

# Filosofie en de politieke actualiteit: Overheersing & Dienstbaarheid

Syllabus

2<sup>st</sup> semester 2022/23, block 4

Room: OMHP D 1.08

ECTS: 6

Docent: Daniel Loick

Email: [d.loick@uva.nl](mailto:d.loick@uva.nl)

Time: Thursdays, 9-12 h

First session February 16<sup>th</sup>, last session March 23<sup>rd</sup>

## Objectives

Upon successful completion of this course, you will have

- investigated a canonical motif of Western practical philosophy;
- explored a host of critical strands in contemporary political and social philosophy;
- reflected on the possibility to update classical philosophical texts for contemporary problems;
- improved your hermeneutical and analytical skills.

## Content

*This course will be partly taught in Dutch and partly in English (students can speak English or Dutch, teacher will speak English)*

The short chapter “Mastery and Servitude” from Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* is one of the most important passages in the history of philosophy. Here, Hegel not only describes an essential phase in the development of self-consciousness, but also systematically explains why no recognition between individuals can succeed under conditions of domination. This argument has subsequently been adopted by numerous philosophical approaches and political movements. We will first reconstruct Hegel's own argumentation in detail and then familiarize ourselves with subsequent attempts to update, revise and reformulate Hegel's original idea. In addition to Hegel, we will read texts by Marx, Beauvoir, Benjamin, Coulthard, Davis, Du Bois, Fanon, and Kojève.

## Recommended prior knowledge

- Essential for this course is the willingness to engage deeply and in a concentrated way with very difficult texts.
- In addition, students should bring curiosity about applying political and social philosophy to contemporary issues.

## Format

The seminar has the following structure: 1. Introductory lecture, 2. Group discussion, 3. Break, 4. general class discussion.

- It is absolutely essential to read the assigned texts thoroughly. The background reading is not required (except for the experts, see below), but useful. The texts will be made available through Canvas.
- You are highly encouraged to form independent reading groups to continue the class discussion, as well as to present drafts of your papers to each other. You can post a “Looking for reading groups”-ad in the discussions page on Canvas.
- If you want to plan to attend the course via zoom (for example if you need to quarantine), let me know at least the day before, so I can arrange the technical equipment.

## Exam

In order to successfully complete this course, you have to:

- Attend class regularly and well prepared; actively participate in class discussion.
- We will use the program Perusall (on canvas) to collaboratively read the texts. You will find a few reading hints there to help you structure the reading, as well as some initial questions and comments. Each student can add more questions, answer somebody else’s question, start or contribute to a discussion, or include links to background information or further reading. In order to pass the course, you have to engage with each week’s reading at least 2 times (it can be a question, comment, etc.). The assessment of Perusall is on a pass/fail basis. Please add your contributions by Wednesdays, 20.00 h.
- Be an “expert” for one of the six sessions. Experts prepare for the particular session especially thoroughly and moderate the sessions in the workgroups (there will be multiple experts for each session, one in each workgroup). On canvas, you can put your name in a list (under “pages”) for which of the sessions you would like to be an expert.
- For your final exam, you can choose between:
  - *A take-home exam.* The exam will consist of a number of questions to which you can respond with short texts. The entire exam will be about 3000-4000 words.
  - *A collaborative project.* Choose a topic that sheds light on an instance of mastery and servitude. The project needs to be collectively pursued (by 2 or more members). It can be a longer paper with different aspects, but other media are also welcome, as long as it includes a textual part (you can make a podcast, a short film, a performance, a website etc., accompanied with an essay) The scope of the project depends on the number of members of the project (as an orientation: it should be the equivalent of 3000-4000 words texts by each member). Think about how to make your project accessible to others. You will find a page to look for potential collaborators on canvas.

It is essential that you send in a proposal of a project and discuss its format and content with the docent before you start pursuing it.

- Please take notice of UvA's regulations on plagiarism and fraud.

## Class Climate

Creating a respectful, inclusive and attentive atmosphere in the (virtual) classroom is the shared responsibility of teacher and students. This includes reflecting on the different backgrounds, experiences and social positionings among the participants, a sensibility with regard to one's own conduct in the classroom, and an openness towards other perspectives and opinions. The seminar aims at including all students and thus attempts to reduce structural disadvantages. Please contact me with any discomfort with regard to the class climate.

In case of issues with social safety within and outside the classroom, you can also consult this page: <https://student.uva.nl/en/topics/help-with-undesirable-behaviour>.

## Program

### 16.2. *The original Text: Mastery and Servitude*

- Georg W.F. Hegel, "Self-Sufficiency and Non-Self-Sufficiency of Self-Consciousness; Mastery and Servitude", *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Cambridge 2018: Cambridge University Press pp. 108-116
- Alexandre Kojève, "Summary of the First Six Chapters of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*", *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, Ithaca 1980: Cornell University Press, pp. 31-70

### 23.2. *Bourgeois and Proletarians*

- Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels: "Bourgeois and Proletarians", *The Communist Manifesto*, MECW 6, London 2010: Lawrence & Wishart, pp. 483-496
- Friedrich Engels, "The Attitude of the Bourgeoisie Towards the Proletariat", *The Conditions of the English Working Class*, MECW 4, London 2010: Lawrence & Wishart, pp. 562-583

### 2.3. *Master and Slave*

- W.E.B. Du Bois, "Of Our Spiritual Strivings", "Of the Sons of Master and Man", *The Souls of Black Folk*, Oxford 2007: Oxford University Press, pp. 7-15, 111-128.
- Angela Y. Davis, *Lectures on Liberation* (1971), Part I, pp. 1-8

9.3. *Colonizer and Colonized*

- Frantz Fanon, “The Fact of Blackness”, “The Negro and Recognition”, *Black Skin, White Masks*, London 1986: Pluto, pp. 82-108; 163-173
- Glen Coulthard, “The Politics of Recognition on Colonial Contexts”, *Red Skin, White Masks. Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition*, Minneapolis 2014: University of Minnesota Press, pp. 25-49

16.3. *Men and Women*

- Simone de Beauvoir, “Introduction”, “The Nomads”, “Conclusion”, *The Second Sex*, London 1956: Jonathan Cape, pp. 13-32, 87-92, 673-688

23.3. *Dominant and Submissive*

- Jessica Benjamin, “Master and Slave”, *The Bonds of Love. Psychoanalysis, Feminism, and the Problem of Domination*, New York 1988: Pantheon, pp. 51-85.

Final Discussion

**Further Resources**

Hegel, in the Stanford Encyclopedia: <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/hegel/>

Overthink Podcast with Prof. Ellie Anderson on Hegel’s master-servant dialectic: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bKz-HtOPvjE>

Susan Buck-Morss, *Hegel, Haiti and Universal History*, Pittsburgh 2009: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Herbert Marcuse, *Reason and Revolution*, Oxford 1941: Oxford University Press.

John O’Neill (ed.), *Hegel’s Dialectic of Desire and Recognition*, New York 1996: SUNY Press.