

## SEMINAR OUTLINE

PHILOSOPHY 525: SEMINAR IN PHENOMENOLOGY  
Spring Semester 1994  
6:30 -9:00 PM Monday  
Room 102 Mudd Hall of Philosophy

Instructor: Dallas Willard

THEME:

### PHENOMENOLOGY AND POSTMODERNISM

#### **DESCRIPTION:**

Postmodernism is primarily a theory, some would say a practice, of human knowledge. It could be both. It originates and is supported from the failure, real or presumed, of the Modern. We will characterize a certain model or picture of knowledge and action that derives from Classical philosophy but eventually became identified with the 'Modern'. We will consider how that model breaks up on repeated waves of Representationalism from the 17th to the 20th Centuries. Representationalism, generically, is an interpretation of the act of consciousness that closes it in on itself and prevents attainment of the objectivity and universality aspired to by the Modern. Phenomenology, in the form developed by Edmund Husserl, will be considered at lengths as the (thus far) final attempt to re-describe the structure of knowledge in such a way as to salvage the Classical/Modern picture of knowledge from Representationalism.

We then turn to how Phenomenology is countered in the mid-Twentieth Century by Representationalism, as the Classically rational and autonomous individual is obliterated by the social, in the form of history and language. Some attention will be paid to Heidegger, Wittgenstein and others, but we will do a very careful study of Derrida's Speech and Phenomena, as well as some of his shorter pieces. The seminar will conclude by reading the statements by Lyotard and Toulmin on where we seem to be now as 'Postmoderns' in philosophy, and trying to get clear on what they understand knowledge to amount to, especially

in the highly professionalized and technocratic context of contemporary life. An enduring issue will be the extent to which evidence and rationality can be adequately treated in social terms, or, alternatively, in non-social terms.

**TEXTS TO BE PURCHASED:** in order of use----

1. Sarup, Madan, An Introductory Guide to PostStructuralism and Postmodernism. (Read this survey during the first 3 weeks of the seminar.)
2. Willard, Dallas, Logic and the Objectivity of Knowledge
3. Husserl, Edmund, Ideas I (Gibson translation, paperback)
4. Lyotard, Jean-Francois, Phenomenology (Beakley transl.)
5. Derrida, Jacques, Speech and Phenomena
6. Toulmin, Stephen, Cosmopolis
7. Lyotard, J.-F., The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge
8. Lyotard, J.-F., The Postmodern Explained

**FORMALITIES:**

Each "for credit" participant in the seminar will be expected to make an oral presentation in session on one of the assigned texts, and explain and defend her/his interpretation in discussion. <Other participants may wish to do this, and we will see if it can be arranged given the size of the group.> The presentation is to be made from a written basis provided to the members of the seminar. A few (4 or 5) one-page precis will be assigned. Participation in discussion will be noted. A critical/expository paper on a text, or a philosophical analysis of a central problem in the materials covered, will be due at the end of the semester. One hour-long tutorial to be arranged.

**SCHEDULE OF ASSIGNED TEXTS to be read by the date given:**

<Read Sarup during first 3 weeks of semester if possible>

Jan. 10: Discussion of the work to be done in the seminar.  
Lecture on the classical/modern picture of knowledge and its problems with objectivity. As soon as possible read chapter I (pp. 1-20) of Willard.

<Jan. 17 is a University Holiday. No meeting.>

Jan. 24: Chapters II, III & IV of Willard (two weeks)

Jan. 31: Chapters V and VI of Willard

Feb. 7: Husserl, pp. 37-57, 72-132, 153-154.

Feb. 14: Husserl, 155-234

<Feb. 21 is a University Holiday. No meeting.>

Feb. 28: Husserl, 235-270, 345-372

Mar. 7: Lyotard, Phenomenology, especially 31-76, 111-136

Mar. 14: Derrida, pp. 3-47

**TO BE CONTINUED:**

Mar. 21:

<March 28- April 1 is Spring Recess>

Apr. 4:

Apr. 11:

Apr. 18:

Apr. 25: