

THE MCANULTY COLLEGE AND GRADUATE SCHOOL OF LIBERAL ARTS
DUQUESNE UNIVERSITY

SPRING 2021

GILLES DELEUZE'S *DIFFERENCE AND REPETITION*

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Philosophy 672-61
Wednesdays 12:00-2:40 pm

Many scholars of twentieth-century French philosophy describe *Difference and Repetition* (1968) as Deleuze's masterwork, yet until the 2010s it played a surprisingly small role in the English-language reception of his thought. In part, this is due to the book's aggressive conceptual and argumentative complexity, its stylistic immersion in a sea of extra-textual references to the history of philosophy, mathematics, biology, art, and literature, and its author's unwillingness to throw his readers explanatory lifelines. Another possible explanation is that the book simultaneously and unapologetically deploys a metaphysics and an epistemology, modes of philosophizing typically renounced by the late phenomenological and post-Heideggerian interpretive traditions in Anglo-American continental philosophy from the 1980s through the late 1990s (the period during which much of Deleuze's work was translated). Yet another explanation may be that *Difference and Repetition* is a more philosophically austere work than Deleuze's collaborative texts with Félix Guattari and demands a different sort of approach: while the authors of the 'Capitalism and Schizophrenia' project explicitly suggest that their readers orient themselves anywhere within its conceptual structure and to take up whatever in it they find to be useful or powerful (the 'toolbox' approach to philosophy), *Difference and Repetition* demands to be read as a systematic philosophical treatise developing a specific position (albeit one sometimes frustrating in its opacity). The best way of approaching *Difference and Repetition*, I suggest, is through a close and relatively slow reading that attempts to make sense of Deleuze's concepts, arguments, and positions. That will be the collaborative task of this seminar.

This course satisfies the Contemporary area for the historical distribution requirement.

Members of the seminar will be responsible for a protocol, a seminar paper, a work-in-progress presentation, and active engagement in seminar discussion.

Required:

- Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994). Feel free to use the Continuum edition of Patton's translation, but be forewarned that the pagination does not match Columbia's – you'll be responsible for figuring out where we are.

Recommended texts:

- Gilles Deleuze, *Différence et répétition* (Paris: PUF, 1968). If you plan on doing serious work on Deleuze or French philosophy...
- Joe Hughes, *Deleuze's Difference and Repetition: A Reader's Guide* (London: Continuum/Bloomsbury, 2009). An interesting English-language introductory commentary on *DR*.
- Henry Somers-Hall, *Deleuze's Difference and Repetition: An Edinburgh Philosophical Guide* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013). The only other good English-language introductory commentary on *DR* (there is plenty of excellent and more advanced work on *DR* that addresses specific problems in or sections of the book, but I think Hughes and Somers-Hall offer the only decent 'global' introductions).