

PSC 71902  
Limited Enrollment: 12

CUNY GC Tues 2-4  
Professor Buck-Morss

### Critical Reason: The Basics Fall 2014

This course deals with basic concepts and problems of Western Critical Theory. The readings focus on three key authors: Kant, Hegel and Adorno. Philosophy is considered from the perspective of the political. Concepts include: critical reason, transcendental claims, phenomenology, dialectics, non-identity, materialist metaphysics, history, causality, and freedom. Students who are non-specialists are encouraged to read extremely difficult texts (Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Adorno's *Lectures on History and Freedom*) with the goal of developing critical capacities for concrete, historical analyses of political, social and economic life. The challenge is not to master systems of thought, but to make the concepts of the readings and the insights they provide meaningful for contemporary projects of critical analysis. Seminar requirements: sustained, active seminar participation, one short midterm paper, and one final paper (or exam option).

The required texts are:

Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (Cambridge U Press)

Theodor W. Adorno, *Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (Stanford U Press)

G.W.F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A.V. Miller (Oxford U Press)

Theodor W. Adorno, *History and Freedom*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (Polity Press)

Week 1 (September 2) Introduction

Week 2 (September 9)

Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, Prefaces, Introduction, Transcendental Aesthetic, as in 1st and as in 2nd editions, (Guyer and Wood, trans., pp. 99-218).

Adorno, *Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*, pp. 1-33; 224-234.

Week 3 (September 16)

Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, "Transcendental Analytic" (Guyer and Wood, trans., pp. 201-383).

Adorno, *Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*, pp. 81-137.

Week 4 (September 23) NO CLASS (classes follow Friday schedule)

Week 5 (September 30)

Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, "Transcendental Dialectic," (Guyer and Wood, trans., pp. 384-549).

Adorno, *Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*, pp. 138-223.

Week 6 (October 7)

Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, "Ideal of Pure Reason" (Guyer and Wood, trans., pp. 551-704)

Adorno, *Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*, pp. 34-80.

Week 7 (October 15) Short paper due (3-7 pp). We will discuss your reflections on Kant.

Week 8 (October 21)

G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, pages 1-103.

Preface (para. 1-72)

Introduction (para. 73-89)

**A. Consciousness:**

I. Sense Certainty: or the 'This and Meaning'

II. Perception: or the Thing and Deception

III. Force and Understanding: Appearance and the Supersensible World

Week 8 (October 28)

Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, pages 104-138

**B. Self-Consciousness**

IV. The Truth of Self-Certainty

A. Independence and Dependence of Self-Consciousness:

Master/Slave dialectic (*Herrschaft und Knechtschaft*, translated here as "Lordship and Bondage")

**Susan Buck-Morss**, "Hegel and Haiti" (pdf)

[Hegel, *Phenomenology*, B. Freedom of Self-Consciousness: Stoicism/Skepticism/Unhappy Consciousness]

Week 9 (November 4)

Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, pages 139-262

**C. Reason**

V. The Certainty and Truth of Reason

A. Observing Reason: Observation of nature, laws, teleology, organic idea; inner/outer; genus, species, individual; logical/psychological laws; physiognomy and phrenology

B. Actualization of Rational Self-Consciousness through its Own Activity: Pleasure and Necessity; Law of the Heart and Frenzy of Self-Conceit; Virtue and the Way of the World

C. Individuality as Real in and for Itself: Spiritual Animal Kingdom (*Geistige Tierreich*); Reason as lawgiver; Reason as testing laws

Week 10 (November 11) Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, pp. 263-409,  
**[D.] Spirit** (Ethical Order, Culture, Morality). State Power – Alienated Obedience (pp. 305-313 [para. 500-516] Enlightenment – Absolute Freedom and Terror (pp.349-363 [para. 574-595])

Week 11 (November 18)

Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, pp. 410-493

**Religion:** Natural Religion; Religion in the Form of Art; Revealed Religion

**Absolute Knowing**

[Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*: (xerox/scan)

Para. 48: critique of Kantian Antinomy (dialectics)

Para. 53-55: on Kant's 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> critiques (is/ought; free imagination)

Being Becomes (Summary: Para. 111)

Essence Appears (para. 112-131; 138-143)

Critique of liberalism (para. 145)

The Concept (para. 160-165)]

Week 12 (November 25) Week of Thanksgiving – no class

Week 13 (December 2)

Adorno, *History and Freedom*, Editor's foreward and Part I, "History" (lectures 1-10), pp. xi-98

Week 14 (December 9)

Adorno, *History and Freedom*, Part I, "History," and Part II "Progress" (lectures 11-18), pp. 99 – 174 [and "Freedom," lectures 19-22, pp. 177-208]

December 16) Reading Day - no classes

Week 15 (December 23) exam week