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:

Adorno, *Metaphysics: Concepts and Problems*
J. Schmidt, *What is Enlightenment?*

**Pinkard, *German Philosophy, 1760-1860***
Forster, *Hegel’s Idea of a Phenomenology of Spirit*
Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* (Kemp Smith translation)
Herder, *Another Philosophy of History*
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*
Adorno, *Lectures on Negative Dialectics* (Polity)
Habermas, *Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*

Books by your instructor that you might find useful:

- *The Politics of Being: The Political Thought of Martin Heidegger* (Columbia UP)
- *The Seduction of Unreason: The Intellectual Romance with Fascism from Nietzsche to Postmodernism* (Princeton UP)
- *Labyrinths: Critical Explorations in the History of Ideas* (University of Massachusetts)
- *The Frankfurt School Revisited* (Routledge)

General Requirements: regular class attendance; class participation; final writing assignment

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**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.**
Weekly Assignments:

Sept. 5: (N.B.: classes follow a Thursday schedule): Introduction

Sept. 9: What is Metaphysics or “First Philosophy”? (A Guided Tour Led by G. W. F. Hegel)
Descartes, *Discourse on Method*
Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, III: 131-151, 170-178, 213-216*

Sept. 16: Kant: the Bounds of Sense and the Autonomy of Reason
Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781, 1787), Prefaces, Introduction, A19/B33 – A55/B80;
A67/B92-A130/B170
Kant, *Groundwork of a Metaphysics of Morals* (selection)*
Pinkard, *German Philosophy*, 1-80
Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, III, 423-478*

Sept. 23: Debating the Enlightenment: Kant, Herder and Hamann
Herder, *Another Philosophy of History* (selection)*
Kant, “Response to Herder”*

Sept. 30: No Classes scheduled

October 7: Hegel and the Idea of a *Phenomenology of Spirit* I
*Phenomenology of Spirit*, Preface
M. Forster, *Hegel’s Idea of a Phenomenology of Spirit*: 1-125
Pinkard, *German Philosophy*, 214-304

Oct. 14: **Class Will Not Meet**

October 16: N.B.: classes follow a Thursday schedule: imHegel and the Idea of a *Phenomenology of Spirit* II
*Phenomenology of Spirit*: 1-137
M. Forster, *Hegel’s Idea of a Phenomenology of Spirit*: 126-192
Pinkard, *German Philosophy*, 82-86, 217-245

Oct. 21: The Aesthetic Dimension
Schiller, *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man* (selections)*
Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism* (selection)*
Hegel, *Aesthetics*, Introduction
Pinkard, *German Philosophy*, 172-198
Recommended: Bowie, *Aesthetics and Subjectivity*, 16-48, 140-182*
October 28: Anti-Hegelianism I: Schelling and Kierkegaard
Schelling (Bowie, ed.), *On the History of Modern Philosophy*, 1-39, 134-163*
Kierkegaard, Bretall, ed., *The Kierkegaard Reader*, 190-256 *
Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, vol. 3, 512-554*
Pinkard, *German Philosophy*, 172-198

November 4: Anti-Hegelianism II: Marx
Tucker, ed., *The Marx-Engels Reader*, 3-125; 143-145
Lukács, “Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat,” *History and Class Consciousness*
Kolakowski, *Main Currents in Marxist Thought*, vol. I, 114-144 *

November 11: Anti-Hegelianism III: Reason as “Domination”
Danto, *Nietzsche as Philosopher*, 1-18, 50-82 (“Perspectivism”) *
Recommended: Foucault, “Truth and Power” *

November 18: Adorno: The Critique of Hegelianism and Negative Dialectics
Adorno, “The Experiential Content of Hegel’s Philosophy” (*Three Studies on Hegel*), 53-88; *
Adorno, Introduction, *Negative Dialectics* *
Recommended: Introduction, to *Three Studies on Hegel*, ix-xxxiv; Adorno, Negative Dialectics,
“Concepts and Categories”

November 25: Special Film Showing: “Heidegger: Only a God Can Save Us”
Heidegger, “The Self-Assertion of the German University” * (1933)

December 2: Work on Papers

Dec. 9: 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 11. 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”