In 1886, Friedrich Engels wrote a perfectly mediocre book, *Ludwig Feuerbach and the Outcome of Classical German Philosophy*, which nevertheless managed to raise a fascinating and important question that is still being debated today: how should we go about evaluating the legacy of German Idealism following the mid-nineteenth century breakdown of the Hegelian system? For Engels, the answer was relatively simple: the rightful heir of classical German philosophy was Marx’s doctrine of historical materialism. But, in truth, Engels’ response was merely one of many possible approaches. Nor would it be much of an exaggeration to claim that, in the twentieth-century, there is hardly a philosopher worth reading who has not sought to define him or herself via a confrontation with the legacy of Kant and Hegel.

Classical German Philosophy – Kant, Fichte, Hegel, and Schelling – has bequeathed a rich legacy of reflection on the fundamental problems of epistemology, ontology and aesthetics. Even contemporary thinkers who claim to have transcended it (e.g., poststructuralists such as Foucault and Derrida) cannot help but make reference to it in order to validate their post-philosophical standpoints and claims.

Our approach to this very rich material will combine a reading of the canonical texts of German Idealism (e.g., Kant and Hegel) with a sustained and complementary focus on major twentieth-century thinkers who have sought to establish their originality via a critical reading of Hegel and his heirs: Alexandre Kojève, Martin Heidegger, Michel Foucault, Theodor Adorno, and Jürgen Habermas.

The course will primarily focus on the nexus between philosophy, reason, and, autonomy. We will also examine the substantive arguments that the school’s leading representatives have set forth, with special attention to the “healing” role of both reason and the aesthetic dimension. If thought and being are sundered in real life, art and reason offer the prospect of making the world whole once more. Thus, in German Classical philosophy, aesthetic consciousness often plays what one might describe as a *redemptory* or *reconciliatory* function.

In his “Discourse on Language” Foucault warns us appositely that, “Truly to escape Hegel involves an exact appreciation of the price we have to pay to detach ourselves from him. It assumes that we are aware of the extent to which Hegel, insidiously perhaps, is close to us; it implies a knowledge that permits us to think against Hegel, of that which remains Hegelian. Thus 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
insightful caveat will, in many respects, function as our interpretive watchword as we seek to decode and reconstruct German Idealism and its innovative contemporary legacies. ***

Booklist:

J. Schmidt, What is Enlightenment?

**Pinkard, German Philosophy, 1760-1860**

Kant, Political Writings (Cambridge)
Kant, Critique of Pure Reason (Kemp Smith translation)
Hegel, Phenomenology of Spirit (Miller translation)
Hegel, Aesthetics (Knox translation)
Schiller, Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man
Schelling, System of Transcendental Idealism
Löwith, From Hegel to Nietzsche
Bowie, Aesthetics and Subjectivity: From Kant to Nietzsche
Tucker, ed., Marx-Engels Reader
Beiser, Enlightenment, Romanticism and Revolution
Heidegger, “Letter on Humanism” and “Origins of the Work of Art,” in Basic Writings
Wolin, ed., The Heidegger Controversy: A Critical Reader
Adorno, Lectures on Negative Dialectics (Polity)
Habermas, Philosophical Discourse of Modernity

* *** Note on the Heidegger Black Notebooks Conference, September 11 & 12

Last March, the editor of Heidegger’s Collected Works, Klostermann Verlag, published three volumes of Heidegger’s philosophical notebooks from the 1930s and early 1940s – the so-called Black Notebooks. Since their appearance six months ago, the Black Notebooks, which total 1300 pages, have become an object of far-reaching international controversy – predominantly owing to the prevalence of Heidegger’s pro-Nazi sentiments.

On September 11 and 12, an international conference, on the Black Notebooks, featuring six renown Heidegger scholars, will be held at the Graduate Center. (I am the conference organizer). Under the circumstances, it only makes sense to integrate the conference into the structure of our course. For this reason, we will devote our first class discussion to issues relevant to Heidegger’s work, as it is framed by the conference themes. Since the Black Notebooks remain untranslated, we will concentrate on texts that are related to the way in which philosophy and politics intersected in Heidegger’s work during the 1920s and 1930s. Needless to say, you are strongly encouraged to attend the conference. I have included the conference schedule on the last page of the syllabus.

** Pinkard’s book, German Philosophy, 1760-1860: The Legacy of Idealism, offers the best overview of German Idealism from Kant through Schelling. I urge you to purchase it and utilize it as an interpretive key. I have assigned several chapters as secondary reading.
General Requirements: regular class attendance; class participation; class report (optional); final writing assignment

Weekly Assignments:

Sept. 1: Labor Day

Sept. 8: Introduction (N.B.: see note on page 2 concerning GC Heidegger conference on 11 & 12 September)

Sept. 15: Reason, Autonomy, and Freedom: Debating the Enlightenment
Kant, Political Writings, 41-73, 192-220 (recommended: 1-40)*
Habermas, “Modernity’s Need for Self-Reassurance,” Philosophical Discourse of Modernity, 1-22
Beiser, Enlightenment, Revolution, and Romanticism, “The Politics of Kant’s Philosophy,” 27-56*
Taylor, “Kant’s Theory of Freedom” *

Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, Prefaces, Introduction, A19/B33 – A55/B80; A67/B92-A130/B170
Pinkard, German Philosophy, 1-80

Sept. 29: Hegel and the Idea of a Phenomenology of Spirit
Phenomenology of Spirit: 1-137
M. Forster, Hegel’s Idea of a Phenomenology of Spirit: 1-192
Pinkard, German Philosophy, 214-304

Oct. 6: Kant versus Hegel: Practical Reason versus Objective Spirit
Kant, Groundwork of a Metaphysics of Morals
Hegel, Phenomenology of Spirit, 294-409
Hegel, Philosophy of Right, Preface, Part II “Morality”
Habermas, “Hegel’s Concept of Modernity,” in Philosophical Discourse of Modernity, 23-44
Habermas, “Morality and Ethical Life: Does Hegel’s Critique of Kant Apply to Discourse Ethics” (in Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action)

Oct. 13: No classes scheduled
Oct. 20: The Aesthetic Dimension
Schiller, *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man* (selections)
Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism* (selections)
Hegel, *Aesthetics*, Introduction
Bowie, *Aesthetics and Subjectivity*, 16-48, 140-182*
Pinkard, *German Philosophy*, 172-198

Oct. 27: Marx and the Confrontation with German Idealism
Feuerbach, “Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy”*
*Tucker, ed., *The Marx-Engels Reader*, 3-125; 143-145
Lukács, “Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat,” *History and Class Consciousness*
L. Kolakowski, *Main Currents in Marxist Thought*, vol. I, 114-144*

Nov. 3: Heidegger: Fundamental Ontology as a Critique of German Idealism
Heidegger, *Being and Time*, Introduction, Division I: Preparatory Fundamental Analysis of Dasein; paras. 52, 53, 62,

Nov. 10: The French Hegel
Hegel, “Lordship and Bondage” (*Phenomenology of Spirit*)
Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*
Foucault, “The Order of Discourse”*
Heckman, “The French Hegel Renaissance”*

Nov. 17: Negative Dialectics: Adorno’s Interpretation of Hegel
Adorno, *Hegel: Three Studies* (entire)
Adorno, *Negative Dialectics* (selections)*
Adorno, “What is the Meaning of Working Through the Past,” “Resignation” (in *Critical Models)*
Marcuse, “A Note on Dialectics” (*Reason and Revolution)*

Nov. 24: work on papers

Dec. 1: Film: “Heidegger: Only a God Can Save Us”

Dec. 8: Adorno: The Ideology-Critical Function of Literature and Criticism
Adorno, *Prisms*: “Cultural Criticism and Society”
Adorno, *Notes to Literature* I:
Dec. 15: Final Paper Due

Recommended Secondary Works

Beiser, *German Idealism*
Beiser, *The Fate of Reason*
Paton, *Kant’s Metaphysic of Experience*
Taylor, *Hegel*
Heine, *Religion and Philosophy in Germany*
Henrich, *Between Kant and Hegel*
Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit*
Lukács, *The Destruction of Reason*
Lukács, *The Young Hegel*
Marcuse, *Reason and Revolution*
Pippin, *Hegel’s Idealism: The Satisfactions of Self-Consciousness*
Pippin, *Idealism as Modernism*
Adorno, *Kierkegaard: The Construction of the Aesthetic*
Derrida, “From General to Restricted Economy: A Hegelianism without Reserve,” in *Writing and Difference*
Foucault, “Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?” in *The Foucault Reader*
Goldmann, *Lukács and Heidegger*

Written Assignment: Final papers are due on December 15. You are to choose a syllabus-related topic (in consultation with yours truly) and write a 12-15 page essay. The assignment is meant to be an “interpretive essay” rather than a full-blown “research paper.” By the same token, the essay should demonstrate extensive familiarity with the relevant secondary literature as well as the relevant conflict of interpretations. What matters is your capacity to discern and reconstruct the major interpretive standpoints, to evaluate the stronger and weaker arguments and positions, and to arrive at fresh conclusions that, ideally, will advance our understanding of the material
Some Important Quotations to Keep in Mind:

Metaphysics as a natural disposition of reason is real, but taken by itself it is . . .
dialectical and deceptive.

Kant, Werke (4: 365)

The critical path alone is still open.

Kant, Critique of Pure Reason

Two things fill the mind with ever new and increasing admiration and awe, the more
often and steadily we reflect upon them: the starry heavens above me and the moral law
within me.

Kant, Critique of Practical Reason

The true is thus the bacchanalian whirl in which no one escapes from being drunk; and
because each, as soon as he detaches itself, dissolves immediately — the whirl is just as
much transparent and simple repose.

Hegel, Preface, Phenomenology of Spirit

The truth must be grasped not only as *substance* but as *subject*.

Hegel, Preface, Phenomenology of Spirit

What are contained here are the thoughts of God before He created the world.

Hegel, Science of Logic

What is rational is real and what is real is rational.

Hegel, Philosophy of Right

The whole is the true.

Hegel, Phenomenology of Spirit

The whole is the false.

Adorno, Negative Dialectics
In politics, the Germans thought what other nations did. Germany was their theoretical conscience. The abstraction and presumption of its thought was always in step with the one-sidedness and lowliness of its reality. If, therefore, the status quo of German statehood expresses the completion of the ancien régime, the completion of the thorn in the flesh of the modern state, the status quo of German state science expresses the incompletion of the modern state, the defectiveness of its flesh itself.

Karl Marx, “Contribution to the Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right, Introduction”

“The great thing in Hegel’s Phenomenology and its final result . . . is simply that Hegel grasps the self-development of man as a process . . .; that he thus grasps the nature of work and comprehends objective man . . . as the result of his own work”; “he grasps labor . . . as man’s act of self-creation.”

Marx, The Paris Manuscripts

Communism as the positive transcendence of private property as human self-estrangement, and therefore as the real appropriation of the human essence by and for man; communism therefore as the complete return of man to himself as a social (i.e., human) being – a return accomplished consciously and embracing the entire wealth of previous development. This communism, as fully developed naturalism, equals humanism, and as fully developed humanism equals naturalism; it is the genuine resolution of the conflict between man and nature and between man and man – the true resolution of the strife between existence and essence, between objectification and self-confirmation, between freedom and necessity, between the individual and the species. Communism is the riddle of history solved, and it knows itself to be this solution.

Marx, The Paris Manuscripts

Classical German philosophy . . . is able to think the deepest and most fundamental problems of the development of bourgeois society through to the very end – on the plane of philosophy. It is able – in thought – to complete the evolution of class. And – in thought – it is able to take all the paradoxes of its position to the point where the necessity of going beyond this historical stage in mankind’s development can at least be seen as a problem.

Georg Lukács, History and Class Consciousness
“On January 30, 1933, Hegel died.”

Carl Schmitt, *State, Movement, Volk*

To write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric.

Adorno, “Cultural Criticism and Society”

There is no universal history leading from savagery to humanitarianism, but there is one that leads from the slingshot to the megaton bomb. It is a situation that confirms Hegel and that stands him on his head.

Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*

But truly to escape Hegel involves an exact appreciation of the price we have to pay to detach ourselves from him. It assumes that we are aware of the extent to which Hegel, insidiously perhaps, is close to us; it implies a knowledge, in that which permits us to think against Hegel, of that which remains Hegelian. 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, “The Discourse on Language”
Black Notebooks Conference

11 September, Proshansky Auditorium, 6:30, Film: Jeffrey van Davis, “Heidegger: Only A God Can Save Us” (followed by panel discussion)

12 September, Elebash Recital Hall, The Graduate Center, 34th and Fifth Avenue, New York

9:30: Opening Remarks: Richard Wolin

10:00 – 12:00
Karsten Harries (Yale University): “Nostalgia, Spite, and the Truth of Being”
Steven Crowell (Rice University): “Reading Heidegger’s Black Notebooks”

12:00 – 1:00 Lunch Break

1:00 – 3:00
Peter Trawny (University of Wuppertal): “Heidegger and the Myth of a Jewish World Conspiracy”
Sidonie Kellerer (University of Cologne): “Heidegger’s ‘Will to Power’ in the Black Notebooks”

3:00 Break

3:15 – 5:15
Emmanuel Faye (University of Rouen): “Anti-Semitism and Extermination: Heidegger, the Collected Works, and the Black Notebooks”
Thomas Sheehan (Stanford University): “Heidegger: The Greatest Philosopher of the Twentieth Century?”

5:15 – 5:30 Break

5:30 - 6:30 Concluding Remarks: Richard Wolin