

Syllabi of the Student-run Seminars – Spring '25

Table of Contents

1. Metaphysics, Human nature and A Play Based Queer Philosophy	1
2. Our Relapse into Fascism: An Investigation into the Conditions making Fascism Possible.....	3
3. Kirkegaard and Islamic Intellectual History; Silence, Obedience, and Love	5
4. Refutations of Philosophy.....	6
5. Hegel/Deleuze Reading Group	7
6. Philosophy Self-Study Group: Wittgenstein’s philosophical investigations.....	8
7. Putting Philosophy to Practice.....	9
8. Chinese Philosophy Reading Group.....	11

1. Metaphysics, Human nature and A Play Based Queer Philosophy

by Fabius Schöndube

In this weekly class, I would like to reflect with students on the ways in which metaphysical claims on the universe's nature, ideas on human nature, and our political possibilities intersect.

We will do so by using Butler's very early works and the ways in which later thinkers (mis-)read Queer theory as a jumping off point to more broadly look at and critique mimesis and play as metaphysical-anthropological theories.

Some important ideas we will get through along the way, as well as thinkers I will introduce to students are;

Butler's performativity and gender as drag, Georges Bataille's theory of erotic religiosity, Helmuth Plessner's account of violence, Foucault's theory of the soul as prison, Preciado's pharmaco-pornographic capitalism, Plato's theory of mimesis, Nidesh Lawtoo account of mimetic fascism, Huizinga's theory of play and Eugen Fink's account of world as play.

In doing so we will also learn something on the political contexts out of which queer philosophy grew, as well as more broadly think through the translation of philosophical theories into political imaginary within an age of growing fascism.

Structure:

We will hold weekly meetings, where I will introduce and we discuss one thinker, or book, at a time. Students will be given up to a maximum of 10 pages to read, and it is highly recommended to do these readings, but it is not strictly required. The readings will be supplied per WhatsApp group, and I will do my best to keep to the schedule below, but there may be changes.

Weekly schedule:

1. Introductions and situating our history
 - a. Readings: Fabius; Bachelor thesis
2. Why Metaphysics and human nature?
 - a. Bataille; theory of religion
3. The Inhuman of human nature
 - a. Post-Human Ontology
4. Enter Butler and their Trauma
 - a. Butler; Mimesis and Gender Insubordination
5. Butler's early Anthropology
 - a. Butler; Subjects of Desire
6. What is Mimesis
 - a. Mimesis an introduction

7. Mimesis as political anthropology
 - a. A critical reading of Butler's performativity
8. What is Play as
 - a. Nguyen; Aesthetics
9. Play as political anthropology
 - a. Huizinga; Homo Ludens final chapter
10. TBD
11. TBD
12. TBD

Assessment:

As this class is an extra-curricular activity, there is not mandatory assessment. However, at the end of the course, students can write a 2000 word essay in which they apply the theories to individual case studies. This is optional, but it will allow students to obtain more practice and confidence in reading and writing.

2. Our Relapse into Fascism: An Investigation into the Conditions making Fascism Possible

by Sven Bouman

In this seminar we will try to understand the current political reality of Europe and 'the West' more generally; the rise of fascism. Race riots in the UK, Wilders' landslide win here, the rise of the AfD in Germany, Orbán in Hungary, the list goes on. We will do this by both looking at philosophical work dealing with the subject and by investigating the historical, ideological and material roots of fascist ideology.

Note on the readings: Everyone is busy, I guess these are not required readings, just what I'll be basing the sessions on. I've tried to keep everything in English, but unfortunately the Schinkel book has not yet been translated. However, I have made an extensive analysis in English of the book, so if you really want to do some reading and can't read dutch, I can send that to you. If you would like a more extensive bibliography because you're a nerd, I have more – especially texts that focus on what fascism *is*, or actual Nazi texts.

Session plan:

1) Yet the fully radiated earth radiates disaster triumphant. Again.

An introduction into how fascism is a result of systems already in place, which, according to Adorno and Horkheimer, is the enlightenment and its material base.

Readings: Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Chapter 1

2) Fascist notion of Home: Blut und Boden

An analysis of National Socialist 'ideology.' What is the meaning of their self-described core concept of Blood and Soil? We look at how blood and soil co-constitute each other, and how their relation can best be described as *Heimat*, which is a very specific notion of home.

Readings: Bouman, 'Blut und Boden? Husserl's Transcendental Earth as Heimat and its Relation to National Socialism,' Chapter 1 part 1&2.

3) Nation States as Blood and Soil: Migration and Refugees

An analysis of how Blood and Soil ideas aren't solely present in National Socialism, but already are the foundation of modern nation states.

Readings: Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, Chapter 3 part 2

Van Reekum en Schinkel, *Theorie van de Kraal*, Chapter 2

4) Capital and the Nation State: Whiteness

An analysis of the entanglement of capitalism and the nation state, of class and race.

Readings: Van Reekum en Schinkel, *Theorie van de Kraal*

Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical
Reproduction'

5) Fascism as the Truth of Liberal Democracy

Bringing everything together, where we see how our current nation states as capitalist liberal democracies manufacture their own crises and therefore will always become fascist. Fascism is the unfolding of liberal democracy precisely through the fear of fascism.

Readings: Van Reekum en Schinkel, *Theorie van de Kraal*

Marx, *Estranged Labour*

3. Kirkegaard and Islamic Intellectual History; Silence, Obedience, and Love

by Oliver Kuivasto

Søren Kierkegaard writes: “Just as in earthly life lovers long for the moment when they are able to breathe forth their love for each other, to let their souls blend in a soft whisper, so the mystic longs for the moment when in prayer he can, as it were, creep into God.”

In this seminar, we will analyse and contrast the recurring themes of *silence*, *obedience*, and *love*—three characteristics of faith—in two distinct traditions: Kierkegaardian philosophy and Islamic philosophy and theology.

The seminar aims to be more accessible. Instead of following a continuous weekly progression, we will explore different intellectuals from the Islamic tradition each week and compare them with various Kierkegaard passages. The first four weeks will focus on the relationship of faith with the concepts of *silence*, *obedience*, and *love* in Kierkegaard and Islamic ontotheology/mysticism, examining the nature of being and God through philosophy, logical analysis, and mysticism. The following four weeks will address *silence*, *obedience*, and *love* as found in Kierkegaard, contrasted with magnificent Islamic poetry. Thus, the first half will have a more lecture-based format, while the latter half will adopt a more relaxed pub setting.

How delightful is your love, my sister, my bride! How much more pleasing is your love than wine, and the fragrance of your perfume more than any spice! (Song of Solomon 4:11)

Readings: Kierkegaard: selections from *Fear and Trembling*, *Works of Love*, *Three Upbuilding Discourses*, and *Lily of the Field and the Bird of the Air*. Comparative texts include selections from Sevcan Ozturk’s *Becoming a Genuine Muslim: Kierkegaard and Muhammad Iqbal*, Chittick’s *The Sufi Path of Knowledge: Ibn al-Arabi’s Metaphysics of Imagination*, Kahlil Gibran’s *The Prophet*...

Preliminary plan:

Part I. Kierkegaard vs Islamic ontotheology and mysticism:

Week I. Introduction – Refutation of Islamic existentialism, Ozturk on Muhammad Iqbal

Week II. Al-Ghazali and ontotheology – Kierkegaard on Obedience

Week III. Ibn Arabi, Chittick – Kierkegaard on Silence

Week IV. Sufism, Ibn Arabi – Kierkegaard on Love

Part II. Kierkegaard vs Islamic poetry:

Week V. Comparative Reading: Strengthening in the Inner Being

Week VI. Shams-i Tabrīzī, Rumi

Week VII. Kahlil Gibran*

Week VIII. Revisiting Muhammad Iqbal

IX. Film Event

4. Refutations of Philosophy

by Dimitrije Đorđević

The seminar is envisioned as a series of weekly lectures, spanning over the course of the 2025 spring semester. Each lecture would be held by a (philosophy) student, or a team of students, no matter their current stage in the curriculum (BA, MA, PhD). While every lecture would be focusing on a distinct topic, they would be connected through an overarching theme. The connecting thread are refutations of philosophy. Thus, every session would cover a single thinker or school of thought which sought to refute the hitherto philosophical tradition (in their respective geographic-historical contexts). Students would be encouraged to participate both as lecturers and attendees, with the aim to discover a new dimension of various philosophical traditions. Each lecture should be primarily designed by the presenting student. They can opt for their preferred presentation style.

The concept of 'refutation of philosophy' should be understood in a wide sense. There is no set definition of 'refutation' or 'philosophy', as both are context-dependent. The essence is that the thinker or school of thought rejected and denied the amalgamated projects of their predecessors. This means that they not only disagreed (and provided a 'better' theory), but that they took the whole enterprise (whatever it may be) to be mistaken/misguided. Every (radical) thinker who could fit into this criterion could potentially be incorporated into the project. It is up to the student to make a claim for why a certain thinker is adequate. The more creative the claim, the better. However, it is understood that such a thinker is not simply a person who dislikes philosophy...

Preliminary plan:

- Sessions starting in third week of February
- Introductory session – explaining the concept and inviting students to join
- Session on Kierkegaard by Oliver Kuivasto
- Session on Nietzsche by Meira Orrela
- Session on Wittgenstein by Dimitrije Đorđević
- Session on Gustavo Bueno by Javier Oro
- ... future sessions TBA

The plan is subject to change, depending on students' participation. The final schedule will be discussed and established in the seminar's group chat. All students are welcome to join this group, and join any of the sessions they are interested in. The scope and diversity of the topics depend entirely on students' ideas and engagement. **Everyone is invited to develop their claim and present on any suitable thinker (or school)!** Simply reach out to me with your idea, and present an abstract of your lecture!

5. Hegel/Deleuze Reading Group

by Thomas de Bruin

This course is intended as a (close)reading group for those either interested in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* or Deleuze's *Difference and Repetition*. While both of these books may be categorized as monstrous in difficulty, it requires no further explanation that a reading-group will help a great deal in opening up the philosophical treasures that lie in the profound depths of these works. We will choose, together as a group, one of the two texts to work through the upcoming semester. Because I do not know the interests of the participants of the reading-group, I have left the syllabus rather open. Depending upon which text we choose, I will make a selection of important parts of the books (in doing so, hopefully decreasing some of our workload). Depending on the specific interests of the participants, we will lean towards certain topics within the works (such as the problem of representation, identity and difference, the production of the New, dialectical thought, the logic of "Aufhebung", the Hegelian history of Philosophy and its problems for future thinking, etc.)

Session plan:

I plan to have a weekly meeting of 2-3 hours, depending on our 'Geisteskraft', i.e. to the extent that we can stretch our mental capacities. Day of meeting yet to be determined.

Reading(s):

Hegel: *The Phenomenology of Spirit*

/

Deleuze: *Difference and Repetition*

Optional other works by Deleuze:

Nietzsche and Philosophy

Expressionism and Philosophy: Spinoza

Bergsonism

Proust and Signs

Optional secondary literature:

Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of the Phenomenology of Spirit*

Houlgate, *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*

Somers-Hall, *Deleuze's Difference and Repetition*

N.B.: depending on the language of the participants, we will choose whether to read the texts in French, German, Dutch and/or English.

6. Philosophy Self-Study Group: Wittgenstein's philosophical investigations

by Javier Oro Bracco

The idea of this "seminar" is to engage together with the second book of Wittgenstein: "philosophical investigations".

In this work the author will philosophize against himself, challenging the ideas he defended in his previous work, the "Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus". He will present a very different picture (Wittgensteinian pun intended) of language, attempting to explain it through every-day usage, as opposed to an analytical dissection of it.

The idea is to create a self-organized study group where we can all work together towards the understanding of Wittgenstein's philosophy. I will try to keep the discussion dynamic and structured, but I will try to interfere as little as possible, for I will be studying and learning with you, as opposed to lecturing.

Readings

Wittgenstein, Ludwig (1958). *Philosophical Investigations*. Trans. by G. E. M. Anscombe, Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Preliminary plan

This is going to be a self-study group, and not a seminar, for the simple reason that I don't know a lot on this topic yet, and I'm as eager to learn about it as you are. We will go through the book together, reading for every week a certain number of paragraphs, to comment, discuss and interpret them in class, engaging in a philosophical discussion.

I will present on the first week a very quick sketch of the Tractatus, and of Wittgenstein's life and influences, to offer some more context on this work. We will then discuss how to organize the seminar, and decide on what paragraphs to read for the first session. I will also invite some professors to participate, if they want to do so. We can discuss about it together on the first week.

7. Putting Philosophy to Practice

by Jip Floris Bloem and Hidde-Bas van Campen

Objective of the Seminar:

The goal of this seminar is to explore how philosophical thinking can be applied in practice. By engaging with real-world problem-solving, we aim to bridge the gap between theory and application.

Structure of the Seminar:

The seminar is structured as a think tank where participants will develop proposals in a format similar to parliamentary motions. Each week, we will focus on a different political theme, working collaboratively to craft well-reasoned realistic and actionable solutions. Through this process, we will gain hands-on experience in translating philosophical ideas into concrete proposals.

Preliminary Weekly Plan:

1. Introduction
2. Housing
3. Education
4. Climate
5. Health
6. Democratization
7. Economy
8. Security
9. Migration
10. International relations
11. Culture
12. Reflection: The limits/ possibilities of Philosophy in Addressing Polity Issues

This schedule is flexible and can be adjusted. Any additional topics that we come across during the ongoing seminar can be included.

Literature suggestions

The philosophy literature suggested here are not meant to be read in the seminar, but highlights the philosophical influences that this seminar has been taken from.

John Dewey: Advocated pragmatic philosophy for social improvement and education.

- *Book suggestion: Democracy and Education*

William James: Focussed on ideas' practical consequences.

- *Book suggestion: Pragmatism: A New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking*

Jürgen Habermas: Developed communicative action theories for rational discourse.

- *Book suggestion: The Theory of Communicative Action*

Peter Singer: Advocates for ethics applied to real-world problems like animal rights.

- *Book suggestion: Practical Ethics*

Donella Meadows: Introduced system thinking for understanding complex, interconnected problems.

- *Book suggestion: Thinking in Systems*

Joshua Cohen: Explores democratic theory and deliberative democracy principles.

- *Book suggestion: Philosophy, Politics, Democracy: Selected Essays*

8. Chinese Philosophy Reading Group

Initiated by a few philosophy students and began meeting since June 2022, this reading group project welcomes people who are interested in either (classical) Chinese philosophy or reading texts classical Chinese. During the sessions, we aim at a slow, close, and careful reading experience that would be valuable for both philosophical research and China studies, quality over quantity. Current members range from BA to PhDs, with varying background including philosophy and China Studies. Professors and visiting scholars may also join.

On a social level, this group creates a friendly environment that brings together people who share the same interests in these areas. On an academic level, the project hopes to provide a platform for intercultural and interdisciplinary dialogues based on not only serious engagement with the primary texts and their translations, but also openness towards different approaches and opinions, either within or across cultural or disciplinary boundaries.

Readers from all backgrounds and levels are welcome. Chinese proficiency will be an advantage but not required; a few current members have no such proficiency at all. The assigned text will be made available in both English and Chinese and the discussions will have an emphasis on the philosophical connotations instead of Chinese language itself. However, members with Chinese proficiency (or interest in it) are encouraged to read the Chinese texts and all questions about the language are welcome in the discussions. The same applies to prior background knowledge of Chinese history, Chinese philosophy and its history, etc., though these will be an advantage too. When needed, relevant information will be provided and discussed during sessions. Members are encouraged to consult secondary literature for their own knowledge building, while questions of such nature are welcome in discussions and members with better knowledge will try their best to answer.

Workload & Meeting Format

At the moment, we meet fortnightly, i.e. every other week. See information on top for upcoming meetings. Each meeting lasts for two hours, while overtime may be anticipated.

Members propose and decide which materials to read. Readings will be prepared, assigned, and distributed before the next meeting. Based on our experience so far, we only read a few sentences per meeting, so workload should be bearable. During the meeting, we read the assigned texts slowly and closely, spending as much time as we like with the texts and discussions. All questions from the language itself, social-historical contexts, to philosophical contents are welcome. More experienced members could try to answer these questions, or we try to figure out together.

Resources & Links Group Related

- WhatsApp Group Join-Link

<https://chat.whatsapp.com/D4u3CQaRN6nItbTR1LVvWt>

- Syllabus & Announcements (includes meeting dates and location, links to WhatsApp group, and other resources)

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1y7FrKvCxVgScNGmMchY3dGSr2YK6tfLk/edit?usp=sharing&oid=106872014218052200428&rtpof=true&sd=true>