

IDSVA SYLLABUS
801 Seminar II
Topological Studies II
Athens and Berlin

Course Number:	801.1
Course Title:	801.1 <i>Topological Studies II</i>
Dates:	May 30 – June 11, 2025
Format:	In-residence
Faculty:	Howard Caygill; Dejan Lukic; Simonetta Moro; Silvia Mazzini
Visiting Faculty:	Nina Papazoglou
Credits:	2

801.1 Course Description:

Seminar II, Part I: Topological Studies II analyses crucial relationships between past and present in two pivotal sites for the history of Western thought and the arts. The residency begins in Athens, where students are invited to reflect on the different interpretations concerning ancient Greek thought and art. Building on these manifold narratives, we will approach their legacy deconstructed and developed in the contemporary art scene.

Visits to key archaeological sites as the Acropolis and Delphi, and museums such as the Benaki, Cycladic, and EMST, will be intersected with lectures by Prof. Caygill and Prof. Lukic on ancient Greek art and thought, which paved the way to renewed narratives and philosophical reinterpretations from Hegel and Nietzsche to Heidegger and Derrida. This will allow students to critically situate the visits to contemporary galleries and art installation through the city, guided by visiting faculty Nina Papazoglou.

In Berlin, we return to the question of history and its traces, through a dynamic reading of the city as the site of the emergence of Idealist and Romantic philosophy (Hegel), the progressive and Marxist-informed thought developed during the Weimar Republic period (Benjamin), its suppression during the Nazi period, and the development of renewed hopes for alternatives forms of living together (Bloch). In particular, we will discuss how the legacy of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit and Lectures on Aesthetics impacted different, partly contradictory attitudes towards past, present and future, which had enormous repercussions on the history of philosophical, artistic and political ideas and practices. Lectures and excursions led by Prof. Mazzini and Prof. Caygill will highlight the role of Berlin as one of the liveliest centers for contemporary art in Europe, through visits to museums and cultural institutions, such as Hamburger Bahnhof, the Boros collection, Kulturforum, Neue Nationalgalerie, and others.

Learning Objectives:

In the course of the seminar, students will:

1. Deepen their knowledge in Ancient and Contemporary arts and philosophy through close reading and intertextual reading;
2. Cultivate their critical and dialogical skills;
3. Develop their ability to historically and theoretically contextualize readings, monuments and works of art
4. Identify, deconstruct and analyze multiple narratives and perspectives on cultural phenomena and artifacts

Students are also expected to cultivate formulating **concise, critically informed questions**. This skill is to be practiced through posing questions at the end of student seminar presentations and at the end of faculty lectures.

Course Requirements:

1. Reading and discussion of texts listed below.
2. Students are required to formulate questions in response to their colleagues' seminar presentations, as well as faculty's lectures and workshops.

Note: While in residency at Athens, selected mornings will be dedicated to **20-minutes paper presentations** (Mayists '24 with their papers for course 703.2).

Students in cohort '23 will present their IS during the online seminar 901 at the end of June.

Assessment:

Grades will be determined as follows:

- 40% discussion of required texts
- 60% for class and visit participation

At the end of the residency, students will be asked to assess the course via an online anonymous **course evaluation**. Please make sure you complete this evaluation; faculty and administrators really value your feedback and often make important changes to the curriculum based on it.

Required Texts:

Athens

Harrison, Jane. [*Ancient Art and Ritual*](#)

Hegel, G.W.F. 'Sculpture'. (Hegel's [*Aesthetics*](#), Part III 'System of the Individual Arts' Section II 'Sculpture' tr. T.M. Knox, OUP vol. 2 pp. 701-791)

Euripides, *The Bacchae* (use whichever edition you prefer)

Nietzsche, Friedrich. [*The Birth of Tragedy*](#), section 1-16

Benjamin, Walter. "In the Sun." In *Selected Writings, Volume 2, 1927-1934*. Harvard University Press, 1999. (PDF)

Flusser, Vilem. "We need a philosophy of emigration" and "Exile and Creativity." In *The Freedom of the Migrant*. University of Illinois Press, 2003. (PDF)

Gilles Deleuze, "Desert Islands". In [*Desert Islands and Other Texts*](#), 1953-1974. Semiotext(e), 2004. (PDF)

Recommended: **Heidegger, Martin.** *Sojourns. The Journey to Greece*. SUNY Press, 2005. (PDF)

Berlin

Benjamin, Walter. *Berlin Childhood around 1900*. In *Selected Writings- Vol. 3: 1935- 1938*. Michael W. Jennings (ed), Harvard University Press, 2002. 344-386. (PDF)

Caygill, Howard. "The Future of Potsdamer Platz," 1997. (PDF)

Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich. [*The Phenomenology of Mind*](#). Trans. J. B. Baillie (use whichever edition you prefer, including Google Books). Read: Preface; Introduction; Chapter IV.

Bloch, Ernst. *The Principle of Hope*, vol. 1. Translated by Neville Plaice and Paul Knight. MIT University Press, 1995. Read: 3-18; 195-198 & 205-222. (PDF)

Watch: Wim Wenders, *Wings of Desire (Der Himmel über Berlin)*, 1987).

Optional:

Walther Ruttmann, *Berlin, Symphony of a Great City* (1927), available on
YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LdFasmBJYFg>
Goodbye Lenin! (2006)
The Lives of Others (*Das Leben der Anderen*, 2006)
Maps: <https://maps-berlin.com/maps-berlin-districts>

Please check the **Google Calendar** for workshop meetings and schedule details.