

# PHIL10175: Late Modern Philosophy

## Recognition and Alienation

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**Course Summary:** This course aims to trace a path through the history of late modern philosophy, from Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781/1787) through Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807) and Marx's *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, to Sartre's *Being and Nothingness* (1943), de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949) and Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952). The central theme of the course is the tension between recognition and alienation. Starting with a criticism of Kant's theory of knowledge, Hegel sets out to understand what knowledge is in a way that allows us to understand ourselves as knowers. To do so, he places self-consciousness at the centre of our understanding. However, he holds that there can be no self-consciousness without recognition by another self-consciousness; self-consciousness is essentially interpersonal and mutual. This gives rise to a struggle for recognition and opens up space for many ways of falling short – various forms of alienation and bad faith. Yet the full extent of such alienation only becomes apparent in the struggle for recognition in the context of gender and race. Our aim in the course is to study various conceptions of the struggle for recognition and examine the many forms of alienation that, in the course of this struggle, self-consciousness can fall victim to.

**Course Structure:** There are weekly pre-recorded lectures and other online content equivalent to 2-hours of an in-person seminar, as well as a weekly one-hour in-person tutorial. The pre-recorded materials will provide some explanation and analysis of the readings for each week. The tutorials afford the opportunity for philosophical discussion and engagement. Philosophical learning is very much a matter of engaging and thinking together with others, rather than the achievement of a state of possessing information. This is why it is extremely important that you read through the assigned texts and view the pre-recorded materials in advance so as to be prepared to actively take part in discussion.

Tutorials will take place on Thursdays, 9am-10am, 10am-11am, as well as Fridays, 9am-10am, 10am-11am. Please check your schedule for your tutorial assignment. Pre-recorded lectures will be available on Fridays at noon, the week before the content will be discussed. For example, the pre-recorded lectures for week 1 will be available on Friday, Sept 17. Office hours will be on MS Teams, with exact day and time TBA.

**Important note:** In tutorials, we will discuss the material that is covered in that very week. Since there are no tutorials in week 1, the topic of the first tutorials (in week 2) will be the Introduction to Hegel's *Phenomenology*. (This way we can have a proper discussion of Fanon in week 11.)

**A note of encouragement:** Hegel's *Phenomenology* is extremely hard reading for everyone. I encourage you to push through; better to have looked at it and failed to understand much than not to have looked at it at all.

**Assessment:** There are three pieces of assessment for this course:

- Mid-term essay (approx. 1500 words) (40%): Due Thurs. 21st Oct. 2021, 12pm
- Final essay (approx. 2500 words) (55%): Due Thurs. 9th Dec. 2021, by 12pm
- Participation (5%)

The Mid-term essay will require an explanation of a central idea from Hegel. The Final essay will require an explanation of, and critical engagement with, a central idea from one of the later authors. Questions and guidance for each essay will be posted at least 4 weeks before the deadline on Learn. The assessment of participation will be based on presence and engagement in tutorial and in office hours.

### Main Texts

- Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*

There are two main translations of the *First Critique*: The classic one by Norman Kemp Smith, and the standard scholarly one by Paul Guyer and Allen Wood. Either of these translations would be fine. Another option, available online, is the simplified and annotated text by Jonathan Bennett:

<http://www.earlymoderntexts.com/authors/kant>

- Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*

The standard translation in English is by A.V. Miller. However, we will work from a translation by Terry Pinkard that juxtaposes the English and German text and is available online:

<https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/hegel/works/ph/pinkard-translation-of-phenomenology.pdf>

- Marx's *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*

The standard translation in English is by Martin Milligan and is included in *The Marx-Engels Reader* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.), edited by Robert Tucker. An online version is available here:

<https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/pdf/Economic-Philosophic-Manuscripts-1844.pdf>

- Sartre's *Being and Nothingness*

A new English translation by Sarah Richmond was published in 2018 and supersedes Hazel Barnes's translation from 1957. I would urge you to purchase Richmond's translation. A pdf of the old translation is available online.

- De Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*

A new English translation by Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier was published in 2010 and supersedes H.M. Parshley's poor translation from 1953. (Under pressure from the publisher Alfred Knopf, Parshley abridged the book by about 80 pages!). Please use the new translation. A pdf of it is available online.

- Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*

The current standard is the *Penguin Classics* edition, reissued in 2021, translated by Richard Philcox. A pdf of an older translation by Charles Lam Markmann is available through discoverED and online.

## Schedule of Readings

### Week 1: Kant's *Critical Philosophy*

In formulating his *Critical Philosophy*, Kant asks how knowledge of the world is possible. To answer the question, he argues that rather than our experience depending on the knowable world, the knowable world depends on our experience. In this week, we will acquire a brief overview of Kant's project in the *First Critique*.

**Reading:** *Critique of Pure Reason*, Preface to the Second Edition; Introduction

### Week 2: The project of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*

Hegel expresses dissatisfaction with Kant's epistemology. He seeks to understand what knowledge is in a way that allows us to understand ourselves as knowers. To do so, he embarks on the project of phenomenology. In this week, we will seek to understand what phenomenology is, how it is related to Hegel's dialectical method, and what Hegel finds dissatisfactory in Kant's philosophy.

**Reading:** *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Introduction §73-§89

### Week 3: Hegel on Self-Consciousness and Lordship and Bondage

The key to phenomenology is self-consciousness. However, self-consciousness requires recognition by another self-consciousness. This gives rise to a struggle for recognition. One stage of this struggle is Lordship and Bondage. This is a form of personal encounter that has inspired a great deal of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century philosophy, social theory and politics—including the authors we will read later in the term. It is, arguably, the most famous passage from *The Phenomenology of Spirit*. In this week, we will seek to understand why self-consciousness stands in need of recognition, how the struggle for recognition unfolds, and how it gives rise to Lordship and Bondage.

**Reading:** *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Self-Consciousness §166-§196

### Week 4: Hegel on Spirit

The progression of the Hegelian dialectic is well exemplified in Hegel's discussion of Spirit. Here we encounter the tension between laws of family and laws of state (Think: Antigone), and a discussion of gender roles. We will study the relation between self-consciousness and spirit, how spirit sees its relation to law, and how this gives rise to gender roles.

**Reading:** *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Self-Consciousness §437-§462

If you are unfamiliar with Sophocles' *Antigone*, please read at least one version of the play—either Sophocles' original or one of the re-creations. Famous twentieth-century versions of *Antigone* are by Bertolt Brecht and Jean Anouilh. A gripping contemporary version is Kamila Shamsie's *Home Fire*.

**Week 5: Marx on Estranged Labour**

Marx thinks that capitalism gives rise to real lordship and bondage, and, in consequence, various forms of alienation. In this week, we will examine Marx's line of thought and the forms of alienation, and we will seek to relate this to Hegel's discussion of self-consciousness.

**Reading:** *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*, Estranged Labour (pp. 70-81 in *The Marx-Engels Reader*)

**Week 6: Sartre on Self-Consciousness and Bad Faith**

In formulating a leading version of existentialism, Sartre offers his own account of self-consciousness as freedom. He then puts forward a phenomenological account of various ways in which we can misconstrue our freedom, and, in doing so, succumb to bad faith. In this week, we will study Sartre's theory of self-consciousness as freedom and examine the various kinds of bad faith.

**Reading:** Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, Part One, Chapter One: "The Origin of Negation," §II and §V (pp. 37-44, pp.57-86); Part One, Chapter Two: "Bad Faith," §1 and §2 (pp. 87-113)

**Week 7: Sartre on Interpersonal Self-Consciousness**

For Sartre as for Hegel, our self-consciousness essentially depends upon another self-consciousness. Sartre thinks that we know another self-consciousness as immediately as we know our own and that the other's self-consciousness shapes and determines ours. This, however, provides the occasion for various kinds of objectification and alienation. In this week, we will study Sartre's account of interpersonal self-consciousness.

**Reading:** Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, Part Three, Chapter One: "The Existence of Others," §I and §V (pp. 307-309, pp. 347-408)

**Week 8: Sartre on Freedom**

The key to Sartre's thought, and to existentialism in general, is the notion of freedom: We are, first and foremost, free. However, our freedom is always *in situation*, and we misconstrue it if we disregard factual aspects of our being—our facticity. Yet can freedom and facticity be reconciled? How are we to understand limitations on

freedom? In this week, we will consider whether, at the heart of Sartre's system, there lies incoherence.

**Reading:** Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, Part Four, Chapter One: "Being and Doing: Freedom," §I (pp. 569-628)

### **Week 9: Simone de Beauvoir – Existentialist**

Kant, Hegel, Marx, Sartre – and many others – have an enormous blind spot. As white men, they write from a position of power and privilege. De Beauvoir formulates her own version of existentialism, grounded in an account of the experience of women, which affords her a different view of 'facticity'. She redeploys the Hegelian theme of Lordship and Bondage in the context of gender, and she argues that, up to this point in history, the being of a woman has always been alienated. In this week, we will study de Beauvoir's project, consider its philosophical ambition, and examine, as a case study, her account of the woman in love who struggles for recognition.

**Reading:** De Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, Introduction

### **Week 10: De Beauvoir: Liberation and its Obstacles**

Despite her grim depiction of woman's condition, de Beauvoir remains optimistic about the possibility of liberation. In this week, we will study the struggles that woman faces on the path to liberation and de Beauvoir's vision of what such liberation would look like.

**Reading:** De Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, Chapter 12: The Woman in Love; Chapter 14: The Independent Woman; Conclusion

### **Week 11: Fanon on the Lived Experience of Blackness**

Another profound blind spot in the tradition from Kant and Hegel onwards is race. Fanon articulates in existentialist terms the experience of being a black man. However, he also criticizes Sartre for what, in effect, amounts to a betrayal. In this week, we will study Fanon's phenomenological reflections together with his critique of Sartre.

**Reading:** Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, Chapter 5: The Lived Experience of the Black Man; Conclusion

## **Learning Outcomes**

On completion of this course, you will be able to:

1. Demonstrate core skills in philosophy, including interpreting and critically engaging with difficult philosophical texts, evaluating arguments and theories, and developing your own ideas in response to the issues discussed.
2. Articulate and defend your own views regarding the topics and theories covered by the module.
3. Compare and contrast the concepts and theoretical frameworks covered by the course with those used in other areas of philosophy.
4. Demonstrate understanding of key figures and texts from late modern philosophy.