

**Area Readings on Levinas**  
Summer 2018  
Supervisor: John Caruana

**Format**

- We will meet to discuss the readings; two meetings a piece for each sub-topic, for a total of six.
- The meetings will be two hours apiece, and I will expect you to come prepared to discuss the material and answer questions on it. I will NOT be lecturing, presenting material etc.
- In conjunction with me, you will formulate a set of roughly four questions to answer.
- You will then write answers to the three questions on your list. These written answers should each be around 2000 words (or 6 to 7 pages of 2x spaced text).
- Answers to all questions are due by 15 August 2018.

**Levinas: Critic of Western Philosophy**

**Readings**

Levinas, E., & Lingis, A. (1979). *Totality and infinity: An essay on exteriority*. The Hague: M. Nijhoff.

— Section II, part B: Enjoyment the mythical form of the element

— Section II, part C: I and Dependence

Lévinas, E. (2003). *On escape = De lévasion*. Stanford (California): Stanford University Press.

Lévinas, E., Lingis, A., & Bernasconi, R. (2008). *Existence and existents*. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press.

Levinas, E., & Nemo, P. (2011). *Ethics and infinity: Conversations with Philippe Nemo*. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press.

Lévinas, E., Lingis, A., & Bernasconi, R. (2008). *Existence and existents*. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press.

Peperzak, Adriaan Theodoor., and Lévinas Emmanuel. *To the Other: an Introduction to the Philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas*. Purdue Univ. Press, 1993.

**Questions**

1. How is Levinas's concept of metaphysics different from the traditional understanding of this term?
  - How does Levinas avoid the pitfalls that surround the traditional metaphysics?
  - What are the points where Levinas's metaphysics diverges from those of Aristotle's naturalism and Plato's idealism? Are there any convergent points?
  - Why does he understand metaphysics as transcendence?

2. Levinas defines the 'Other' completely different from the 'I' that never could be grasped as the same or through the same. He defines the 'face' as the expression of other and human's excessive desire for the other. He concludes that the other is the site of our transcendence. For this reason, Levinas claims that ethics rather than metaphysics is First Philosophy. How does he come to such a radical conclusion?
  
3. What are Levinas's critiques to phenomenology?
  - Levinas opposes Heidegger's application of disclosure. In *Totality and Infinity*, he maintains that the relation between the same and the other is not always reducible to knowledge of the Other by the same, nor even to the revelation of the Other to the same, which is already fundamentally different from disclosure. Why does Levinas find disclosure or uncovering inadequate as a means of doing justice to the 'Other'?
  - What are the philosophical and Jewish sources for Levinas's critique of disclosure?
  - How does Levinas benefit from phenomenology to develop his ideas of 'Totality' and 'Infinity'?