

Filosofie en de politieke actualiteit: Corona

Syllabus

2st semester 2020/21, block 4

Online-Course (zoom-link on Canvas)

ECTS: 6

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Time: Wednesdays, 9-12 h

First session February 10th, last session March 17th

Objectives

Upon successful completion of this course, you will have

- learned about the most important philosophical positions about the Corona crisis;
- sharpened your critical understanding about the pressing issues of our times;
- reflected on the question of the applicability of philosophy;
- improved your analytical and hermeneutical skills.

Content

This course will be partly taught in Dutch and partly in English (students can speak Dutch, teachers will speak English and Dutch)

The idea of the seminar is to apply philosophical methods to understand pressing contemporary questions. This year, the course will focus on philosophical analyses of the Corona crisis. We will read and discuss classical as well as contemporary philosophical texts and examine the pandemic with respect to the relation of nature and society, democracy and authoritarianism, gender and race, care and community, and life and death.

Recommended prior knowledge

- Read for preparation: “The Quarantine Files: Thinkers in Self-Isolation”, LA Review of Books, April 14th, 2020: <https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/quarantine-files-thinkers-self-isolation/>
- All other texts will be made available on Canvas.

Format

Due to the corona-crisis, this course will be an online course. The zoom link will be in the canvas course page. The seminar has the following structure: 1. Introduction by the teachers (30 min), 2. Group discussion in breakout rooms, led by student experts (see below) (30 min),

3. Break (15 min), 4. general class discussion in two groups (60 min), 5. official end of class, 'hangout' with teachers for further discussions & specific questions (30 min).

It is absolutely essential to read the assigned texts thoroughly. The background reading is not required (except for the experts), but useful. The texts will be made available through Canvas.

Examen

In order to successfully complete this course, you have to:

- Attend class regularly and well prepared. This includes working through the texts and be able to name central passages of each text in the class discussion.
- Actively participate in class discussion.
- Be an "expert" for one of the 6 sessions. Experts prepare for the particular session especially thoroughly (including the background texts) and moderate the sessions in the breakout rooms (there will be multiple experts for each session, one in each breakout room). On canvas, you can put your name in a list (under "pages") for which of the sessions you would like to be an expert.
- For your final exam, you can choose between:
 - *A take-home exam.* The exam will consist of a number of questions to which you can respond with short texts. The entire exam will be about 3000-4000 words.
 - *A collaborative project.* Choose a topic that sheds light on a corona-related issue from a philosophical perspective. The project needs to be collectively pursued (by 2 or more members). It can be a longer paper with different aspects, but other media are also welcome, as long as it includes a textual part (you can make a podcast, a short film, a performance, a website etc., accompanied with an essay) The scope of the project depends on the number of members of the project (as an orientation: it should be the equivalent of 3000-4000 words texts by each member). Think about how to make your project accessible to others. You will find a page to look for potential collaborators on canvas. It is essential that you send in a proposal of a project and discuss its format and content with the teachers before you start pursuing it.
- Please take notice of UvA's regulations on plagiarism and fraud.

Class climate

Creating a respectful, inclusive and attentive atmosphere in the (virtual) classroom is the shared responsibility of teacher and students. This includes reflecting on the different backgrounds, experiences and social positionings among the participants, a sensibility with regard to one's own conduct in the classroom, and an openness towards other perspectives and opinions. The seminar aims at including all students and thus attempts to reduce

structural disadvantages. Please contact me with any discomfort with regard to the class climate.

The corona-situation poses extraordinary challenges to teachers and students alike (health problems, care obligations, financial problems, access to university facilities, etc.). It cannot be expected to carry out “regular” education under these circumstances. Please let me know if you have special needs or problems with the online teaching situation. We will try to work out a solution together.

Program

10.2. *Corona and Multiple Crises*

- Mike Davis, “The Monster Enters”, in *The Monster Enters. Covid-19, Avian Flu and the Plagues of Capitalism*, London/New York 2020: OR books, pp. 1-44
- Andreas Malm, “Corona and Climate”, in *Corona, Climate, Chronic Emergency*, London/New York 2020: Verso, pp. 1-30

17.2. *Biopolitics and Discipline*

- Michel Foucault, “Panopticism”, in *Discipline and Punish. The Birth of the Prison*, New York: Vintage, pp. 195-228
- Michel Foucault, “Right of Death and Power over Life”, in *The History of Sexuality*, New York 1978: Random House, pp. 133-160
- Paul Preciado, “Learning From the Virus”, <https://www.artforum.com/print/202005/paul-b-preciado-82823>

24.2. *Nature*

- Donna Haraway, “When Species Meet: introductions”, in *When Species Meet*, Minneapolis/London 2008: University of Minnesota Press, pp. 3-19, 41-42.
- Donna Haraway “Viral Response-ability”, in *Staying with the Trouble*, Durham and London 2016: Duke University Press, pp. 114-116.
- Bruno Latour, “On the instability of the (notion of) nature” (First lecture), in *Facing Gaia: Eight Lectures on the New Climatic Regime*, Cambridge 2017: Polity Press, pp. 7-40.
- Bruno Latour, “Gaia, a (finally secular) figure for nature” (Third lecture), in *Facing Gaia: Eight Lectures on the New Climatic Regime*, Cambridge 2017: Polity Press, pp. 87-94.

3.3. *Race*

- Achille Mbembe, “The Universal Right to Breathe”, <https://critinq.wordpress.com/2020/04/13/the-universal-right-to-breathe/>
- Jean Bearman, “Underlying Conditions. Global Anti-Blackness Amid Covid-19”, <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/cico.12519>
- Shaun Ossei-Owusu, “COVID-19 and the Politics of Disposability”, in Deborah Chasman & Joshua Cohen (eds.), *The Politics of Care*, New York/London 2020: Verso, pp. 112-117
- Colin Gordon, Walter Johnson, Jason Q. Purnell, Jamala Rogers, “COVID-19 and the Color Line”, in Deborah Chasman & Joshua Cohen (eds.), *The Politics of Care*, New York/London 2020, pp. 118-127

10.3. *Isolation, Contact and Sociality*

- Douglas Crimp, “How to Have Promiscuity in an Epidemic”, in *October, Vol. 43, AIDS: Cultural Analysis/Cultural Activism* (Winter, 1987), pp. 237-271
- Catherine Malabou, “To Quarantine from Quarantine”, <https://critinq.wordpress.com/2020/03/23/to-quarantine-from-quarantine-rousseau-robinson-crusoe-and-i/>

17.3. *Care and Mutual Aid*

- The Care Collective, *Care Manifesto*, Introduction + ch. 1-3, London/New York 2020: Verso, pp. 1-58
- Dean Spade, “What is Mutual Aid?”, in *Mutual Aid*, London/New York 2020: Verso, pp. 9-44
- Miriam Ticktin, *Building a Feminist Commons in the Time of COVID-19*, <http://signsjournal.org/covid/ticktin/>

Further Resources

- Corona Syllabus: https://docs.google.com/document/u/0/d/1-IRVbz1nsBQJHcaCVh8QLRBiwj3cFT_bXSwmTNs_Hf0/mobilebasic#heading=h.7oja_fjqxvqwx
- Coronavirus and philosophers: <https://www.journal-psychoanalysis.eu/coronavirus-and-philosophers/>
- Teaching Pandemic Syllabus: https://daily.jstor.org/teaching-pandemics/?utm_term=Read+More&utm_campaign=jstordaily_03192020&utm_content=email&utm_source=Act-On+Software&utm_medium=email&fbclid=IwAR2Ecc0FWGx0_tL1NvsHjQZVfCZ-m4OJRTfJpTfNAJq7aZ7XTqmvcs8y5Hk

- Corona-Glossary (partly German, partly English):
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NwB5Hck7t9w&list=PLvqj5O3ibOM7eYWSTZc-uMS6Ksse6Ed_D
- Feminists Theorize Covid-19: signsjournal.org/covid/
- Dispatches from the Pandemic: <http://somatosphere.net/series/dispatches-from-the-pandemic/>
- The Quarantine Files, LA Review of Books:
<https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/quarantine-files-thinkers-self-isolation>
- 2020, The Year of the Virus (Crisis & Critique): <https://www.crisiscritique.org/>
- Philosophy and Covid-19: <https://library.hccs.edu/guides/philosophy/covid19>