

McGill University
Department of Philosophy
Phil 480-001 Topics in the History of Philosophy (Fall 2022)

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Course Description

The topic of this course is the epistemological significance of *feeling*. We will discuss the problem of the longstanding antagonism between feeling and rationality. We will explore the distinctions between feeling, intuition, passion, desire, affect, drives and emotions, and we will examine the importance of feeling in epistemology and ontology.

Throughout the history of philosophy, the canon has traditionally accorded the highest rank to *thought* and discounted *feelings* as having little or no epistemological worth. When they have been considered at all, feelings are most often investigated as they relate to states of happiness or pleasure or the role they play in morality and ethics. Recently, there has been interesting work on affect and theories of emotions, but little attention has been paid to the extent that feeling plays an important and interesting epistemological and ontological role, especially in thinkers who are renowned for their hyper rationality and their claim to objectivity and scientific rigor in their philosophical systems, such as Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel.

We will discuss the interesting and surprising shift that began in the Enlightenment when the concept of feeling began to play a more significant role in philosophical discourse, in, for example, the work of Rousseau, Hume and Kant. We will then study different aspects of the concept of feeling as it appears in thinkers from Fichte to Novalis. In Kant feeling is connected to states of pleasure and happiness and plays an interesting role in his ethics and aesthetics. In Fichte, "*Selbstgefühl*" is the keystone for knowledge of oneself and other selves. We will see that Hegel is misread as staunch rationalist for whom feeling must always be subjugated to conceptually determinate thought. In Hegel's thought, feeling actually underlies and accompanies the positing of concepts. For Schopenhauer, the metaphysical sublime is accessible only through feeling, and, for Schleiermacher, the essence of religion and piety lies in feeling and intuition rather than meditation and practice. Finally, we will consider *lyrical feeling* in Nietzsche and Novalis's work. We will see that these thinkers foreshadow twentieth and twenty-first century theories of emotions and we will likely be surprised to discover the extent to which knowledge is related to feeling.

Knowledge of nineteenth century philosophy would be an asset but is not strictly necessary.

The lectures and discussions will not be recorded by the instructor and students are not permitted to record the lectures or class discussions.

Evaluation

1. Weekly comments on assigned readings (on Perusall) and weekly questions for class discussion (My Courses) 40%. Late submissions are not accepted for marks. Each mark assigned weekly includes the written comments on the Perusall text (six). The requirement to submit six comments/questions is a minimum, you are invited to submit more than six comments if you wish. You must also submit one question for class discussion on My Courses in "Discussions". This can be a different question from your comments, or you may recycle one of your comments on the text, but it must meet the criteria of a good question for class discussion, and it must be submitted on My Courses in "Discussions". The class is a seminar style class, and you are expected to come to class and to discuss the questions/comments with your classmates and the instructor.

Your weekly grade will be based on the following criteria:

- quality of the comments on Perusall text and spacing of comments throughout the text
- quality of the question for class discussion
- participation in the class discussion

2. Presentation 15%

On one occasion during the semester, you will give a presentation in class. The presentation should be 35 minutes minimum and 50 minutes maximum excluding discussion. The method of presentation is open. You may use notes and give a lecture style presentation, you may present a power point, you may provide handouts to the class. It is hoped that everyone will be able to choose a text and a date that suits them, if this is not possible, the instructor will assign texts and dates.

Your grade will be based on the following criteria:

- depth of understanding and explication of the assigned text
- relevant primary source research (written up in a bibliography)
- submission of written copy 48 hours before the presentation
- clarity of presentation
- ability to lead the discussion

The written-up presentation must be sent to the instructor 48 hours before the presentation. You may make some changes and improvements to the presentation after you have handed in the written copy, however, the copy you submit to the instructor should be a complete and finished version of the presentation.

3. One exegetical paper of the main primary source for the final paper 15%. One critical paper on the epistemological significance of feeling (2500-3000 words) 30%. Students may choose their topic although the topic must be discussed and approved by the instructor. You may work on the same philosopher that you presented on, however, you may not recycle the primary source text that you did your presentation on for your exegetical paper.

Universal Accommodation

I will take 80% of your submissions on Perusall and 80% of your submissions on Discussions for grades so if you miss one due to illness or extenuating circumstances, there is no consequence to your final grade. You are still required to do 100% of the readings and comments for the class, however, you will not be penalized if you have a late submission on less than 20% of your submissions.

Readings

David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature, Enquiries Concerning Human Understanding and concerning the Principles of Morals* (excerpts).

Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment* (excerpts).

Johann Fichte, *Wissenschaftslehre Nova Methodo (1796-1799)* (excerpts)

Friedrich Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism* (1800) (excerpts)

G.W.F Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind, Phenomenology of Spirit* (excerpts)

Friedrich Schleiermacher, *On Religion, Speeches to its Cultured Despisers* (excerpts)

Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation* (excerpts).

Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil* (excerpts). Other texts TBA.

Friedrich von Hardenberg (Novalis), *Hymns to the Night, Fichte-Studien* (excerpts).

Readings and/or links to the readings will be available on My Courses and Perusall. A tentative schedule of readings will be posted at the beginning of the semester on My Courses.

Communication

I am available during my office hours and by appointment by Zoom. If I have a message for students, I will post it on My Courses so please check regularly. Please do not leave messages for me on My Courses, please email me at susan.hoffmann@mcgill.ca

Dialogical Framework

There is no written feedback on individual Perusall comments or questions for class discussion although you are welcome, on an individual basis, to discuss your question with me during office hours or during an appointment made at a time that is mutually agreeable. Examples of good questions will be posted and general feedback about the quality of the questions will be offered at the beginning of the semester. General feedback on the Perusall comments will be built into the lectures. Our investigation and discussion about the nature and relevance of feeling in philosophy is a collaborative discussion and students are expected to participate in the class discussions and to lead the class discussion on at least one occasion.

University Policies

In accord with McGill University's [Charter of Student Rights](#), students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French written work that is to be graded. This does not apply to courses in which acquiring proficiency in a language is one of the objectives.

Conformément à [la Charte des droits de l'étudiant](#) de l'Université McGill, chaque étudiant a le droit de soumettre en français ou en anglais tout travail écrit devant être noté, sauf dans le cas des cours dont l'un des objets est la maîtrise d'une langue.

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 McGill's [guide to academic honesty](#) for more information.)

L'université McGill attache une haute importance à l'honnêteté académique. Il incombe par conséquent à tous les étudiants de comprendre ce que l'on entend par tricherie, plagiat et autres infractions académiques, ainsi que les conséquences que peuvent avoir de telles actions, selon [le Code de conduite de l'étudiant et procédures disciplinaires](#). (pour de plus amples renseignements, veuillez consulter le [guide pour l'honnêteté académique de McGill](#).)

The [University Student Assessment Policy](#) exists to ensure fair and equitable academic assessment for all students and to protect students from excessive workloads. Students and instructors are encouraged to review this Policy.

Work submitted for evaluation as part of this course may be checked with text-matching software within MyCourses.

© Instructor-generated course materials (e.g., handouts, notes, summaries, exam questions) are protected by law and may not be copied or distributed in any form or in any medium without explicit permission of the instructor. Note that copyright infringements can be subject to follow-up by the University under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures.

As the instructor of this course, I endeavor to provide an inclusive learning environment. However, if you experience barriers to learning in this course, do not hesitate to discuss them with me and/or the [Office for Students with Disabilities](#).”

Students may face mental health challenges that can impact not only their academic success but also their ability to thrive in our campus community. Please reach out for support when you need it; many [resources](#) are available on-campus, off-campus, and online.”

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