SUBJECTIVITY AND SCIENCE
Graduate Course
PHIL 657-61

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French philosophy of the 20th Century was concerned with a root and branch recasting of the question of what ‘science’ means. The question of the subject as it was reformulated by psychoanalysis was, in particular, invoked as a possible site through which to rethink the conditions of and obstacles to scientific insight. Beginning with the formalist thinking of Jean Cavaillès and Gaston Bachelard, progressing through the eccentric vitalism of Georges Canguilhem, and taking in the extraordinary, transdisciplinary rethinking of science and subjectivity that accompanied the rise of structuralist psychoanalysis and Marxism in 1960s France, this course will culminate with a look at how contemporary French scholarship has adopted an approach to science heavily influenced by the empirical social sciences and neuroscience. Instead of asking ‘is psychoanalysis a science?’, we will ask what happens to our very conception of science itself when psychoanalysis, Marxism and broader practices of the subject, including literature, are considered somehow to be scientific.

Assessment: 2 3,000 word papers, class presentations, final research paper of 6,000 words.

Thinkers studied: Jean Cavaillès, Gaston Bachelard, Georges Canguilhem, Jacques Lacan, Louis Althusser, Pierre Macherey, Jacques-Alain Miller, Alain Badiou, Michel Serres, Bruno Latour, Catherine Malabou

Required books: (all in paperback):


