

# PT229 Hegel's Philosophy of Right

Seminar Leader: Dr. Jan Völker  
Course Times: Wednesday, 17:30-20:45  
Email: j.voelker@berlin.bard.edu  
Office Hours: By appointment

## Course Description

Our contemporary understanding of terms like “Law” and “Right” seems narrow and restrictive when compared with the possibilities opened by the set of problems considered in Hegel’s Philosophy of Right. The central question of this 1820 text concerns the realization of freedom within the form of the modern state. For Hegel, freedom cannot be achieved through individualistic and liberal frameworks; freedom relies on the freedom of the other. It is realized within the state as the lawful form of collective existence. Hegel’s proposal strikes us as ambivalent: on the one hand, it is far distant from a current sense of the state as a purely administrative apparatus—it seems conservative, even Romantic in tenor. On the other hand, it prompts questions that clearly continue to haunt the modern state from within, questions that have gained renewed importance in debates about identity, belonging, populism, and representation. Is freedom individual or collective? How does the state relate to individuals? In this seminar, we will discuss the entirety of the text, and complement our reading of Hegel by referring to interpretations of specific passages.

All texts will be provided via email! We will work with the following edition:  
G.W.F. Hegel: Elements of the Philosophy of Right, ed. Allen W. Wood, Cambridge / new York:  
Cambridge University Press, 1991.

## Requirements

Attendance at every class is essential, as is full advance preparation of the course readings for each session of the seminar. There will be two essays, the first of 1800-2500 words or 5-7 pages, and the second of 8-10 pages, or 2800-3500 words, as well as in-class presentations, which form part of the participation grade.

## Academic Integrity

Bard College Berlin maintains the staunchest regard for academic integrity and expects good academic practice from students in their studies. Instances in which students fail to meet the expected standards of academic integrity will be dealt with under the Code of Student Conduct, Section III Academic Misconduct.

## Attendance

Attendance at ALL classes is expected. More than two absences (that is absences from two sessions of 90 minutes) in a semester will significantly affect the participation grade for the course.

Students should consult the Student Handbook for regulations governing periods of illness or leaves of absence.

### Assessment

Attendance at ALL classes is expected. More than two absences (that is absences from two sessions of 90 minutes) in a semester will significantly affect the participation grade for the course.

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PLEASE NOTE: No electronic devices are allowed in class.

### Writing Assignments

Mid-Term Paper: 1800-2500 words, 5-7 pages. Final paper: 2800-3500 words, 8-10 pages.

Essay deadlines: Midterm paper: Sunday 17 March 23.59. Final paper: Sunday 12 May 23.59

### Policy on Late Submission of Papers

Syllabi for core and elective classes should note or refer to the following policy from the Student Handbook on the submission of essays: *essays that are up to 24 hours late will be downgraded one full grade (from B+ to C+, for example). Instructors are not obliged to accept essays that are more than 24 hours late. Where an instructor agrees to accept a late essay, it must be submitted within four weeks of the deadline and cannot receive a grade of higher than C.*

*Thereafter, the student will receive a failing grade for the assignment.*

### **Grade Breakdown**

Mid-term essay: 20%

Final essay: 30%

Seminar grade: 50% (20%presentation, 30%participation)

All texts will be provided via email! We will work with the following edition:

### **Schedule**

Wednesday, 30 January

- *Preface and Introduction*, pp. 9-65.

Wednesday, 6 February

- *Abstract Right: The Person, Property*, pp. 65-104.

Wednesday, 13 February

- *Abstract Right: Contract, Wrong*, pp. 104-133.

Wednesday, 20 February

- *Morality: Subjectivity, Purpose and Responsibility, Intention and Welfare*, pp. 133-157.

Wednesday, 27 February

- *Morality: The Good and the Conscience*, pp. 157-187.

Wednesday, 6 March

- *Ethical Life, The Family, Marriage, The Family's Resources, The Upbringing of Children and the Dissolution of the Family*, pp. 187-220.

Wednesday, 13 March

- *Civil Society: The System of Needs, The Administration of Justice*, pp. 220-259

Wednesday, 20 March

- *Civil Society: The Police and the Corporation, The State*, pp. 259-305.

Wednesday, 27 March

- *The State*, pp. 305-327.

Wednesday, 3 April

- *The State*, pp. 327-359

Wednesday, 10 April

- *The State, External Sovereignty, International Law*, pp. 359-372.

Wednesday, 17 April

- Spring Break

Wednesday, 24 April

- *The State, World History*, pp. 372-380.

Wednesday, 1 May

- Federal Holiday

Wednesday, 8 May

- General discussion

Wednesday, 15 May

- Completion