

idsva

703 Syllabus: Seminar (Quasi-Independent Study Course II)

Hegemonic Fantasms: A History of Philosophy

Online
4 Credits

Dates: Jan 21 - April 19 (Spring Break March 3-7)
Instructors: Prof. Howard Caygill
TA Hannah Christian (PhD candidate)

Course Description

Seminar III, Part 2: *Hegemonic Fantasms: A History of Philosophy* combines a reading of Western Philosophy from the ancient Greeks to the post-modern period with a quasi-Independent Study course. Coursework will focus primarily on one text, Rainer Schürmann's *Broken Hegemonies*. Close reading of this text will take place over the whole semester with Professor Caygill. Along with it, in the last two weeks students will also read three texts that deal with issues of race and the Anthropocene, Achille Mbembe's *Critique of Black Reason*, Andreas Weber's *Enlivenment: Toward a Poetics for the Anthropocene* and Thomas Nail's *A Theory of the Earth*.

Learning Objectives

The *Hegemonic Fantasms: A History of Philosophy* seminar is a quasi-independent study course leading to a 12-to-15 page self-directed paper at the end of the semester. This paper is intended to hone students' critical thinking and writing skills, while broadening their engagement with ideas and artworks. The TA will work with students directly on this aspect of the course.

Continuing the work started in the 702 Seminar II: *Art in Theory* Revisited, this quasi-independent study course aims at helping students develop particular scholarly interests and to integrate those interests within the IDSVA curriculum. Unlike the first semester of study, first-year students are now required to conduct outside research. Critical texts for the final paper will

be chosen from the readings for the seminar itself, as well from 704: *The Subject and Object of Art*, and outside research (see paper specifications below).

The quasi-Independent Study is meant to foster the skills and attitude necessary for successful scholarship. These include “hard” skills, such as creating an outline, footnotes, and a bibliography, but also “soft” skills, such as the wherewithal to pursue research independently while also seeking advice and counsel from colleagues in the field.

More specifically, over the course of the semester students will learn to:

1. Situate a broad spectrum of philosophical ideas within their historical background and become familiar with key figures and concepts in Western thought.
2. Identify recurrent problems in the history of ideas and see how they develop in time and relate with our contemporary condition.
3. Formulate questions that aim at gaining deeper understanding of the issues themselves, and ways they relate with one another.
4. Develop critical reading & writing skills and intertextual analysis.
5. Develop student’s own research interests and skills based on course material and outside research.

Note: Students will formulate their questions for the final paper in week 6, and by week 8 they will produce a first rough draft of their papers.

Course Requirements

1. Seminar participation, including Videoconferences, Open Class Forum, and Individual Calls:

- a. **Videoconference.** Students will participate in a once-every-three weeks (roughly) 2-hour videoconference. Each videoconference will be recorded and archived in Canvas (archiving will take a couple of hours after the end of the session).
 - a.1. Attendance policy: students are expected to attend every class. Video recordings are available as a make-up resource for missed classes, but they should not be considered equivalent to attending the class in person. More than two missed conferences will lower the final grade of 0.25 points per missed conference.
 - a.2. VC etiquette: Students are expected to participate via webcam. Being on video improves the interactive character of the VC and the level of attention of the students and helps the instructor to engage more actively in their communicative skills. Any exemption should be discussed with the professor in charge before the class takes place and will be considered on a case-by-case basis. For example, if you are travelling or have problems with your connection, ask the professor for permission not to use the webcam or to participate via phone.

- a.3. Please make use of the chat function only if you encounter technical problems or in order to post information and links that are addressed during the discussion. Avoiding parallel conversations helps develop a shared conversation with all students and the professor.

b. Open Class Forum: Students can initiate optional written discussion in Canvas (“Discussions” area) every week. However, in designated OCF weeks the discussion will be more structured and will require students to answer specific questions formulated by the TA. OCF should be considered as a focused conversation with the readings and one another (not a social-media style forum for scattered musings). The primary goal for the OCF is to guide students in the task of “formulating the question”; the TA will model the questions to facilitate the learning process.

- b.1. At the start of each OCF week, the TA will post a couple of intertextual questions based on the assigned readings (these questions will be ‘pinned’ by the TA). Each student is required to answer/address a question at least once in the discussion thread, and for each OCF designated week. Students are encouraged to pose their own questions as well, as part of their answers.
- b.2. These responses should be posted preferably by the middle of the week, to allow for the discussion to take place with other members of the class. The forum will be left open after the end of the week to allow for more discussion to take place; please take advantage of it!
- b.3. Replies to questions should be **thoughtful and succinct (under 300 words)** in order to keep the conversation lively and to the point.
- b.4. Replies should (i) address at least one of the questions, and (ii) engage productively with other student comments.

The TA will act as a mediator and step in whenever necessary to provide feedback or refocus the conversation if it goes out of track.

In addition to serving our immediate learning and engagement with the material, Open Class Forum discussions should also lay the groundwork for the seminar essay assignments. Cohort OCF discussion is archived for this purpose. Moreover, if you have a good solid OCF trail, oral exam prep is very doable. Without that, orals prep can be very difficult.

c. Individual Calls (IC): Roughly every three weeks each student will engage in a video conference or Google Meet discussion with the faculty. Calls will last approximately 30 minutes and will be scheduled close to the date. Students should come to the calls prepared to discuss the readings for that week, and with a couple of questions for the instructor.

- a.1. Attendance policy: If you need to reschedule your IC, please notify the professor in advance. Please reschedule only for urgent reasons and possibly within the

designated IC week. More than two missed ICs will lower the final grade by 0.25 points per missed meeting. Please inform the TA and the professor in advance if you cannot attend the IC. (We suggest you add the scheduled IC to your calendar: in this way, you'll make sure not to miss it.)

2. Final paper

- a. The final paper (twelve to fifteen-page – or 3600-4500 words – excluding bibliography, footnotes and images) should make a careful argument that intertextually relates topics explored in the seminar with issues researched by the student, and with course material from the 704 seminar when applicable. The topic and thesis statement should be discussed with Professor Caygill and the TA beginning in week 6 and a paper statement submitted by **Feb** . Please limit your final paper to between 3 and 5 main selected texts to put in intertextual relation, following the guidelines that will be posted with the assignment.
- b. Papers should include *a minimum* of six and a maximum of twelve bibliographic entries. Students are encouraged to include texts from other seminar courses in their bibliographies (including past seminars).
- c. Please refer to the **IDSVA Writing Guide** for detailed explanation of paper requirements. All papers must include an **outline** as developed according to Guide specifications. Please use **MLA style** in your papers (see Section VIII, for some tips on writing style and mechanics). (For a quick online reference, see: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>)
- d. Papers (including preliminary statements) should be uploaded to Assignments in Canvas as a Word document (.doc or .docx; no pdf). Please use a Times New Roman font, point 12, double-spaced, leaving a 1" margin on top/bottom and 1" on right and left sides. No other fonts or formats are acceptable. Clearly mark your name, seminar and assignment on the front page of your document, and number your pages. Files should be named according to the following format:

Familyname, givenname_702.2_assignmentname_yymmdd

(e.g. "Spade,Sam_702.2_final draft_240329")

- e. Late submissions will not be graded unless prior arrangements have been made with Professor Caygill for a brief extension (made on a case-by-case basis in response to special circumstances). A grade reduction may apply to late submissions. For extensions exceeding two weeks after the due date at the end of the semester, students should request an Incomplete (see Student Handbook).

Assessment and Grading

The final grade for 703.2 Seminar will be based on class participation in Videoconferences, Open Class Forum, and individual calls (40% total), and the grade received on the final paper (60%).

Students are required to familiarize themselves with the Rubric for Long Papers Evaluation (available in Canvas), which will be used as a meter to assess final papers.

Required Texts

- Reiner Schürmann. *Broken Hegemonies*. * Translated by Reginald Lilly, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2003. ISBN: 0-253-21547-1
* **Read the General Introduction, pp. 1-48, before the start of the semester.**
- Achille Mbembe. *Critique of Black Reason*. Wits University Press, 2017. ISBN: 978-1-77614-050-3
- Andreas Weber, *Enlivenment: Toward a Poetics for the Anthropocene*. Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 2019.
- Thomas Nail. *A Theory of the Earth*. Stanford UP, 2021
- IDSVA Research and Writing Guide (PDF, Canvas homepage)

Course Structure

10 weeks of instruction, with Spring Break after week 6 and with final paper due one week after the end of the semester (Reading Period). Average of 100 pages of readings per week.

Note: The semester begins on **January 21st**, so please plan on starting the readings *before then*. Ideally, you should be *at least* one week ahead with the readings. You are strongly advised to create a reading schedule for yourself, and to block in times to complete x amount of pages every day (we indicated the number of pages for each week to facilitate this task).

Reading & Writing Schedule

Please note: This schedule is provided as a guideline for students and faculty. It may be modified on a case-by-case basis, at the discretion of the faculty. Weeks follow a Monday-Sunday structure.

Week 1 (Jan 21-Jan 26) VC: Monday, Jan 27– 4-6pm EST

Hegemonic Fantasms and their Foundation

Reiner Schürmann, *Broken Hegemonies*, General Intro, Part I Chapter 1, 1-71

Optional VC with Hannah: Tuesday January 28th– 3 pm EST

Week 2 (Jan 27th-Feb 2) VC: Monday, Feb 3– 4-6pm EST

Parmenides and the One

Reiner Schürmann, *Broken Hegemonies*, Part I, I, Chapters 2-5 71-135

Week 3 (Feb 3rd-9th) Calls: time TBD**The Movement of Destitution**

Reiner Schürmann, *Broken Hegemonies*, Part I, II, Chapters 6&7, 137-188

Week 4 (Feb 10th-16th) OCF**Nature as Hegemonic Fantasm**

Reiner Schürmann, *Broken Hegemonies*, Part II, I, Chapters 8-10, 189-269

Optional VC with Hannah: Tuesday February 11th – 3 pm EST

Week 5 (Feb 17th-23th) VC: Monday February 17h 4pm EST**The Invention of Radical Freedom:**

Reiner Schürmann, *Broken Hegemonies*, Part II, II, Chapters 11-13, 271-340

Mandatory VC with Hannah to discuss writing guide and paper ideas: Tuesday February 18th – 3 pm EST

Week 6 (February 24th – March 2nd) VC: Monday February 24th 4pm EST**Freedom and the Conscious Subject**

Reiner Schürmann, *Broken Hegemonies*, Part III, I, Chapters 1, 2, 3 & 4 343-510

Formulate main question/topic/thesis for paper (submit to Canvas by February 24th)

Week 7 (March 3-9) SPRING BREAK – no class**Week 8 (March 10th-16th) VC: Monday March 10th 4pm EST****The Diremption**

Reiner Schürmann, *Broken Hegemonies*, Part III, II, 511-574

Optional VC with Hannah: Tuesday March 11th – 3 pm EST

First draft due March 10th

Week 9 (March 17th-23th) OCF

The Singularisation to Come?

Reiner Schürmann, *Broken Hegemonies*, Part III, II Chapter 7 & Conclusion,
575-632

Week 10 (March 24th -30st) VC: Monday March 24th 4pm EST

Race as Hegemonic Fantasm?

Achille Mbembe, *Critique of Black Reason*

Second draft due March 25th

Week 11 (March 31-April 6th) Calls (TBD) – Calls will be scheduled April 1st-12th

The Anthropocene as Hegemonic Fantasm?

Thomas Nail. *A Theory of the Earth*. Weber, *Enlivenment*

Week 12 (April 8th-14th) Reading/writing Period (no class)

Final paper due: April 14

Key assignment due dates (summary):

- Feb 24th: Formulate main question/topic/thesis for paper
- March 10th: First draft final paper due
- March 25th: Second draft final paper due
- April 14th: Final paper due