



**The Life of the Spirit:
Hegel and Kierkegaard**
Spring 2012

PHIL 394-01
MW 7:00-8:30 PM
Main 011

Professor Diane Michelfelder
Office: MAIN 110
Office hours: Thursday 2-4 and by appointment
Phone: 696-6197
E-mail: michelfelder@macalester.edu

Course Description

Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's daring and drama-packed volume, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, has long stood out as one of the masterworks of 19th century-European philosophy. In this course, we will embrace the adventure of reading the *Phenomenology*, starting with the preface and continuing through the section on Unhappy Consciousness. Among the questions guiding our adventure will be: Just what does Hegel mean by "spirit"? What does it mean to "do" philosophy as a speculative science and how does this approach differ from some of Hegel's predecessors, most importantly Kant? What are the historical forms that Hegel identifies with the emergence and development of philosophical consciousness and how are the transitions between these forms accomplished? In the second part of the course, we will turn to one of Hegel's most sharp-witted and wittiest critics, the Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard, in whose writings the roots of existentialism can be found. Through reading and discussing original texts such as *Fear and Trembling*, *The Sickness unto Death*, and parts of *Either-Or* and *The Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, we will critically examine the contrast

between Hegel's stages of consciousness and those proposed by Kierkegaard: the aesthetic, the ethical, and the religious. What does Kierkegaard mean when he claims that "truth is subjectivity"? And what are we to make of it when he proposes that "a human being is spirit.....spirit is the self"?

Learning goals

The learning goals for this course can be simply expressed.

With respect to learning about content, this course is designed to help you acquire a critical understanding of (a) the fundamental questions, concepts, perspectives, and thematic developments within Hegel's and Kierkegaard's philosophies, as exemplified by the works that will challenge us in this course; (b) how Hegel's philosophy fits within the broader tradition of European philosophy, both as an astute questioning of this tradition and as its continuation; and (c) how the themes sounded by Kierkegaard in his response to Hegel as well as his consideration of Christianity lay the groundwork for the movement of existentialist thought in the 20th century.

This course is also intended to give you opportunities for becoming more practiced in the kinds of reading, talking, thinking, and writing that are part of the activity of "doing philosophy," and to help you become more aware of the questions and assumptions you bring to this activity. It is also intended to give you a greater appreciation of the genuine difficulties involved with doing philosophy, as well as its genuine pleasures.

Required Texts

G.W. F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, Oxford University Press, 1979.

Howard Hong and Edna Hong, Eds., *The Essential Kierkegaard*, Princeton University Press, 2000.

Søren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, Cambridge University Press, 1st edition, 2011.

Søren Kierkegaard, *The Present Age*, Harper Perennial, 1962

Academic Integrity

In this class, we will strive to have an environment geared as best as possible toward facilitating individual learning and which models best scholarly practices. Please know that in reviewing your work, I will adhere to the College's *Academic Integrity Policy* as published in the *Student Handbook*.

Through the gift of your attention, you not only offer yourself more opportunities to be involved in class discussion, but you also help support the integrity of the learning environment. For your own sake and that of your fellow students, kindly take your phone

off the “ring” setting while in class and please refrain from texting, tweeting, googling, and the like.

Coursework

For this course, you will be writing one short and a draft and a final version of a longer, term paper, which you will also get a chance to present in class. You will also have multiple opportunities through contributing to class discussion to develop your skills as an active participant in the construction of philosophical knowledge. And, you will be able to further develop your skills for reading philosophical texts that are far from famous for their simplicity.

The focus of your first paper, which should be from 5-7 pages long, will be a critical analysis on a topic from the portion of the *Phenomenology* that we will be considering in class. For your second paper, you may choose to extend your Hegel paper, write on a topic in Kierkegaard, or take a comparative look at one aspect of Hegel’s and Kierkegaard’s philosophy. Before you turn it in in its final form, you will have benefited in two ways from the feedback of your peers. First, each of you will be reading a draft of everyone else’s paper on Moodle and offering a comment or a question prior to the day on which the author of the paper presents it in class. Second, following the presentation of each paper, there will be time for discussion.

A late paper will be accepted without penalty if you have a good reason for turning it in late and you let me know in advance of the due date that you will not be turning it in on time. Unexcused late papers will be accepted up to one week after the due date, but you will lose half a grade (eg your grade will go from A- to B+) on the first day your paper is late, and every two days thereafter.

You will also be asked to turn in ten one-page reflections on the readings, oriented by a question of your own choosing. Why start with a question, rather than come up with one about a text after you have read it? The point of these “MyQuestion” reflections is to help you “read from the inside” by having a dialogue with the works we will be considering in this course. One “MyQuestion” reflection will be due during each of the weeks 3-7 and 9-13. It does not matter if you turn it in as a reflection for a Monday reading or a Wednesday one, just send it electronically before class meets on that day. These will be graded on a check plus, check, and check minus basis. It is acceptable and even anticipated that the question you ask at the beginning may undergo modification as you read, and so be different from the one you are asking at the course’s end.

In general, for any given class meeting, we will spend the first half hour exploring the general themes and trajectories of thought posed by the reading assignment as well as by putting it in its philosophical and larger historical context. We will spend the remaining hour looking more closely at the substance of the reading and on discussion. As just noted, this is a general plan, and it could turn out that on some occasions we may not follow it. In keeping with the advanced level of this course, in the course of the semester, each of you will have the opportunity to co-lead one class discussion.

Coursework evaluation

Your final grade for this class will be based on the following percentages:

First paper	20%
Second paper, draft	15%
Second paper, final	15%
MyQuestion reflections	15%
Oral presentation	10%
Co-leading class discussion	10%
Class participation	15%

Class Schedule

This schedule may change at the discretion of the instructor; any changes will be announced in class and also e-mailed to the class distribution list.

Week One

Monday, 23 January	Welcome and orientation to the course Introduction to Hegel: Hegel and his times
Wednesday, 25 January	Hegel and Kant The paradox of philosophical prefaces Hegel, <i>Phenomenology of Spirit</i> , Sections 1-19

Week Two

Monday, 30 January	“The true is the whole” Spirit and the modern age <i>Phenomenology</i> , Sections 20-37
Wednesday, 1 February	Argumentative and speculative thinking <i>Phenomenology</i> , Sections 38-72

Week Three

Monday, 6 February	The phenomenon of consciousness <i>Phenomenology</i> , Sections 73-89
Wednesday, 8 February	Here and now with Hegel: Sense-certainty <i>Phenomenology</i> , Sections 90-110

Week Four

- Monday, 13 February Sense-perception and the objects of its frustrations
Phenomenology, Sections 111-131
- Wednesday, 15 February Force, understanding, and the world turned upside-down
Phenomenology, Sections 132-165, giving particular
attention to Sections 148-165

Week Five

- Monday, 20 February The kaleidoscopic structure of life
Spirit enters the scene
Phenomenology, Sections 166-177
- Wednesday, 22 February Lordship and servitude
Phenomenology, Sections 178-196

Week Six

- Monday, 27 February Stoicism and skepticism
Phenomenology, Sections 197-206
- Wednesday, 29 February Why, at this point, is consciousness unhappy?
Phenomenology, Sections 207-238

Friday, 2 March

First Paper Due

Week Seven

- Monday, 5 March Unhappy consciousness and the reception of Hegel in
20th century French philosophy
Readings to be assigned
- Wednesday, 7 March Spirit knowing itself as spirit:
One look ahead and another look back
Phenomenology, Sections 788-808, review of Preface

Week Eight

- Monday, 12 March Spring break
- Wednesday, 14 March Spring break

Week Nine

- Monday, 19 March Kierkegaard in the setting of his times, especially “the System”

Reading: *The Present Age*

Wednesday, 21 March

The dimensions of the aesthetic life
Selections from *Either-Or*, in Hong & Hong,
pp. 37-65

Week Ten

Monday, 26 March

The dimensions of the ethical life
Further selections from *Either-Or*, in Hong & Hong,
pp. 66-83; also pp. 182-186 (from *Stages on Life's Way*)

Wednesday, 28 March

Knights of faith and infinite resignation
Fear and Trembling, Preface through Problem One

Week Eleven

Monday, 2 April

Ethical duty and faith-full passion
Fear and Trembling, Problems Two and Three

Wednesday, 4 April

Possibility and anxiety (and spirit again)
Selections from *The Concept of Anxiety*, in Hong & Hong,
pp. 138-155

Week Twelve

Monday, 9 April

Spirit, the self, and despair
Selections from *The Sickness unto Death*, in Hong & Hong,
pp. 351-372

Wednesday, 11 April

The impossibility of thinking system and existence together
Selections from *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, in Hong & Hong, pp.187-198

Week Thirteen

Monday, 16 April

Truth as subjectivity
Concluding Unscientific Postscript, in Hong & Hong, pp.198-225

Wednesday, 18 April

The style of the subjective thinker
Concluding Unscientific Postscript, in Hong & Hong, pp.225-246

Friday, 20 April

Second Paper Drafts Due

Week Fourteen

Monday, 23 April

Second paper oral presentations

Wednesday, 25 April

Second paper oral presentations

Week Fifteen

Monday, 30 April

Additional time for oral presentations, if needed
End-of-semester wrap-up and reflection on the course

Friday, 4 May

Second Paper Final Version Due

Your papers may be turned in to me in my office
at any time before 5 pm