

### *Metaphysical Fundamentality in Post-Kantian German Philosophy: The Unconditioned*

This seminar is on post-Kantian German Idealism and Romanticism. While it is designed to serve as an introduction to several of these thinkers' philosophical projects, it will also focus on (1) what they take to be metaphysically fundamental, which they refer to variously as the "Unconditioned", the "Absolute" or the "Infinite", and (2) the different ways in which they maintain that we can and cannot grasp what is metaphysically fundamental.

#### **Reading Schedule** (subject to adjustment)

##### Week 1 Introduction: Kant's Critical Philosophy as a Prelude to Post-Kantian Philosophy

- April 1 \*Ameriks, "Introduction: Interpreting German Idealism" (*Cambr. Companion to German Idealism*, Ch. 1).  
\*Watkins "Introduction" (*Kant and the Fate of Metaphysics: The Unconditioned*, Introduction).  
\*Beiser, "Jacobi and the Pantheism Controversy" (*The Fate of Reason*, Ch. 2).  
\*\*Beiser, "The Enlightenment and Idealism" (*Cambr. Companion to German Idealism*, Ch. 2) (overview).  
\*\*Thielke, "Who's Who from Kant to Hegel I: In the Kantian Wake" (overview).

##### Week 3 Reinhold: Systematic Philosophy from a First Principle of Representation

- April 15 Reinhold, *Foundation of Philosophical Knowledge (Between Kant and Hegel*, pp. 53-96).  
Franks, "All or Nothing: Systematicity and Nihilism in Jacobi, Reinhold, and Maimon" (*CC to GI*, Ch. 5).  
\*Ameriks, "Reinhold's Contribution" (*Kant and the Fate of Autonomy*, Ch. 2).  
\*\*Sandkaulen, *Ausgang vom Unbedingten*.

##### Week 4 Schulze: Skepticism

- April 22 Schulze, "Aenesidemus" (*Between Kant and Hegel*, pp. 104-33).  
Fichte, "Review of Aenesidemus" (*Between Kant and Hegel*, pp. 136-53).  
Breazeale, "Fichte's Aenesidemus Review and The Transformation of German Idealism".  
Martin, "From Kant to Fichte".  
\*Beiser, "Schulze's Skepticism" (*The Fate of Reason*, Ch. 9).

##### Week 5 Fichte: Systematic Philosophy from an Unconditioned First Principle; the Absolute Subject

- April 29 Fichte, *Wissenschaftslehre* (1794), 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Introductions & Part I (pp. 3-119) (focus esp. on Part I).  
Horstmann, "The Early Philosophy of Fichte and Schelling" (*CC to German Idealism*, Ch. 6).  
Neuhouser, "The Self-Positing Subject and Theoretical Self-Consciousness" (*Fichte's Theory of Subjectivity*, Ch. 3).  
\*Neuhouser, *Fichte's Theory of Subjectivity*, Chs. 1 & 2.

##### Week 6 Fichte: Systematic Philosophy from an Unconditioned First Principle; Self-Determination/Freedom

- May 6 Fichte, *Wissenschaftslehre*, Part II (pp. 120-217).  
Neuhouser, "The Self-Positing Subject and Practical Self-Determination" (*F's Theory of Subjectivity*, Ch. 4).  
Ameriks, "Kant, Fichte, and the Radical Primacy of the Practical" (*Kant and the Fate of Autonomy*, Ch. 4).

##### Week 7 Schelling: Systematic Philosophy from the Form of Philosophy

- May 13 Schelling, *On The Possibility of a Form of Philosophy in General* (1794).  
Gardner "Fichte and Schelling: The Limitations of the *Wissenschaftslehre*?"

##### Week 8 Schelling: Systematic Philosophy from the I

- May 20 Schelling, *On the I as a Principle of Philosophy or on the Unconditioned in Human Knowledge* (1795).  
Watkins "The Early Schelling on the Unconditioned".  
\*Frank, *The Philosophical Foundations of Early German Romanticism*, Chs. 4 & 5.  
\*Fisher, "Grounding and Unity" (*Schelling's Mystical Platonism*, Ch. 1.)

##### Week 9 Novalis: Anti-Systematic and Anti-Foundationalist Philosophy

- May 27 *Kant Studies*.  
*Fichte Studies* (selections).  
Frank, *The Philosophical Foundations of Early German Romanticism*, Chs. 1-3.  
\*Nassar, "Interpreting the *Fichte-Studien*".  
\*\*Larmore, "Hölderlin and Novalis" (*CC to German Idealism*, Ch. 7).

Week 10 Novalis: Non-Discursive, Literary Means of Representing the Absolute

June 3 Novalis, *Faith and Love*.

Novalis, *Dialogues and Monologues* (selections).

Frank, *The Philosophical Foundations of Early German Romanticism*, Chs. 7 & 9.

\*Watkins, "The Unconditioned and the Absolute in Kant and Early German Romanticism".

\*Thielke, "Who's Who from Kant to Hegel II: Art and the Absolute".

Week 11 Schleiermacher: Religious Experience (Intuition) of the Infinite

June 10 Schleiermacher, *On Religion* (1799), First, Second and Third Speeches (pp. 3-71).

Schleiermacher, *Monologues* (1800), Monologues 2 and 3.

\*Schleiermacher, *Dialectic* (1810), selections

\* indicates highly recommended (but not required)

\*\* indicates recommended

Requirements

One Book Discussion (5 pages): Every student should select one book (see books marked with ° on the list below) and engage with some main thesis or topic that is discussed in the book. While a brief summary of the book could be helpful, it should primarily be a critical engagement with the book's content. This will be shared with the class and, ideally, enter into our class discussions. It is due by May 15<sup>th</sup> (at the latest). We will need to coordinate who will write on which book so that we have a good distribution.

One term paper (15-20 pages): Approval of term paper topics is required. I may be able to point out relevant secondary literature and/or help in formulating the issue you want to write on. The term paper is due Wednesday, June 11.

Class participation: Active class participation is required every week.

Recommended book-length discussions:

°Ameriks, Karl, *Kant and the Fate of Autonomy: Problems in the Appropriation of the Critical Philosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

Ameriks, Karl. *Cambridge Companion to German Idealism*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

Beiser, Frederick, *The Fate of Reason*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987.

°Beiser, Frederick, *The Romantic Imperative*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003.

°Fisher, Naomi, *Schelling's Mystical Platonism: 1792-1802*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2024.

°Förster, Eckart, *The Twenty-Five Years of Philosophy*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012.

°Frank, Manfred, *The Philosophical Foundations of Early German Romanticism*, Albany: SUNY Press, 2004.

°Frank, Manfred, *Unendliche Annäherung: Die Anfänge der philosophischen Frühromantik*. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1997.

°Franks, Paul, *All or Nothing: Systematicity, Transcendental Arguments, and Skepticism*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005.

Henrich, Dieter, *Konstellationen, Probleme, und Debatten am Ursprung der Idealistischen Philosophie (1789-95)*, Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1991.

Henrich, Dieter, *Between Kant and Hegel*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003.

Henrich, Dieter, *The Course of Remembrance and other Essays on Hölderlin*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997.

°Henrich, Dieter, *Grundlegung aus dem Ich: Untersuchungen zur Vorgeschichte des Idealismus: Tübingen – Jena 1790-1794*. 2 Bde., Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2004.

°Nassar, Dalia, *The Romantic Absolute: Being and Knowing in Early German Romantic Philosophy, 1795-1804*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014.

°Neuhouser, Fred. *Fichte's Theory of Subjectivity*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

Ostarcic, Lara (ed.), *Interpreting Schelling: Critical Essays*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014.

Pinkard, Terry, *German Philosophy 1760-1860: The Legacy of Idealism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

°Sandkaulen, Brigitte, *Ausgang vom Unbedingten: Über den Anfang in der Philosophie Schellings*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1990.

Further Relevant Books:

DiGiovanni, George, and Harris, James. *Between Kant and Hegel*. Albany: SUNY Press, 1994.

Fichte, J.G.. *Science of Knowledge*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982.

Schleiermacher, Friedrich, *On Religion*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996.