

Special Topics on German Philosophy
Post-graduate Course 2022, Zhejiang University

Dr. GUTLAND Christopher

Email: gutland@zju.edu.cn

Lecture: Fall & Winter Semester

1. Course Description

This course aims at tracking the impact of the “I think” as a primordial anchor point inaugurated by René Descartes’ within three German philosophers: Immanuel Kant, Johann Gottlieb Fichte and Edmund Husserl. The questions the course raises are: As what do these authors conceive the ‘I’ and its relation to thinking? What role does it play in their respective philosophies? And how do their philosophies relate to each other when the ‘I think’ is taken as the focus of contrast? The course starts with reviewing the six meditations in Descartes Meditations on First Philosophy. In Kant, the course focuses on the first part of the Critique of Pure Reason, wherein the “I think” or transcendental apperception is called the “highest point” of transcendental philosophy. In Husserl, the course will first delve into the first four Cartesian Meditations to establish a background and then look at essential sections in other works of Husserl discussing the ‘I’. In Fichte, who outright began his philosophy with the I and its activity (Tathandlung) as its first principle, the course focuses of the beginning sections of the Science of Knowledge.

2. Goal of This Course

The goal of this course is to read relevant sections of the English translations of the original texts and make clear what the “I think” is in them along with the role it plays in the respective philosophy. The course provides students with a chance to familiarize themselves with these four crucial thinkers and offers a viable angle to contrast and compare their respective philosophical systems.

3. Course Materials

Meditations on First Philosophy	René Descartes	Oxford University Press	2008
---------------------------------	----------------	----------------------------	------

Critique of Pure Reason	Immanuel Kant	Cambridge University Press	1998
The Science of Knowledge	Johann Gottlieb Fichte	Cambridge University Press	1982
Logical Investigations. Volume I	Edmund Husserl	Routledge	2001
Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy	Edmund Husserl	Martinus Nijhoff	1983
Cartesian Meditations	Edmund Husserl	Springer	1960
Phenomenological Psychology	Edmund Husserl	Martinus Nijhoff	1977
The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology	Edmund Husserl	Northwestern University Press	1970

4. Course Outline

Students should be able to read about 30-40 pages of philosophical texts per week and be willing to do a presentation on one relevant topic.

Week 1	General introduction into the course topic and distribution of the oral reports to be prepared and held by students.
Week 2	Discussion of Descartes' Meditations I - III (pp. 1-37): These texts introduce the basic doubt experiment Descartes undertakes and how he finds the "cogito" as the secure anchor point of philosophy.

Week 3	Discussion of Descartes' Meditations IV - VI (pp. 38-64): These texts elaborate Descartes philosophical system further and in the end again relate it to the cogito.
Week 4	Kant's Critique of Pure Reason: Preface to the first and second edition and Introduction to the first edition (pp. 99-135). These texts lay an introductory groundwork for Kant's transcendental philosophy.
Week 5	Kant's Critique of Pure Reason: Introduction to the second edition and Transcendental Aesthetics on space and time in the second edition (pp. 136-152 & 172-192). In these texts Kant further elaborates some of the key terms of his philosophy like distinctions between a priori and a posteriori, analytic and synthetic and the two forms of the intuition: space and time.
Week 6	Kant's Critique of Pure Reason: Transcendental Logic and Transcendental Analytic First Chapter (pp. 193-218). Kant elaborates on normal logic and transcendental logic and lays out a way to uncover the most basic concepts based on functions in judgments.
Week 7	Kant's Critique of Pure Reason: Transcendental Logic and Transcendental Analytic Book 1 Chapter 2 First Section (219-244). Kant attempts to deduce the twelve categories and their application transcendently.
Week 8	Kant's Critique of Pure Reason: Transcendental Analytic Book I Chapter 2 Second Section (pp. 245-266). Here Kant finally connects and unites all the previous contents within the transcendental apperception or the "I think". A comparison to Descartes will be offered.