September 2010

Phil. 366: GERMAN IDEALISM (previously known as “18th and early 19th Century German Philosophy”; CNR 5049)
Tuesday & Thursday, 11:35am–12:55pm
Instructor: Professor George di Giovanni; associate instructor: Ms Anna Ezekiel
Office: Leacock 930; 514-398-6062
di_giovanni@mcgill.ca
Office hours: for the moment, by appointment. Regular hours will be duly posted by the Philosophy Office.

Description: An introduction to German Idealism that includes (1) an account of the immediate background of Kant’s critical theory; (2) an introductory account of Kant’s theoretical and moral critical philosophy; (3) a detailed account of the idealism that followed upon Kant’s critical revolution and of the circumstance behind this new development. Kant and Fichte will be the principal objects of study, but a host of other figures will be treated as well.

Normal enrolment: 25-30 students (this year might be more).

Required readings: (The following texts, except Schultz’s commentary, are all available at Paragraphe bookstore)

(1) Excerpts from Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi, The Main Philosophical Writings and the Novel ‘Allwill’, G. di Giovanni, tr. ed. (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1994; paperback, 2009). In past years, I have provided these excerpts in a special course-pack. However, the book is now available at Paragraphe bookstore in paperback edition at paperback price, which is just about the equivalent of the course-pack. Having the whole volume will much facilitate my teaching and your readings. You can also try Amazon.

(2) Excerpts (listed below) from Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, 1781/1787. Numbers refer to standard pagination, i.e. the pagination of the first (A) and the second (B) edition (for the most part, these two editions overlap, though in some significant places this is not the case). This pagination is included in the margin in both the old Norman Kemp Smith translation and the more recent Cambridge translation (Guyer/Wood). The Norman Kemp Smith translation is now available online: google “Critique of Pure Reason” and look for the Norman Kemp Smith translation. If you want to buy the text, you should buy the new Guyer/Wood translation, but the older one is perfectly adequate. Note that these excerpts are not very extensive. Excerpts:
  - Prefaces to the first and second edition (Avii-xxii; B vii-xliv)
  - Introduction (A1/B5–A16/B30)
  - Transcendental Aesthetic (A19/B33–A49/B73)
  - The Principles of Any Transcendental Deduction (A84/B117-A95/B129)
  - The Transcendental Deduction of the B edition (B129-B175)
  - Refutation of Idealism (B274-2790),

There is another translation by Pluhar. I do not recommend it. This an abridged edition and does
not contain all the required passages.

The first commentary of the Critique ever written (still the most concise and the clearest) is now available in English translation. I recommend it as an aid to the reading of Kant’s work: Johann Schultz, Exposition of Kant’s Critique of Pure Reason, tr. James C. Morrison (University of Ottawa Press, 1995). Unfortunately, I cannot order copies because it is out of print. Copies, however, are in the Library.

(3) Kant, Critique of Practical Reason, tr. Lewis White Beck. Despite the ponderous title, this is not a very big book.

Besides the Paragraphe bookstore, you can also try Amazon.


Suggested reading:

All the content of this course, and much more besides, is now to be found in George di Giovanni, Freedom and Religion in Kant and His Immediate Successors: The Vocation of Humankind, 1774-1800 (Cambridge: University Press, 2005; paperback edition, 2007). Two copies are in the Library. A few copies will be available at Paragraphe bookstore. Copies are now available at Amazon at a very low price. This is not a required text.

The main texts will also be placed on the reserve shelf at the Library.

Tentative list of lecture topics (some topics will take up more than one lectures, some less):

01. Introduction to the course
02. The Spinoza dispute
03. First preface to the Critique of Pure Reason.
04. Second preface

05. Introduction to the *Critique of Pure Reason*

06. The Transcendental Aesthetics

07. Introduction to the Transcendental Deduction

08. The Transcendental Deduction

09. Refutation of Idealism

10. Noumena and Phenomena

11. Kant’s moral philosophy

12. Jacobi’s dialogue, *David Hume*

13. Reinhold

14. Schulze/Aenesidemus

15. Maimon

16. Fichte

17. Schelling and Hegel

18. Conclusion

A brief description of the lectures will be posted on the WEBCT. These descriptions are only intended to orient students in the material of the course. E-mails are to be sent to me only for technical elucidations or special problems. Questions are to be raised in class for general discussions. I do not take attendance, but students miss lectures and class discussions at their own risk.

Requirements: Two short papers (about 1,500 words each; each 30% of final mark); one take-home examination (40% of final mark).

Topics for the first paper will be issued at the beginning of October and the papers will be due on the first lecture date of November. Topics for the second paper will be issued at the beginning of November and the papers will be due on the first lecture date of December. The examination text
will be given at the last lecture. Although the examination is ‘take home’, it is formal. That means that examination papers will be due on the date determined by Faculty in the general examination schedule.

McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see http://www.mcgill.ca/integrity for more information).

In the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the University’s control, the content and/or evaluation scheme in this course is subject to change.

In accord with McGill University’s Charter of Students’ Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded.