

PHYSF382 WAYS OF SEEING, WAYS OF KNOWING

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE HUMANITIES

Spring 2022: Thursdays 10h30-12h30, **h** Room 511 (except 27/1, Room 102)

Instructor: Dr Charis QUAY, maître de conférences in physics (charis.quay@u-psud.fr)

Medium of instruction: English

Course Description

Our ways of seeing and of knowing mutually influence each other. By ‘ways of seeing and knowing’ we mean not only our ‘models’ of the world around us – whether these be physical, cultural, political or other – but also the ‘mechanics’ of seeing and knowing, including the relation between the knowing/seeing subject and the known/seen object.

Whether or not one is aware of it, and whether or not one can articulate it, one’s ‘way of seeing’ the world and one’s place in it (including one’s relation to others) is intimately related to what one ‘knows’ and how one knows it. It also has a decisive influence on what one considers to be the proper use of one’s knowledge and one’s self – in particular, who one should be and how one should act in society. This leads naturally to the consideration of ‘ways of being’, including political and ethical issues.

This course will explore these and related ideas through texts by several contemporary, mostly Western, scholars who (re)present a range of ‘ways of seeing’ from classical antiquity to modern times. We shall pay particular attention to the evolution of worldviews (over time) – focusing on the transition between the mediaeval and modern conceptions of the universe which occurred at the Renaissance – and the possibility of dialogue between different worldviews.

Format and Pedagogical Goals

This seminar will meet two hours per week throughout the spring semester. Students are expected to come to class having read and understood the reading assignment for the week and ready to discuss it. Among the goals of the class are to introduce students to academic work in the humanities and to develop the ‘rhetorical’ skills of speaking, arguing and writing.

A seminar is ‘a class at university in which a topic is discussed by a teacher and a small group of students’. Class discussions can be thought of as opportunities to refine one’s thoughts in preparation for the essays, which will not be invigilated. There will be no lectures or exams.

Evaluation

Class participation	30%	
Discussion facilitation	15%	
Mid-term essay (2-5 pages)	20%	
Final paper (5-10 pages)	35%	N.B. 1 page ~400 words

Written assignments can be on any course-related topic of the student’s choice. Suggestions will be provided. Both written assignments can be on the same topic, i.e. the final paper can be a improved and expanded version of the mid-term essay.

Reading and Writing Assignments

20 January	WS Ch. 1	
27 January	WS Ch.s 3, 7	
3 February	SSR Ch.s 2, 9 and 10	
10 February	TD Ch.s 1-2	
17 February	AK, Ch. 3	
24 February	DI, Ch.s 1, 2, 7C, 7D, 7H, 7I, 8 and Epilogue	
3 March	Break	
10 March	CWIU, Ch.s 2, 4	Mid-term essay due
17 March	CWIU, Ch.s 7, 11, 12 (excerpts)	
24 March	SS, Ch.s 5-8	
31 March	SS, Ch.s 9-12	
7 April	SS, Ch.s 5-12 + HC, Prologue, Ch.s 35-41	
14 April	HC, Prologue, Ch.s 35-41	
21 April	UR, Ch. 6	
16 May		Final paper due

Essays should be turned in to the instructor on e-Campus (<https://tinyurl.com/4z6vmfu3>).

Texts

WS	<i>Ways of Seeing</i> , John Berger
SSR	<i>Structures of Scientific Revolutions</i> , Thomas Kuhn.
TD	<i>The Tacit Dimension</i> , Michael Polanyi.
AK	<i>Michael Polanyi: The Art of Knowing</i> , Mark T. Mitchell
DI	<i>The Discarded Image</i> , C. S. Lewis
CWIU	<i>From the Closed World to the Infinite Universe</i> , Alexander Koyré
SS	<i>Sources of the Self</i> , Charles Taylor
HC	<i>The Human Condition</i> , Hannah Arendt
UR	<i>The Unintended Reformation</i> , Brad Gregory

All assigned texts are available in soft copy on e-Campus, and will be available in hard copy in the Photon common room at least a week ahead of time. In addition, most of the books used in this course are in the MPF library (**h** 4th floor, ask me if you would like to borrow them).

The Ways of Seeing documentaries can be found at the following links:
Episode 1 (<http://goo.gl/tV9p7X>), Episode 2 (<http://goo.gl/nGdp8W>),
Episode 3 (<http://goo.gl/UuyCo5>), Episode 4 (<http://goo.gl/PYQHF2>).

Discussion Facilitation

Starting on the 10th of February, you will facilitate class discussions – taking turns and in pairs. Please indicate your date preferences here by the 27th of January: <https://tinyurl.com/2u3as4rm>

Further Reading (during the summer or later in life)

<i>Personal Knowledge</i> , Michael Polanyi	<i>The Life of the Mind</i> , Hannah Arendt
<i>I and Thou</i> , Martin Buber.	<i>Orientalism</i> , Edward Said
<i>Truth and Method</i> , Hans-Georg Gadamer	<i>Introduction to Philosophical Hermeneutics</i> , J. Grondin.
<i>Language, Truth and Logic</i> , A. J. Ayer.	<i>On Certainty</i> , Ludwig Wittgenstein.
<i>Soi-même Comme Un Autre</i> , Paul Ricoeur. (See especially Etudes 5-6.)	
<i>Love's Knowledge</i> , Martha Nussbaum (On knowing through literature.)	
<i>A Defence of Common Sense</i> (http://goo.gl/ZHPDhs), <i>A Refutation of Idealism</i> (http://goo.gl/4NIWIs) and <i>A Proof of the External World</i> (http://goo.gl/luV8bY), G. E. Moore.	

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GUIDELINES FOR CLOSE READING

Read with a pencil (or electronic equivalent!) in your hand and annotate the text. Annotating means underlining, circling or highlighting key words and phrases – anything that strikes you as surprising or significant, or that raises questions – as well as making notes in the margins. When we respond to a text in this way, we not only force ourselves to pay close attention, but we also begin to think with the author about the evidence – the first step in moving from reader to writer.

Look for patterns in the things you've noticed about the text: repetitions, contradictions, similarities. Identify phrases (as in music) in the author's thought: whole passages developing a particular thought or articulating a particular question. Try to put the thought or question in your own words. Notice how these phrases connect with what goes before and after, both logically as well as structurally. (Pay particular attention to linking words and phrases.) Identify the author's overall argument and how individual thoughts and questions feed into it and form its structure. Try to put the overall argument in your own words.

Be aware of assumptions. The author may have based his/her argument on ideas which are not mentioned explicitly in the text. Ask yourself what the author needs or believes to be true. For example, arguing that 'all souls go to heaven' assumes that souls exist.

Ask questions 'around' the text, such as:

- What is the question the author is trying to answer? Is it well-posed? Is it important? Why or why not?
- To what extent does the author answer the question? Which issues are left unaddressed?
- What are the larger implications of the author's arguments? What other questions do they raise?
- How might the author's social/political/economic context have influenced his/her argument?

Play devil's advocate. Ask questions like:

- What does the author need to show in order to be convincing?
- Do parts of the argument potentially contradict each other?
- What are potential alternatives to the author's argument?

CLOSE READING IS NOT ALWAYS APPROPRIATE

As the semester progresses, our readings will get longer and more complex. It then becomes more appropriate to skim or scan the text, and to close read only certain passages. You can find guidelines for scanning and skimming texts on the [BBC's website](#) and elsewhere on the internet. Remember: unless you are facilitating the discussion that week, you should NOT be spending more than three hours per week reading for this class.

(Adapted from materials from the [Harvard Writing Centre](#), the [University of Guelph Library](#), and Drs Pierre Bourdon and Henri-Jérôme Gagey of the Institut Catholique de Paris.)

GUIDELINES FOR WRITING (elements of a strong paper)

Remember that your main aim is to **present your ideas clearly** and in such a way as to **persuade your reader** to agree with you or at least that your point of view is worth considering.

Have a clear, clearly-stated and appropriately nuanced **thesis**.

Use **central terms** consistently. Define them if/where necessary.

Organise your paper well. Consider how each paragraph connects with the next and develops your overall argument. Consider the overall shape of your argument and the relative importance of the particular thoughts that feed into it; develop each of these accordingly.

Provide evidence for your claims. Writing is perhaps most persuasive when the ‘facts’ appear to speak for themselves and lead the reader to an obvious and inevitable conclusion.

- Consider each text as a whole. At points, you may find it helpful to briefly summarise the overall argument of a text or some part thereof with the degree of nuance or detail appropriate to your purposes. Also consider: Does the text as a whole support your argument? Are there significant passages or arguments that might seem to contradict what you want to say? If so, you may need to re-think or nuance your argument.
- At other points, you may also find it helpful to highlight relevant passages in a text which support and develop your argument; these should be representative of the overall argument of the text or some part thereof.
- Both overall summaries and explications of specific details or passages should feed naturally into your argument and the overall structure of your paper.
- You may use sources, including visual texts, other than the assigned texts. Cite all your sources. Reproduce visual texts if possible.

Discuss the **larger implications** of your thesis (in longer pieces).

You will not be penalised for minor spelling or grammatical mistakes that do not obscure meaning.

Both British and American spelling, punctuation and idiom are acceptable.

You may also find the University of Chicago’s (and other such) guidelines helpful:

<http://writing-program.uchicago.edu/resources/collegewriting/>

Anthologies of generally well-crafted essays can be found at <https://www.aldaily.com> and <http://www.aeon.co>.

MARKING SCHEME FOR PARTICIPATION

A range (16-20 marks upon 20): The student is fully engaged and highly motivated. This student is well prepared, having read the assigned texts. This student's ideas and questions are productive (either constructive or critical); they stimulate class discussions. This student listens and responds to the contributions of other students. The student speaks several times each class but doesn't try to dominate discussion. If she/he speaks only a couple of times each class, her/his comments are thoughtful.

B range (12-16): The student attends class regularly, is well prepared for discussion, and participates consistently. This student contributes productively to the discussion by sharing thoughts and questions that demonstrate familiarity with the material. This student shows interest in other students' contributions. To move to an A-range, she/he should work to speak a bit more frequently or offer slightly more in-depth comments. (Comments may be based on notes taken ahead of time.)

C range (8-12): The student attends class but rarely participates, or only when prompted. Her/his comments do not necessarily demonstrate consistent knowledge of the texts. This student may offer a few interesting or insightful ideas from time to time, but these ideas do not connect well to the general discussion: they do not help to build a coherent and productive discussion.

(More severe lack of participation and/or preparedness, or especially problematic attendance, will result in 7 or fewer marks.)

MARKING GUIDELINES FOR DISCUSSION FACILITATION

Here are the questions I'll be asking myself as I observe your class period and decide on your marks. Unless there are glaring differences within a pair, marks will be given to pairs, not individuals.

Preparation. Did the discussion facilitators demonstrate good basic comprehension of the text?

Engagement. Were their classmates engaged during the time that the pair led?

- Did the pair leave space for other students to reflect and respond?
- Lulls in conversation are natural, even in a well-run discussion. How did the pair handle these lulls? Did they leave space for necessary silence? Did they judge effectively when to step in and ask a follow-up question or prompt?
- Did the pair find ways to engage (elicit comments from) all or nearly all students during their time leading class? What different approaches did they take?

Complexity and interest. Did the pair offer a variety of ways to engage with the assigned materials so that their classmates could explore the texts in both general and specific ways?

- Did the pair provide opportunities to understand the texts in a larger perspective?
- Did the pair provide opportunities to engage with the texts in a closer, more detailed and analytical way?
- Did the pair provide a blend of open-ended questions/prompts and focused questions/prompts?
- Was there some variety in the way discussion was led/organized?
- Was the discussion relatively well-organized, and/or had a logical and/or engaging progression?
- Were questions and activities framed clearly?

(Adapted from materials from Dr Martha Kelly, University of Missouri.)

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GUIDELINES FOR FACILITATING DISCUSSIONS

When you lead a class discussion, your job is to help us as a group advance arguments about or interpretations of a text; draw connections with what we've already discussed; and connect the text with our own lives and the world in which we live. To this end, try to maintain a class atmosphere in which all participants feel welcome, and welcome to express their ideas (without preventing others from doing so!).

It is often helpful to begin with some general remarks or background information on the author and text, making connections to key course concepts if possible. You may also want to allow your classmates to ask a few basic comprehension questions. Both here and in general, do not be afraid to say so if you do not know the answer to a question. (If I do know it, I'll help you.)

Before going into a general discussion, you may want to highlight some of the text's main points (perhaps giving specific passages and page numbers). Whether or not you choose to do this, you should come prepared with notes on patterns you noticed in the text, and questions you can ask your classmates, as jumping-off points for discussion.

Feel free to use media (audio, images, video, slides...), article/book excerpts and other materials; to propose creative or group activities; and to use the equipment available in the room – anything which you think will stimulate reflection and critical engagement with the text.

Suggestions for formulating questions to stimulate discussion:

- Ask questions you yourself would like to be asked.
- Ask questions which can elicit differing responses.
- Include open-ended questions ('what did you think?', 'what did you (not) like?', 'what could you relate to?', 'what was difficult to understand?', 'what was disturbing, encouraging...?').
- Ask questions that elicit detailed observation ('compare x with y,' 'let's try to apply x concept to specific passages,' 'what do we notice in this specific passage?' etc.).
- Also include questions that help to draw connections across the course (engage with repeated course concepts, foster cross-textual comparisons, apply skills used on other texts to this one etc.).

Suggestions for deepening discussion:

- Do not be afraid of silence. Allow gaps – longer than you may think necessary! – so your classmates can consider questions or remarks, and formulate responses.
- Ask for clarification when needed.
- Ask follow-up questions to push discussion further/deeper.
- Highlight connections between what different people are saying, remark on patterns you see emerging in the conversation.
- Point out – and encourage – well-articulated differences.

It may sometimes be helpful to refocus the discussion on the text, or to move to a different topic. When doing this, always be polite, and try to make the transition as smooth as possible, e.g. by acknowledging the points of view expressed and perhaps connecting some of them to the direction you want to go in.

Throughout this class and especially when facilitating discussions, strive to cultivate intellectual dependability (<https://tinyurl.com/y24lhq48>).

(Adapted from materials from Dr Martha Kelly, University of Missouri.)