AQ PHL 525 Nietzsche and the Thinking of History

Prof. Sean D. Kirkland

W 3-6:15 pm Arts and Letters 303

Nietzsche closes the preface of his essay, "On the Use and Disadvantage of History for Life," the second of his *Untimely Meditations* (1873-1876), with the following statement: "I do not know what meaning classical studies could have for our time if they were not untimely—that is to say, acting counter to our time and thereby acting on our time and, let us hope, for the benefit of a time to come." That is, for Nietzsche, the past is to be considered always and only as *our* past, or as the past *of the present*, i.e. as the historical figures, texts, and events that have generated our own concepts, principles, and values, all of which are still determining and setting the horizon for our experience of and our thinking about our world and ourselves. Our task in taking up our history is not to arrive, then, at the objective truth of what occurred or what a given author had in mind in some now long dead historical moment. Rather, as we shall come to see, with Nietzsche we are called upon to access the past as text and read through it to its sources, to the complex play of forces that subtend the text and give rise to it. And that project, Nietzsche insists here, can be "untimely," in that it can have a disruptive and even a destructive influence on the present. But it is precisely here that we encounter a certain tension in Nietzsche's thinking of history and we will attend to that tension this quarter. For we will ask, how is it that the past, which delivers up the historical content that is passed down to us and determines our present, can *also* be the source of impulses or insights that serve to disrupt that very present? What explains this fundamentally ambivalent power of history? How can our history be both oppressive and the ultimate source of our liberation? That is the question we will be posing this quarter, investigating the various characterizations of the project, from radicalized 'philology,' to radicalized 'history,' to radicalized 'genealogy.' These are 'radical' in the sense of pushing the tasks and methods that these terms name down to their *radix* or 'root, source.' Finally, we will ask, in what sense is Nietzschean philology/history/genealogy is most of all related neither to the past nor to the present but to the future, insofar as it incorporates a certain openness and indeterminacy into the thinking it grounds and the creative comportment it hopes to encourage.

AQ PHL 415: Aristotle's De Anima

Will McNeill

TH 3:00-6:15

In this course, we shall read Aristotle's classical treatise on the soul or psuche, as the first principle of the being of living beings, from a phenomenological perspective. Aristotle's inquiry, we shall show, is itself phenomenological, that is, attentive to beings in their very appearing, in Greek, phainesthai, and thus demands a phenomenological reading in order to understand adequately its central claims. Appearing here means presencing, coming to presence, so that opening up a phenomenological perspective on the De Anima will mean attempting to understand the key aspects of the soul in terms of the kinds of presence accessible to and experienced by living beings.

To read the De Anima from a phenomenological perspective, then, will mean, among other things, opening up the question of presence as it relates to such key phenomena as aisthesis (sensation), phantasia (imagination), nous (intellect), dianoia (discursive thought), logos (discourse, language), orexis (desire), and kinesis (movement).

AQ PHL 500: Special Topics in the History of Philosophy

Continental Philosophy of Science & the Nature of Natural Laws

H. Peter Steeves

Tuesdays, 6:00 – 9:15 p.m., Clifton, Room 145

In this course we will investigate the basic question of what might constitute a Continental philosophy of science, focusing on what is meant by a "natural law," what sort of *necessity* such a law indicates, and whether or not science must always proceed accompanied by a naïve realism. Because in some respects analytic philosophy has made philosophy of science its model for doing philosophy in general, we will begin by taking a brief look at analytic approaches and then move to discuss why Continental philosophy has had less to say on the topic and why Continental philosophy has often been attacked (rightly or wrongly) when it does comment on science. Then, starting with Husserl's *Cartesian Meditations* and *Crisis of the European Sciences* and moving to various shorter works by Merleau-Ponty and Derrida, we will try to flesh out the foundations for a thoughtful Continental philosophy of science in partnership with phenomenology and deconstruction. Though we will question the ways in which biology, psychology, etc. are considered by many to be "different sorts" of sciences, along the way it will be helpful to have specific scientific questions and methodologies in mind, thus we will be using physics as our general touchstone, especially turning to cosmology (investigating the origin and ultimate end of the universe) as well as the laws of thermodynamics as we proceed, reading some essays by scientists as well. In the end, it is hoped that we will have a broader understanding of the sort of necessity that supposedly founds a natural law, and that we will have arrived at a set of questions and methodologies that could point us toward a thoughtful Continental philosophy of science.

AQ PHL 400.101 (course # 16247): Special Topics
Pleasure Unlimited: Plato's *Philebus* and Derrida's "Double Session"

Michael Naas

M 3:00-6:15

What is pleasure? That is the central question of Plato's late dialogue *Philebus*. In order to approach that one question, however, Plato ends up investigating everything from the nature of perception, memory, knowledge, dialectic, the finite and the infinite, measure, time, truth, and the Good, to imitation, painting, grammar, and rhetoric. In this course we will work through Plato's dialogue as slowly and methodically as possible in order to see why it became necessary for Plato to take detours through all these other questions in order to approach the single question of pleasure. To help us read this difficult text, we will take our own detours through other Platonic dialogues (*Alcibiades I*, *Statesman*, *Sophist*, and *Timaeus*, to name just a few) as well as Derrida's "The Double Session," an essay that juxtaposes a reading of *Philebus* on the question of imitation with Stéphane Mallarmé's "Mimique." My hope is that, by the end of the quarter, we will have learned something not only about Plato's understanding of pleasure, memory, imitation, the Good, and so on, but, even more importantly, about how both Plato and Derrida went about thinking and addressing these questions.

WQ PHL 661 Topics in Feminist Theory: Judith Butler: Gender, Desire, Vulnerability

Fanny Söderbäck

W 3:00-6:15

"How does one move from a theory of performativity to a consideration of precarious lives?" This question is raised by Judith Butler in her most recent book, and it echoes a more general concern about how we might think through the relation between her early work on gender, sexuality, power, and desire, and her more recent work on war, torture, vulnerability, and disability. This course offers a careful examination of

some of Butler's most famous texts with this question in mind, as we reflect on the ways in which her theory of gender performativity in early texts such as *Gender Trouble* and *Bodies That Matter* is grounded in a set of concerns about precariousness and precarity – concepts that she has developed more explicitly in later works such as *Precarious Life* and *Frames of War*.

The course will be suitable both for students who come to Judith Butler's work for the very first time, and for those more familiar with her work. We will engage in close reading of principal texts, unpack central concepts, situate her thought in relation to some of her most important interlocutors, and broach critical questions regarding some of the fundamental themes of her thinking. A public intellectual and the author of almost twenty books, Butler is one of the most influential feminist voices of our times, and familiarity with her work is essential to anyone who wants to work in feminist theory or its adjacent fields.

WQ PHL 445 –David Hume's, Treatise on Human Nature

Peg Birmingham

TH 3:00-6:15

This course will be dedicated to a close reading of Hume's, Treatise on Human Nature. We will read the Treatise in its entirety over the course of the ten-week winter quarter. Alongside the Treatise, we will read Deleuze's second monograph (1953), Empiricism and Subjectivity: An Essay on Hume's Theory of Human Nature. This second monograph follows Deleuze's first book-length publication in 1952 (in collaboration with André Cresson), David Hume: Sa vie, son oeuvre, avec un exposé de sa philosophie. With these two books standing as a kind of arche to Deleuze's thinking, it is not too much to claim that his work is in large part indebted to Hume, especially Hume's theory of the affects. Empiricism and Subjectivity focuses on the question, "How does the mind become a subject?" Deleuze's question will be the guiding question of the course.

We will begin with Hume's epistemological skepticism (Part I), which clears the ground of knowledge and puts in its place the concept of belief, a concept that keeps Hume awake at night and pacing the floors, as this author of the three-volume work, The History of England, grapples with how to justify a distinction between legitimate and illegitimate belief (illusion) as without this distinction there is no possibility of a philosophy of history. We will then follow Hume as he sets out in his leaky metaphysical boat to the shores of morality and politics (Parts II and III of the Treatise.) No longer a skeptic, Hume develops a robust theory of the affects and morality in Part II and shows in Part III why a theory of justice and the political is needed in order to artificially enlarge what he calls "the partial sentiments" of the affective, moral subject.

Hume's Treatise on Human Nature calls into question contemporary readings of the modern subject as autonomous, self-possessed and powerful. Instead, Hume begins with a sensing, material mind (similar to Hobbes, there is no mind/body split) bombarded with sense impressions and secondary affects, caught in an externality of relations in which the mind is nothing other than a circulation of tendencies and forces. The emphasis on Hume's epistemological skepticism (the fare of most undergraduate classes on Hume) has obscured what I take to be his more important contribution, namely, his radical critique of a stable, powerful and rational subject. In its place, Hume offers a notion of the self or subject as a "progress of sentiments" (to use the title of Annette Beyer's great work on Hume) who in the end needs political institutions for any worldly stability and coherence.

WQ PHL 565 – Desire and Distance: Renaud Barbaras' Reading of Merleau-Ponty

Frédéric Seyler

M 3:00-6:15

Renaud Barbaras is the leading figure of contemporary phenomenology in France today. With Desire and Distance (1999, English translation 2005), Barbaras – already established as a Merleau-Ponty scholar (The Being of the Phenomenon: Merleau-Ponty's Ontology, Engl. 2004) – breaks through toward an original phenomenology of life that will be continued systematically in Introduction à une phénoménologie de la vie (2008) as well as in the recent Dynamique de la manifestation (2013), all heavily indebted to Merleau-Ponty's concepts of perception and embodiment.

Our seminar will thus be discussing the most recent phenomenological research and debates that are currently taking place in France, while allowing for a new and creative reading of Merleau-Ponty. After a section devoted to key aspects of Merleau-Ponty's thought, we will focus on Barbaras' Desire and Distance and include, at the end of the seminar, references to his later works.

The wide range of authors discussed by Barbaras (Merleau-Ponty, of course, but also Husserl, Bergson, Patocka, Heidegger, Henry, for instance) provides an equally wide range of possible seminar papers.

WQ PHL 559: Foucault / SQ PHL 522: Social and Political Philosophy
Foucault and the Question of Truth

Kevin Thompson

Tuesdays, 3:00-6:15

Truth stands as perhaps the central organizing problematic of Foucault's thought. From the early investigations of madness, health, and knowledge through the later accounts of criminality, sexuality, and the practices of parrhesia, he continually sought to interrogate the historical nature, function, and value of truth. Accordingly, this seminar examines the problematic of truth in Foucault's writings in its relationship to the core themes of his thought: knowledge, power, subjectivity, method, and critique.

The seminar assumes no prior knowledge of Foucault's work. However, the second quarter will build on the work undertaken in the first in a way that may be somewhat different than a more conventional two quarter long seminar. Specifically, the first quarter (The Truth of Man) will engage in a standard close reading of two of the major works from the corpus: *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* [1966] and *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* [1975]. Foucault indicates very clearly that these works seek to demonstrate that the history of the human sciences and the history of penal law derive from a 'common matrix': man. In the opening of the nineteenth century in Europe, man is invented, Foucault argues, as, at once, the ultimate object of knowledge and of punishment and as the authoritative subject of both as well, which is to say, man was born here as the final standard and purveyor of truth. The first quarter will thus explore the question of truth in Foucault's accounts of the shifting grids of intelligibility and criminality by reading these two works, as Foucault suggests, in tandem.

The second quarter (Truth-Telling) investigates the problematic of truth in Foucault by looking outside the canon of his main published works. This quarter will therefore function more like a research seminar investigating interpretive hypotheses and lines of analysis that appear only tangentially in the writings that Foucault himself authorized and brought to publication. In particular, the seminar will examine the question of truth in relationship to knowledge, power, subjectivity, method, and critique in the reading and

rereading of Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* that Foucault undertook from his first lecture course at the Collège de France in 1971 through to his final course there in 1984.

SQ PHL 601 Aesthetic Humanism: Poetry's Role in the Work of Friedrich Schlegel and Schopenhauer

Elizabeth Millán

W 4:00-7:15

In the seminar, we will read work from the leading early German Romantics (Schlegel and Novalis) on the role of poetry for philosophy and then turn to Schopenhauer's view of the same. We will consider the sort of aesthetic humanism that emerges from a focus on the productive role that poetry can play in philosophy's task. Then we will turn to the work of the Spanish poet, Federico García Lorca and consider the value of *duende* for philosophy.

SQ PHL 511 Kant

Avery Goldman

TH 3:00-6:15

The Spring Kant course will be a close reading of his Critique of Practical Reason. It will be an attempt to locate this work both within the moral theory of his time and, most essentially, within the transcendental system that he constructed. For it's not evident what the Critique of Practical Reason offers to the elucidation of moral duty that hasn't already been presented in his Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals. And when one does look to those sections of the text that differ from the earlier work, particularly in the Dialectic, it's hard to know how the emphasis there on happiness doesn't conflict with his earlier strident commitment to virtue. Kant explains in the Dialectic that while moral virtue has been shown to be the "supreme [oberste] good" of human life, still it is not the complete or "highest [höchsten] good" for that would require happiness as well. This "highest good," as the idea towards which rational life strives, allows us to conceive of pure practical reason in a manner that is fully in keeping with the ideas of pure speculative reason introduced in the Critique of Pure Reason. And such an emphasis on the goal of pure practical reason in Kant's most developed account of his moral theory, combining virtue and happiness, and so Stoicism and Epicureanism, forces us to transform the standard picture of a deontological Kant and recognize that there is something teleological going on here (as Barbara Herman asks).