

**Winter 2025 – Carleton University**  
**PHIL 4330/ PHIL 5350: The Politics of German Idealism**  
**Wednesdays, 11:35 am – 2:25 pm**  
**Course Delivery: In-person**

**Instructor:** Dr. Kyla Bruff

**Email:** [kyla.bruff@carleton.ca](mailto:kyla.bruff@carleton.ca)

**Office hours:** Wednesdays, 3pm – 5pm in 3A56, Paterson Hall, or online by appointment

### **I. Description:**

This course will explore the political philosophies of Kant, Fichte, Hegel, and Schelling. Key political texts from these thinkers, as well as background readings from Jean-Jacques Rousseau, will be read in relation to the changing German political context from 1770-1854. We will explore the development of each thinker's perspectives on right, the law, religion, and the relationship between the state and the community. We will critically investigate how the law and the state relate to the realization of human freedom, asking: in which political configuration did the classical German philosophers think we would be most free? How did they think we would get there?

**II. Preclusions:** Additional credit for the same course under either PHIL 4330 or PHIL 5350.

### **III. Prerequisite(s):**

Undergraduate students must be enrolled as a Fourth Year Undergraduate with a Major, Minor or Concentration in Philosophy or Phil. Ethics PubAff.

Graduate students must be enrolled in the Graduate Philosophy Program.

### **IV. Learning Outcomes:**

- to understand the development of post-Enlightenment political philosophy in Germany up to 1854, as informed by the topics and writings of Jean-Jacques Rousseau.
- to be able to critically compare Kant's, Fichte's, Hegel's, and Schelling's views on right, the state, the role of reason, and community.
- to be able to critically discuss the relevance of classical German political philosophy today.
- to discuss confidently on the topic of and write about natural right, the will, human nature, teleology, different models of the state (and the relation of these models to freedom and necessity), monarchy, nationalism, and community in German Idealism.

## V. Course texts:

There are no required texts for this course. All readings will be provided online. If you would like to purchase any of the full, physical books, we will be reading excerpts from the following:

- Rousseau: [\*Discourse on the Origin of Inequality\*](#) (trans. Philip, Oxford UP)
- Rousseau: [\*Discourse on Political Economy and The Social Contract\*](#) (trans. Betts, Oxford UP)
- Kant, [\*The Metaphysics of Morals\*](#) (trans. Gregor, Cambridge UP)
- Kant, [\*Political Writings\*](#) (ed. H. S. Reiss, Cambridge UP)
- Fichte: [\*Foundations of Natural Right\*](#) (ed. Neuhouser, trans. Baur, Cambridge, UP)
- Fichte: [\*The Way Towards the Blessed Life\*](#) (trans. Smith)
- Hegel, [\*Elements of the Philosophy of Right\*](#) (trans. Wood, Cambridge UP)
- Schelling, [\*System of Transcendental Idealism\*](#) (trans. Heath, University of Virginia Press)
- Schelling, [\*Philosophy and Religion\*](#) (trans. Ottmann, Spring Publications)
- Schelling, [\*Philosophical Investigations on the Essence of Human Freedom\*](#) (trans. Love and Schmidt, SUNY Press)
- Schelling, [\*Idealism and the Endgame of Theory\*](#) (trans. Pfau, SUNY Press)

## VI. Calendar descriptions:

**PHIL 4330 – Seminar in Social or Political Philosophy:** Detailed study of selected issues in social or political philosophy. Prerequisite(s): eligibility for fourth-year standing in a Philosophy Honours program or permission of the Department.

Also offered at the graduate level, with different requirements, as [PHIL 5350](#), for which additional credit is precluded.

**PHIL 5350 – Topics in the History of Philosophy:** A detailed study of an issue or the work of selected philosophers in the general areas of ethics or political philosophy. Topics may vary from year to year.

Also offered at the undergraduate level, with different requirements, as PHIL 4320 or PHIL 4330, for which additional credit is precluded.

## VII. Course calendar, readings, and overview:

Date	Readings
Jan. 8	Course Introduction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Introduction,” Christopher Yeomans, <i>The Politics of German Idealism</i></li> </ul>
<b>Unit 1: Natural Right, The Will, and Human Nature</b>	
Jan. 15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rousseau: <i>Discourse on the Origin of Inequality</i> (1755, excerpts)</li> <li>• Rousseau: <i>The Social Contract</i> (1762, excerpts on the general will and freedom)</li> </ul>
Jan. 22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fichte: <i>Foundations of Natural Right</i> (1796, Introduction, First, Second, and Third Main Divisions)</li> <li>• Kant, <i>Metaphysics of Morals</i> (1797), Introduction to the Doctrine of Right; Private Right</li> </ul>
Jan. 29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schelling, “New Deduction of Natural Right” (1796)</li> </ul>
Feb. 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hegel, <i>Philosophy of Right</i> (1821, Introduction and Abstract Right)</li> </ul>
<b>Unit 2: Teleology and the Organic Model of Political Structures</b>	
Feb. 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kant: <i>Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose</i> (1784)</li> <li>• Fichte: <i>The Way Towards the Blessed Life</i> (1806, excerpts)</li> </ul>
Feb. 19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hegel: <i>Philosophy of Right</i> (1821, sections on family and civil society)</li> </ul>
Feb. 26	<b>NO CLASSES – MIDTERM BREAK</b>
Mar. 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schelling: <i>System of Transcendental Idealism</i> (1800; excerpts)</li> <li>• Schelling: <i>On University Studies</i> (1802-1803; excerpts)</li> <li>• Schelling: <i>Philosophy and Religion</i> (1804; excerpts)</li> </ul> (Optional reading: Schülein, “ <a href="#">Schelling’s Political Naturalism</a> ”)
<b>Unit 3: The State, Monarchy, Nationalism, and Community</b>	
Mar. 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kant: “What is Enlightenment?” (1784)</li> <li>• Kant: <i>Metaphysics of Morals</i>, Section on Public Right (1797)</li> <li>• Kant: <i>On Perpetual Peace</i> (1795)</li> </ul>
Mar. 19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fichte: <i>The Way Towards the Blessed Life</i> (1806, excerpts)</li> <li>• Fichte: <i>Addresses to the German Nation</i> (1806)</li> <li>• David James, “<a href="#">The political theology of Fichte’s Staatslehre: immanence and transcendence</a>”</li> </ul> (Optional reading: Nakhimovsky, “ <a href="#">Perpetual Peace and Fichte’s Theory of the State</a> ”)
Mar. 26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hegel: <i>Philosophy of Right</i> (1821, sections on the state, religion, and constitutional monarchy)</li> </ul>
Apr. 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schelling, <i>Philosophical Investigations on the Essence of Human Freedom</i> (1809) (excerpts)</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schelling, “Stuttgart Seminars” (1810, published in <i>Idealism and the Endgame of Theory</i>) (excerpts)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Schelling: Lectures 22-24, Presentation of the Purely Rational Philosophy</a></li> </ul>
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**VIII. Evaluation**

- Short expository essay (1500 words) 25%  
**Due on February 5, 11:59 pm** (graded and returned Feb 17)
- Seminar presentation + handout 25%  
OR  
1500-word critical summary of a weekly reading from the primary text  
(to be submitted **anytime on or before April 9**)
- Preparation for class and contributions to discussions 10%
- Term paper (take-home exam) of 3000-3500 words 40%  
(2000-2500 for undergraduates)  
**Due on April 26, 11:59 pm**

For the seminar presentation, you are required to produce a handout of 10-12 points of approximately two lines each (without quotations), summarizing the reading of the day for your classmates. You will present the reading and your handout in a presentation of approximately 20 minutes to the class. Your handout must be submitted by **the Monday before your presentation at 11:59 pm**. I will approve the handout and make copies of it for the class. Presentation dates will be assigned on the first day of the course. Instead of a seminar presentation, you also have the option of writing a 1,500 expository summary of one of our weekly readings.

For your final assignment, please make sure all sources are cited in line with Carleton’s Academic Integrity guidelines, listed here:  
<https://carleton.ca/registrar/academic-integrity/>.

The final take-home exam is due on the last day of the exam period, according to the University calendar.

**Late assignments will be penalized at a rate of 2% per day for a maximum of 5 days or -10%.**

## **IX. Department of Philosophy and Carleton University Policies (Fall/Winter 2024-25)**

### **Assignments:**

Please follow your professor's instructions on how assignments will be handled electronically. There will be NO hard copies placed in the essay box this coming year.

### **Evaluation:**

Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor subject to the approval of the Faculty Dean. This means that grades submitted by the instructor may be subject to revision. No grades are final until they have been approved by the Dean.

### **Deferrals for Term Work:**

If students are unable to complete term work because of illness or other circumstances beyond their control, they should contact their course instructor no later than *three working days* of the due date. Normally, any deferred term work will be completed by the last day of the term. Term work cannot be deferred by the Registrar.

### **Deferrals for Final Exams:**

Students are expected to be available for the duration of a course including the examination period. Occasionally, students encounter circumstances beyond their control where they may not be able to write a final examination or submit a take-home examination. Examples of this would be a serious illness or the death of a family member. If you miss a final examination and/or fail to submit a take-home examination by the due date, you may apply for a deferral no later than *three working days* after the original due date (as per the University Regulations in [Section 4.3 of the Undergraduate Calendar](#)). Visit the [Registrar's Office](#) for further information.

### **Plagiarism:**

It is the responsibility of each student to understand the meaning of 'plagiarism' as defined in the Undergraduate or Graduate Calendars, and to avoid both committing plagiarism and aiding or abetting plagiarism by other students. ([Section 10.1 of the Undergraduate Calendar Academic Regulations](#))

### **Academic Accommodation:**

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term:

- *Pregnancy or religious obligation:* write to your professor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details visit the [EDC](#) website.
- *Academic accommodations for students with disabilities:* The [Paul Menton Centre](#) for Students with Disabilities (PMC) provides services to students with Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/mental health disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), chronic medical

conditions, and impairments in mobility, hearing, and vision. If you have a disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact PMC at 613-520-6608 or [pmc@carleton.ca](mailto:pmc@carleton.ca) for a formal evaluation. If you are already registered with the PMC, contact your PMC coordinator to send your Letter of Accommodation at the beginning of the term, and no later than two weeks before the first in-class test or exam requiring accommodation. After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with your professor to ensure accommodation arrangements are made.

- *Survivors of Sexual Violence:* As a community, Carleton University is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working and living environment where sexual violence will not be tolerated, and where survivors are supported through academic accommodations as per [Carleton's Sexual Violence Policy](#).
- *Accommodation for [Student Activities](#):* Carleton University recognizes the substantial benefits, both to the individual student and for the university, that result from a student participating in activities beyond the classroom experience. Reasonable accommodation must be provided to students who compete or perform at the national or international level. Please contact your instructor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist.

### **Important Dates:**

Sept. 4	Classes start.
Sept. 17	Last day for registration and course changes for fall term and fall/winter (two-term) courses.
Sept. 30	Last day for entire fee adjustment when withdrawing from fall term or two-term courses. Withdrawals after this date will result in a permanent notation of WDN on the official transcript.
Oct. 14	Statutory holiday. University closed.
Oct. 21-25	Fall Break – no classes.
Nov. 22	Last day for summative tests or examinations, or formative tests or examinations totaling more than 15% of the final grade, before the official examination period.
Dec. 6	Last day of fall term classes. <b><i>Classes follow a Monday schedule.</i></b> Last day for academic withdrawal from fall term courses. Last day for handing in term work and the last day that can be specified by a course instructor as a due date for term work for a fall term course.
Dec. 9-21	Final examinations for fall term courses and mid-term examinations in two-term courses. Examinations are normally held all seven days of the week.
Dec. 21	All take-home examinations are due.
Jan. 6	Classes begin.
Jan. 17	Last day for registration and course changes in the winter term.
Jan. 31	Last day for a full fee adjustment when withdrawing from winter term courses or from the winter portion of two-term courses. Withdrawals after this date will result in a permanent notation of WDN on the official transcript.
Feb. 17	Statutory holiday. University closed.
Feb. 17-21	Winter Break – no classes.
Mar. 15	Last day for academic withdrawal from fall/winter and winter courses.

- Mar. 25 Last day for summative tests or examinations, or formative tests or examinations totaling more than 15% of the final grade, in winter term or fall/winter courses before the official examination period.
- Apr. 8 Last day of two-term and winter term classes. Last day for handing in term work and the last day that can be specified by a course instructor as a due date for two-term and for winter term courses.
- Apr. 9-10 No classes or examinations take place.
- Apr. 11-26 Final examinations for winter term and two-term courses. Examinations are normally held all seven days of the week.
- Apr. 18 Statutory holiday. University closed.
- Apr. 26 All take-home examinations are due.

**Addresses:**

Department of Philosophy:

[www.carleton.ca/philosophy](http://www.carleton.ca/philosophy)

520-2110

Registrar's Office:

[www.carleton.ca/registrar](http://www.carleton.ca/registrar)

520-3500

Academic Advising Centre:

[www.carleton.ca/academicadvising](http://www.carleton.ca/academicadvising)

520-7850

Writing Services:

<http://www.carleton.ca/csas/writing-services/>

520-3822

MacOdrum Library

<http://www.library.carleton.ca/>

520-2735