *Hegel's Practical Philosophy: Rational Agency as Ethical Life*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Cambridge University Press, 2008.
- 4) Ricoeur, Paul. *Oneself as Another*, trans. Kathleen Blamey. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1992).
- 5) Packet: Bakhtin, Dialogue, and Identity:
  1. McAdams: "The Problem of Identity," Chapter One of *Power, Intimacy, and the Life Story*"
  2. McAdams: "What We Know When We Know a Person"
  3. Morson: Introduction, "Narrative and Freedom: The Shadows of Time"
  4. Morson: "Interlude: Bakhtin's Indeterminism"
  5. Hermanns: "The Narrative Construction of Reality"
  6. Hermanns: "The Decentralization of the Self"
  7. Hermanns: "The Dialogical Self: Tension between Dominance and Exchange"
  8. Habermas, Juegen. "Individualization as Socialization: On George Hubert Mead's Theory of Subjectivity," in *On the Pragmatics of Communication*. Ed Maeve Cook. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1998.

### **RECOMMENDED TEXTS:**

- 1) Bohman, James. 1997. "Two Versions of the Linguistic Turn: Habermas and Poststructuralism," in *Passerin d'Entreves* 1997.
- 2) Bowie, Andrew. *Aesthetics and Subjectivity: From Kant to Nietzsche*. Manchester, England: Manchester University Press, 2003.
- 3) Dreyfus, Hubert (1990). *Being-In-The-World: A Commentary on Heidegger's Being and Time, Division 1*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1991.
- 4) Frank, Manfred. *The Subject and the Text: Essays on Literary Theory and Philosophy*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1997

- 5) Habermas, Juergen. *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*. Trans. Frederick G. Lawrence. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1987.
- 6) Jurist, Elliot L. *Beyond Hegel and Nietzsche: Philosophy, Culture, and Agency*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2002.
- 7) Kolb, David. *The Critique of Pure Modernity: Hegel, Heidegger, and After*. Chicago, Illinois: Chicago University Press 1986.
- 8) LaFont, Christina. 2000. *Heidegger, Language, and World-Disclosure*. Trans. Graham Harmon. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Cambridge University Press.
- 9) LaFont, Christina. 1999. *The Linguistic Turn in Hermeneutic Philosophy*. Trans. Jose Medina. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press.
- 10) Olafson, Frederick (1987). *Heidegger and the Philosophy of Mind*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1987
- 11) Pippin, Robert (1991). *Modernism as a Philosophical Problem*. Oxford, England: Blackwell Publishers, 1991.
- 12) Pippin, Robert (2000). *Henry James & Modern Moral Life*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- 13) Zizek, Slavoj. *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology*. London: Verso 1999.
- 14) Zizek, Slavoj. *Tarrying with the Negative: Kant, Hegel, and the Critique of Ideology*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1993.

### **EVALUATION:**

Seniors will be evaluated on the basis of seminar participation (25%), 3 Senior Individual Research papers (60%), and conference presentations (15%). Late assignments will result in grade reductions, and seniors are required to submit their research papers for conference presentations. Seniors who present papers at conferences and submit their papers for either essay competitions or undergraduate journal publication may receive honors in the seminar. Honors in the major requires 2 out of the three following conditions:

1. 3.5 GPA in philosophy courses
2. Honors in the comprehensive examination
3. Honors in Senior Seminar.

## **READING SCHEDULE**

### **FALL TERM:**

#### **Part One: The Question of the Subject in the Context of Husserlian Phenomenology and Structuralist semiotics: Paul Ricoeur's Alternative Hermeneutic Conception of the Agency and Character:**

Week One:

1. Ricoeur: "The Question of the Subject," from *The Conflict of Interpretation* [Handout]
2. Ricoeur: "Introduction: The Question of the Subject"

Week Two:

1. Ricoeur: "From Action to Agent"
2. Ricoeur: "Personal Identity and Narrative Identity"
3. Abstract for Senior Research Paper #1 due.

**Part Two: Life Narrative Psychology: The Confluence of Literary Analysis and Empirical Psychology:**

Week Three:

9. McAdams: "The Problem of Identity," Chapter One of *Power, Intimacy, and the Life Story*"
10. McAdams: "What We Know When We Know a Person"
11. Abstract for Senior Research Paper #2 due

**Part Three: Bakhtin Concept of Polyphony:**

Week Four:

1. Morson: Introduction, "Narrative and Freedom: The Shadows of Time"
2. Morson: "Interlude: Bakhtin's Indeterminism"
3. Abstract for Senior Research Paper #3 due

**Part Four: The Psychological Appropriation of Bakhtin: The Dialogical Self:**

Week Five:

1. Hermanns: "The Narrative Construction of Reality"
2. Hermanns: "The Decentralization of the Self"
3. Hermanns: "The Dialogical Self: Tension between Dominance and Exchange"
4. Rough draft of Senior Research Paper #1 due

**Part Five: Interlude: Review of Contemporary Philosophy of Language:**

Week Six:

1. Medina: "Communication and Speech Acts"
2. Medina: "Meaning, Sense, and Interpretation"
3. Medina: "Indeterminacy and Language Learning: Communication as the Meeting of Minds"

Week Seven:

1. Medina: "Linguistic Creativity and Relativism"
2. Medina: "Speakers, Linguistic Communities and Histories of Use"
3. Medina: "Language and Identity"
4. Senior Research Paper #1 due

**Part Six: German Romanticism: Language, Literature, and Subjectivity**

Week Eight:

1. Bowie: "Introduction"
2. Bowie: "Philosophical origins: Kant, Jacobi, and the crisis of reason"

Week Nine:

1. Bowie: "Shifting the ground: "where philosophy ceases literature must begin"
2. Bowie: "The philosophy of critique and the critique of philosophy"
3. Rough draft of Senior Research Paper #2 due

Week Ten:

1. Bowie: "Interpretive reasons"
2. Bowie: "The ethics of interpretation: Schleiermacher"

Finals Week:

1. Senior Research Paper #2 due
2. Individual Meetings with each senior

**WINTER TERM:**

Week One:

1. Bowie: "Being true: Dilthey, Husserl and Heidegger (1)
2. Bowie: "The Truth of art: Heidegger (2)
3. Rough draft of Senior Research Paper #3 due
4. Comprehensive Examination Questions due (2)

**Part Seven: Hegel's Theory of Agency, Freedom, and Ethical Life:**

Week Two:

1. Pippin: Introduction: leading a free life
2. Pippin: "Naturalness and Mindedness: Hegel compatibalism"
3. Pippin: "On Giving Oneself the Law"

Week Three:

1. Pippin: "The Actualization of freedom"
2. Pippin: "The freedom of the will: psychological dimensions"

Week Four:

1. Pippin: "The freedom of the will: social dimensions"
2. Pippin: "Hegelian sociality: recognitive status"

Week Five:

1. Pippin: "Recognition and politics"
2. Pippin: "Institutional rationality"
3. Pippin: "Concluding remarks"

**Student Presentations of Senior Individualized Projects & Senior Seminar Essays:**

Week Six:

Week Seven:

Week Eight:

Week Nine:

Week Ten:

Finals Week:

## READING SCHEDULE

### **Part One: Historical Stage Setting: Modernism and Post-modernism as the Legacy of 19<sup>th</sup>-Century Philosophy:**

1. Bowie, Andrew. *Aesthetics and Subjectivity: From Kant to Nietzsche*. Manchester, England: Manchester University Press, 2003.
2. Pippin, Robert. *Modernism as a Philosophical Problem*. Oxford, England: Blackwell Publishers, 1991.
3. Habermas, Juergen. *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*. Trans. Frederick G. Lawrence. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1987.
  - a. Chapters One to Four.
4. Zizek, Slavoj. *Tarrying with the Negative: Kant, Hegel, and the Critique of Ideology*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1993.

### **Part Two: The Linguistic Turn as Kant's Copernican Turn in Contemporary Philosophy:**

1. Bowie, Andrew. *From Romanticism to Critical Theory: The Philosophy of German Literary Theory*. New York, NY: Routledge Press, 1997.
2. LaFont, Christina. 1999. *The Linguistic Turn in Hermeneutic Philosophy*. Trans. Jose Medina. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press.
3. Bohman, James. 1997. "Two Versions of the Linguistic Turn: Habermas and Poststructuralism," in Passerin d'Entreves 1997.
4. Habermas, Juergen. *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*. Trans. Frederick G. Lawrence. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1987.
  - a. Chapters Five to Twelve.
5. Medina, Jose. *Language: Key Concepts in Philosophy*. London, England: Continuum Press, 2005.

### **Part Three: Language, Literature, and Subjectivity:**

1. Frank, Manfred. *The Subject and the Text: Essays on Literary Theory and Philosophy*. Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1997
2. LaFont, Christina. 2000. *Heidegger, Language, and World-Disclosure*. Trans. Graham Harmon. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Cambridge University Press.
3. Habermas, Juegen:
  - a. "Individualization as Socialization: On George Hubert Mead's Theory of Subjectivity," in *On the Pragmatics of Communication*. Ed Maeve Cook. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1998.
  - b. "On the Distinction between the Poetic and the Communicative Uses of Language," in *On the Pragmatics of Communication*. Ed Maeve Cook. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1998.
4. Zizek, Slavoj. *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology*. London: Verso 1999.

### **Part Four: The Pippin Conference: Hegel's Concept of Agency:**

1. Butler, Judith. *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection*. California: Stanford University Press, 1997).
2. Pippin, Robert (2008). *Hegel's Practical Philosophy: Rational Agency as Ethical Life*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Cambridge University Press, 2008.
3. Zizek, Slavoj. *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology*. London: Verso 1999.

## **SUBJECTIVITY, LANGUAGE, AND DESIRE**

Honneth, Axel. *Reification: A New Look at an Old Idea*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2008.

Boothy, Richard. *Freud as Philosopher: Metapsychology After Lacan*. New York: Routledge, 2001.

Dear Rising Seniors,

I know that Rachel and Natalia can make on Thursday and that Vijay cannot. Liz and Pat, might you be able to join us for a discussion of what we should do in Sem? From what you all have told me, the real confluence point for all of us is the way in which subjectivity is formed in Language and, hence, carried forth into literature/narrative. If I were in a Kantian mood (ok, leave it alone you all!), I would say that we're all taking subjectivity as the "transcendental unity of apperception" reformulated in the philosophy of language: hence, "I must be able to attach itself to each of its speech acts/narratives." Beginning here, we get Pat's intense focus upon the psychology of identity formation as depicted by Habermas and Erik Erikson; Vijay's intense focus upon a Neo-Kantian/Hegelian theory of meaning, which all of its consequences for how we understand the ontological status of the speaker (he's moving toward Heidegger here); Rachel's sharp focus upon historical self-interpretation *as ethical self-determination* in both secular political and religious account giving; Natalia's overarching theme of poetic language use and identity through the lens of Merleau-Ponty, David Carr, and, I hope, Julia Kristeva (*Revolution in Poetic Language: The Subject on Trial*); and Liz's growing interest in Merleau-Ponty and feminist theorizing about identity, which I hope will lead her to Julia Kristeva and Judith Butler as well. Is this roughly appropriate?

As you all know, Zizek and Lacan have been a growing interest of mine, primarily because both provide a sharp contrast to Habermas's Neo-Kantian view of identity as "communicatively structured." I am also working intensively upon Hegel's theory of freedom and identity, in preparation for a conference I am hosting at K next year on Robert Pippin's *Hegel's Ethical Theory: Rational Agency as Ethical Life*. The gist of this book is rather straightforward: freedom is autobiographical self-realization, which requires that I belong to a social community within, and only be means of which, which I can identify with my actual deeds and have such self-identification recognized by others! I read this simple these through lens of a philosophy of language: Language is the actualization of freedom!!

Might I ask you all to send around in a "reply-to-all" fashion a brief paragraph about your desires for individual research during the senior year? We need to get to know each and, in this fashion, shape what we want to do. See you soon. Notice the chart below:

<b>SENIOR COURSEWORK</b>					
<b>2009/2010</b>					
	<b>19<sup>th</sup>-Century</b>	<b>Philosophy of Language</b>	<b>Philosophy &amp; Literature</b>	<b>18<sup>th</sup>-Century</b>	<b>CoCo</b>
Liz Chiaravalli	X				
Pat Brooks	X	x	x		X
Natalia Holtzman	X	x	x	x	x
Rachel Jeffery	X	x	x/x	x	
Vijay Ramesh	x/x	x	x	x	x

### **REQUIRED TEXTS:**

- 1) Bohman, James. 1997. "Two Versions of the Linguistic Turn: Habermas and Poststructuralism," in Passerin d'Entreves 1997 [Handout].
- 2) Bowie, Andrew. *From Romanticism to Critical Theory: The Philosophy of German Literary Theory*. New York, NY: Routledge Press, 1997.
- 3) Habermas, Juergen:
  - a) *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*. Trans. Frederick G. Lawrence. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1987.
  - b) Habermas, Juegen. "Individualization as Socialization: On George Hubert Mead's Theory of Subjectivity," in *On the Pragmatics of Communication*. Ed Maeve Cook. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1998 [Handout].
- 4) Koenigler, Hans Herbert and Stueber, Karsten R, eds. *Empathy and Agency: The Problem of Understanding in the Human Sciences*. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 2000 [Handout].
- 5) Medina, Jose. *Language: Key Concepts in Philosophy*. London, England: Continuum Press, 2005.
- 6) Pippin, Robert (1991). *Modernism as a Philosophical Problem*. Oxford, England: Blackwell Publidshers, 1991.
- 7) Pippin, Robert (2008). *Hegel's Practical Philosophy: Rational Agency as Ethical Life*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Cambridge University Press, 2008.
- 8) Searle, John. 2001. *Rationality in Action*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press.
- 9) Velleman, David. *Self to Self*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Cambridge University Press, 2006 [Handouts]:
  - a) "Self as Narrator"
  - b) "Identification and Identity"
- 10) Zizek, Slavoj. *Tarrying with the Negative: Kant, Hegel, and the Critique of Ideology*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1993.

### **RECOMMENDED TEXTS:**

- 1) Bowie, Andrew. *Aesthetics and Subjectivity: From Kant to Nietzsche*. Manchester, England: Manchester University Press, 2003.
- 2) Dreyfus, Hubert (1990). *Being-In-The-World: A Commentary on Heidegger's Being and Time, Division I*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1991.
- 3) Frank, Manfred. *The Subject and the Text: Essays on Literary Theory and Philosophy*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1997
- 4) LaFont, Christina. 2000. *Heidegger, Language, and World-Disclosure*. Trans. Graham Harmon. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Cambridge University Press.
- 5) LaFont, Christina. 1999. *The Linguistic Turn in Hermeneutic Philosophy*. Trans. Jose Medina. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press.
- 6) Jurist, Elliot L. *Beyond Hegel and Nietzsche: Philosophy, Culture, and Agency*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2002.
- 7) Kolb, David. *The Critique of Pure Modernity: Hegel, Heidegger, and After*. Chicago, Illinois: Chicago University Press 1986.
- 8) Miklowitz, Paul S. *Metaphysics to Metafiction: Hegel, Nietzsche and the End of Philosophy*. Albany,

- New York: State University of New York Press, 1998.
- 9) Olafson, Frederick (1987). *Heidegger and the Philosophy of Mind*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1987.
  - 10) Pippin, Robert (2000). *Henry James & Modern Moral Life*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
  - 11) Zizek, Slavoj. *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology*. London: Verso 1999.

### **RELEVANT BACKGROUND READINGS:**

- 1) Carr David. *Time, Narrative, and History*. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1991.
- 2) Lloyd, Genevieve. *Being in Time: Selves and Narrators in Philosophy and Literature*. New York, NY: Routledge, 1993.

### **FALL TERM:**

#### **Part One: The Classical Model of Practical Rationality & Searle's Account of Intrinsic Intentionality:**

##### Week One:

3. Searle: Introduction.
4. Searle: "The Classical Model of Rationality and its Weaknesses"

##### Week Two:

4. Searle: "The Basic Structure of Intentionality, Action, and Meaning"
5. Searle: "The Gap: Of Time and the Self"

##### Week Three:

12. Searle: "The Logical Structure of Reasons"
13. Searle: "Some Special Features of Practical Reason: Strong Altruism as a Logical Requirement"

##### Week Four:

4. Searle: "How We Create Desire-independent Reasons for Action"
5. Searle: "Appendix: Internal and External Reasons"

##### Week Five:

5. Searle: "Weakness of Will"
6. Searle: "Why there is No Deductive Logic of Practical Reason"
7. Searle: "Conclusion: Free Action and the Brain"

#### **Part Two: Contemporary Philosophy of Language:**

##### Week Six:

4. Medina: "Communication and Speech Acts"
5. Medina: "Meaning, Sense, and Interpretation"
6. Medina: "Indeterminacy and Language Learning: Communication as the Meeting of Minds"

##### Week Seven:

5. Medina: "Linguistic Creativity and Relativism"
6. Medina: "Speakers, Linguistic Communities and Histories of Use"
7. Medina: "Language and Identity"

## **Part Six: German Romanticism: Language, Literature, and Subjectivity**

Week Eight:

3. Bowie: "Introduction"
4. Bowie: "Philosophical origins: Kant, Jacobi, and the crisis of reason"

Week Nine:

4. Bowie: "Shifting the ground: "where philosophy ceases literature must begin"
5. Bowie: "The philosophy of critique and the critique of philosophy"

Week Ten:

3. Bowie: "Interpretive Reasons"
4. Bowie: "The ethics of interpretation: Schleiermacher"

Finals Week:

## **WINTER TERM:**

Week One:

5. Bowie: "Being true: Dilthey, Husserl and Heidegger (1)"
6. Bowie: "The Truth of art: Heidegger (2)"

## **Part Four: Hegel's Theory of Agency, Freedom, and Ethical Life:**

Week Two:

4. Pippin: Introduction: leading a free life
5. Pippin: "Naturalness and Mindedness: Hegel compatibalism"
6. Pippin: "On Giving Oneself the Law"

Week Three:

3. Pippin: "The Actualization of freedom"
4. Pippin: "The freedom of the will: psychological dimensions"

Week Four:

3. Pippin: "The freedom of the will: social dimensions"
4. Pippin: "Hegelian sociality: recognitive status"

Week Five:

4. Pippin: "Recognition and politics"
5. Pippin: "Institutional rationality"
6. Pippin: "Concluding remarks"

Week Six:

Week Seven:

Week Eight:

Week Nine:

Week Ten:

Finals Week:



The Freud book gave me a better understanding of his view of subjectivity and of how his three constructs (Ego, Id and Superego) are structured and formed. I was, however, a bit confused about his "Eros instinct". I understand this concept as representing a sexual instinct and also a self-preservation instinct, but while he mentions it on pg. 44 of this book (I'm not sure if you have this text or not) he goes on to say that "If thought processes in the wider sense are to be included among these displacements, then the activity of thinking is also supplied from the sublimation of erotic motive forces." I know that sublimation to Freud meant more of a 'desexualization', and I think he warrants agency to the ego as a subjectively thinking entity, I'm just not sure if he sees this process as a conscious one.

The Fink book was great, what an interesting view of Subjectivity and very clearly written. I was left feeling that there is a lot of Lacan's work that Fink only hinted at or glossed over, and so I have a few questions from this text. First, I was a little unsure about the relationship Lacan sees between Freud's displacement/condensation and the literary concepts of metaphor and metonym. **I know that he says the unconscious is structured like a Language, but I'm having a little trouble with this connection.** It is interesting to me that he posits agency in the unconscious and I see how it can hold eternal knowledge in its syntactical rules and symbolic order. **The second difficulty I am having is understanding how the unconscious has "perfectly well articulated knowledge with no responsible subject" (p.22).** Thirdly I am a little unsure about his "2nd real" or the real that is left over after symbolization. The inverse of the cogito is a cool new way for me to think about subjectivity. My fourth point of confusion comes in Ch.4 when he says that an 'I' comes to take responsibility of the unconscious, but that this is not a subjective activity and happens through the linking up of thoughts. Is the symbolic order of the unconscious linking these thoughts? Lastly, I am a little unsure about the "nonsensical Master Signifier to which all other signifiers represent a subject". I see how a primary repression of some experience of Jouissance could create the "nucleus of the unconscious" as a coupled pair of signifiers, I don't get how all other signifiers come to represent Subjects.

Just a quick comment on Fink that I think will help: Fink says at one point that something is "remembered for us," which is the way the unconscious works in tandem with consciousness. I think we are all quite familiar with this rather mundane phenomenon, and it helps to keep our experiences in mind when we approach the theory. When, for instance, one is overcome by a mood, say an awful feeling or a certain melancholy, something is remembered *for us*. I often pause within such moods and ask, What's going on here, Why are feeling so bad or down. For Lacan, something is remembered for us, and the past is simply not over, not finished and behind us, but, instead, right there in the mood or attunement within which the future shows up for us. This is the unconscious at work, which claims – invades, colonizes, appropriates, and settles – the perceptual field, taking objects as hostages, so to speak, which they are now conscripted as symbols of something in the past that *will* be heard or acknowledged. It's a sort of hostile take over of a terrain, whereby the new feel of the terrain is there because objects function to symbolize what that seems to have a will of its own: it will be acknowledged.

**QUESTION: I know that he says the unconscious is structured like a Language, but I'm having a little trouble with this connection.**

The basic idea is that the past is retained only in *distortions* of ego functions – e.g. slips of the tongue, compulsive thoughts, dreams, bodily symptoms, phobia, aversions, etc. – and that such distortions *symbolize or encode* a traumatic event or other unsettled matters. We have to *decipher* the distortion, which is "our own message we send to ourselves" in encrypted form. So, the unconscious is structured like – and the qualification is important here – a *private* language.

**QUESTION: The second difficulty I am having is understanding how the unconscious has "perfectly well articulated knowledge with no responsible subject" (p.22).**

I can't locate this quotation, but I think I understand the gist of the matter: namely, to think of the unconscious, not as just like a conscious subject but other or underground – as if the unconscious were someone with whom one could dialogue – but, in contrast, as things happening or being done "for one," so

that one finds all this encrypted content in one's experiences. So, it's knowledge – knowledge of the past – that is waiting for a responsible subject.

QUESTION: THirdly I am a **little unsure about his "2nd real" or the real that is left over after symbolization.**

This is difficult. Think of the first real as totally mythological, the mythological fusion of mother and infant, when the infant isn't a subject at all. This "time before time," or "place before place," or pre-subjectivity could not be experienced at all, because the structure of conscious thinking is not in place. The child "awakes" or "emerges" *as an always already subjectified being*, since consciousness is a matter of the split subject, the subject that differentiates itself from world. Only in this self-splitting – what Heidegger calls "thrownness" in the world – does the subject ex-sist. So, the first real is totally unexperiencable. The second real, however, is when one traverses the fantasy, when one owns up to the fact that one's life has been scripted and blocked and directed *by my taking over ego images and symbolic identifications*. When one is able to actually break the grip of certain ego images – what Gary Gregg calls "self-images" – and own up to the fact that one has, in effect, legislated them to oneself, then one become fluid or mobile in getting a new imaginary or symbolic identifications. This breaking out of the carapace of old images/symbols is the second real, since we are *really* alive again to new shapes of self.

Hope this helps Pat. Thank you for the good questions!

Apropos of self-identification, please look at Richard's Koenig's earlier exhibition titled *Koans*. It's fascinating because it insists that the activity of identifying oneself is always *anamorphic*: that is, a matter of double and yet irreconcilable perspectives, making subjectivity *constitutively* or *essentially* de-centered, fragmented, or, as Shakespeare will have it, "out of joint." This conceptualization of subjectivity/identity — as constitutively de-centered — connects up with the political issues of understanding difference (along whatever coordinates one explores), because mature identity formation acknowledges the essential "otherness" of oneself, the fact that we have no privileged, incorrigible, unilateral position from which we can definitively say who we are. The fact that O'Keefe juxtaposes self-portraits and other subjects is already a provocation, as if to raise the question for her viewers, In which one will you find me, this one, that one, both, but only as *differentiating*? Gary Gregg's model of identity — his account of the structural ambiguity of "self-symbols" — is also pertinent here, since he in effect claims that we dis-place or "double" ourselves every time we identify ourselves in terms of some basic self-symbol. What is fascinating for all of us working in the FY seminar program is that all these issues of identity are conceptually interdependent with understanding and dialogue across dimensions of difference, one of the quintessential political issues of our day. The poet John Ashberry aims at some of these issues in his "Self-portrait in a Convex Mirror."