

# The Promise of German Philosophy: Between Kant and Hegel (Fall only)

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Time Slot:	Thursdays, 4:30 p.m.
Language of Instruction:	English
Contact Hours:	45
ECTS Credits:	6

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## Course Description

German idealism, a movement in German philosophy that began in the 1780s and lasted until the 1840s, has constituted a central element in the development of modern German culture and has left its mark on subsequent philosophical thinking far beyond Germany. It comprises both the promise of the Enlightenment period to further the commonwealth of humankind through sciences and humanities but also the seeds of anti-enlightenment thought that blossomed only later on. In this course, we follow the emergence and full deployment of German idealist philosophy from its beginnings in Kant's theoretical and moral philosophy to Hegel's grand but fragile synthesis. We also discuss the critique by Schelling and the so-called Young Hegelians (Feuerbach, Stirner), trying to understand the richness as well as the limitations of this tradition of German philosophy.

Besides the historical overview, we pursue two systematic lines of inquiry: On the one hand, we will ask how philosophy reacts to a broader cultural network and can be extended to include contemporary critical discussions (feminist, postcolonial, and black perspectives). On the other hand, we will encounter several answers to the question of how radical conversion is possible, from evil to good and from dogmatic to critical philosophy (or vice versa). In times of culture wars and deep political divisions, this problem has a persistent relevance.

## Learning Objectives

By the end of this course, students will be able to give accurate and relevant answers, complete with supporting details, to specific questions about philosophical ideas covered during the semester. They can explain difficult text passages clearly, accurately, and thoroughly. They will learn to speculate, in a well-informed, well-supported, and plausible fashion, about what a given philosopher would say about a novel issue or problem. Students will also gain competency in using and evaluating AI tools.

## Technology Policy

Out of respect for your fellow students, your instructor, and the educational process, all technology devices (cell/smart phones, I-pods, laptops) must be turned off and put away during class.

## Student Profile

They should be in their fourth semester of college/university education or beyond.

## Assignments and Grading

Attendance & Participation: 300 Points (including weekly reading responses and short presentation)

Independent Project Report: 100 Points

Midterm Exam: 300 Points

Final Exam: 300 Points

## **Weekly reading responses**

2-3 pages, due at noon on the day of class.

## **Short Presentation**

Each student has to give one mini-presentation on a specific topic.

## **Independent Project Report**

Write a 4-5 page report about your time travel to the past (the time we covered in class). Your task is to change history a little bit by convincing a philosopher to change or clarify their view on a specific topic. The report is a combination of personal fiction and a philosophy paper. Please include one fun historical fact (what you wear, where you eat, etc.) and concentrate on one specific text.

Completion of the Midterm Exam as well as the Final Exam is needed for a grade.

FUB Grade	Points of 1,000
1.0	980-1,000
1.3	950-979
1.7	900-949
2.0	850-899
2.3	800-849
2.7	750-799
3.0	700-749
3.3	650-699
3.7	600-649
4.0	500-599
5.0	< 500

## **Attendance**

Attendance in class is mandatory. We also expect you to be punctual out of respect to both your instructor and your fellow students. If you cannot attend class because you are ill, please report sick to the FU-BEST office (info@fubest.fu-berlin.de) and to your instructor by e-mail before class.

Absences are **excused** in case of **illness**; however, for the fifth sick day and every other sick day after that (consecutive or cumulative, counted not per individual course but for the program overall), you will need to turn in a doctor's notice ("Attest" in German) to the FU-BEST office in order for them to count as excused, too.

If you miss an exam due to an excused absence, your instructor and the FU-BEST team will arrange a make-up exam for you; you may also be entitled to a term paper deadline extension. If you, however, do not fulfill all course requirements needed for a grade by the (later) date determined by the program, passing the course is no longer possible.

Please also note that if you miss more than half of a course's sessions (even if due to excused absence), passing the course is no longer possible.

Personal travel and visits by relatives or friends are **not** accepted as reasons for absence (i.e., absences for these reasons always count as unexcused).

Regarding **unexcused** absences, please note the following:

- Any unexcused absence has consequences for at least the participation portion of the grade.
- Two unexcused absences lead to a formal warning and a lowering of the course grade by a fraction.
- Three unexcused absences will result in an "F" (5.0) on the transcript.

An absence for more than half of a particular day's session will be considered an absence for that day.

## Literature

Digitalized readings are posted on the online learning platform Blackboard.

## Background Reading

A. Recommended Web Resources (referring to further web resources):

- [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/German\\_idealism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/German_idealism)
- <http://www.iep.utm.edu/g/germidea.htm>
- <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/idealism/>
- <https://www.wcas.northwestern.edu/germanphil/resources.html>

B. Selected Secondary Texts:

- Andrew Bowie, Introduction to German Philosophy. From Kant to Habermas, Cambridge: Polity, 2003.
- Heinrich Heine, Religion And Philosophy In Germany. A Fragment, transl. John Snodgrass, Boston: Publisher Beacon Press, 1959.
- Dieter Henrich, Between Kant and Hegel. Lectures on German Idealism, Cambridge/Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003.
- Terry Pinkard, German Philosophy 1760-1860. The Legacy of Idealism, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

## Course Schedule

Calendar	Topics, Readings, etc.
Session 1	<p><b>Topic: The Origins of German Philosophy in the Lutheran Reformation</b></p> <p><b>Readings</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Martin Luther, Selected Writings (1517-1520)</li> </ul> <p><b>Music</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Giacomo Meyerbeer, Les Huguenots (1836) <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hDfpOu-VWGw&amp;t=311s">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hDfpOu-VWGw&amp;t=311s</a></li> <li>• Chorale, Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Snj9yR5Ae_k">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Snj9yR5Ae_k</a></li> </ul> <p><b>Mini-presentation:</b> Katharina von Bora Luther: The invention of the Protestant family</p>
Session 2	<p><b>Topic: German Enlightenment and its Other</b></p> <p><b>Readings</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Immanuel Kant: An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment? (1784)</li> </ul> <p><b>Music</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• German folk song, Die Gedanken sind frei <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YVc0wBLri1A">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YVc0wBLri1A</a></li> </ul> <p><b>Mini presentation:</b> Caroline von Keyserling: regent of the court of the muses</p>
Session 3	<p><b>Topic: Kant's Transcendental Turn: Radicalizing the Enlightenment?</b></p> <p><b>Readings</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Immanuel Kant: Critique of Pure Reason. Preface to the Second Edition (1787)</li> </ul> <p><b>Mini-presentation:</b> Did Kant suppress his debt to Anton Wilhelm Amo, the first black philosopher?</p>

<b>Session 4</b>	<p><b>Topic: How is conversion from evil to good possible?</b></p> <p><b>Readings</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Immanuel Kant: Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason (1793)</li> </ul> <p><b>Mini-presentation:</b> The conversion of the 20<sup>th</sup> century: Edith Stein</p>
<b>Session 5</b>	<p><b>Topic: German Idealism as the Elaboration of the New Philosophy</b></p> <p><b>Readings</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Friedrich Hölderlin: Judgment and Being (1795); Poems; Letters to Hegel and Schelling; Hyperion</li> <li>Schelling/Hegel/Hölderlin: The Oldest System Program of German Idealism (1797)</li> </ul> <p><b>Music</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Franz Schubert, Trio no. 2 op. 100 <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3kuFzjkUcLw">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3kuFzjkUcLw</a></li> </ul> <p><b>Mini-presentation:</b> Roommates at the Tübinger Stift</p>
<b>Session 6</b>	<b>MIDTERM EXAM</b>
<b>Session 7</b>	<p><b>Topic: How is conversion from dogmatism to criticism possible?</b></p> <p><b>Readings</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling, Philosophical Letters on Dogmatism and Criticism (1795)</li> </ul> <p><b>Mini-presentation:</b> The longing of Caroline Schelling</p>
<b>Session 8</b>	<p><b>Topic 8: Johann Wolfgang von Goethe as a Freemason. Recasting Cosmopolitanism?</b></p> <p><b>Mini-presentations:</b> The history of Freemasonry; Goethe's service to Karl August</p> <p><b>Music</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Franz Schubert / Goethe, Der Erlkönig <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zTxiaqvCThg">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zTxiaqvCThg</a></li> </ul>
<b>Session 9</b>	<p><b>Topic 9: Faust. The drama of the Germans</b></p> <p><b>Readings</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Johann Wolfgang von Goethe: Faust I + II (1808, 1832)</li> </ul> <p><b>Mini-presentation:</b> Xi Jinping's fascination with Faust</p>
<b>Session 10</b>	<p><b>Topic: Reclaiming Theory – Hegel's Transitional Synthesis: The Phenomenology of Spirit</b></p> <p><b>Readings</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel: <i>The Phenomenology of Spirit. Introduction</i> (1806)</li> </ul> <p><b>Mini-presentation:</b> Why became Hegel's sister mad?</p>

Session 11	<p><b>Topic: Hegel on Recognition: The Master-Slave Dialectic</b></p> <p><b>Readings</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel: <i>The Phenomenology of Spirit. Mastery and Servitude</i> (1806)</li> </ul> <p><b>Guest lecture:</b> Hegel and black thought. The legacy of Martin Luther King</p>
Session 12	<p><b>Topic: The Unravelling of Hegel's Synthesis: The Young Hegelians</b></p> <p><b>Readings</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Max Stirner: <i>The False Principles of Our Education – Or, Humanism and Realism</i> (1842)</li> </ul> <p><b>Music</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Einstürzende Neubauten, Kollaps (live) <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hkrv0Q11tWM">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hkrv0Q11tWM</a></li> </ul> <p><b>Mini-presentation:</b> Ayn Rand: taming the self?</p>
Session 13	<b>FINAL EXAM</b>