

*Phi 600 - Fall, 2005 - Syracuse University*  
*Postmodernisms: A Philosophical Introduction*  
*John D. Caputo*  
*Thomas J. Watson Professor of Religion and Humanities*  
*and Professor of Philosophy*

*Required Readings:*

Martin Heidegger, *The Principle of Reason* (Indiana UP pbk.)  
Jacques Derrida and Catherine Malabou, *Counterpath* (Stanford UP pbk.)  
Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense* (Columbia UP pbk)  
Alain Badiou, *Ethics* (Verso Paperback)  
\_\_\_\_\_. *Deleuze: The Clamor of Being* (U. Minnesota Press pbk)

*Reserve Room*

All these books, including the additional Derrida readings, have been placed on reserve in the Bird Library.

*Course Requirements*

- (1) Seminar Participation (20%)
- (2) 2 Research Papers (40% each)

These papers should be approximately 4,000-4,500 words long.

The paper should be prepared in accordance with a standard style sheet and should be correctly documented (notes and bibliography).

The topic of the first paper is Heidegger and/or Derrida and of the second paper Deleuze and/or some aspect of Badiou's critique of postmodernity.

Bibliographical assistance is available on line in the library. *Philosopher's Index* is the best place to start. I have also put several books on reserve in the Bird Library for your use.

*Deadlines:*

Paper #1 - proposal due Oct. 5; paper due Oct. 26

Paper #2 - proposal due Nov. 16; paper due Dec. 16

*Office (HL 505)*

Although I have scheduled office hours—Tuesday, 3:45-5:30, Wednesday, 1:00-4:15—you should, for safety's sake, make an appt in advance by email at [johncaputo@comcast.net](mailto:johncaputo@comcast.net) or [jcaputo@syr.edu](mailto:jcaputo@syr.edu).

*Topic*

This course will undertake a strictly philosophical introduction to the idea of postmodernism, not as a cultural phenomenon, but as a set of philosophical theses about modernity, subjectivity, singularity, being, truth and thought, all of which will be clustered around the organizing concept of the “event,” a term that has assumed central philosophical significance in this movement.

The course will fall broadly into two parts, in which I will take up first what we might broadly and loosely call the “post-phenomenological” thinkers, (the “later”) **Heidegger** and Jacques **Derrida**, both of whom have a point of departure in Husserl, and then in the second half, Gilles **Deleuze** and Alain **Badiou**. The background figure for Deleuze is not Husserl but Nietzsche, although *The Logic of Sense* is perhaps the one work in which Deleuze makes his critical appreciation of Husserl most clear. Badiou is not a postmodernist at all, but a neo-Marxist and Lacanian critic of postmodern ideas, who belongs in this course both as an interpreter/interlocutor/critic of Deleuze and as important voice of opposition and critique of postmodern conceptions of truth and universality.

We will begin the course with a study of Heidegger's *The Principle of Reason*, one of Heidegger's most insightful and lucid statements of his “later” standpoint. In an ongoing meditation upon Leibniz's “Principle of Sufficient Reason” Heidegger lays out the fundamental presuppositions of “modern metaphysics,” which he critiques in the light of the early Greek experience of *physis*, and whose upshot he locates in the contemporary epoch of the rule of global technology, and this by way of a dialogue with Leibniz and Angelus Silesius, a 16<sup>th</sup> century mystical poet. In many ways, this delimitation of modernity opens the space within which current post-modern debates takes place. The

guiding idea in Heidegger's interpretation is what he calls the "event" (*Ereignis*) or "sending" (*Geschick*) of Being.

Next we will take up the work of Jacques Derrida by reading *Counterpath*, a book he co-authored with Catherine Malabou, which is a writing experiment in which Malabou charts the Derrida's intellectual journey while Derrida writes to Malabou from various locations in his endless travels. Along with that book we will read several essays by Derrida—on Leibniz's Principle of Sufficient Reason, justice and the law, and forgiveness and hospitality. Again, Derrida's guiding idea is what he calls the "event" (*événement*), which Derrida thinks in terms of unforeseeability, surprise, experience, the future, which is charted out by Malabou in terms of the deconstruction of the logic of "derivation" by virtue of the movements of the drift (*dérive*).

In the second half, we will undertake a reading of Deleuze's *The Logic of Sense*, which is arguably his major theoretical work. In this book Deleuze lays the foundation for his project of reversing Platonism (that is, a philosophy of multiplicity, becoming, time, univocity, and simulacrum, rather than unity, being, eternity, depth, analogy and truth) and to do this by way of a theory of "sense" (or pure meaning) and its co-constitution by non-sense. This is undertaken by means of a dialogue with Stoic logic and the paradoxical logic of Lewis Carroll in the name of what he calls a new logic of the "event." (Here Deleuze appears to be all the things that Badiou claims it would be a misinterpretation to attribute to him.)

We will first read Badiou's *Ethics* in which he sets out in a pretty straightforward way the essentials of his own thought, which is also organized around the "event" which transforms the subject into a militant. Then we will read his *Deleuze: The Clamor of Being*, which is a "strong reading" of Deleuze, one written from Badiou's own philosophical standpoint (like Heidegger's readings of the early Greeks or Kant). But it raises not only the obvious question of whether Badiou has transformed Deleuze into Badiou but the opposite one, to what extent Badiou's thought really differs from Deleuze. In this way we should get a good sense of the central issues raised by a characteristic postmodern view (Deleuze) and its critique.

### *Schedule of Classes*

August 31	Orientation: "Postmodernism" and the "Event."
September 7	Heidegger, <i>Principle of Reason</i> , Lectures 1-4
14	Lectures 5-9
21	Lectures 10-13; Address
28	Derrida and Malabou, <i>Counterpath</i> , pp. 1-92 + "The Principle of Reason: The University in the Eyes of Its Pupils," in <i>Eyes of the University: Right to Philosophy 2</i> , pp.129-155
October 5	<i>Counterpath</i> , pp. 93-184 + "Force of Law: The Mystical Foundations of Authority" (Part I), in <i>Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice</i> , pp. 3-29. Paper # 1 Proposal due
12	<i>Counterpath</i> , pp. 185- end. + "As if it were possible: 'Within Such Limits'," <i>Negotiations</i> , 343-370
19	Deleuze, <i>Logic of Sense</i> , pages TBA
26	Deleuze, <i>Logic of Sense</i> , pages TBA Paper # 1 due
November 2	Deleuze, <i>Logic of Sense</i> , pages TBA

- 9 Deleuze, *Logic of Sense*, concluded.  
Badiou, *Ethics*, chaps. 1-3
- 16 *Ethics*, chaps. 4-5, Conclusion, and “Interview”  
Paper #2 proposal due
- 23 Thanksgiving
- 30 Badiou, *Deleuze: The Clamor of Being*, chs. 1-2
- December 7 *The Clamor of Being*, chs. 3 - end.
- 16 [Paper #2 due]