This course takes up the troubling role of the life sciences in the organization of knowledge, with reference both to German Idealism in the late 18th to 19thc and to the (unpredictable) two-way traffic between philosophy and its others, specifically life and earth sciences that shift the very nature of philosophy. The course will have five parts.

1. An Introduction, which looks at Hegel’s, Schelling’s and Novalis’ theorization of an “encyclopedia of the philosophical sciences” that thinks even empirical fields of knowledge in terms of their philosophical potential, but also their contamination of philosophy and interimplication with each other within a (deconstructive) architecture of knowledge. Contemporary thinkers will provide a framework.

2. A section on Hegel’s philosophy of nature, the most ignored and troublesome part of his work. Here I will be concerned not only with the argument but also with layout and narrative structure, in other words, with the *Philosophy of Nature* as writing/écriture in Derrida’s sense. In some of his work Hegel is a profoundly affective writer, and this text is something of a “pathography” as well as a “phenomenology” of the transition from nature to “spirit” that Hegel desperately wants to see. Hegel’s own *Aesthetics* is useful for approaching the text as writing, which also raises the larger issue of how we read philosophy in ways that do more than provide an exegesis.

3. A section on Schelling, who more openly confronts the writing of philosophy and the nature of philosophy as “science” (or systematic and certain knowledge). We will be particularly concerned with the interdisciplinary implications of the life sciences (physics, chemistry, physiology, medicine, geology) for other domains of thought, as shown by the consequences of Schelling’s early *Naturphilosophie* for later works such as the *Freedom* essay.

4. A section on the uptake (including by British Idealists of the 19thc) of the late 18thc. British medical theorist, John Hunter (1728-1893), whose collection of anatomical and fossil specimens was made a “national trust” in 1799. Hunter’s interdisciplinary corpus allows us to reflect on disciplines such as medicine, physiology, comparative anatomy, geology, paleontology and museology, as well as on the cultural management of knowledge. Unlike that of Hegel and Schelling, his work is thoroughly empirical.

5. A final section on contemporary thinkers (Malabou, Esposito) whose work also registers the interdisciplinary impact of the life sciences, as well as providing resources for approaching the previous thinkers studied in a new key.

This course is located within Romantic philosophy, broadly conceived. However, the issues it raises about the nature of interdisciplinarity and the difference between speculation and
positivism are the issues that animate Theory.

**Timetable** (approximate)

I: Sept. 15  Introduction to the course. Hegel’s Encyclopedia project and the relation between disciplines. Philosophy of nature as this course’s particular way of focusing this larger issue, which pertains to what constitutes “theory” as opposed to “philosophy.” Foucault’s reprise of the encyclopedic project in *The Order of Things*.


II: Sept. 22  Foucault continued. Hegel’s “histories” of various subjects. The *Aesthetics* as an example, both of the ruin of his dialectic and as a resource for approaching his work as writing. “German” philosophy in the History of Philosophy.

Readings: selections from *Aesthetics*; selections from *History of Philosophy* (on Boehme, Wolff)

III. Sept. 29  Hegel, *Philosophy of Nature*.

Readings: The Introduction and “Organics” section of the Philosophy of Nature. J.H. Green, selections from “Recapitulatory Lecture” (in *Vital Dynamics*).

IV. Oct. 6  As above. Seminar #1 on phenomenology and phantasmatology.

Readings: *PN* as above. Rodolphe Gasché, “Phenomenology and Phantasmatology” in *Georges Bataille: Phenomenology and Phantasmatology* (this is not available as a pdf; if someone chooses this seminar, I’ll make a xerox that people can copy)

Oct. 13 NO CLASS. Will be made up later

V. Oct. 20  Introduction to Schelling. His attempt to unify idealism and realism in one system. *On University Studies*: his “encyclopedia,” the relation between ideal and real sciences, positive and absolute knowledge. Seminar #2

Readings: *Introduction to the First Outline* (at back of the *First Outline*); *On University Studies* TBD. Background reading: Derrida, “Theology of Translation.”

VI. Oct. 27  Schelling’s *First Outline*; the organization of the text, the lecture form vs. book, Schelling’s multiple “systems.” Fields and subsystems in the text – a new way of doing philosophy. The Stufenfolge or graduated stages of nature and its place in this mix. Possibly a seminar

VII. Nov. 3  Same as above. Seminar(s) #3 and 4
VIII. Nov.10  Schelling, *Freedom* essay. 2 Seminars (#5 and 6)
Reading: *Freedom* essay.

IX. Nov.17  Introduction to Hunter. His radical empiricism, array of topics he covers, his Museum, loss of manuscripts, editing and reception of his work. Disciplinary categorization of his work. Palmer vs. Owen, Romantic vs Victorian.
Readings for classes IX-XI: TBD depending on seminars, but will include *Lectures on Surgery*, ToC, Chapters 2-4, 9, and a glance at 6 at 10 (*Surgical Works, Vol. 1*); “On the Stomach Digesting Itself After Death” (Works, IV); the Advertisement, and pp. I.1-41 of Owen (ed.), *Essays and Observations*; the ToC of both volumes of the above.

X. Nov.24  Above contd. Seminar on Coleridge’s *Theory of Life*, if anyone chooses it.

XI. Dec.1  Owen’s editing and representation of Hunter. Remaining Hunter seminars will be scheduled in Class X or XI depending on which are chosen.

Class XII.  Roberto Esposito. General Introduction (though he will have been introduced earlier). 2 Seminars (#9 and 10)

Class XIII  Malabou. Seminars (#11 and 12). TBD on the basis of seminars, but will include selections from her work on Hegel, *What Can We Do With Our Brains*, *Ontology of the Accident*, and *The New Wounded*.

One class towards the end of term will be a class scheduled on a day other than Tues., to make up for class missed in October. It may be Class XI, XII or XIII.

**Seminar Topics**

#1. Phantasmology vs. phenomenology as an approach to Hegel in Rodolphe Gasché’s *Georges Bataille: Phenomenology and Phantasmatology*. Does Gasché use the full potential of these terms? Do the two actually form a binary?

#2. Schelling’s systemization and totalization (?) of knowledge in on *University Studies*. Can the text be read other than “romantically”?

#3 and #4. *First Outline* (2 seminars): 2 of any of the following fields/disciplines in the general economy of the *First Outline*—physiology, physics, chemistry, earth sciences (for which you may bring in *Ages of the World 1815*)

#5. *Freedom Essay*: the role of the opening pages on pantheism.

#6. The impact of the *Naturphilosophie* on the *Freedom* essay. (Among other things, what does Schelling mean by saying that he is taking up the “ideal side” of philosophy for the first time, when he had published extensively on it before)

#7-#9: No more than three of the following:

i). Coleridge’s *Theory of Life* as a response to Hunter (its non-publication; his relation to
Schelling, to J.H. Green).
ii. Hunter’s two editions of *Animal Oeconomy* vs. Owen’s editing of the text in *Surgical Works*, Vol. 4 (including Owen’s Introduction to the text)
iii. Hunter’s work on fossils and geology vs. Owen’s editing of it as “paleontology” (in *Essays and Observations*)
iv. Any aspect of Hunter’s corpus and/or career read alongside Foucault’s *The Birth of the Clinic*, the work of Esposito (cf. his discussion of Bichat in *Third Person*, Chapter. 1), the theory of open systems (cf. Ansell-Pearson, last chapter of *Viroid Life*), or the work of some other contemporary theorist.

#10 and 11--Esposito: *TWO* of the following:
i) his work in general and its place in contemporary theory (e.g. including relation to Foucault, Derrida, Agamben or others).
ii. his particular relation to the 19thc, both Romantic and “Victorian” ends
iii. how he might be used to rethink Hunter, Hegel or Schelling.

#12 Malabou: her work on Hegel, relation of plasticity in her book on Hegel to what she subsequently does with plasticity; the plasticity of Hegel’s *Philosophy of Nature*

#13 Malabou’s work in general (its place in contemporary theory etc.)

**Assignments:**

The distribution of grades is as follows:

Response : 10%
Other Participation (including attendance): 5%
Seminar: 25%
Essay proposal: 5%
Essay: 55%

**Response:** Each student seminar will have a student respondent. The response may offer another point of view, or take up an aspect of the topic not covered in the seminar. In any case it should offer something substantive, and raise discussion points (5-8 minutes). The respondent should coordinate with the student presenting the seminar about seeing the seminar in advance or having some sense of what it will cover. It follows that the respondent is also responsible for reading the whole text being covered in the seminar, and not just a selection (or in the case of a formidable text such as *PN* or the *First Outline*, responsible for glancing at the whole text)

**Seminar:** Topics are above. The seminar should be about 25 minutes, not including questions, and will be graded on clarity and effectiveness of presentation as well as content. While the class may be assigned a limited reading, the presenter MUST read the text(s) being considered in their entirety. The seminar should go beyond a summary, to read dialogically between the commentator, the primary author and the issues thus opened up. A hard copy of the seminar must be submitted to me one week after the presentation.

**Essay Proposal:** By Nov.10, you must submit a 500 word essay proposal, in the mode of an abstract that you might submit for a conference. You are not tied to developing the topic exactly as you outline; however, if you change your topic entirely, you must submit a new proposal. The
proposal will not be graded, and the grade for it may be subsumed into the essay grade; however, failure to submit a proposal will result in loss of the % of the grade assigned for the proposal. There is some leeway with essay topics: essays do not have to be on authors covered in the course, if they take up the impact of the life sciences on philosophizing and/or vice versa (but please discuss this with me).

**Major Paper**: The major paper is a research paper which should be 6,000-7,500 words (20-25 pages). It should not overlap with the seminar. It should contain a Bibliography and show evidence of secondary reading and original research. Essays should follow either the MLA or Chicago Style format for references.

**Due date for final paper**: Dec. 23rd. All essays must be submitted in hard copy, and either left for me at the English Department (AHB, ground floor), or dropped off at my house (870 Wellington Street, SE corner of Wellington and Grosvenor). Students whose seminar falls in December, may have till December 30th to submit their major paper. After the 23rd (or the 30th as applicable) there will be a late penalty of 2% per day. All essays should also be e mailed to me so that I can be sure of when they were submitted. I cannot accept late essays after Jan. 5th (penalty of 12%-26% as applicable) as I will be leaving for a conference, and the grades meeting is immediately on my return.

**Penalties**:  
*Failure to deliver a seminar creates a problem for the entire class and its scheduling. Anyone who fails to deliver a seminar on the assigned date will have to submit it in writing within a week in order to receive a grade no higher than 70%.
*Late essays will be penalised at the rate of 2% per day.
*Attendance in class is part of the participation mark. A student who misses classes without a good reason can expect that to be reflected in the participation mark.
*Incompletes must be approved by the director in consultation with the instructor.

**Plagiarism**: “Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea, or a passage of text from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate, and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence (see Scholastic Offence Policy on the Western Academic Calendar)” [Senate Statement on Plagiarism]