

Continental Philosophy and Cosmopolitanism in a Time of Existential Crisis

Description and Requirements

Before or after the globe turns warmer and the floods begin. Before or after Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West* becomes reality and mass migrations commence. We will need something more than shared fear to unite us and help us to draw on the diversity of the world for support. For fear is as likely to divide as to unite; to build walls instead of bridges. Moreover, the two global forces predominate today are of no help: the neo-liberal economy creates increased inequality within and between countries and produces a reaction to itself – the second force – that reminds many thinkers of the fascist movements that emerged prior to World War II (see, for example, Robert Kuttner, *Can Democracy Survive Global Capitalism*, Norton: 2018).

Historically, cosmopolitanism has attempted to articulate a political ethics that can make us aware of bonds between us that are stronger than shared fear or other expedient forces. Philosophy is reopening this effort once more. To explore and evaluate what continental philosophy is doing for cosmopolitanism today, our course will involve three Parts. In Part I, we will examine the diverse positions of John Rawls, Jacques Derrida, Alain Badiou, and Jacques Rancière along with some of my own published reflections on their thoughts. In Part II, we shall cover feminist-informed views of cosmopolitanism and democracy by Seyla Benhabib, Bonnie Honig, Judith Butler, and Martha Nussbaum. And in Part III, we will scrutinize Deleuzian views of cosmopolitanism by Ronald Bogue and Claire Colebrook as well as the innovative Marxist position of Dipesh Chakrabarty, the “decoloniality” of Walter Dignolo, and a few more post-colonial views still to be decided. The texts will consist of both books by some of these figures and PDF articles by others, the latter provided by the professor. I will expect all students to contribute to the main theme via short presentations and/or reports on the material, sterling attendance, and participation in class discussion. But students can select their term paper topic on whatever social-political theme they wish so long as it makes ample use of some of the figures we will discuss. My own task will be to pursue the White Whale of cosmopolitanism, a current book project of mine.

Fulfills a Contemporary Philosophy Requirement.

The required books are **Alain Badiou**'s *Saint Paul* (an accessible and comprehensive view of Badiou's philosophy), **Seyla Benhabib**'s *Another Cosmopolitanism* (with Bonnie Honig), **Jacques Derrida**'s *Rogues* and *Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*. The papers thus far selected and provided by the professor are **Ronald Bogue**, “Nature, Law and Chaospolitanism”; **Judith Butler** (TBA); **Claire Colebrook**, “Destroying Cosmopolitanism for the Sake of the Cosmos”; **Bonnie Honig**, “Another Cosmopolitanism? Law and Politics in the New Europe” (in Benhabib book); **Dipesh Chakrabarty**, “Universalism and Belonging in the Logic of Capital”; **Martha Nussbaum**, two chapters from her new book, *The Cosmopolitan Tradition: A Noble but Flawed Ideal*; **Jacques Rancière**, “Ten Theses on Politics”; **John Rawls**, selections from *A Theory of Justice* and “The Idea of an Overlapping Consensus”; **Fred Evans**, a chapter on Rawls and Derrida and another on Badiou and Rancière, from my new book, *Public Art and the Fragility of Democracy: An Essay in Political Aesthetics*; an optional chapter on Deleuze and Guattari from my *The Multivoiced Body: Society and Communication in the Age of Diversity*.