PHI 604 Freedom and Agency in Spinoza and Descartes
Wednesday 2:30-5:30
Description:
The terms ‘action’ and ‘passion’ play a central role in Spinoza’s moral psychology, as well as in his broader ethical theory. The concept of action is also closely linked, in early modern thought, to key ideas in metaphysics and physics, including the concepts of power, volition and conatus, or striving. This seminar will explore these concepts in Spinoza, and in some of the authors who influenced his thought. Our main text will be Spinoza’s Ethics. We will supplement our reading of the Ethics with selections from Spinoza’s other writings, and with readings by some of his contemporaries, with special attention to Descartes’ Principles of Philosophy and Passions of the Soul. Our goal will be to see Spinoza’s views about agency and freedom in historical context, and to better understand the role of conceptions of action, power and striving in seventeenth century physical, psychological and ethical theory.
Requirements will include at least one in-class presentation, and a term paper.

PHI 611 Proust and Philosophy’s Old Quarrel with Literature over Truth
Tuesday 2:30-5:30
Description:
From the beginning, Proust presents À la recherche du temps perdu as a philosophical text with a philosophical aim. Taking up what Plato calls philosophy’s “old quarrel” with art over truth, Proust argues that philosophy must become literature in order to achieve its own philosophical aims. Philosophy must, like a work of art, supply the experiences that provide evidence for its claims. Only the impression is a guarantor of truth. Involuntary memory provides a model for an involuntary thought that translates experience into the more permanent and accessible images of art and literature.

In the course of developing this argument, Proust elaborates a philosophy of mind, an epistemology, a critique of society and politics, an analysis of love and friendship, an ethics of generativity, a demonstration of philosophical method, and an account of time, joy, and death. This course aims to unfold this complex philosophical narrative through a close reading of the text. We will pay particular attention to the implicit engagements of Proust’s text with the history of philosophy, as well as the appropriation of Proust by contemporary authors including Deleuze and Roland Barthes.
Regarding translations: my own somewhat eccentric preference is the original English translation in seven volumes by C.K. Scott Moncrieff. (Nabokov called him an idiot.) This is available on Kindle. Second would be the revision of Moncrieff by Terence Kilmartin, edited by D.J. Enright and published in six volumes. (Not Kilmartin’s unedited version in three volumes.)

Or
Or

Assignments will be determined by individual contract.

**PHI 631 The Philosophy of Kurt Gödel**

**G. Mar**
**Monday 4:00-7:00**

**Description:**
This is a course on the philosophy of Kurt Gödel. Harvard University bestowed upon him an honorary doctorate “for the discovery of the most significant mathematical truth of the century.” *Time* Magazine listed him among the top 100 intellectuals of the 20th century, which also included Alan Turing and Ludwig Wittgenstein, who were also interested in philosophical logic. John von Neumann regarded Gödel as the greatest “logician since Aristotle,” the only mathematician who was “absolutely irreplaceable.” His friend Einstein liked to say that he went to the Institute of Advanced Studies “um das Privileg zu haben, mit Gödel zu Fuss nach Hause gehen zu dürfen.” Despite the nearly universal admiration of Gödel among intellectuals, their understanding of his remarkable work has been marred by misleading and exaggerated accounts. The goal of this course is to present the philosophical and logical work of Gödel through readings of his classic papers in light of contemporary scholarship. The course includes a survey of logic from Aristotle to Frege, Gödel’s two incompleteness theorems, Gödel’s views on mathematical Platonism and his work on Cantorian set theory, Gödel’s argument for the non-objectivity of time in Einstein’s General Theory of Relativity, and a selection of Gödelian philosophical themes—such as Gödel’s dichotomy concerning minds and mechanism, Gödel’s modal ontological argument, and related Gödelian results concerning the impossibility of democracy (Arrow’s Theorem) and generalizations of incompleteness results to chaos theory, randomness, and information theory.

---

1 Graduate students may elect to satisfy the logic requirement by doing some additional exercises in logic.
PHI 638 The Body and Its Vicissitudes
E. Casey
Wednesday 5:30-8:30

Description:
This seminar will explore several major approaches to body and bodily experience within the framework of continental philosophy. In the first phase of the course, a brief conspectus of Merleau-Ponty’s *Phenomenology of Perception*, Book One – The Body, will be followed by selected sections of *The Visible and the Invisible*. A close reading of Jean-Luc Nancy’s *Corpus I* will explore this neglected masterpiece. In a second phase, readings from Irigaray’s *Speculum of the Other Woman* will be discussed. Parts of Butler’s *Bodies That Matter* will be on the agenda next, along with parts of Grosz’s *Volatile Bodies* as well as Karmen McKendrick’s recent writings on body. Throughout, the effort will be to consider in depth such topics as objective vs. lived body, the habitual vs. the erotic body, soul and body, as well as the body as it figures into the writing of leading American and French feminists. There will be special guest speakers in the seminar who will also give public lectures on the topic of body.