

Hegel's *Phenomenology*, PHL 4PH.01 Summer Term 2026

In the past 30 years, some key analytic philosophers have taken an interest in Hegel, among them, the “Pittsburgh School” (Brandom & McDowell), but also elsewhere (Germany, Australia, England, Finland). We will read parts of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Mind/Spirit* as it has been taken up within “analytic philosophy.” The seminar will consider selected portions of the book including “Sense Certainty and Understanding”, the “Master/Servant” dialectic and its (de-)formations, subjective ethics (utilitarian, virtue ethics), “ethical substance”, and “the struggle of Enlightenment and superstition.”

This course is an introduction to Hegel, and as an introduction it will try to accomplish three tasks:

1. give students a sample of the range, character, and relevance of Hegel's philosophy;
2. equip students to read and appreciate Hegel's own peculiar way of explaining;
3. acquaint students with some of the most significant, influential, and still fruitful portions of Hegelian philosophy.

This course will be of interest to those who wonder what Hegel has to say to the 21st century as well as to those who find Hegel's writing baffling and/or his explanations wrong-headed and want to know more than just a “bad impression.”

Requirements are two papers: 1) a short midterm report on some contemporary analytic scholarship about Hegel, and 2) a final paper with the students' own analysis of some extended passage of the *Phenomenology*. Students will discuss their final paper with the class and the professor. Attendance and class participation are also components of the course grade.



Hegel lecturing in Berlin.

*"Das Bekannte überhaupt ist darum,
weil es bekannt ist, nicht erkannt."*

Hegel's “difficulty” is only that he asks us to think and rethink what is familiar. His philosophy does not lead us to some mysterious hyper-reality of an Absolute controlling the confusion of this world of appearances (he is not that kind of idealist), rather he pushes us to look once, twice, and once again at what is obvious and familiar and to “see it steadily and to see it whole.”

Preliminary sketch of course topics and readings:

1. Introductions: Kant's "Copernican Revolution" and the transcendental unity of apperception.

Readings: Kant "What is Enlightenment?"; Introduction to the *Phenomenology* and to the *Encyclopedia*; Robert Brandom, "Some Pragmatist Theses in Hegel's Idealism."

2. Phenomenology of consciousness: subject, object, and understanding.

Readings: *Berlin Phenomenology*

3. Master and Servant: discipline, education, and intersubjectivity.

Readings: *Phenomenology*: "Master & Servant, Stoicism, Skepticism, and the Unhappy Consciousness"; Kojève, "In the Guise of an Introduction"; Pinkard, "The claims of self-sufficiency agency"; McDowell "The Apperceptive I and the Empirical Self"

4. Moral education: hedonism, sentimentality, virtue.

Readings: *Phenomenology*: "The realization of rational self-consciousness" and "Individuality"

5. Alienation and the Enlightenment Struggle with Superstition.

Readings: *Phenomenology*: "Alienated Spirit: Education"

The above list can be revised depending on interests, the first three topics are fixed.

Texts will be provided in electronic formats. A full translation of *The Phenomenology of Spirit* is online at Terry Pinkard's website below. I recommend it, but you may use any translation in any language.

Web Links:

General resources: <http://www.hegel.net/en/links.htm>

Electronic texts: <http://www.hegel.net/en/etexts.htm>

Phenomenology translation:

http://web.mac.com/titpaul/Site/Phenomenology_of_Spirit_page.html

Encyclopedia: <http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/hegel/encindex.htm>

Supplementary Readings (optional)

Immanuel Kant, "What is Enlightenment?"

G.W.F. Hegel, from Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Science I:

"I. Introduction"

"II. Preliminary Notion"

G.W.F. Hegel, from Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Science III:

“B. Phenomenology of Mind: Consciousness”

Robert Brandom, from Tales of the Mighty Dead

“Some Pragmatist Themes in Hegel’s Idealism”

Terry Pinkard, from Hegel: A Biography

“Hegel Finds His Voice: The *Phenomenology of Spirit*”

“Hegel’s *Philosophy of Right*: Freedom, History, and the European State”

“The Logic of Hegel’s Logic”

from Hegel’s *Phenomenology*: The Sociality of Reason

“The claims of self-sufficient agency: freedom and self-consciousness”

Aleksander, Kojève from Introduction to the Reading of Hegel

“In Place of an Introduction”

“Summary of the First Six Chapters of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*”

John McDowell

“Hegel’s Idealism as Radicalization of Kant”

“The Apperceptive I and the Empirical Self: Towards a Heterodox Reading of

‘Lordship and Bondage’ in Hegel’s *Phenomenology*”