Course No.: 1030303

Course Title: Hermeneutics from Plato to Postmodernism

Course title in Hebrew: הרמנויטיקה: מאפלטון ועד פוסטמודרניזם

Year: 2021-2022 (תשפ"ב)

Name of Lecturer: Professor Shira Wolosky

Program: Interdisciplinary Program in Jewish Thought and Philosophy

Duration: Semester I; 4 academic hours, twice per week

Type: Seminar

Credits: 4

Pre-Requisites: The Western Thought I: Introduction to Ancient Greek Philosophy;
     Advanced English

Office Hours: After Class

Lecturer's Contact Information: shira.wolosky@gmail.com; 02 566 1195

About the Course: Any act of reading (or understanding) involves interpretive frameworks, assumptions, directions. Hermeneutics is the study of these interpretive frameworks, a self-reflexive examination of the methods and approaches through which we interpret beyond the act and results of interpretive work. The course will begin with traditions of Greek philosophy and Christian exegesis which both found and continue to inform Western hermeneutics across a variety of fields. Topics will include: aesthetic theory; Nietzsche; scientific paradigms; phenomenological reading processes; interpretive communities; deconstruction; historicism and cultural studies; psychology; feminism; Judaic hermeneutics; Discourse Theory.

Purpose of Course: To encounter and engage main hermeneutical approaches of the Twentieth and Twenty-first centuries. The course will follow trends as well as differences among them, and consider critically the underlying assumptions which in each case direct interpretive work in specific directions. The course will also focus on how postmodernism challenges traditional assumptions and the consequences for this challenge for ethics.

Requirements and Grades:

Written work: Mid-term (4 pages in Hebrew/5 pages in English; 2000/2500 words) – 40%.

Final paper (6 pages in Hebrew/7 pages in English; 3000/3750 words) – 60%

Passing grade: 60

Each paper will pose a question about the reading and ask you to answer it. This does not mean summarizing the reading, but offering an argument about a specific issue in it, in the form of your own claim; evidence for and against that claim; and a conclusion regarding why your argument is important.

Papers will be submitted directly to MOODLE AND **emailed to me:**
shira.wolosky@gmail.com

You must PRINT and bring to class each week's readings.

This course requires close to native English, including an ability to read highly theoretical texts, and a minimum speaking level of ACTFL Advanced High. If your speaking is below this level, and you are nevertheless interested in participating in the course, please contact Prof. Wolosky: shira.wolosky@gmail.com

NOTE: I may request short statements on the reading to be brought to class. These will NOT BE GRADED, and will be two or three sentences on what was interesting, what was troubling or problematic to understand, or something in the reading the student wishes to discuss in class.

All readings will be available to you digitally sent through moodle or email, and also through a COURSE READER

Contents

I.   Ancient Hermeneutics

Session 1. Plato's theory of Ideas/copies; art as a copy of a copy; the divided line as another schema of copies and formal abstraction

Required Reading:

Plato: *Republic* 10 595b-603b; *Republic* VI 506b-510d, Translated Benjamin Jowett from The Internet Classics Archive http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/republic.html digital printed handout in class.

Session 2: Augustine's Neoplatonism as it structures his theory of language. The two-world system as metaphysical structure

Required Reading:

Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*, Translation from Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, James O'Donnell https://faculty.georgetown.edu/jod/augustine/ddc.html digital selections from *On Christian Doctrine*: Book I. Chaps. 2, 4, 9, 13, 36, 38; Book II chap 1; Book III chaps. 5; 6, 9, 10.

Session 3: Negative Theology The implications for language theory of Neoplatonist metaphysics

 Required Reading:

Plotinus *Enneads,* Digital selections Book VI: The Internet Classics Archive translated by Stephen MacKenna and B.S. Page; digital copy

Session 4: Biblical Exegesis: Hebrew Scripture reread as Old Testament prefiguring the New Testament: Paul: 2 Corinthians

Required Reading:

Auerbach, *Mimesis* pp. 16-17, 73; from: *Figura* Scenes from the Drama of European Literature, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis pp. 38-39; digital copy

II.   Structuralism, Nietzsche, Deconstruction

Session 5: Saussure's revolution in language theory: sign-theory and its metaphysical implications

Required Reading:

Ferdinand de Saussure: *Course in General Linguistics*, Part I chapter 1, pp. 65-80; digital copy

Session 6: Saussure, continued; Nietzsche's critique of metaphysics and language theory

Required Reading:

Friedrich Nietzsche: "On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense", translated by Sander Gilman,1873 Oxford University Press (1989 Internet Archive);

https://archive.org/stream/NietzscheOnTruthAndLying/nietzsche%20on%20truth%20and%20lying_djvu.txt digital copy

<u>Session 7: Nietzsche: "On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense," continued reading text</u>

<u>Session 8: Critique of Saussure's sign-theory and its continuation of metaphysics.</u>
<u>Deconstruction</u>
Required Reading:
Nietzsche: *Twilight of the Idols,* "Reason in Philosophy," *The Portable Nietzsche,* ed. Walter
Kaufman (NY: Penguin Books, 1954,1976), pp. 479-456.
Jacques Derrida, "Grammatology and Semiology," in *Positions,* University of Chicago Press
1982, pp. 17-36; digital copy, pp. 18-22; 26-28

<u>Session 9: Metaphysical implications of sign-theory</u>
Required Reading:
Jacques Derrida, Grammatology and Semiology, continued;
Of Grammatology Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976, digital copy, pp.11-16

III. Hermeneutical Fields

<u>Session 10: Paradigm shifts: hermeneutics of science</u>
Required Reading:
Thomas Kuhn: in "*The Structure of Scientific Revolutions,*" University of Chicago Press,
1962. Preface x; chapter 1, pp. 10, 23-24; Chapter VII, pp 66-68; Chapter VIII, pp. 77-78;
85-86; Chapter X, pp. 111-116, 120-126, 135; digital copy.

<u>Session 11: Kuhn, continued; Hermeneutics of history</u>
Required Reading:
Hayden White, "The Historical Text as Literary Artifact," *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in
Cultural, Criticism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), pp. 81-100. Digital
copy.
http://yunus.hacettepe.edu.tr/~jason.ward/ied485britnovel4/HaydWhitHistTextArtifact.pdf

<u>Session 12: White, continued. "Historical Text"</u>

Session 13: Phenomenology: cognitive processing of reading in time

Required Reading:

Wolfgang Iser: "The Reading Process," *New Literary History,* 1972; digital copy

Session 14: Freud's model of the psyche, its conflicts and developmental course.

Required Reading:

Sigmund Freud: "The Dissolution of the Oedipus Complex," in Peter Gay (ed.), *The Freud Reader,* W.W Norton, 1995; digital copy.

Session 15: Cinderella

Required Reading:

Sigmund Freud: "Family Romance". The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume IX (1906-1908); digital copy

Session 16: Critique of Freud from a gendered position. Revolution in developmental theory in its implications for ethics

Required Reading:

Carole Gilligan: chapter 1: *In a Different Voice,* Harvard University Press, 1993, pp. 5-23; digital copy.

Session 17: Gilligan, continued; Theory of power and instituted selfhood

Required Reading:

Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish,* Vintage Books, NY. 1975 "Docile Bodies" pp.135-148 (Digital selection)

Session 18. Foucault, continued. Post-identity selfhood; Application of Foucault to gender

Required Reading:

Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble,* Routledge NY, 1990, pp 139-140, 184-190. digital selection.

Session 19. Judith Butler, continued.

Required Reading:

Judith Butler, continued. "Critical Race Theory, An Introduction" eds Richard Delgado, Jean Stefancic NYT Press 2012; excerpts; digital copy

IV. Post-Metaphysical Theories of Language and Ethics

<u>Session 20: Narrative as a hermeneutic model morally, psychologically, politically</u>

Required Reading:

Paul Ricoeur, "Life: A Story in Search of a Narrator," *The Ricoeur Reader,* University of Toronto Press, 1991, pp. 425-437; digital copy

<u>Session 21: Discourse ethics as post-metaphysical</u>

Required Reading:

Karl Otto-Apel, ″Discourse Ethics as a Response to the Novel Challenges of Today's Reality to Co-responsibility″, *The Journal of Religion* 73:4 (October 1993), Part III, pp. 506 - 513; digital copy:

<u>Session 22: Pragmatisms as critique of Platonism and its language implications</u>

Required Reading:

Otto-Apel, continued. Richard Rorty, from *Consequences of Pragmatism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), p. xix; "Pragmatism, Relativism, Irrationalism"; digital copy.

<u>Session 21: The ethics of pragmatism.</u>

Required Reading:

Richard Rorty, continued. "The Contingency of Liberal Community," *Contingency, Irony, Solidarity* (NY: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 57-63; digital copy.

<u>Session 22: An ethical Discourse Theory</u>

Required Reading:

Emmanuel Levinas, "Dialogue", *Of God Who Comes To Mind,* Stanford University Press, 1998, pp. 137-151; digital copy.

<u>Session 23: Levinas, continued "Dialogue"</u>

<u>Sessions 24-25: Diversity and Democratic Norms in a pluralistic society</u>

John Rawls, "The Idea of Overlapping Consensus," *Oxford Journal of Legal Studies* 7:1 (Spring 1987), pp. 1-25; digital copy

<u>Session 26: Conclusion</u>