

COURSE #
TOPICS IN HEGEL'S PHILOSOPHY:
HEGEL'S ABSOLUTE IDEA

INSTRUCTOR

Alexander Englert

E-mail: aengler1@jhu.edu

Time: TBA

Location: TBA

Office Hours: TBA

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Beside the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, the *Science of Logic* is Hegel's most influential work. In this course, we will be focusing on the last part, which Hegel refers to as "The Doctrine of the Concept" or "Subjective Logic." In particular, we will be studying the moves in which Hegel unpacks the pinnacle of his entire system, namely, the absolute idea.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

In this course, we will have two goals: first, gain an overview of how this part of the *Logic* should work; and, second, work together to understand many detailed passages through close analyses. Regarding the latter, we will focus on the introductions, the chapter on the concept in general, a few portions of the section on objectivity, as well as the three levels of the Idea (life, cognition, and the absolute idea). While we will not be able to read the whole thing, we will be able to practice close readings of large sections of this work.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Please purchase, rent, or borrow the following work by Immanuel Kant:

1. GWF Hegel, *The Science of Logic*, ed. and trans. by George di Giovanni. Rereading the text in the original German is recommended but not required.
2. For each section, I have offered some helpful sources from the secondary literature. These are not required but might help with your own personal efforts to understand the text outside of class.
3. Finally, I have made the *Encyclopedia* version of the Subjective Logic available online. While abridged and less easy to understand than the *Logic*, it has useful student notes that can help make sense of what is going on in the primary text.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

For the successful completion of this course, you must maintain good attendance and participation (see below for what this entails specifically), as well as write two papers.

MIDTERM PAPER (6-8 PAGES): This paper will be assigned in the middle of the semester. You will receive a list of prompts that require you to analyze a particular passage in detail. All I want to see is that you are engaging with the text and producing an interpretation of the passage with as close reading as possible. This is not a space to evaluate or simply repeat what you find in the secondary literature.

SEMINAR PAPER (12-15 PAGES): For this paper, you should choose a topic that interests you and develop a research paper in consultation with me.

ATTENDANCE/PARTICIPATION: This course will only make sense if you show up and do the work. Hegel is incredibly difficult and requires that you collaborate. As part of this, you are required to bring a note card or piece of paper to each class in which you have one question written down in regards to the reading for that week or day. I will use these to organize discussion and I expect one for every sitting, even if you cannot be in attendance.

SCHEDULE

SL = *Science of Logic*

***It goes with the territory that this reading schedule might change over the course of the semester. Focus on the *Science of Logic*. As mentioned above, all the secondary sources are optional and offered just in case you have the time and need for them.

UNIT I – SUBJECTIVITY AND BEGRIFF

WEEK 1 – KANTIAN PRELIMINARIES, FICHTE’S REVOLUTION, AND HEGEL’S PROJECT IN OUTLINE

SL: Introductions to the *Science of Logic*
Stephen Houlgate, “Hegel’s Logic”
Eckart Förster, Chpts. 1, 8, 11, 13, & 14
Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Hegel’s Dialectic: Six Hermeneutical Studies*
Hans Friedrich Fulda, *Das Problem einer Einleitung in Hegels Wissenschaft der Logik*

WEEK 2 – THE CONCEPT IN GENERAL – PART 1

SL: On the Concept in General [*Vom Begriff im Allgemeinen*] (1/2)

WEEK 3 – THE CONCEPT IN GENERAL – PART 2

SL: On the Concept in General [*Vom Begriff im Allgemeinen*] (2/2)

WEEK 4 – THE SUBJECTIVE LOGIC’S PLAN

SL: Introduction to the Subjective Logic

WEEK 5 – OVERVIEW OF THE CONCEPT AND JUDGMENT CHAPTERS

SL: Concept & Judgment (Introductions to both; D. Judgment of the Concept; and c. Apodictic Judgment)

Beatrice Longuenesse, *Hegel’s Critique of Metaphysics*

*** I once took a semester-long course just on this section of the *SL*. Don’t read all of this. Just read the sections assigned and I will lecture to connect this backwards and forwards to the rest. Focus instead on the midterm prompt.

Midterm paper prompts distributed!

WEEK 6 – OVERVIEW OF THE INFERENCE CHAPTERS

SL: Inference (Introduction and (C. c. Disjunctive Judgment)

Paul Redding, “The Role of Logic ‘Commonly So Called’ in Hegel’s *Science of Logic*”

*** Just like the section on Judgment, Inference [*Schluss*] could be the subject of a semester-long course. Read the introduction and the last section and think of it in relation to judgment and concept.

Midterm paper Due!

Unit II - Objectivity

WEEK 7 – SUBJECTIVITY BECOMES OBJECTIVITY

SL: Objectivity (Introduction)

Anton Friedrich Koch, “Subjektivität und Objektivität: Die Unterscheidung des Begriffs”

WEEK 8 – OVERVIEW OF MECHANISM AND CHEMISM

SL: First Two Chapters, Mechanism and Chemism

James Kreines, “The Dialectic of Mechanism” in *Reason in the World*

***We will not be dwelling too long on these chapters. Focus on the introductions and transitions between the sections, but don’t get lost in the weeds. I’ll be tying together how these are related to what came before and what is to come.

WEEK 9 – TELEOLOGY

SL: Teleology (A & B: The subjective Purpose and the Means [*Mittel*])

David Lindquist, “Hegel’s ‘Idea of Life’ and Internal Purposiveness”

WEEK 10 – TELEOLOGY (CONT.)

SL: Teleology (C: The fulfilled Purpose [*Der ausgeführte Zweck*])

Willem deVries, “The Dialectic of Teleology”

UNIT III – THE IDEA

WEEK 11 – LIFE AS A LOGICAL CATEGORY

SL: Introduction and The Idea of Life

Christian Georg Martin, “Die Idee als Einheit von Begriff und Objektivität”

James Kreines, “The Logic of Life: Hegel’s Philosophical Defense of Teleological Explanation of Living Beings”

Karen Ng, *Hegel’s Concept of Life*

WEEK 12 - COGNITION

SL: The Idea of Cognition (the Idea of the True)
Daniel Dahlstrom, "Hegel's *Science of Logic* and the Idea of Truth"

WEEK 13 – COGNITION (CONT.)

SL: The Idea of Cognition (the Idea of the Good)

WEEK 14 – THE ABSOLUTE IDEA

SL: The Absolute Idea (1/2)

WEEK 15 – THE ABSOLUTE IDEA (CONT.)

SL: The Absolute Idea (2/2)

Final Examination Period
Seminar Paper Due Date: TBA

COURSE POLICIES

ELECTRONICS: No electronics may be used in class unless otherwise noted. This includes laptops, tablets, phones, etc.

OFFICE HOURS: I encourage you to come and meet with me during my office hour. Philosophy requires much reflection and dialogue. Should my office hour be inconvenient for you, please get in touch with me and we will be able to find a time that works for us both. Also, please come by and discuss your papers as you plan them.

CONDUCT: It is always important to show respect to your fellow human beings, especially those with whom you disagree. Do not interrupt each other; do not make others feel small; etc. Be a mensch!

ATTENDANCE POLICY: You must maintain good attendance. Two unexcused absences are fine. Anything beyond that will start to count against your grade.

EXCUSED ABSENCES: Absences will be excused only for documented medical emergencies, or extreme documented family emergencies. Here are some examples of things that will not count as excused absences: "Traffic was bad and I had trouble finding a parking spot"; "I had to work"; "I had a dentist appointment"; "I was out of town with my family."

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY: There is a zero tolerance policy regarding violations of the university's academic integrity policy. Violations will be prosecuted to the fullest extent. It is the responsibility of the student to be familiar with the academic integrity policy. Please turn in your own work – everyone will be happier in the end. If you have questions or are concerned that something you are doing constitutes plagiarism, please contact me and we will work it out.