PHIL 521.60: TEMPORALITY AND ETHICS
Stony Brook Manhattan
Spring 2014
Friday 7-10 pm
Prof. Marcia Morgan and Eduardo Mendieta
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Prof. Mendieta: Eduardo.Mendieta@stonybrook.edu
Office hours: 6-7pm Fridays, Manhattan, and by appointment

***this syllabus will not be printed by the faculty. Have your own copy handy***

***subject to revision depending on whether we are keeping pace with our readings***

Description

Ethical decisions and acts are done as if sub specie aeternitatis. Yet, they are also inextricably done from out of history, for history, beyond history. They are conditioned by what has happened, although they are unconditioned as they are free and thus unexpected and incalculable, while they also condition what is to come. In this sense ethical acts are sui generis exemplars of the antinomies of freedom. Ethical decisions and acts are the traces of time, but they also open up new temporalities and the historical. They are memory, but also the novum. The ethical decision is a vortex of time, caught between what was, the now, what is to come, and the eternal. This seminar will be dedicated to studying the relationship between temporality and ethics in terms of how ethical subjectivity, judgment, and act are temporally structured, and how moral consciousness is caught in the historical consciousness of the ethical communities in which subjects are socialized into moral subjectivity and agency. We will study the problem of ethical consciousness in Kant and how it relates to his philosophy of history. This will be followed by Hegel’s engagement with Kant’s moral philosophy. We will introduce Nietzsche as the philosopher who mediates the normative claims of temporality through and on the body—ethics as a form of temporal training of the body. Then, we will trace how the tensions between Kant, Hegel, and Nietzsche are taken up by Levinas, Adorno, Heller and Habermas. These tensions will be studied under three rubrics: first, the disremption of the ethical—or time as the impossible condition of possibility of the ethical; second, we will address temporality as the memory of catastrophe (how to be ethical after Auschwitz and the Gulags), i.e. we question ethics because we are always facing the disaster of the failure of ethics; third, we will then conclude with an analysis of how ethical subjectivity is grounded in the temporality of embodiment, i.e. we cannot be ethical agents without our embodiment, but our corporeality is the site of the running away of time. We will read texts by Kant, Hegel, Levinas, Adorno, Heller, and Habermas, with some secondary reading by Jay Bernstein, Matthias Fritsch, Max Pensky, Marcia Morgan, and Eduardo Mendieta.
Required Texts

I. Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, Allen Wood translation, available at: [http://www.inp.uw.edu.pl/mdsie/Political Thought/Kant%20groundwork%20for%20the%20metaphysics%20of%20morals%20with%20essays.pdf](http://www.inp.uw.edu.pl/mdsie/Political Thought/Kant%20groundwork%20for%20the%20metaphysics%20of%20morals%20with%20essays.pdf)

“Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose” (1784) and “Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch” (1795) BB


**Requirements**

All students are required to do a *class presentation* that entails doing a 10 to 15 minute presentation of the reading assigned for that day. The presentation should be written, although it is not necessary that it be read to the class. The presentations will be posted to Black Board, so that all students have an opportunity to see how other students presented the materials.

All students are required to write a 3k word (or two to three single space pages) *comparison of two thinkers* we are studying on a specific issue relating to the theme of the seminar: temporality, ethics, embodiment, history, and responsibility for the past, for the future. This will be also posted to BB. Alternatively, students may choose to write a 3k exegesis of a provocative formulation from any of the different thinkers we are reading (due on March 28).

Finally, students are required to submit an *abstract* for their *final research paper*, before the paper is written. The faculty will provide feedback on the abstract and guide your research (due on April 4).

The final research paper should be between 17 and 25 pages, but not longer than 25 (due on May 9)

**Conceptual map of our readings. How to make sense of them and why**

Theme:--Disremption of the Ethical

Adorno, *Minima Moralia* (1951)
Levinas, *God, Death and Time* (1975-76)
Levinas, *Time and the Other* (1946-7)
Habermas, “Remarks on Discourse Ethics” (1991)

Theme: --’after Auschwitz’ and the Gulags. *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*

Adorno, “The Meaning of Working Through the Past” (1959)
Habermas, excerpts from “Historical Consciousness and Post-Traditional Identity” (1987)
Heller, “Forgetting and Remembering” (2001)
Max Pensky, “Solidarity with the Past and the work of translation: Reflections on Memory Politics and the Postsecular”
Matthias Fritsch, “Discourse Ethics and the Intergenerational Chain of Concern” (manuscript)
Theme--Temporality, the Body [*Leib v. Koerper*], and Ethical Subjectivity

Nietzsche, “On the Advantage and Disadvantage of History for Life” and the second essay from *Genealogy of Morals*
Habermas, “Human Dignity and the Realist Utopia of Human Rights” (2012)

**Tentative Class Meeting Schedule**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Reading</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1/31</td>
<td>Kant, “Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals”</td>
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<tr>
<td>2/07</td>
<td>Kant, “Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose” and “Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch”</td>
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<tr>
<td>2/14</td>
<td>Hegel, from the <em>Phenomenology of Spirit</em>, the entire section BB “Spirit” in the A.V. Miller translation, pp. 263-409. If you have to make choices, read section A &amp; B of this BB section. Pinkard translation, 383-600 (this has the German on the right and the English on the left)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2/21</td>
<td>Nietzsche, “On the Advantage and Disadvantage of History for Life” and the second essay from <em>Genealogy of Morals</em></td>
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<td>3/14</td>
<td>Levinas, <em>Time and the Other</em> and <em>God, Death, and Time</em></td>
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<td>3/21</td>
<td>No Class: Spring Break</td>
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*Comparative Analysis/Exegesis Due 3/28*

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<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>4/04</td>
<td>Heller, <em>Ethics of Personality</em>, Part II: Vera, or Is an Ethics of Personality Possible? and “Vergessen und Erinnern: Von Sinn der Sinnlosigkeit”</td>
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*Paper Abstract Due 4/04*

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<th>Date</th>
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<td>4/18</td>
<td>Habermas, “Learning by Disaster? A Diagnostic Look Back on the Short 20th Century,”</td>
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4/25  Fritsch, Pensky, Mendieta
5/02  Morgan on Morgan (M. Morgan sole lecturer)
5/09  Final Class,

*Paper Due 5/09*