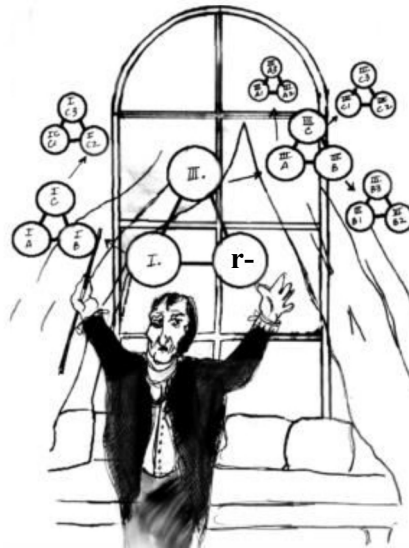


ENG 6077

LITERARY THEORY: FORMS

THE OWL'S SPECTERS:
THE (RE)TURN TO HEGEL IN CONTEMPORARY THEORY



Professor Phillip Wegner
Monday 6-8 (12:50-3:50 p.m.)
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Michel Foucault, in an homage to his teacher the great French Hegel scholar Jean Hyppolite, notes that any effort "truly to escape Hegel involves an exact appreciation of the price we have to pay to detach ourselves from him We have to determine the extent to which our anti-Hegelianism is possibly one of his tricks directed against us, at the end of which he stands, motionless, waiting for us." Foucault's insight seems especially apt today: for despite the efforts of many in Foucault's generation to expunge critical theory of Hegel's influence, interest in his work—and dialectics more generally—have witnessed a tremendous resurgences in recent

years. However, this latest turn to Hegel is not a *return* in the sense of seeking a lost moment before the great revolution of post-structuralist critical theory; rather, as Slavoj Žižek would have it, such a movement involves an effort to *repeat* Hegel, "to distinguish between what [Hegel] actually did and the field of possibilities he opened up." Only in this way, all these thinkers suggest, might we actually hope to achieve Foucault's goal "to leave Hegel behind, once more." In this course, we will examine some of the most interesting recent engagements with Hegel's immense corpus and the radical thought mode of the future to which it gave rise.

Texts

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

Henri Lefebvre, *Dialectical Materialism*

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

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*

Rebecca Comay, *Mourning Sickness: Hegel and the French Revolution*

Susan Buck-Morss, *Hegel, Haiti, and Universal History*

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

Catherine Malabou, *What Should We Do With Our Brain*

Slavoj Žižek, *Less Than Nothing: Hegel and the Shadow 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 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 presence here, 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 each week's readings. As I imagine all of our work fundamentally to be a collective project, you will do this in groups of two or three, with each group being responsible for the readings on two 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, drinking beer, 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 Sixteenth Annual Conference of the Marxist Reading Group will be held the weekend of March 27-29, with keynote addresses by Kim Stanley Robinson, Nicholas Brown, and Fredric Jameson. 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 PhD 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/eeo/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](https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/advising/info/student-honor-code.aspx)

Tentative Discussion Schedule

- 1. January 6 - Introduction:
Dialectics, '...not merely an
intellectual event but a living
experience and a mode of life.'**

Readings: GWF Hegel, *Hegel's
Preface to the Phenomenology of Spirit*



- 2. January 13 - Alternate Traditions of Dialectical Thought, Part 1**

Readings: GWF Hegel, *Hegel's Preface*, continued;
Henri Lefebvre, *Dialectical Materialism* (1940)

- 3. January 20 - MLK Day: NO CLASS**

- 4. January 27 - Alternate Traditions of Dialectical Thought, Part 2**

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

- 5. February 3 - 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)



- 6. February 10 - The Valences
Project, Part 2**

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

- 7. February 17 - The Valences Project, Part 3**

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

- 8. February 24 - The Valences Project, Part 4**

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

9. March 3 - SPRING BREAK

Optional 10-12 page paper #1 due March 10

10. March 10 - Dialectics, Revolution, and Mourning

Readings: Rebecca Comay, *Mourning Sickness: Hegel and the French Revolution* (2010)

11. March 17 - Toward a Universal History

Readings: Susan Buck-Morss, *Hegel Haiti and Universal History* (2009)

12. March 24 - Deconstruction and Dialectics

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



13. March 31 - Plasticity and Globalization

Readings: Catherine Malabou, *What Should We Do With Our Brain?* (2004)

Final Project Proposals Due March 31

14. April 7 - Hegel avec Lacan

Readings: Slavoj Žižek, *Less Than Nothing: Hegel and the Shadow of Dialectical Materialism* (2012)



15. April 14 - Hegel avec Lacan, part 2

Readings: Slavoj Žižek, *Less Than Nothing*, continued

15. April 21 - Hegel avec Lacan, part 3

Readings: Slavoj Žižek, *Less Than Nothing*, continued

17. April 28 - 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)