You are cordially invited to a lecture by

Roy Ben Shai
Fairfield University
Lecture:
“Critique, Emancipation, Revolt”

Roy Ben-Shai was born and raised in Israel. He received his BA degree in philosophy from Tel-Aviv University and, following a period of study at the Sorbonne IV in Paris, entered the MA/PhD program in philosophy at the New School for Social Research. His main area of expertise is Heideggerian and post-Heideggerian philosophy. During his studies, Roy held fellowships at the Transregional Center for Democratic Studies, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and the German National Merit Foundation, and served as managing editor for the online journal Political Concepts: A Critical Lexicon. He graduated from the New School in 2012, defending a dissertation titled “Moral Pathology: A Philosophical Study of Jean Améry and a Pathos-Based Approach to Moral Thinking”, which won the Hans Jonas Memorial Award for Best Dissertation in Philosophy. Roy has taught undergraduate courses on modern and Continental philosophy at Manhattan College, Fairfield University, and Eugene Langue College, and graduate-level courses at universities in Iceland and Mexico. He has published essays in Telos and The European Legacy and book chapters related to his dissertation. Most recently, he co-edited a volume of essays titled Nihilism and the State of Israel: New Critical Perspectives. Bloomsbury Academic will publish this book this coming August.

To Cut the King’s Head: Critique, Emancipation, Revolt

During the seventies, Foucault set out a major challenge to philosophical and political thought. Famously, he wrote that political philosophy should “cut the king’s head,” namely, free itself from a model of thinking that revolves around oppression and sovereignty. Foucault’s challenge is part of a constellation of philosophical projects in France, and later in Italy, inspired by Spinoza, Nietzsche, and Heidegger, which I call “post-critical thought”.

In this talk, I interpret this intellectual phenomenon in terms of a move from critical to emancipatory thinking, taken as two paradigms of thought. I then offer a third paradigm, which I call thinking in revolt, that counters the drive to agency and freedom shared by both critical and emancipatory thinking. In contrast, thinking in revolt carves a space for the preservation of experiences of powerlessness and victimhood. The gesture of doing away with “the king’s head”, I argue, is still not enough to eradicate thoughtless brutality and to advance our responsibility as intellectuals to counter it thoughtfully. I propose that post-critical thinking requires inhabiting a space in-between the pro-active drive to emancipation and the re-active movement of revolt.

Thursday February 27th, 2014
5:00 pm
Harriman Hall 214

Reception to Follow