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Office Hours: TBD

## German Thought in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century:

History – Language – Technology (3 cr)

01:470:XXX:XX; Index: XXXX

Fall 2021

Days, TBD

Room, TBD



The history of German philosophy and thought in the 20<sup>th</sup> century is a problematic one: against the backdrop of Germany's political decline into calamity and disaster, the German intellectual tradition became radically fragmented and dislodged. While many German-Jewish thinkers were persecuted and had to escape into exile, others remained active in Germany, some even supported the Nazi regime. In the course of the semester, we will study some of the towering proponents of German thought, including vexing figures like Martin Heidegger and tragic ones like Walter Benjamin, as students will become familiarized with some of their most impactful works. The course's guiding concepts—*history*, *language*, *technology*—will allow us to cover a broad spectrum of questions while at the same time analyzing specific issues with precision and acuity, from the "language crisis" inherited from the 19<sup>th</sup> century through post-humanist concerns raised around the "Question Concerning Technology." While the course's main goal is to convey a broad understanding of German thought and its recent history, it will also introduce students to a variety of fields of inquiry such as hermeneutics, philology, historical materialism, logical positivism, and cybernetics, as well as teach them important methods of textual analysis and close reading. **No prerequisites; taught in English.**

Approved in fulfillment of the following **Core Goals**:



Permanent Core Curriculum requirements:

- TBD.

**Grade distribution:**

A	90–100%
B+	85–89%
B	80–84%
C+	75–79%
C	70–74%
D	65–69%
F	64 and below

**Grade Components:**

Lesson Summary	5%
Attendance	10%
Participation	10%
1 <sup>st</sup> paper	10%
2 <sup>nd</sup> paper	20%
3 <sup>rd</sup> paper	20%
Weekly responses	25%

**Details:**

- Participation and Attendance: To earn your participation grade for this class, you primarily need to focus on two things: (1) consistently attend our class meetings and (2) help to shape the conversation through well-thought-out questions and comments. This means that you do not just “tune in,” but that you take part as an *active and well-prepared* participant. Ideally, all students will be present during our synchronous meetings in order to participate in our discussions in an active and well-prepared fashion. All students are required thoroughly to have read and worked through the assignments for a given session and should stand ready to share questions and thoughts with the group. The course will refine your ability to step up with proven insight to formulate elaborate academic interventions.

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- Weekly Responses: By Friday of each week, I will unlock the “Module” for the coming week on Canvas. The Module will include everything needed to prepare for the upcoming two sessions, including dates, assignments, deadlines, course materials, etc. The Module will also include a discussion section which students will use to post responses to the assigned texts. Responses are 200–300 words long (i.e. one double-spaced page), and contain a review or critique of the materials assigned: You can highlight certain aspects you found particularly interesting, emphasize and analyze quotes that you think pertinent, or pose further questions and write up additional thoughts that might inform our in-class discussion. All responses have to be posted by 8pm the day before the respective class (no extensions or late submissions). Students are encouraged to read each other’s responses the night before each session in order to compare notes and prepare for discussion. Each student is required to post *one* response per week (that is, if the week has two sessions, you may sit out one session).
- Lesson Summary: At the beginning of each session, one student will be asked briefly to summarize what was discussed in the previous session. These mini presentations are 3–5 minutes in length and serve the purpose of recalling the course’s overall trajectory and ensuring that everyone is on the same page as the new session commences. There will be a sign-up sheet sent out at the beginning of the semester so you can decide when you would like to present.
- Papers: Students will be asked to write three papers, the length of which will increase throughout the semester (the first one being 2 pages, the second paper 4 pages, and the final paper 6 pages long). These papers represent responses to detailed prompts formulated by the professor. They are double-spaced, 12 pts, written in Times New Roman according to the MLA style guide, and should be submitted as PDFs by midnight the day of the deadline.

Office Hours: I will be holding office hours twice a week, on Mondays and Thursdays. On Canvas, you will find a link leading you to a Google doc that allows you to sign up for a slot. The Google doc will be updated/cleared every Friday night.

Speaking Freely: In addition to my regular office hours that give students the opportunity for one-on-one meetings, I am also offering a “Speaking Freely” corner for all my students. It provides a space for all those who wish to “shoot the breeze” in a more informal setting; instead of consecutive one-on-one meetings, everyone who wishes to join will be admitted to this Zoom session at the same time. Think of it as a weekly happy hour. **Every Wednesday, 2:30–3:15pm (<Link>).**

Course Materials: All required readings will be made available through Canvas.

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**Course Schedule:**

Week 1      Date    *Introduction*

**HISTORY**

Week 2      Date    *Transcendental Homelessness*  
György Lukács, History and Class Consciousness (sel.)

Week 3      Date    *From Homer to 1933*  
Theodor Adorno & Max Horkheimer, Dialectic of Enlightenment (sel.)

Week 4      Date    *Angels of History*  
Walter Benjamin, The Concept of History

Week 5      Date    *Being in Time*  
Hannah Arendt, The Origins of Totalitarianism (sel.)

**LANGUAGE**

Week 6      Date    *Crises of Language*  
Hugo von Hofmannsthal, A Letter  
Ludwig Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations (sel.)

Week 7      Date    *Towers of Babel*  
Walter Benjamin, The Task of the Translator  
Walter Benjamin, On Language as such and the Language of Man

Week 8      Date    *Thinkers and Poets*  
Martin Heidegger, Language  
Martin Heidegger, Why Poets?

Week 10     Date    *The Claim of Hermeneutics*  
Hans-Georg Gadamer, Truth and Method (sel.)

Week 10     Date    *Language, Otherwise*  
Werner Hamacher, 95 Theses on Philology

**TECHNOLOGY**

Week 11     Date    *Dissemination*  
Walter Benjamin, The Artwork in the Age of its Mechanical Reproduction

Week 12     Date    *The Essence of Technology*  
Martin Heidegger, The Question Concerning Technology

Week 13     Date    *Post-Hermeneutic Horizons*  
Friedrich Kittler, Discourse Networks (sel.)

Week 14     Date    *The Advent of Anti-Humanism*  
Peter Sloterdijk, Rules for the Human Zoo

Week 15     Date    *Conclusions*



## Departmental Policies:

- Attendance

All students must attend regularly and arrive prepared; if you expect to miss one or two classes, please use the [University absence reporting website](#) to indicate the date and reason for your absence. An email is automatically sent to me. Those who miss more than two class sessions without a compelling excuse should expect a one-step reduction in the course grade (i.e. an A becomes a B+, a B+ becomes a B). Every additional three absences may entail a further one-step grade-reduction. Three late arrivals count as one absence. It is the responsibility of students who have been absent (for any reason) to find out what they have missed and obtain materials that may have been handed out. Missing class in observance of religious holidays is always permitted. (As mentioned above, special conditions apply to anyone who is unable to attend a Zoom session due to time difference or technical difficulties; please get in touch with me to discuss your individual circumstance).

- Academic Integrity

Cheating on tests or plagiarizing materials in your papers deprives you of the educational benefits of preparing these materials appropriately. It is personally dishonest to cheat on a test or to hand in a paper based on unacknowledged words or ideas that someone else originated. It is also unfair, since it gives you an undeserved advantage over your fellow students who are graded on the basis of their own work. In this class, we will take cheating very seriously. All suspected cases of cheating and plagiarism will be automatically referred to the Office of Student Conduct, and we will recommend penalties appropriate to the gravity of the infraction. I recommend you consult [the university's policy on Academic Integrity](#) and strongly advise you to familiarize yourself with this document, both for this class and for your other classes and future work.

Since what counts as plagiarism is not always clear, I quote the definition given in Rutgers' policy:

*Plagiarism: Plagiarism is the use of another person's words, ideas, or results without giving that person appropriate credit. To avoid plagiarism, every direct quotation must be identified by quotation marks or appropriate indentation and both direct quotation and paraphrasing must be cited properly according to the accepted format for the particular discipline or as required by the instructor in a course. Some common examples of plagiarism are:*

- *Copying word for word (i.e. quoting directly) from an oral, printed, or electronic source without proper attribution.*
- *Paraphrasing without proper attribution, i.e., presenting in one's own words another person's written words or ideas as if they were one's own.*
- *Submitting a purchased or downloaded term paper or other materials to satisfy a course requirement.*
- *Incorporating into one's work graphs, drawings, photographs, diagrams, tables, spreadsheets, computer programs, or other nontextual material from other sources without proper attribution.*

Students often assume that because information is available on the internet it is public information, does not need to be formally referenced, and can be used without attribution. This is a mistake. *All* information and ideas that you derive from other sources, whether written, spoken, or electronic, must be attributed to their original source. Such sources include not just written or electronic materials, but people with whom you may discuss your ideas, such as your roommate, friends, or family members. Judgments about plagiarism can be subtle; if you have any questions, please feel free to ask for guidance from your instructor. On any paper handed in for this class, you will include a pledge testifying to its integrity and originality.

Lectures and materials utilized in this course, including but not limited to videocasts, podcasts, visual presentations, assessments, and assignments, are protected by United States copyright laws as well as Rutgers University policy. As the instructor of this course, I possess sole copyright ownership of my lectures and personal materials. You are permitted to take notes for personal use or to provide to a classmate also currently enrolled in this course. Under no other circumstances is distribution of recorded or written materials associated with this course permitted to any internet site or similar information-sharing platform without my express written consent. Similarly, these copyright

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protections extend to original papers and projects you produce for this course. In the event that I seek to share your work further, I will first obtain your consent to do so.

### Student Wellness:

- Counseling, ADAP & Psychiatric Services (CAPS)

CAPS is a University mental health support service that includes counseling, alcohol and other drug assistance, and psychiatric services staffed by a team of professionals within Rutgers Health services to support students' efforts to succeed at Rutgers. CAPS offers a variety of services that include: individual therapy, group therapy and workshops, crisis intervention, referral to specialists in the community and consultation and collaboration with campus partners. Reach CAPS at: (848) 932-7884 / 17 Senior Street, New Brunswick, NJ 08901

[Main Website](#) / [Crisis Intervention](#) / [Report a Concern](#)

- Violence Prevention & Victim Assistance (VPVA)

The Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance provides confidential crisis intervention, counseling and advocacy for victims of sexual and relationship violence and stalking to students, staff and faculty. To reach staff during office hours when the university is open or to reach an advocate after hours, call (848) 932-1181. VPVA is located at 3 Bartlett Street, New Brunswick, NJ 08901 / [Main Website](#)

- Disability Support Services

Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, a student with a disability must contact the [appropriate disability services office](#) at the campus where you are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation. If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus's disability services office will provide you with a Letter of Accommodations. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodations with them as early in your courses as possible. To begin this process, please complete the Registration form on the [ODS website](#). It is recommended that students seeking accommodations begin filing paperwork as soon as possible as the documentation review process may take up to 30 business days. Students are encouraged to speak with teachers about these issues at the beginning of the term. All such conversations will be kept strictly confidential. Disability Support Services can be reached at (848) 445-6800 / Lucy Stone Hall, Suite A145, Livingston Campus, 54 Joyce Kilmer Avenue, Piscataway, NJ 08854.