



Philosophy 421,

Gadamer and Hermeneutics

Spring Semester 2010, Michigan State University

Dr. Christian Lotz

Tentative Schedule (last **UPDATE**: April 19, 2010)

NUMBER	DATE	TOPIC	READING	INFO	SUMMARY	ASSIGNMENTS
1	Jan 12	Introduction				
INTRODUCTION						
2	Jan 14	Hermeneutics	Gadamer in Conversation, pp.1-60	Gadamer		
3	Jan 19	Understanding	Gadamer in Conversation; pp. 61-102			
4	Jan 21	Understanding	Gadamer in Conversation; pp. 61-102			
INTRODUCTION: THE UNIVERSALITY OF HERMENEUTICS						
5	Jan 26	Overview	Gadamer Reader, pp.3-40		1	
6	Jan 28	Overview	Gadamer Reader, pp.3-40			
7	Feb 2	Hermeneutics	Philosophical Hermeneutics, pp 3-17		2	
8	Feb 4	Understanding	Philosophical Hermeneutics, pp 18-43			
9	Feb 9	Understanding	Philosophical Hermeneutics, pp 44-58		Caitlin	
10	Feb 11	Art	Gadamer Reader, pp.192-226		Paul	
11	Feb 16	Art	Gadamer Reader, pp.192-226		Adam	Take-home assignments passed out in class
TRUTH AND METHOD						
12	Feb 18	Humanities	Truth and Method, Introduction and Foreword Truth and Method, pp.		Nicholas	Take-home

13	Feb 23	Schleiermacher	184-196	Schleiermacher	7	assignment due
14	Feb 25	Dilthey	Dilthey, excerpts (copy per pdf)			
15	Mar 2	Dilthey	Truth and Method, pp. 218-241	Dilthey	Chris	
16	Mar 4	Phenomenology	Truth and Method, pp. 242-264		Matthew	
17	Mar 9	Spring Break	Spring Break	Spring Break	Spring Break	
18	Mar 11	Spring Break	Spring Break	Spring Break	Spring Break	
19	Mar 16	Heidegger	Truth and Method, pp. 265-276		Jeffery	
20	Mar 18	no class	no class		Allison	
21	Mar 23	History	Truth and Method, pp. 276-306; 267-305			
22	Mar 25	Hermeneutics	Truth and Method, pp. 307-341; 305-335			
23	Mar 30	Hermeneutic Experience	Truth and Method, pp. 341-361; 335-362			Take-home assignments passed out in class
24	Apr 1	Hermeneutic Experience	Truth and Method, pp. 341-361; 335-362			
25	Apr 6	Logic of Questions	Truth and Method, pp. 361-380; 362-383		Mark	Take-home assignment due
26	Apr 8	Language	Truth and Method, pp. 381-404; 383-405		Brian M.	
27	Apr 13	Language	Truth and Method, pp. 404-436; 405-435	Guest speaker: Prof. David Vessey (GVSU)	Guest speaker: Prof. David Vessey (GVSU)	
1	Apr 15	Language	Truth and Method, pp. 404-436; 405-435			Final essay assignment passed out
29	Apr 20	Language	Truth and Method, pp. 436-492; 435-493			
30	Apr 22	Language	Truth and Method, pp. 436-492; 435-493			
31	Apr 27	Language	Truth and Method, pp. 436-492; 435-493		Brian R.	Draft of first page due
32	Apr 29	Wrap up	Wrap up	Wrap up		
	May 3 (day of final exam)					Final essay due

Class Meetings:

Days: TTH
 Time: 10:20 AM - 11:40 AM
 Place: 111 Morrill Hall

Office:

Phone: 517.355.4490 [dept.]
 Place: 501 S. Kedzie Hall (part of room 503, front office)
 Hours: see homepage

Other Contact:

E-mail: lotz@msu.edu
 Home Phone: please ask
 Webpage: <http://christianlotz.wordpress.com>

Box

You will find my box in the front office of the philosophy department (and in front of my office)

Teaching Assistant: no teaching assistants

Course Description

This class will introduce students to Hermeneutics and its main proponent, Hans-Georg Gadamer. The main task of Hermeneutics is to develop a philosophical theory of what it means to understand - in two regards: [1] understanding in general and the role of history, [2] understanding as the main concept for the humanities in contrast to positivism and the social sciences. We will review exemplary texts of all stages of Gadamer's thought by studying his views on art, interpretation, understanding, language, and poetics. We will pay special attention to Gadamer's main work *Truth and Method* (1960). Please read the following entry for a first orientation of our class topic: <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/gadamer>. If the topics outlined in this entry do not interest you, drop this class.

Course Goals

This lecture class should students introduce to

- the idea of philosophical Hermeneutics
- the hermeneutical critique of aesthetics
- the hermeneutical idea of understanding and dialogue
- the hermeneutical idea of interpretation
- the hermeneutical concept of art
- the hermeneutical idea of language

Note

Students should be aware of the fact that this course is based on extremely difficult (and awkward) texts. Accordingly, this class requires self-responsible learners and an intense confrontation with the primary text. Accordingly, if you are not excited about the prospect of a daily confrontation with abstract and historical reflections, then you should not take this class. This class is not based on a set of fixed knowledge; rather, we will try to learn together.

Required Texts (Bookstore)

- Gadamer, *Truth and Method*
- Gadamer, *Philosophical Hermeneutics*
- Gadamer in *Conversation*
- *The Gadamer Reader: A Bouquet of the Later Writings*

Reading assignments and preparation

The reading assignment per session is limited; however, this means that I expect you to come to class having prepared the texts carefully and thoroughly and that you are able to talk meaningfully about the text, raise questions of your own and provide answers when called upon. I will take the liberty to call on students randomly. An approximate preparation time for each class is a minimum of three hours. The reading for the next session, if not clear from the course schedule (below), will be announced at the end of the previous class. "Preparing for class" implies underlining and making excerpts from the text assigned; looking up unfamiliar vocabulary and writing them into a note book (I encourage you to keep a vocabulary booklet for all of your classes). Just reading the text won't be sufficient. You have to study the material. Some vocabulary might not be sufficiently explained in a regular dictionary (this goes especially for philosophical terms), so it is necessary to consult additional sources (e.g., the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy — online (see remark below) — is an excellent source of information, and the MSU Library Website is a great resource for nearly all questions in this regard).

Organization

The course will be organized such that, ideally, each class period will include [i] "interactive" lecture, [ii] discussion time or [iii] response time. Students will be asked to intensively prepare a certain text or part of a text for the next class period. Certain class sections will be devoted to listening to Wagner's music and will be accompanied by brief assignments

Course Requirements

- Daily reading and studying (around 5-10 pages)
- 2 take-home exams
- 1 class essay
- 1 task card
- 1 summary paper

Note

The class and my lectures are solely based on the texts selected for class and require a thorough study and preparation of the

material. I will primarily lecture on the readings, which will help you to more fully understand the texts. Therefore it is not sufficient for students to come to class without having prepared the texts. And indeed, in the exams you have to demonstrate whether you have appropriately prepared the readings selected for each lecture.

Make-Up Assignments

Students who need to miss the exam(s) for excusable reasons must inform me ahead of time, and will be permitted to make up the exam and movie assignment. I will only accept official doctor notes (no faxes, no emails) or letters from other professors.

Attendance

To get a good grade in this class, regular attendance is required. I will not call roll. Hence, it is up to you to come to class or not. However, if you do not come to class on a regular basis and participate in the class discussion, it is impossible for you to achieve a good grade in this class; so coming to class is your responsibility and your call. If you choose to attend class, please come on time, turn off cell phones and other electronic devices that interfere with your (and others') concentration, have the reading prepared and be ready to participate. If you are not prepared, do not bother showing up. It is a sign of disrespect to your peers and the instructor to attend class unprepared. If you miss class, it is your responsibility to obtain class notes from a fellow student and to catch up on reading. Nevertheless, please be aware that you should not make me responsible for a failure that results out of your decision. You should be aware that chances to master this class are minimal, if you do not show up for class or if you do not prepare the readings (=studying).

Task Cards

I will from time to time assign so called "task cards." Students who receive task cards, must write a 1-2 page paper (no more than 600 words) about a concept or about background information. Task cards will be assigned without prior notice in class and have to be prepared for the next class section. Students have to make copies for every participants and pass their assignment out at the beginning of the next class section. For example, in one of our discussions it turns out that no one has ever heard about the philosopher Augustine or about the problem of movement in Zeno. I will ask a student to do research and to prepare brief biographical information of Augustine or an overview of the concept of movement in Zeno. Selected students will read their brief elaborations at the beginning of the next class section. This task is challenging because in your writing you should be as precise as possible. Note: you are not allowed to cite common internet resources, such as Wikipedia. Instead, work with the following online resources (or other resources in the library): [Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy](#) - [Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy](#) - [Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy](#) - [Encyclopedia of Continental Philosophy](#) (e-book) - [The Oxford Companion to Philosophy](#)

Summary Papers

Each student has to write a 2-page (no more than 600 words) summary paper of one of the readings. Students have to make copies for every participants and pass their assignment out at the beginning of class. Each student will read his/her paper at the beginning of class.

Make-Up Exam

Students who need to miss the exams for excusable reasons must inform me ahead of time, and will be permitted to make up the exam. I will only accept official doctor notes (no faxes, no emails) and letters from other professors/athletic directors.

Class Essay

I expect a brief paper at the end of the class (5 pages, around 1500 words), the topic of which must be chosen from a list that I will pass out during this class.

Take-Home Exams

In order to intensify and improve your understanding of the material, you will turn in on selected days (check schedule for due dates) brief papers/exams, in which you analyze the readings (2-3 pages, double spaced, no more than 900 words):

- [take-home exam 1]
- [take-home exam 2]

Course Evaluation

You will be evaluated on the basis of:

2 take-home exams	40 points
1 class essay	20 points
unannounced reading quizzes	10 points

1 task card	10 points
1 summary paper	10 points
participation	10 points

	100 points

Grading:

4.0 (=A)	100 - 93
3.5	92 - 87
3 (=B)	86 - 82
2.5	81 - 77
2 (=C)	76 - 72
1.5	71 - 65
1.0 (=D)	64 - 60
0.0	< 60

GENERIC SYLLABUS (might not be applicable to each class)

Class Attendance

As mentioned above, I do not employ in my classes a class attendance policy. Having said this, you should be aware that class attendance is very important. When engaging in a philosophical and humanistic dialogue it is necessary to be an active and present participant in the ongoing discussion. If you miss class please do not email me asking if you missed anything important. Every class is important. You should get a study buddy for the class; a student in class who will inform you of what you missed. If you miss a class you can come to my office hours or make an appointment to discuss the material, providing you have read the material and you simply want to see if your understanding of the material is on target. Time in office hours will not be used to repeat the class lectures.

Grading Criteria

Check out [this page for grading criteria, example of assignments, etc.](#)

Helpful information about oral presentations, paper writing and plagiarism

[Click here to find help on your presentations and your writing](#)

Online Research Sources

Unfortunately, some people think that the internet as such is a reliable source of information. If you decide to use online sources for additional information or your paper then do not just use one of the common internet search engines, such as Google; rather, use reliable academic sources, such as Britannica Online, or the [Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy](#). The [Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy](#) isn't very good, but still acceptable. Check out MSU's [library resources!](#) And, as with other sources, you must cite any online sources to which you refer in your essay.

Writing Center Information

MSU's writing center offers excellent help on all matters regarding writing and learning. Check the website at <http://writing.msu.edu> for an overview and hours. For more information, please call 517.432.3610 or send an e-mail to writing@msu.edu.

Integrity of Scholarship and Grades (Plagiarism)

The following statement of University policy addresses principles and procedures to be used in instances of academic dishonesty, violations of professional standards, and falsification of academic or admission records, herein after referred to as academic misconduct. [See General Student Regulation 1.00, Protection of Scholarship and Grades.]: [download document](#) (pdf)

Academic Honesty

Article 2.3.3 of the Academic Freedom Report states that "The student shares with the faculty the responsibility for maintaining the integrity of scholarship, grades, and professional standards." In addition, the (insert name of unit offering course) adheres to the policies on academic honesty as specified in General Student Regulations 1.0, Protection of Scholarship and Grades; the all-University Policy on Integrity of Scholarship and Grades; and Ordinance 17.00, Examinations. (See Spartan Life: Student Handbook and Resource Guide and/or the MSU Web site: www.msu.edu) Therefore, unless authorized by your instructor, you are expected to complete all course assignments, including homework, lab work, quizzes, tests and exams, without assistance from any source. You are expected to develop original work for this course; therefore, you may not submit course work completed for another course to satisfy the requirements for this course. Students who violate MSU rules may receive a penalty grade, including but not limited to a failing grade on the assignment or in the course. Contact your instructor if you are unsure about the appropriateness of your course work. (See also <http://www.msu.edu/unit/ombud/honestylinks.html>)

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities should contact the Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities to establish reasonable accommodations. For an appointment with a counselor, call 353-9642 (voice) or 355-1293 (TTY)

Drops and Adds

The last day to add this course is the end of the first week of classes. The last day to drop this course with a 100 percent refund and no grade reported is (see Academic Calendar). The last day to drop this course with no refund and no grade reported is (see Academic Calendar). You should immediately make a copy of your amended schedule to verify you have added or dropped this course.

Note on Attendance

Students who fail to attend the first four class sessions or class by the fifth day of the semester, whichever occurs first, may be dropped from the course.

[Back to classes](#)