

Freie Universität Berlin
FU-BEST Program
Dr. Frieder Otto Wolf

Problems and Issues in German Philosophy: Kant to Habermas

Course description:

Philosophy in Germany has constituted a central element in the development of modern German culture. In the late eighteenth century, German philosophy participated in the broader European enlightenment culture and in modern empirical science, especially reflecting the rise of the British political economy and the political transformation brought about by the French Revolution. The course will follow its development from their Kantian beginnings to contemporary attempts at rethinking a global political perspective – in focusing on the tension between the enlightenment heritage of a universalist human philosophy and a national culture project, as well as on the tension between classicist rationalism and romantic emotionalism in its construction as a series of philosophical projects. In the perspective of a German version of the dialectics of the enlightenment, the German philosophers of the nineteenth and twentieth century will be read in context – combining the reading of key texts with a reconstruction of their historical contexts and their interaction. This will include a discussion of the real links between Marx and Marxism, between the Vienna circle and the scientific revolution of the early twentieth century, as well as between German academic philosophy and Nazism. In addition, post-war philosophical developments in Germany will be studied in this perspective: have they succeeded in finding pathways out of the destructive turn these dialectics have taken in Germany in the first half of the twentieth century?

Required Texts (tentative):

A selection of **primary texts** by the philosophers to be studied (in English) will be collected in a course reader. They will constitute required reading (see syllabus), together with a small selection of **secondary texts** also collected in a course reader, as well as two paperback books:

Andrew Bowie, *Introduction to German Philosophy: Kant to Habermas*
Anthony O'Hear, ed., *German Philosophy since Kant*

Recommended Texts (tentative):

A selection from the following books will be made available to all students in a background reader, especially to be used in essay writing:

Rudiger Bubner, *Modern German Philosophy*
John Dewey, *German Philosophy and Politics* (1915)
George L. Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology: Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich*
Fritz Joachim Rintelen, *Contemporary German Philosophy and its Background*
Julian Roberts, *German Philosophy: An Introduction*
G. Santayana, *Egotism in German Philosophy*

Course work/expectations

Midterm exam: 25%

Essay paper: 30%

Final exam: 25%

Attendance and participation: 20%

Schedule:

Session 1: The European Heritage of the Enlightenment and German Philosophy

Required reading:

Immanuel Kant: "An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?" (1784)

Session 2: Kant's Critical Turn: Radicalizing the Enlightenment?

Required reading:

Immanuel Kant: [Prefaces, and The Canon of Pure Reason] (from: *The Critique of Pure Reason*, both editions, 1781 and 1787)

Immanuel Kant: 'Open Letter on Fichte's Wissenschaftslehre', August 7, 1799

Session 3: German Idealism as an Elaboration of the New Philosophy and Hegel's Transitional Synthesis

Required reading:

J. G. Fichte: *Foundations of the Entire Science of Knowledge* (1794-95) (selections)

F. Schelling: *System of Transcendental Philosophy* (1800) (selections)

G. W. F. Hegel: *The difference between the Fichtean and Schellingian systems of philosophy* (selections)

Friedrich Hölderlin: *Letters to G. W.F. Hegel and Friedrich Schelling*

Session 4: Hegel's Synthesis and its unthinking by Ludwig Feuerbach

Required reading:

G. W. F. Hegel: *Preface to the Phenomenology of Mind* (1806)

Ludwig Feuerbach: *Principles of the Philosophy of the Future* [selections] (1843)

Session 5: Philosophy, Critique, and Praxis: Karl Marx

Required reading:

Karl Marx: *Theses on Feuerbach* (1845)

Karl Marx: *Introduction to a Contribution to a Critique of Political Economy* (1857)

Karl Marx: *Notes on Adolph Wagner's 'Lehrbuch der politischen Ökonomie'* (1881)

Session 6: Mid-term exam

Session 7: Scientific Reformers versus 'Philosophies of Life'

Required reading:

Friedrich Albert Lange: *[On the History of Materialism]* [selected corrected translations for course use, to be handed out in class, incl. the 'Introduction and Critical Supplement by Hermann Cohen] (1866)

Wilhelm Dilthey: *Introduction to the Human Sciences* (1883) [selection]

Friedrich Nietzsche: *Prejudices of Philosophers* (from: *Beyond Good and Evil*, 1886)

Session 9: A New scientific philosophy: Ernst Mach and the Vienna Circle

Required reading:

Ernst Mach: *The Analysis of Sensations and the Relation of the Physical to the Psychical* (1886) [*Introductory Remarks: Anti-metaphysical*]

Ludwig Wittgenstein: *Tractatus logico-philosophicus* (1918)

Moritz Schlick: *Epistemology and Modern Physics* (1925)

Session 10: Philosophy in a new key: Friedrich Nietzsche, Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger

Required reading:

Friedrich Nietzsche: Prejudices of the Philosophers (from: *Beyond Good and Evil*, 1886)

Edmund Husserl: *The Crisis of European Sciences* [selections] (1937)

Martin Heidegger: *What is Metaphysics?* (1929)

Interview with Martin Heidegger in *Der Spiegel* (1966)

Session 11: Philosophy and ‘Critical Theory’: Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno

Required reading:

Max Horkheimer: *On the Problem of Truth* (1935)

Theodor W. Adorno: *Subject and Object* (1969)

Session 12: Philosophy in Germany from the 1960s: Ernst Tugendhat and Jürgen Habermas

Required reading:

Ernst Tugendhat: *Language Analysis and the Critique of Ontology* (1967)

Jürgen Habermas: *The Idea of the Theory of Knowledge as Social Theory* (1968)

Session 13: Final exam