



The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Syllabus

Community: On a Figure of Thought in French and Italian Contemporary Theory - 45855

Last update 13-09-2023

HU Credits: 2

Degree/Cycle: 2nd degree (Master)

Responsible Department: Romance Studies

Academic year: 0

Semester: 2nd Semester

Teaching Languages: English

Campus: Mt. Scopus

Course/Module Coordinator: Dr. Chiara Caradonna

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Coordinator Office Hours: Upon request

Teaching Staff:

Dr. chiara Caradonna

Course/Module description:

What is community, how does it come to be, and how is it preserved? Who is included, and who is excluded from it? Does community necessarily rest on mechanisms of exclusion? These questions have been at the core of political philosophy from the very onset, but have been posed with particular urgency in the 20th century, when conflicting notions of community where, often violently, played out against each other. In the 1980es, the provocative reflection on community carried out half a century earlier by the philosopher and writer Georges Bataille gained new momentum and sparked one of the most passionate and engaged philosophical debates of the past decades. This debate involved mainly those French and Italian philosophers that have shaped recent continental thought: Jean-Luc Nancy, Maurice Blanchot, Giorgio Agamben and Roberto Esposito. Each of them reacted and replied to the others' texts on community, forming an outright corpus of writings on this controversial topic. A common thread that binds these writings together is the presence and role of literature, used in order to both explain and illustrate what community is as well as to imagine what it should or might be. In this course, we will dive right into this contemporary discussion on community while paying particular attention to the uses of literature and literary devices in the texts under scrutiny. We will map out different stances on this issue, as we will ask ourselves, with Achille Mbembe and beyond Europe, what community means to us today.

Course/Module aims:

Learning outcomes - On successful completion of this module, students should be able to:

Students will be well acquainted with the protagonists and major themes of the recent Franco-Italian debate on community. They will gain fundamental notions on the history of the reflection on community in the continental philosophical tradition. Students will acquire an understanding of the main proposals brought forward by each of the authors under scrutiny with regard to the issue, and will be able to situate the debate in its historical and cultural context. Finally, they will be able to apply tools of literary analysis on philosophical texts and be familiar with the use of literature in these texts.

Attendance requirements(%):

100

Teaching arrangement and method of instruction: The course consists in close reading and discussion of the texts at hand. Students are required to read the texts closely beforehand and participate actively in the classes by preparing specific questions to be handed in and uploaded in the course diary before the class and then raised during the class. Students will be assigned, in groups, responsibility for at least one of the classes during the semester, providing context to the reading, writing a class protocol, and suggesting specific questions for discussion to the class. During the break, students will be asked to write a two-page assignment on a literary aspect of the text discussed thus far.

Course/Module Content:

- 1.12/3/24 – Introduction: Why Community? Framing a Contemporary Franco-Italian Debate
- 2.19/3/24 – Georges Bataille, “The Notion of Expenditure” (1933) / “Program (Acéphale)” (1936) / “What we have undertaken” (1937)
- 3.26/3/24 – Georges Bataille, *The Inner Experience* (1943)
- 4.2/4/24 – Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Inoperative Community* (1986)
- 5.9/4/24 – Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Inoperative Community* (1986)
- 6.16/4/24 – Maurice Blanchot, *The Unavowable Community* (1983)

Passover Break: Midterm Assignment

- 7.30/4/24 – Giorgio Agamben, *The Coming Community* (1990)
- 8.7/5/24 – Giorgio Agamben, *The Coming Community* (1990)
- 9.21/5/24 – Roberto Esposito, *The Origin and Destiny of Community* (2006)
- 10.28/5/24 – Roberto Esposito, *The Origin and Destiny of Community* (2006)
- 11.4/6/24 – Achille Mbembe, *The Earthly Community* (2022)

Work on final presentations / Online Feedback

- 12.25/6/24 – Student Presentations, Discussion, Outlook

Required Reading:

- Giorgio Agamben, *La comunità che viene*, Torino: Bollati Boringhieri, 1990.
- Giorgio Agamben, *The coming community*, trans. by Michael Hardt, Minnesota University Press, 1993.
- Georges Bataille, *Visions of Excess: Selected Writings 1927-1939*, trans. by Allan Stockl with Carl R. Lovin and Donald M. Leslie, Jr., Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985.
- Georges Bataille, *What we have undertaken...*, in: *The Obsessions of Georges Bataille. Community and Communication*, ed. by Andrew J. Mitchell, Jason Kemp Winfree, New York: SUNY Press, 2009, 189-196.

Maurice Blanchot, *La communauté inavouable*, Paris: Les éditions de minuit, 1983.
Maurice Blanchot, *The unavowable community*, trans. by Pierre Joris, New York: Station Hill Press, 1988.
Roberto Esposito, *Communitas. Origine e destino della comunità*, Torino: Einaudi, 2006.
Roberto Esposito, *Communitas. The Origin and Destiny of Community*, trans. by Timothy Campbell, Stanford University Press, 2010.
Denis Hollier (ed.), *The College of Sociology*, trans. by Betsy Wing, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988.
Jean-Luc Nancy, *La communauté désœuvrée*, Paris: Christian Bourgois, 1986.
Jean-Luc Nancy, *The inoperative community*, trans. by Peter Connor, Lisa Garbus, Michael Holland, and Simona Sawhney, University of Minnesota Press, 1991.
Jean-Luc Nancy, *La Communauté désavouée*, Paris, Galilée, 2014
Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Disavowed Community*, trans. by Philip Armstrong, New York: Fordham University Press, 2016
Achille Mbembe, *La communauté terrestre* (2023)
Achille Mbembe, *The Earthly Community: Reflections on the Last Utopia*, V2_Publishing, Rotterdam, 2022

Students are welcome to read the texts in the language of their preference and to raise issues of translation during the course.

Additional Reading Material:

Greg Bird, *Containing Community. From Political Economy to Ontology in Agamben, Esposito, and Nancy*, New York: SUNY Press, 2016.

Greg Bird, Jon Short (eds.), *Community, Immunity and the Proper*. Roberto Esposito

Fausto De Petra, Georges Bataille et Jean-Luc Nancy. Le « retracement » du politique. *Communauté, communication, commun*, in: *Lignes* 2005/2 (n° 17), pp. 157-171.

Patrick Ffrench, *After Bataille. Sacrifice, Exposure, Community*, New York: Legenda, 2000.

Kevin Hart, "The Aggrieved Community. Nancy and Blanchot in Dialogue", in: *Journal for Continental Philosophy of Religion* 1 (2019), 27-42.

Andrew J. Mitchell, Jason Kemp Winfree (eds.), *The Obsessions of Georges Bataille. Community and Communication*, ed. by Andrew J. Mitchell, Jason Kemp Winfree, New York: SUNY Press, 2009.

Jean-Luc Nancy, "Conloquium", introd. à Roberto Esposito, *Communitas : origine et destin de la communauté*, (trad. de l'italien par Nadine Le Lirzin), Paris: PUF, 2000.

Jean-Luc Nancy, *La communauté affrontée*, Paris, Galilée, 2001.

Jean-Luc Nancy, The Confronted Community, in: The Obsessions of Georges Bataille. Community and Communication, ed. by Andrew J. Mitchell, Jason Kemp Winfree, New York: SUNY Press, 2009, 19-30.

Grading Scheme:

Essay / Project / Final Assignment / Home Exam / Referat 60 %

Active Participation / Team Assignment 20 %

Submission assignments during the semester: Exercises / Essays / Audits / Reports / Forum / Simulation / others 20 %

Additional information:

Students will be asked to write a paper of 10 pp. on one of the texts or aspects of the debate discussed during the semester. Deadline to hand in the paper is 1 September 2024.