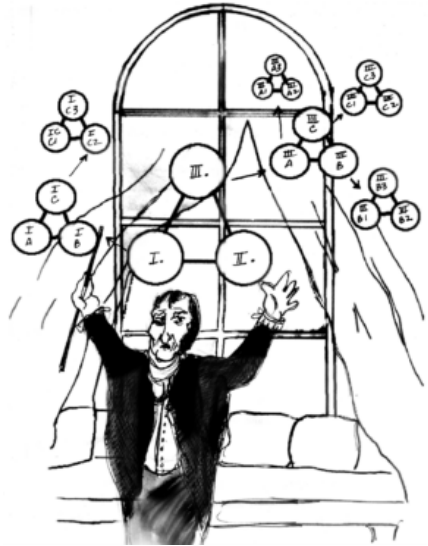


**ENG 6077
LITERARY THEORY: FORMS**

**BEING DIALECTICAL:
THE (RE)TURN TO HEGEL IN CONTEMPORARY THEORY**



**Professor Phillip Wegner
Tuesday 6-8 (12:50-3:50 p.m.)
Turlington 4112**

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Office Hours: Thursday, 1:30-3:30 p.m.
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The premise of our seminar is that dialectics remains the most creative and dynamic mode of reading and thinking currently available to us. One of the most influential contemporary practitioners of dialectics, Fredric Jameson, describes it as “a speculative account of some thinking of the future which has not yet been realized: an unfinished project, as Habermas might put it; a way of grasping situations and events that does not yet exist as a collective habit because the concrete form of social life to which it corresponds has not yet come into being.” Our goal in this

seminar will be to assist your passage into such a future by “diving in” to the work of some of most important thinkers and readers of the last two centuries. This course thus should be of great interest to any student in any program who hopes to follow the untimely vocation of the intellectual. Following a too brief engagement with the work of the founder of modern dialectics, G. W. F. Hegel, the first part of our seminar will take up the writings of some of the most significant practitioners of dialectical thinking and writing from the first half of the 20th century. We will then turn to a group of more contemporary intellectuals who advance the claim that it is time to (re)turn to Hegel in our present, and especially in the aftermath of the great revolution that was structuralist critical theory. (This course can thus also be understood as something of a Part 2 to my Spring 2017 seminar). Such a movement, as Slavoj Žižek would have it, involves no simple return to Hegel’s project, but a far more significant effort to *repeat* it, “to distinguish between what [Hegel] actually did and the field of possibilities he opened up.”

Texts

GWF Hegel, *Hegel’s Preface to the Phenomenology of Spirit*, translation and running commentary by Yirmiyahu Yovel

C.L.R. James, *Notes on Dialectics: Hegel, Marx, Lenin*

Theodor Adorno, *An Introduction to Dialectics*

Fredric Jameson, *Valences of the Dialectic*

Fredric Jameson, *The Hegel Variations: On the Phenomenology of Spirit*

Fredric Jameson, *Representing Capital: A Reading of Volume One*

George Ciccariello-Maher, *Decolonizing Dialectics*

Andrew Cole, *The Birth of Theory*

Catherine Malabou, *The Future of Hegel: Plasticity, Temporality and Dialectic*

Rebecca Comay and Frank Ruda, *The Dash—The Other Side of Absolute Knowing*

Slavoj Žižek, *Absolute Recoil: Towards a New Foundation of Dialectical Materialism*

Students will be responsible for procuring copies of all the readily available readings for the semester. Harder to find, out-of-print, and shorter texts will be made available on our Canvas site as the semester progresses.

Aims and Methods

1. Full presence in every spatial, ontological, existential, and intellectual sense of the word, as well as active and engaged participation in the seminar discussions. Given your enrollment in this course, I assume that all of you are looking forward as much as I am to having the opportunity for a serious and careful engagement with these texts. Thus, the most general expectation that I have for this semester is that all of you intend to read these works, and to do so in a responsible and rigorous fashion, and in a spirit of good faith and intellectual camaraderie. I would ask then that you make every effort to engage in, to use a much abused term, a *dialogue* with these

works, being attentive to their respective voices, acknowledging their particular historical and otherwise contingent beings in the world, and finally working to imagine how we today might best retool the insights and modes of analysis of their various “unfinished projects.” In this way, I hope that we will develop a much more complex and profitable understanding of both the power and originality of these arguments and traditions.

2. In order to facilitate and enrich our discussion of these works, I want to ask each of you to be responsible for introducing and situating some of our readings. As I imagine all of our work fundamentally to be a collective project, you will do this in pairs, with each group being responsible for the readings on three different occasions. Each group will be asked both to provide a brief introduction to the material and to serve as general “experts” on the readings for that week. Your group can take a variety of approaches to this task: you may want to highlight some of the central issues the readings address; briefly outline their main arguments; note the ways they engage with what has come before; place them in historical, intellectual, and political contexts; note connections to other models and practices; give overviews of some of the secondary readings on these works; offer some questions for discussion; provide creative illustrations and applications of the thesis; and so forth. I only ask that you keep the opening comments brief (15 minutes maximum total) so that we can begin our general discussion as soon as possible. I also hope that your groups will continue to work together throughout the semester, sharing ideas, giving support, discussing research projects, sharing drinks, and other important tasks. I will be very happy to meet with your group beforehand to suggest some secondary readings and discuss approaches and tactics.

3. The Twenty-First Annual Conference of the Marxist Reading Group will be held the weekend of March 21-23, with keynote addresses by Andrew Ross and George Ciccariello-Maher. As there will be a great deal of discussion relevant to our class, I ask that all enrolled students plan to attend some of the sessions and events.

4. For the major written component of the course, I will ask each of you to develop an independent research program, which will take one of two forms: either a) two shorter essays of 10-15 pages in length examining the questions or issues raised by the material in more depth, or drawing connections between these works and other areas of interest; *or*, b) a major critical research project of some 25-30 pages in length. The aim of the longer project will be to produce: 1) a sustained engagement with some of the works we discuss in class; 2) a further independent examination of the issues raised by the work we have looked at; 3) a discussion drawing upon some of the recommended secondary or additional readings; or 4) an original reading of another other work—be it literary, theoretical, filmic, architectural, cultural, digital, virtual, or otherwise—deploying the concepts and models we elaborate during the course of the semester. I would also like to ask that all Ph.D students plan to pursue option b, with the goal of producing an essay that will serve either as the basis of a dissertation chapter or a publishable essay (or even both). I ask each of you who choose this second option to turn in a detailed paper proposal, complete with

bibliography, about a month before the paper is due. If you require additional time to work on this project, I am happy to allow you to do so. However, in order to avoid extending the course indefinitely, I expect that the project will be completed by the end of the summer term; work turned in after that time should not expect to receive extensive comments.

Grading Criteria

Attendance and Participation: 25%

Group presentations: 25%

Seminar paper: 50%

UF Policy Statements

1. The Disability Resource Center in the Dean of Students Office provides information and support regarding accommodations for students with disabilities. For more information, see: <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/>

2. UF provides an educational and working environment that is free from sex discrimination and sexual harassment for its students, staff, and faculty. For more about UF policies regarding harassment, see: <http://www.hr.ufl.edu/eo/sexharassment.htm>

3. All students must abide by the Student Honor Code. For more information about academic honesty, including definitions of plagiarism and unauthorized collaboration, see: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/advising/info/student-°©-honor-°©-code.aspx>

Tentative Discussion Schedule

1. January 8 – Introduction: Dialectics, ‘...not merely an intellectual event but a living experience and a mode of life.’

Readings: Fredric Jameson, from *Marxism and Form: Twentieth-Century Dialectical Theories of Literature* (1971), Ch. 5, 306-326.



2. January 15 – The Event of Dialectics

Readings: G.W.F. Hegel, *Hegel's Preface to the Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807) translation and running commentary by Yirmiyahu Yovel

3. January 22 – 20th Century Traditions of Dialectical Thought, Part 1

Readings: C.L.R. James, *Notes on Dialectics: Hegel, Marx, Lenin* (1948)

4. January 29 – 20th Century Traditions of Dialectical Thought, Part 2

Readings: Theodor Adorno, *An Introduction to Dialectics* (1958), Lectures 1-11

5. February 5 – 20th Century Traditions of Dialectical Thought, Part 3

Readings: Adorno, *An Introduction to Dialectics*, Lectures 12-20



6. February 12 – The Valences Project, Part 1

Readings: Fredric Jameson, *Valences of the Dialectic* (2009), Ch. 1
Fredric Jameson, *The Hegel Variations: On the Phenomenology of Spirit* (2010)

7. February 19 – The Valences Project, Part 2

Readings: Jameson, *Valences of the Dialectic*, Chs. 2-3;
Fredric Jameson, *Representing Capital: A Reading of Volume One* (2011)

8. February 26 – The Valences Project, Part 3

Readings: Jameson, *Valences of the Dialectic*, Chs. 4-18

9. March 5 – SPRING BREAK

Optional 10-12 page paper #1 due March 15

10. March 12 – The Valences Project, Part 4

Readings: Fredric Jameson, *Valences of the Dialectic*, Chs. 15-19

11. March 19 – Dialectics and the Global Peripheries

Readings: George Ciccariello-Maher, *Decolonizing Dialectics* (2017)

NOTE: Dr. Ciccariello-Maher will also be a keynote speaker at this year's MRG conference.

12. March 26 – The Birth of Theory

Readings: Andrew Cole, *The Birth of Theory* (2014)

Final Project Proposals Due March 31



13. April 2 – Dialectics and Reading, Part 1

Readings: Catherine Malabou, *The Future of Hegel: Plasticity, Temporality and Dialectic* (1996)

14. April 9 – Dialectics and Reading, Part 2

Readings: Rebecca Comay and Frank Ruda, *The Dash—The Other Side of Absolute Knowing* (2018)



15. April 16 – Hegel avec Lacan, part 1

Readings: Slavoj Žižek, *Absolute Recoil: Towards a New Foundation of Dialectical Materialism* (2014), Chs. 1-4

15. April 23 – Hegel avec Lacan, part 2

Readings: Slavoj Žižek, *Absolute Recoil*, Chs. 5-9

17. April 29 – FINAL PROJECTS DUE by 10 a.m. (in order to receive spring grade)



Renee Magritte,
Les vacances de Hegel (1958)

(sold for \$10,162,500, Nov. 1, 2011)