

BERLIN PERSPECTIVES

Philosophy in Berlin: reforms and revolutions

Semester:	Winter semester 2020/21
Course instructor:	Benjamin Wilck, e-mail: benjamin.wilck@hu-berlin
Subject area:	History and Literature
Credits:	5 ECTS
Time:	Wednesday 16-18 c.t. (16:15-17:45)
Room:	Zoom (Please note: This semester, all classes take place online. If however the general conditions allow it, the seminar room 0323-26 (3 rd floor) at Hausvogteiplatz 5-7 can be used by the courses.)

Course description:

This course explores philosophical reflections on the university and the role of philosophy within that institution as put forward by German philosophers in the Prussian Berlin of the 19th century, while also providing a critical perspective on the subsequent history of the university through the 20th century until today. The University of Berlin was founded in 1809/10 following a series of philosophical university reform writings. Wilhelm von Humboldt in particular had the idea to create a new kind of university in which teaching and research would form a unity, in which science would be independent of political interests, and in which students would receive a universal education. Consequently, the University of Berlin became the paradigm of a new era of teaching and research. By reading key texts by Kant, Schelling, Fichte, von Humboldt, Schleiermacher, Hegel, Marx, Heine, Schopenhauer, and Heidegger, we will trace how ideas relating to the structure and purpose of the university changed and were implemented in the course of the last two centuries, also in light of the most recent European university reform: the Bologna Process in 1999. Moreover, the course puts particular emphasis on the impact of philosophical ideas on politics, religion, and education, as well as on literature, visual arts, and architecture in Berlin past and present.

Learning objectives:

The objective of this Bachelor-level course is to equip students with an overview of the German philosophical activities in the 19th century and, in particular, with an in-depth understanding of the philosophical circumstances which led to the establishment of the University of Berlin in 1809/10. The course will enable its participants to analyze and interpret central philosophical texts about the idea and purpose of the university, as well as to critically reflect from a historical and philosophical perspective upon the institution of the university in which they study.

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

Knowledge

- Understand, describe and identify the central theories of the university by German philosophers (most notably, Kant, von Humboldt, Schleiermacher, Fichte, Schelling, Hegel, Marx, Heine, Schopenhauer, and Heidegger)
- Direct independent research on topics discussed in the course

Academic/Transferable Skills

- Analyze and critically reflect upon programmatic texts about university reform
- Select relevant sources and methods for analyzing course-related questions
- Communicate and discuss key concepts of the theory of the university in the German tradition

Competencies

- Read primary philosophical texts
- Apply relevant theories and concepts in independent work in order to analyze new problems

Examples for assessment portfolio:

- Written assignments (answer questions about the reading material on a weekly basis)
- Individual presentation (with questions + handout; group presentations are possible)
- Research essay (deadline: around 15 February 2021; format: around 2000 words, double-spaced, Times New Roman ft.12)

The grade will be composed of the partial grade for the individual presentation (25 % of the entire grade), and the partial grade for the final research essay (75 % of the entire grade). Written assignments do not contribute to the grade, but are required for the assessment of this course.

Language requirements:

English B2 is required (and German B1 is desirable) to participate in this class. While the course readings are originally written in German, we will be reading the texts in English translation. This course will be taught in English, but German contributions are welcome.

Timetable:

Session 1: 04/11/2020 Opening session

In the first session of the seminar, we will get an overview of the topics to be covered and the texts to be read in the course of this class. In addition, we will informally discuss the definitional question as to what a university is, as well as introduce central course-related notions such as *academic freedom*.

Readings:

Liz Harman: "Racist research must be named, but often allowed", available online: <https://www.dailyprincetonian.com/article/2020/07/racist-research-princeton-faculty-letter>

Session 2: 11/11/2020 Kant's view of the university

We will ascertain Immanuel Kant's (1724–1804) view about the role of philosophy in a university, and compare it to the traditional model of the internal structure of the university since the Middle Ages. We will thereby gain an insight into the institutional status of academic philosophy in the 18th century. Kant's book *The Conflict of the Faculties* from 1798 can be regarded as the origin of the revolutionist calls for university reform by Berlin-based philosophers such as Schelling, Fichte, von Humboldt, and Schleiermacher, which was then followed by the actual establishing of the University of Berlin in 1809/10.

Readings:

- Part I of Kant's *Der Streit der Fakultäten* (1798)

Session 3: 18/11/2020 Schelling's view of the university

Besides Hegel and Fichte, Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling (1775–1854) is one of the founders and primary We will read excerpts from Schelling's *Lectures on the Method of Academic Study* from 1803, which was the first public philosophical reaction to Kant's text.

Readings:

- Selected passages from Schelling's *Vorlesungen über die Methode des akademischen Studiums* (1803)

Session 4: 25/11/2020 Fichte's view of the university

The philosopher Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762–1814) was the founder of German Idealism and the first rector of the University of Berlin. We will read §§ 1–26 of Fichte's programmatic treatise "Deduced Scheme for a University to be established in Berlin", in which Fichte proclaims to derive a theory of the university from one single philosophical principle.

Readings:

- §§ 1–26 of Fichte's *Deduzierter Plan einer zu Berlin zu errichtenden höhern Lehranstalt* (1807).

Session 5: 02/12/2020 Von Humboldt's view of the university

The philosopher and linguist Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767–1835) was actively engaged in the institutional founding of the University of Berlin. We will discuss two of his programmatic writings from this context, and discuss them against the background of (i) Kant's *The Conflict of the Faculties* from 1798, (ii) the prospective actual establishment of a new university in Berlin in 1809/10, and (iii) the Bologna Process in 1999.

Readings:

- von Humboldt's "Antrag auf Errichtung der Universität Berlin" (1809)
- von Humboldt's "Über die innere und äussere Organisation der höheren wissenschaftlichen Anstalten in Berlin" (1809/10)

Session 6: 09/12/2020 First digital excursion (Humboldt-Universität)

We will visit the main building of Humboldt University (which accommodates the Rector's office, the Philosophy Department, and Hegel's original desk), as well as the Law Faculty and the Theological Faculty. We will further explore and critically discuss artworks and memorials regarding Fichte's, Hegel's, Marx's, and Heine's lives and works.

Session 7: 16/12/2020 Schleiermacher's view of the university

The theologian and philosopher Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834) also actively contributed to the establishment of the University of Berlin. We will read his treatise *Occasional Thoughts on Universities in the German Sense* (1808), and compare it to von Humboldt's corresponding views.

Readings:

- Schleiermacher's *Gelegentliche Gedanken über Universitäten in deutschem Sinn. Nebst einem Anhang über eine neu zu errichtende* (1808).

Session 8: 06/01/2020 Hegel's view of the role of philosophy in a university

Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770–1831) taught at the University of University from 1816 until his death, and he can count as the most prominent and influential philosopher who ever lived and worked in Berlin. We will read Hegel's inaugural lecture from 22 October 1818, as well as a letter by Hegel, in which he expresses his views on teaching philosophy at a university.

Readings:

- Hegel's "Über den Vortrag der Philosophie auf Universitäten" (letter to Raumer, 1816)
- Hegel's "Berliner Antrittsrede" (1818)

Session 9: 13/01/2020 Hegel's view of philosophy

We will take a look at the preface to Hegel's *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, which emerged from his lectures in Berlin, and in which Hegel determines the relationship between reason and reality, as well as the scope and limits of political philosophy.

Readings:

- Hegel's preface to *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts* (1820)

Session 10: 20/01/2020 Marx's view of philosophy

We will read a famous essay by the young Karl Marx, which presents itself as a criticism of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*, and in which Marx expresses his own view of philosophy, especially with respect to its revolutionary political potential.

Readings:

- Marx's "Zur Kritik der Hegelschen Rechtsphilosophie, Einleitung" (1843/44)
- Episode 1 of the Chinese TV show *The Leader* (2019)

Session 11: TBA Academic writing tutorial session

In this session, we will talk about how to write a good academic essay, how to decide upon a suitable topic or question for your essay, and to structure your writing process, your argument, and your text. We shall also talk about the crucial issue of quotation and bibliographical conventions in academic texts. In addition, we will initially discuss your prospective essay topics.

Session 12: 27/01/2020 Heine's review of German philosophy

We will read *On the History of Religion and Philosophy in Germany* (1834) by Heinrich Heine (1797–1856), in which the Berlin-based poet draws an entertaining and insightful picture of German philosophy from Luther to Hegel.

Readings:

Heine's *Zur Geschichte der Religion und Philosophie in Deutschland* (1834)

Session 13: 03/02/2020 Schopenhauer's view of the role of philosophy in a university

We will read Schopenhauer's (1788–1860) late essay "On Philosophy at the Universities", which he wrote after he had dropped out of his teaching position in Berlin. In this text, Schopenhauer argues that philosophy should not be taught at the universities. By reconstructing his respective criticism of Hegel, Fichte, and Schelling, we will discuss Schopenhauer's pessimistic perspective on university philosophy.

Readings:

- Schopenhauer's "Über Universitäts-Philosophie" (1851)

Session 14: 10/02/2020 Heidegger's view of the role of philosophy in a university

In order to conclude our readings of programmatic writings on philosophy and the university we will gain a critical perspective on that philosophy's subsequent history. In particular, we will discuss Martin Heidegger's (1889–1976) inaugural address as the Rector of Freiburg University, which is entitled "The Self-Assertion of the German University". While Heidegger here addresses the definition of the university and the problem of academic freedom, this speech also documents Heidegger's entanglement with Nazism.

Readings:

- Heidegger's "Die Selbstbehauptung der deutschen Universität" (1933)

Session 15: 17/02/2020 Second digital excursion (Dorotheenstädtischer Friedhof)

Our second sightseeing tour through Berlin will feature a visit to the Medical Campus of Humboldt-Universität, and the Dorotheenstadt Cemetery, where Berlin-based philosophers such as J.G. Fichte, G.W.F. Hegel, Herbert Marcuse, and Friedrich Kittler, literary authors such as Bertolt Brecht and Heiner Mueller, and singers such as Gisela May are buried. In addition, we will visit the Medical Campus of Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin.

Session 16: 24/02/2020 Final session

In the final session, we will reflect on the previous readings and discussion results by drawing a critical comparison between the received philosophical views on the university on the one hand and the aims and decisions of the most recent European university reform following the Bologna Process in 1999 on the other.

Readings:

- Bologna Declaration (1999)
- Sorbonne Declaration (1998)
- Magna Charta Universitatum (1988)

Literature:

Reading materials (primary texts and selected secondary literature) in both German and English translation will be made available electronically.

Primary texts (in German):

- Anrich, Erich (ed.): *Die Idee der deutschen Universität und die Reform der deutschen Universitäten*, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1960.
- Der Präsident der Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin (ed.): *Gründungstexte. Johann Gottlieb Fichte, Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher, Wilhelm von Humboldt. Festgabe zum 200-jährigen Jubiläum der Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin*. Berlin: Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, 2010.
- Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich: *Berliner Schriften 1818-1831*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1986.
- Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich: *Berliner Schriften (1818-1831)*, Hamburg: Meiner, 1997.
- Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich: *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*, Hamburg: Meiner, 2018.
- Heidegger, Martin: *Die Selbstbehauptung der deutschen Universität. Rede, gehalten bei der feierlichen Übernahme des Rektorats der Universität Freiburg i. Br. am 27. 5. 1933. / Das Rektorat 1933/34. Tatsachen und Gedanken*, Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1983.
- Heine, Heinrich: *Zur Geschichte der Religion und Philosophie in Deutschland*, Leipzig: Reclam, 1970.
- Kant, Immanuel: *Der Streit der Fakultäten*, Leipzig: Reclam, ²1992.
- Kant, Immanuel: *Der Streit der Fakultäten*, Hamburg: Meiner, 2005.
- Klein, Helmut (ed.): *Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin. Dokumente 1810-1985*, Berlin: VEB Deutscher Verlag der Wissenschaften, 1985.
- Marx, Karl: "Zur Kritik der Hegelschen Rechtsphilosophie" (1843/44), in: *ibid: Werke. Band 1*, Berlin: Dietz, 1981, 378–391.
- Medicus, Fritz (ed.): *Johann Gottlieb Fichte. Über den Gelehrten. Bestimmung des Gelehrten, 1794. Wesen des Gelehrten, 1805. Bestimmung des Gelehrten, 1811*, Leipzig: Fritz Eckardt, 1911.
- Müller, Ernst (ed.): *Gelegentliche Gedanken über Universitäten von J.J. Engel, J.B. Erhard, F.A. Wolf, J.G. Fichte, F.D.E. Schleiermacher, K.F. Savigny, W.v.Humboldt, G.W.F. Hegel*, Leipzig: Reclam, 1990.
- Schelling, F.W.J.: *Vorlesungen über die Methode (Lehrart) des akademischen Studiums*, Hamburg: Meiner, ²1990.

- Schopenhauer, Arthur: *Parerga und Paralipomena I. Erster Teilband*, Zurich: Diogenes, 1977.
- Steffens, Henrik: *Ueber die Idee der Universitäten, Vorlesungen*, Berlin: Realschulbuchhandlung, 1809.
- Weischedel, Wilhelm (ed.): *Idee und Wirklichkeit einer Universität. Dokumente zur Geschichte der Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität zu Berlin*, Berlin: de Gruyter, 1960.

Primary texts in English translation:

- Breazeale, Daniel (ed.): *Fichte. Early Philosophical Writings*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, ²1993.
- Dickey, Laurence & Nisbet, H.B. (ed.): *G.W.F. Hegel. Political Writings*, Translated by H.B. Nisbet, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.
- Harries, Karsten & Heidegger, Hermann: "Martin Heidegger. The Self-Assertion of the German University: Address, Delivered on the Solemn Assumption of the Rectorate of the University Freiburg the Rectorate 1933/34: Facts and Thoughts." *The Review of Metaphysics* 38(3), 1985, 467–502.
- Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich: *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.
- Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Fredrich: *The Letters*, tr. Clark Butler & Christiane Seiler, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984.
- Kant, Immanuel: *The Conflict of the Faculties. Der Streit der Fakultäten*. Translation and introduction by Mary J. Gregor, New York: Abaris, 1979.
- Menand, Louis & Reitter, Paul & Wellmon, Chad (eds.): *The Rise of the Research University. A Sourcebook*, Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2017.
- O'Malley, Joseph J. (ed.): *Marx: Early Political Writings*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.
- Pinkard, Terry: *Hegel. A Biography*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- Pinkard, Terry (ed.): *Heinrich Heine. On the History of Religion and Philosophy in Germany and Other Writings*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- Reiss, Hans (ed.): *Kant. Political Writings*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, ²1991.
- Schleiermacher, Friedrich: *Occasional thoughts on universities in the German sense with an appendix regarding a university soon to be established (1808)*; translated and annotated by Terrence N. Tice, with Edwina Lawler, San Francisco: EM TEXT, 1991.
- Turnbull, George Henry (ed.): *The educational theory of J. G. Fichte. A critical account together with translation*, London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1926.

Further literature:

- Brandt, Reinhardt: *Universität zwischen Selbst- und Fremdbestimmung: Kant's Streit der Fakultäten. Mit einem Anhang zu Heidegger's Rektoratsrede*, Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 2003.
- Brandt, Reinhardt: *Wozu noch Universitäten?* Hamburg: Meiner, 2011.
- de Ridder-Symoens, Hilde (ed.): *A History of the University in Europe. Vol. I: Universities in the Middle Ages*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.
- de Ridder-Symoens, Hilde (ed.): *A History of the University in Europe. Vol. II: Universities in Early Modern Europe (1500–1800)*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

- Gerhardt, Volker & Mehring, Reinhard & Rindert, Jana (eds.): *Berliner Geist. Eine Geschichte der Berliner Universitätsphilosophie bis 1946*, Berlin: de Gruyter, 1999.
- Gerhardt, Volker (ed.): *Eine angeschlagene These: Die 11. Feuerbach-These von Karl Marx im Foyer der Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin*, Berlin: de Gruyter, 2015.
- Higton, Mike: *A Theology of Higher Education*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.
- Klein, Helmut (ed.): *Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin. Überblick 1810-1985*, Berlin: VEB Deutscher Verlag der Wissenschaften, 1985.
- Koch, Hans-Albrecht: *Die Universität: Geschichte einer europäischen Institution*, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2008.
- Rüegg, Walter (ed.): *A History of the University in Europe. Vol. III: Universities in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries (1800–1945)*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.
- Rüegg, Walter (ed.): *A History of the University in Europe. Vol. IV: Universities Since 1945*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.
- Tenorth, Heinz Elmar (ed.): *Geschichte der Universität Unter den Linden 1810-2010. Vol. 1. Gründung und Blütezeit der Universität zu Berlin 1810 – 1918*, Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 2012.
- Tenorth, Heinz Elmar (ed.): *Geschichte der Universität Unter den Linden 1810-2010. Vol. 2. Die Berliner Universität zwischen den Weltkriegen 1918–1945*, Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 2012.
- Tenorth, Heinz Elmar (ed.): *Geschichte der Universität Unter den Linden 1810-2010. Vol. 3. Sozialistisches Experiment und Erneuerung in der Demokratie – die Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin 1945–2010*, Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 2012.
- Tenorth, Heinz Elmar (ed.): *Geschichte der Universität Unter den Linden 1810-2010. Vol. 4. Genese der Disziplinen. Die Konstitution der Universität*, Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 2010.
- Tenorth, Heinz Elmar (ed.): *Geschichte der Universität Unter den Linden 1810-2010. Vol. 5. Transformation der Wissensordnung*, Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 2010.
- Tenorth, Heinz Elmar (ed.): *Geschichte der Universität Unter den Linden 1810-2010. Vol. 6. Selbstbehauptung einer Vision*, Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 2010.
- Virmond, Wolfgang (ed.): *Die Vorlesungen der Berliner Universität 1810–1834 nach dem deutschen und lateinischen Lektionskatalog sowie den Ministerialakten*, Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 2011.