

Phil 667. Fall 2017
Seminar on 19th Century Philosophy – Hegel’s Philosophy of Religion

Time: Friday, 8:35 – 10:25 am (since I expect the number of students to be very small, I shall try unofficially to find another time more convenient to all, perhaps late in the afternoon)

Location: Lea 927

Prerequisite: Phil 366 (German Idealism) or Phil 460 (Hegel) or the equivalent. Senior honour students in philosophy with adequate credentials can take this seminar with permission.

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Evaluation: based on one major paper and seminar presentation(s). Late papers without excuse will be penalized by ½ mark per seminar-day delay.

Description:

Hegel repeatedly lectured on the philosophy of religion at Berlin, late in his career in 1821, 1824, 1827, 1829, 1831. Of these lectures we have Hegel’s own notes on which the lectures were based as well as his students’ notes. It is only recently, however, that these sources have been sorted out and critically edited independently, in Volumes 3, 4a, 4b, and 5 of *G.W.F. Hegel: Vorlesungen*, the work of Walter Jaeschke at the Bochum Hegel-Archiv. Philipp Marheike’s published text of the lectures in Volumes 11 and 12 of the 1832 first complete edition of Hegel’s *Werke* only conflates the different sources, imposing on them a unity of intention which does not necessarily reflect Hegel’s mind. Jaeschke’s contribution has been translated into English by Peter G. Hodgson & associates. The content of the three-volume text of this translation is also available in abridged form in two places: as a one volume edition drawn from the notes of 1827 which are the most expansive and presumably the most reliably definitive; in a volume exclusively dedicated to the 1829 and 1831 lectures on the proofs of God’s existence, especially interesting because they are an extensive critique of Kant’s dialectics. Both books are still in print and available on line at a reasonable price:

G.W.F. Hegel: Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion. One Volume Edition: The lectures of 1827 (Oxford, 2006). Also available as ebook:

https://global.oup.com/academic/product/hegellectures-on-the-philosophy-of-religion-9780199283521?cc=ca&lang=en&WT.mc_id=us-rel-06-2017-4&WT.srch=

G.W.F. Hegel, Lectures on the Proofs of the Existence of God (Oxford 2007). The earlier translation by Speirs is available in the public domain:

https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Lectures_on_the_Proofs_of_the_Existence_of_God

These two volumes will be our main but not exclusive texts. Hegel also wrote and published on the subject of religion long before the Berlin lectures—while still a devotee of Lessing prior to 1800, at Jena in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807), in the Philosophy of Spirit of the various editions of the *Encyclopaedia*, and in the *Philosophy of Right*. In the view of Peter Hodgson and Robert Williams, the two contemporary major exponents of Hegel’s philosophy of religion, the Berlin lectures best reflect the whole of Hegel’s system realized in concrete form. This is true, at least in the sense that one cannot judge these lectures without at the same time drawing from Hegel’s logic and phenomenology. One reason for the choice of subject in this seminar is precisely because religion is a very good point of access to Hegel’s thought as a whole. But, contrary to Peter Hodgson and Robert Williams’ opinion, I am rather inclined to believe that in these lectures especially Hegel runs the risk of mystifying. In this, both Kierkegaard and the nineteenth-century left-wing Hegelians were right. I believe that Hegel’s earlier idea of religion, especially as developed in the Jena period (1800-1806), is much more conceptually convincing and still practically relevant today. The later lectures tend to freeze Hegel to the nineteenth century. This is a point I shall defend, especially with reference to Robert Williams’ just published book, the final statement of the author’s life-long involvement in the subject:

Hegel on the Proofs and the Personhood of God (Oxford 2017).

For reasons that I shall explain in class, I keep two texts in reserve which might, but also might not, come in for study in the seminar:

F. W. J. Schelling, *Philosophy and Religio* (1804).

J. G. Fichte, *The Way towards the Blessed Life* (1806).

Both texts are available on line and will be posted on MyCourses if necessary.

For obvious reasons, I shall repeatedly refer to Kant in the seminar. This is the relevant text:

I. Kant, *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason I* (1793), tr. with historical introduction by George di Giovanni, in *Religion and Rational Theology* (Cambridge, 1996); also found in single text at Cambridge 1998. An older but still good translation can be found on line:

<https://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/ethics/kant/religion/religion-within-reason.htm>

Planned Seminars (not definitive)

1. Regarding this seminar: philosophy of religion versus theology (my presentation).
2. How Hegel left the Enlightenment and religion became involved with logic (my presentation).
3. The idea of religion in the Phenomenology (my presentation).
4. 1827 Lectures: Introduction and Part 1 (The concept of religion)
5. Continued
6. Proofs
7. Proofs
8. Proofs
9. Determinate religion (treatment in the Phenomenology)
10. 1827 Lectures: Part III
11. Continued
12. What to make of Hegel's idea of religion? On Robert Williams' book.
13. Open.

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In the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the University's control, the content and/or evaluation scheme in this course is subject to change.

In accord with McGill University's Charter of Students' Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded.