

Winter 2014
PHIL 475: Topics in Contemporary European Philosophy
Continental Ethics: Ricœur's ethical thought. The primacy of the aim over the norm.
Forgiveness: the debate between Jankélévitch, Arendt, Derrida and Ricœur

Monday-Wednesday 10:05-11:25 Birks Building 111, 3520 University Street
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Contacting me

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Contemporary continental ethics has been profoundly marked by the Second World War and the Holocaust. Authors such as Paul Ricœur, Emmanuel Lévinas, Hannah Arendt and Hans Jonas have insisted on the notion of responsibility for the other in order to point out the limitations of considering the human subject only as an autonomous self.

Throughout the semester, the focus of this course, as such, will be Ricœur's ethical thought. We will see how he interprets the ethical aim of the good life, in relation to another person, and to just institutions. While our *main focus* will remain the texts of Ricœur, we will see how he dialogues with different authors: Emmanuel Lévinas, who addresses responsibility for the other, Hans Jonas, who focuses on our responsibility for future generations, and Hannah Arendt, who discusses our role in institutions. At the end of the semester, we will analyze Ricœur's dialogue with H. Arendt, V. Jankélévitch and J. Derrida on forgiveness. The debate around the phenomenon of forgiveness will include questions such as: are some acts, and actors, "unforgivable"? Does forgiving entail forgetting or, on the contrary, does it involve the duty to remember? What is the role of memory? What are the differences between forgiveness, prescription and amnesty? What is the link between forgiveness and justice? Can we speak about a collective guilt? Is forgiveness always personal? What is the relationship between love and forgiveness? Between promising and forgiving? Is it possible to forgive oneself?

A Written Assignment (four pages)	30%	Feb. 6
Research Paper (3500 words)	40%	March 13
Take-home Exam	30%	April 14

Required textbooks (Available at McGill Bookstore)

All of them will be put on reserve, but students are highly encouraged to buy them and have them in class for class discussions)

1. Books

Paul Ricœur, *Oneself as Another*, transl. by Kathleen Blamey, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992.

Jacques Derrida, "On Forgiveness." in *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*, transl. by M. Dooley and M. Hughes, with a preface by S. Critchley and R. Kearney, London and New York: Routledge, 2001, 27-60.

2. MyCourses

•Vladimir Jankélévitch, "Should We pardon Them ?" *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 22, n°3 (Spring 1996), 552-572.

Sophocles, *Antigone*

3. Course Pack (Available at McGill Bookstore)