Philosophy PhD Seminars Fall 2013

PHI 639 Social and Political Philosophy
Allegra de Laurentiis
Tu 5.30-8.30
This seminar is dedicated to the work of the 'last of the universal erudites' (Universalgelehrter), Karl Marx. Main foci of our study of Marxian works:
- Marx's debt to Hegelian logic and Smithian political economy
- Marx's philosophy of history; one case study of historical materialist interpretation (excerpts from de Ste. Croix, The Class Struggle in the Ancient Greek World)
- selected chapters from Marx's mature work (mainly Grundrisse and Capital I).
- developments of Marxian thought in Marcuse and Lukács.
Most texts are available at the Marxists Internet Archive. Others will be provided. Hard copies: Capital vol. I please purchase the Penguin edition. For Grundrisse, the selection edited by David McLellan is fine.

PHI 630 Nature: Event, Place, and Edge
Ed Casey
W 6:30-9:30pm
Harriman 249

“Nature loves to hide.” (Heraclitus)
“Both with man and with animal the species-life consists physically in the fact that man (like animals) lives from inorganic nature, and the more universal man is than animals the more universal is the area of inorganic nature from which he lives.” (Marx)

At this postmodern moment, how are we to understand the natural world and the place of humans and animals in it, especially given the emphasis on the primacy of consciousness and human reason in Western philosophy? Our main aim will be to consider various ways by which philosophers and other thinkers have construed nature. After a brief look at earlier views in Western thought – from Heraclitus to Spinoza, Goethe to Hegel – we shall attend to how the natural world and natural processes figure in the following four areas:

(a) ontology/metaphysics: systematic treatments such as those found in Whitehead’s Process and Reality or Dewey’s Experience and Nature;
(b) naturalism/environmentalism: as in Emerson and Thoreau in the nineteenth century, and in Gary Snyder and Paul Shepard in more recent times, with implications for contemporary issues such as climate change;
(c) women/nature: the relationship between the exploitation of nature and the victimization of women as set forth in Susan Griffin’s Woman and Nature.
(d) animality/body: the conjoint notions of animality and body in Merleau-Ponty’s remarkable lecture courses on Nature (1956 - 1960), which will form a centerpiece for the course, supplemented by parts of Rogozinski’s The Ego and the Flesh.
Across these topics and readings – or a selected subset of them – we shall be sensitive to three parameters in particular:

**Event**: this concept, emerging prominently in contemporary thought, will be explored with clues from Heidegger, Nancy, and Badiou.

**Place**: the spatial counterpart to event. As places condense and modulate space, so events bring time into the domain of human and animal experience; hints to be garnered from authors such as Bachelard, Basso, and Snyder.

**Edge**: both events and places come with characteristic edges, at once spatial and temporal, which we shall consider in relation to the configurations of the natural world.

This is an ambitious plot, and it will be altered in ways that fit the constraints of time and the interests of members of the seminar.

Special guests will invited to address the seminar at several points. These are likely to include Jacob Rogozinski, Francois Raffoul, Oli Stephano, and Andres Colapinto. (All to be confirmed.)

**PHI 631 Rawls and his Critics from the Margins**  
Eva Feder Kittay

No single political/ethical philosopher has been more influential in contemporary thought than John Rawls. We will read a number of Rawls latest formulations of his theory of “justice as fairness” and political liberalism. A theory as comprehensive as Rawls’ begs for a critique regarding what has been omitted. Thus feminists have questioned whether the universalistic framework is as universal as it propounds to be. A number of interesting discussions have emerged from this literature. But not only have women worried if they are as fully included as they should be, critiques have emerged from race theory, disability theory, animal rights advocates and global justice theorists. Others have defended Rawls against these critiques. We will look at some of the critics and defenders of Rawls that fall within the “analytic” tradition as they focus on these issues that play out at the “margins” “justice as fairness” and political liberalism. We will explore Rawls’s work through the lens of these concerns. In addition to the writings of Rawls’s, we will read work by Martha Nussbaum, Susan Okin, Eva Kittay, Charles Mills, Amartya Sen, Norman Daniels, Thomas Pogge, among others.

**BOOKS:**
Martha Nussbaum, *Frontiers of Justice*  
Susan Okin, *Justice, Gender and the Family*  
Eva Feder Kittay, *Love’s Labor*
This seminar uses one of Aristotle’s most influential and fascinating works as an introduction to his thought. Students will read carefully the text of the *De anima* and will reflect on what Aristotle says and on its implications. They will write two brief papers on assigned topics and a longer paper on something they choose that Aristotle discusses in this book. Depending on class size other readings may be assigned for reports, but everyone will give a brief report on one or more previous seminar meetings.

We will take note of the specific difficulty of reading Aristotle, for the ordinary words he uses often mislead us because they are given particular and technical meanings in his text. Close attention to his text will demonstrate the varied meanings of psyche/anima/soul and all that is involved as one moves across living things from veggies to humans. What Aristotle’s analysis of human beings lays bare always evokes controversy and raises philosophical questions that we continue to pursue today.

Required book: Joe Sachs’ English translation of *On the Soul*. Other readings will be required; most should be downloadable from the University library’s electronic resources.

Recommended: Thomas Aquinas’ Commentary on the De Anima
Jonathan Lear, *Aristotle: the Desire to Understand* (esp. to review or introduce Aristotle)
   The Loeb translation of the De Anima (if you know any classic Greek at all.)