

Prof. L. Zerilli

KNOWLEDGE AND POLITICS
Part I: The Skeptical Problematic

Knowledge is in the end based on acknowledgment
--Wittgenstein

Course Description

This course is divided into two quarters. The first quarter (“The Skeptical Problematic”) examines the emergence of modern skepticism in the writings of Descartes and the responses of philosophers and political theorists to its ideal of knowledge (certainty) and its threat of wordlessness (nihilism). The second quarter (“The Linguistic Turn”) examines the political and ethical questions that the skeptical legacy poses in the works of authors (Wittgenstein, Derrida, Foucault, Bakhtin, Lacan, Levinas, Zizek, Irigaray, Rorty, Althusser, Habermas) for whom knowledge is a problem, not of the relation of consciousness and its concepts to their extralinguistic objects, but of language itself as constitutive of objects, explanation, and experience. Central to the skeptical problematic, as Stanley Cavell argues, is the idea that our relation to the world and to others is one of knowing. (Thus the term skepticism is not restricted to those thinkers who deny knowledge of the external world or of other minds.) As we shall see, this premise, elaborated around such irreducible distinctions as true world and apparent world, subject and object, inner and outer, self and other, situates the subject in an monologic relation to truth and puts into question the very possibility of a common world, i.e., the complex interplay of (human) relation and separation that sustains the discursive space of democratic politics. Insofar as political theory and political science both employ concepts (such as “experience,” “objectivity,” “necessity,” “freedom,” and “causality”) to articulate political relations, they make use (albeit, often unconsciously) of a philosophical tradition that is problematically wedded to the aforementioned distinctions and thus to “Man in the singular”-- whereas politics, as Arendt reminds us, is about “men in the plural.” Thus skepticism haunts political thinking and plurality haunts the debates over skepticism. In this course we explore the nature of that haunting.

Course Requirements

In lieu of a research paper and the usual oral presentation, each of you will write a weekly think-piece no longer than 2 single-spaced pages. These should summarize the argument of the text on the relevant themes--yes, it is possible—and, additionally, raise questions you have, especially about certain passages of text, and would like to discuss in class. Your think-pieces should develop into a running conversation that you have with yourself and with others in the class about themes that recur and that interest you. They should also function as condensed accounts of major texts, which will be of use to you later in your studies. Think-pieces will be sent per e-mail to each seminar participant by noon on Tuesday (our class is Wed.). It is expected that you read these think-pieces and be ready to engage each other on the basis of them. (This means that you should have done the week’s reading by Monday evening, at the latest.) At the end of each term you will compile your think-pieces and write a summary essay of approx. 6-8 pages, in which you attempt to pull out the recurring themes and questions that have concerned you throughout the quarter. These are due one week after classes end. I should add that although this is an introductory seminar, it is quite demanding. We are covering a lot of material at a rapid

pace. It is up to you to supplement your class reading. The idea is not to master any one thinker— obviously impossible in this compressed format—but to get a sense of what the debate over skepticism entails: the political and ethical stakes involved both in how one thinks about (what constitutes) knowledge and in construing the relation to the world and to others as a problem of knowledge.

Required Primary Texts (First Quarter Only)

Hannah Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, 2 vol. edition.
Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, vol I: Language (Yale)
René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy* (Hackett)
Sigmund Freud, *The Ego and the Id*, trans. Joan Riviere, ed. J. Strachey (Norton)
G.W.F Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A.V. Miller (Oxford)
Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, ed. David Farrell Krell (Harper Collins)
David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, E. Steinberg, ed. (Hackett, 1993)
Immanuel Kant, *Kant, Selections*, Lewis White Beck, ed. (Macmillan)
Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The German Ideology* (International Publishers)
Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, ed. Walter Kaufman

Recommended Secondary Texts

George Dickler, *Hume's Epistemology and Metaphysics*
Maudemarie Clark, *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy*
Charles Guignon, *Heidegger and the Problem of Knowledge*
Robert Pippin, *Hegel's Idealism: The Satisfactions of Self-Consciousness*
Henry Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism*
Beatrice Longuenesse, *Kant and the Capacity to Judge*, trans. Charles Wolfe
Stanley Cavell, *The Claim of Reason: Wittgenstein, Skepticism, Morality, and Tragedy*
Paul Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation*
Charles Elder, *The Grammar of the Unconscious: The Conceptual Foundations of Psychoanalysis*

An asterisk * denotes required reading

I. Skepticism and the Problem of the Ordinary

Myles Burnyeat, *The Original Sceptics*
G.B. Kerferd, *The Sophistic Movement* (Cambridge, 1981)
Jacqueline de Romilly, *La douceur dans la pensée grecque* (Paris, 1979).
_____, *La construction de la vérité chez Thucydide* (Julliard, 1990)
_____, *The Great Sophists in Periclean Athens*, trans. J. Lloyd (Oxford, 1992).
Barry Stroud, "Understanding Human Knowledge in General," *Knowledge and Skepticism*, ed. Marjorie Clay and Keith Lehrer (Westview, 1989), ch. 2.
_____, *Skepticism*
Michael Williams, *Unnatural Doubts: Scepticism and Epistemological Realism*
T. Clarke, "The Legacy of Skepticism," *The Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 69, no. 20 (Nov. 1972):754-769.
Hilary Putnam, "Skepticism," *Philosophie in synthetischer Absicht/Synthesis in Mind*, ed. Marcelo Stamm (Klett-Cotta, 1998), 239-268.

Peter Winch, *The Idea of a Social Science* (Routledge 1990)

II. Framing the Political and Ethical Problems of Skepticism (xerox)

* Hannah Arendt, "The Vita Activa and the Modern Age," in *The Human Condition*

* _____, "Understanding and Politics," *Essays in Understanding*

* Stanley Cavell, "Criteria and Judgement" and "Criteria and Understanding," *The Claim of Reason: Wittgenstein, Skepticism, Morality, and Tragedy*, chs. 1 & 2.

* _____, "Knowing and Acknowledging," *Must We Mean What We Say?*, ch. 9

III. Descartes and the Response of Rationalism

* René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*

* René Descartes, Letter to Mersenne, 27 May 1630 (xerox)

René Descartes, *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, ed. John Cottingham, 3 vols (Cambridge UP, 1984-1991).

Secondary Texts

Stanley Cavell, "Being Odd, Getting Even," in *Reconstructing Individualism*, ed. Thomas Heller Roger Ariew, *Descartes' Meditations: Background Source Materials* (Cambridge, 1998)

V.C. Chappell, ed. *Descartes's Meditations: Critical Essays* (Rowman & Littlefield, 1997)

Susan Bordo, ed., *Feminist Interpretations of Descartes* (Penn State, 1999)

Hide Ishiguro, "The Status of Necessity and Impossibility in Descartes," in Amelie Oksenberg Rorty, ed., *Essays on Descartes's Meditations* (UC Press, 1986)

John Cottingham, *Descartes* (Blackwell, 1986)

Émile Bréhier, "The Creation of the Eternal Truths in Descartes System," in *Descartes: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Willis Doney (Univ. Notre Dame Press, 1968).

E. M. Curley, "Descartes on the Creation of the Eternal Truths," *The Philosophical Review* XCIII, No. 4 (Oct. 1984):569-597.

_____, *Descartes Against the Skeptics* (Harvard UP, 1978).

Margaret Wilson, *Descartes* (Routledge Kegan Paul, 1978).

IV. Hume and the Response of Naturalism

* David Hume, "Why a Cause is Always Necessary," *A Treatise of Human Nature*, Bk. I, Part iii,

Section II-IV. (xerox)

* _____, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*

_____, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, ed. Richard Popkin (Hackett, 1980)

_____, *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*, ed. J.B. Schneewind (Hackett, 1983)

_____, *Political Writings*, ed. Stuart Warner (Hackett, 1994)

Secondary Texts:

George Dicker, *Hume=s Epistemology & Metaphysics*.

Rupert Read, ed., *New Hume Debate* (Routledge, 2000)

David Fate Norton, *The Cambridge Companion to Hume* (Cambridge, 1993)

Jerome Christensen, *Practicing Enlightenment: Hume and the Formation of a Literary Career* (Wisconsin UP, 1983)

Michel Malherb, *La philosophie empiriste de David Hume* (Paris, 1976)

Robert Fogelin, *Hume's Skepticism in the Treatise of Human Nature* (Routledge, 1985)

Donald Livingston, *Hume's Philosophy of Common Life* (Chicago, 1984)

L. Wenzel, *David Humes politische Philosophie in ihrem Zusammenhang mit seiner gesamten Lehre* (Cologne, 1959)
H.H. Price, *Hume's Theory of the External World* (Oxford, 1940)
David Fate Norton, *David Hume: Common Sense Moralists, Sceptical Metaphysician* (Princeton UP, 1984)
Donald Livingston, *Philosophical Melancholy and Delirium* (Chicago, 1998)
Michel Malberbe, *Kant ou Hume: ou la raison et la sensible* (J. Vrin, 1993).

V. Kant and the Response of Transcendental Idealism

* Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason and Prolegomena to any Future Metaphysics*, in *Kant, Selections*, pp. 85-234.

(I recommend reading the editor's introductions to the volume as well as to the first three essays. This will give you a better sense of the problem Kant was struggling, first, to define and, then, to solve.)

Secondary Texts

Lewis White Beck, "Once More Unto the Breach: Kant's Answer to Hume, Again," in L. W. Beck, *Essays on Kant and Hume* (Yale UP, 1978)
A. Anderson, "On the Practical Foundation of Kant's Response to Epistemic Skepticism," *Kant Studien*, vol. 89, no. 2 (1998):145-166.
Freudiger, Jürg, "Zum Problem der Wahrnehmungsurteile in Kants theoretischer Philosophie," *Kant Studien*, vol. 82 (1991):414-435.
Paul Guyer, *Kant and the Claims of Knowledge*, (Cambridge UP, 1981).
Henry Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism* (Yale UP, 1983).
Dieter Heinrich, *Identität und Objektivität: Untersuchung über Kants transzendentaler Deduktion*, (C. Winter, 1976).
Barry Stroud, "Kant and Skepticism," *The Skeptical Tradition*, ed. Myles Burnyeat (UC Press, 1983),413-444.
Robert Pippin, *Kant's Theory of Form* (Yale UP, 1982).
Beatrice Longuenesse, *Kant and the Capacity to Judge*, trans. Charles Wolfe (Princeton, 1998).
Olga Lucia Valbuena, "The 'Charming Distinction': *Ur-teil* as the Engendering of Reason in Kant's Thought," *Genders*, no. 4 (Spring 1989): 87-102.
Susan Meld Shell, *The Embodiment of Reason: Kant on Spirit, Generation, and Community* (Chicago UP, 1996).
Michael Friedman, *Kant and the Exact Sciences* (Harvard UP, 1992).

VI. Hegel and the Response of Absolute Idealism

* G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Preface, Introduction, and Chs. I-IV

* Robert Pippin, *Hegel's Idealism: The Satisfactions of Self-Consciousness* (Cambridge, 1989), chs. 1, 2, 5-7 (If you can't make it through all the chapters, be sure to read the one on skepticism)

Secondary Texts

Dietmar Köhler und Otto Pöggeler, eds. *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (Akademie 1998)
Alexandre Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel* (Cornell UP, 1980)
Stuart Barnett ed., *Hegel After Derrida* (Routledge, 1998)
Tom Rockmore, *Cognition: An Intro. to Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit* (UC Press, 1997)
A. Phalen, *Das Erkenntnisproblem in Hegels Philosophie* (E. Berling, 1912)
Terry Pinkard, *Hegel's Phenomenology: The Sociology of Reason* (Cambridge, 1994)

Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Hegel's Dialectic: Five Hermeneutical Studies* (Yale UP, 1976)
 Martin Heidegger, *Hegel's Concept of Experience* (Harper & Row, 1970).
 _____, *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit* (Indiana UP, 1988)
 Labarrière, Pierre-Jean, *La Phénomologie de l'esprit de Hegel* (Aubier-Montaigne, 1979)
 Georg Lukács, *The Young Hegel: Studies in the Relations between Dialectics and Economics* (MIT Press, 1974)
 Merold Westphal, *History and Truth in Hegel's Phenomenology* (Humanities Press, 1982)
 Donald Phillip Verene, *Hegel's Recollection: A Study of Images in the Phenomenology of Spirit* (SUNY Press, 1985)
 Charles Taylor, *Hegel* (Cambridge UP, 1975)
 Judith Shklar, *Freedom and Interdependence: A Study of the Political Ideas in Hegel's Phenomenology of Mind* (Cambridge UP, 1976)

VII. Marx and the Response of Historical Materialism

* Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The German Ideology*
 * Marx, "Theses on Feuerbach" (Xerox)
 _____, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* (McGraw Hill, 1963).
 _____, *Capital*

Secondary Texts

Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx* (Routledge, 1994).
 David Lamb, "The Philosophy of Praxis in Marx and Wittgenstein," *Philosophical Forum*, vol. XI, no. 3 (Spring 1980).
 Stephen Mulhall, "Species-Being, teleology and individuality," *Angelaki: Journal of the Theoretical Humanities*, vol. 3, no. 1 (1998)
 Gavin Kitching, *Marxism and Science: Analysis of an Obsession* (Penn State, 1994).
 Rupert Read, "Wittgenstein and Marx on Philosophical Language," *Essays in Philosophy: A Biannual Journal*, vol. 1, no. 2 (2000), www.humboldt.edu/~essays
 Sidney Hook, Christopher Phelps, Sydney Hook, *From Hegel to Marx: Studies in the Intellectual Development of Karl Marx* (Columbia, 1994).
 Tony Smith, *Dialectical Social Theory and Its Critics: From Hegel to Analytical Marxism and Postmodernism* (SUNY Series in Radical Social and Political Theory, 1992).
 Christopher L. Pines, *Ideology and False Consciousness: Marx and His Historical Progenitors* (SUNY Series in the Philosophy of Social Sciences, 1993).
 Jerrold Seigel, *Marx's Fate: The Shape of a Life* (Penn State, 1993).
 Shlomo Avineri, *Social and Political Thought of Karl Marx* (Cambridge, 1971).
 Marshall Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (Penguin Reissue, 1998).

VIII. Nietzsche and the Response of the Will

* Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil* (selections)
 * *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Bk. III
 * *The Gay Science*, Bk. I, par. 51, Bk. II, pars. 110-112, 121, 123, 125.
 * "A Truth and Lie in the Extra-Moral Sense" and "How the True World > Finally Became a Fable," (Xerox: Friedrich Nietzsche, *Philosophical Writings* ed. Reinhold Grimm and Caroline Molina (Continuum, 1997), pp. 87-99, 201-202.

Secondary Texts

- Maudemarie Clark, *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy* (Cambridge)
Gary Shapiro, *Nietzschean Narratives* (Indiana UP, 1989)
Peter Sloterdijk, *Der Denker auf der Bühne: Nietzsches Materialismus*
Walter Kaufman, *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist* (Princeton, 1974)
Alexander Nehamas, *Nietzsche: Life as Literature* (Harvard, 1985)
Michel Haar, *Par-delà le nihilisme: Nouveau essais sur Nietzsche* (Univ. de France, 1998)
Giorgio Colli, *Distanz und Pathos* (Europa, 1993)
David Allison, ed., *The New Nietzsche* (MIT, 1985)
Harold Alderman, *Nietzsche's Gift* (Ohio UP, 1977)
Kelly Oliver, *Womanizing Nietzsche: Philosophy's Relation to the 'Feminine'* (Routledge, 1995)
Walter Platt, *Formen der Anti-Platonismus bei Kant, Nietzsche und Heidegger* (Klosterman, 1992)
Peter Burgard, ed., *Nietzsche and the Feminine*
Henry Staten, *Nietzsche's Voice* (Cornell, 1990)
Manfred Riedel, *Freilichtgedanken: Nietzsches dichterische Welterfahrung*

IX. Freud and the Response of the Unconscious

- *Freud, "Negation,"
- * _____, *The Ego and the Id*
- * _____, The Interpretation of Dreams (selections)

Secondary Texts

- Paul Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation*, trans. D. Savage (Yale, 1970)
Charles Elder, *The Grammar of the Unconscious: The Conceptual Foundations of Psychoanalysis* (Penn State, 1994)
Michael Roth, *Psycho-Analysis as History: Negation and Freedom in Freud* (Cornell, 1987)
Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Johns Hopkins, 1996)
Katherine Kearns, *Psychoanalysis, Historiography, and Feminist Theory* (Cambridge, 1997)
Donald Spence, *Narrative Truth and Historical Truth: Meaning and Interpretation in Psychoanalysis* (Norton, 1982)
John Wisdom, *Philosophy and Psychoanalysis* (Blackwell, 1964)
Jürgen Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests* (Beacon, 1971)
Marshall Edelson, *Hypothesis and Evidence in Psychoanalysis* (Chicago, 1984)
Frank Cioffi, *Wittgenstein on Freud and Fraser* (Cambridge, 1998)

X. Heidegger and the Response of Being

- *Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, Introduction & selections from Section I

Secondary Texts

- Stephen Mulhall, *Heidegger and Being and Time* (Routledge, 1996)
Charles Guignon, *Heidegger and the Problem of Knowledge* (Hackett, 1983)
Winifried Franzen, *Von der Existenzialontologie zur Seinsgeschichte: Eine Untersuchung ueber die Entwicklung der Philosophie Martin Heideggers* (Anton Hain, 1975)
Hubert Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-World: A Commentary on Heidegger's B & T* (MIT, 1999)
Pierre Bourdieu, *L'Ontologie politique de Martin Heidegger* (Paris, 1988)
Dermot Moran, *Introduction to Phenomenology* (Routledge, 2000)
Hubert Dreyfus & Harrison Hall, *Heidegger: A Critical Reader* (Blackwell, 1992)

Herman Philipse, *Heidegger's Philosophy of Being* (Princeton, 1998)
Peter Kemper, ed., *Martin Heidegger-Faszination und Erschrecken: Die politische Dimension einer Philosophie* (Campus Verlag, 1990)
Michael Murray, ed., *Heidegger and Modern Philosophy* (Yale, 1978)
Gerold Prauss, *Knowing and Doing in Heidegger's Being and Time* (Humanity, 1999)
Christopher Fynsk, *Heidegger: Thought and Historicity* (Cornell 1986)
Samuel Weber, "Objectivity and Its Others," *Mass Mediauras: Form, Technics, Media* (Stanford, 1996), pp. 36-54.

XI. Cassirer and the Response of Symbolic Form

Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*

Secondary Texts

Davos Disputation between Ernst Cassirer and Martin Heidegger, in Martin Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, trans. Richard Taft (Indiana UP, 1990), 171-185.
Jürgen Habermas, Der deutsche Idealismus und die jüdischen Philosophen, in *Philosophisch-politische Profile*, 3rd edition (Suhrkamp, 1981). (Heidegger/ Cassirer debate at Davos)
Susan Langer, On Ernst Cassirer's Theory of Language and Myth, in Paul Arthur, ed., *The Philosophy of Ernst Cassirer* (The Library of Living Philosophers, 1949)
Hans-Jorg Braun, *Über Ernst Cassirers Philosophie der symbolischen Formen* (Suhrkamp, 1988).
Enno Rudolph and Bernd-Otto Krippers, eds., *Kulturkritik nach Ernst Cassirer* (Meiner, 1995).
Martin Heidegger, Review of Ernst Cassirer's *Mythical Thought* in *The Piety of Thinking*, ed. and trans. James Hart and John Maralso (Indiana UP, 1976), 32-45.
Geoffrey Waite, On Esotericism: Heidegger and/or Cassirer at Davos, *Political Theory*, vol. 26, no. 5 (October 1998):603-651.

XII. Arendt and the Response of the Political

*Hannah Arendt, Thinking, *The Life of the Mind*, vol. 1.

Secondary Texts

Dana Villa, *Arendt and Heidegger: The Fate of the Political* (Princeton UP, 1996)
Lewis Hinchman and Sandra Hinchman, *Hannah Arendt: Critical Essays* (SUNY Press, 1994).
Craig Calhoun and John McGowan, eds., *Hannah Arendt and the Meaning of Politics* (Minnesota UP, 1997).
Jennifer Ring, *The Political Consequences of Thinking: Gender and Judaism in the Work of Hannah Arendt* (SUNY Press, 1997).
Larry May and Jerome Kohn, *Hannah Arendt, Twenty Years Later* (MIT, 1996).
Hauke Brunkhorst, *Hannah Arendt* (Verlag C.H. Beck, 1999).
Peter Kemper, ed., *The Zukunft des Politischen: Ausblicke auf Hannah Arendt* (Fischer, 1993)
Margaret Canovan, *Hannah Arendt: A Reinterpretation of her Political Theory* (Cambridge, 1992)
Lisa Jane Disch, *Hannah Arendt and the Limits of Philosophy* (Cornell, 1994).