Duquesne University  
Philosophical Psychology: Buber & Gadamer PSYC 620-61  
Spring 2013

Teacher: Will W. Adams, Ph.D.  
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Class meets Wednesdays, 6:00 – 8:40, in College Hall 551

All real living is meeting.  
~ Martin Buber, *I and Thou*

Once again we discover that the person who is understanding does not know and judge as one who stands apart and unaffected but rather he thinks along with the other from the perspective of a specific bond of belonging, as if he too were affected.  
~ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*

**Course Description and Purpose**  
While there is great diversity within human science psychology, the common ground connecting these various approaches is a commitment to rigorous reflection on, and critical conversation regarding, the psychologist's philosophical stance. Therefore, in the Clinical Psychology program at Duquesne, we are dedicated to educating future psychologists who are sensitive to the ontological, epistemological, and ethical perspectives that inhere any effort to understand and work with human beings. Since these guiding perspectives often function as an unnoticed background in our work, and are thereby enacted unconsciously, it is especially important to bring them into foreground awareness for critical consideration. Thus our Department appreciates the generative power of a collaborative alliance between the disciplines of psychology and philosophy. We know that this alliance is fostered by careful study of philosophical texts, specifically with the aspiration of discovering and cultivating their relevance for the practice of psychotherapy and psychological research. All of this serves as the context for our present course.

Together we will study two of the most influential, revealing, and inspiring philosophical texts of the 20th century, *I and Thou*, by Martin Buber, and *Truth and Method*, by Hans-Georg Gadamer; and we will consider how they can assist us in practicing psychology (and in living day to day). (Non-psychology students will consider the relevance of these philosophies for their distinctive discipline and future vocation, including the connection between philosophy and psychology.) In my view, philosophers (and spiritual contemplatives) were the great psychologists long before the formal discipline of psychology ever existed. Buber and Gadamer each offer profound insights into psychological phenomena, ones that can be critically integrated and applied in your own distinctive way in your day to day work. While their philosophies (and writing styles) are quite different from one another, they are deeply complementary. Their work addresses many major themes of contemporary psychology: human relationship, conversation, dialogue, subjectivity, intersubjectivity, understanding and its lack,
interpretation, hermeneutics, language, reflexivity, culture, history, development, love, science, nature, spirituality (to cite a few significant concerns).

The course will be conducted as a participatory, collaborative, doctoral seminar. It is designed such that close textual readings will sponsor shared, in-depth conversations relevant to the theory and practice of psychotherapy and research. I will provide lecture and commentary on key themes or concerns from the texts in order to set up exploratory conversations among all participants in the course. Much of each class will be comprised of discussion emerging from our readings, including discussion of concerns of special interest to each student (whether or not these were highlighted in my lecture). I may also set up occasional opportunities for experiential exploration.

The learning objectives for the course are as follows:

+ Students will cultivate an in-depth, complex, and subtle appreciation of key themes and concerns articulated by Buber and Gadamer;
+ Students will cultivate their own critical stance toward these themes and concerns;
+ Students will discern and develop an appreciation of Buber and Gadamer’s philosophy in relation to their practice of psychotherapy and psychological research. Non-psychology students will do the same in relation to their own discipline and future vocation.
+ Psychology students will begin to explore their own unique ways of bringing Buber and Gadamer’s influence into their actual practice psychotherapy and research.

**Required Readings**

You are required to purchase the texts in the specific editions and translations listed below. They are available at the University bookstore and other sources such as Amazon. Additional shorter readings will be added as time permits, and they will be posted on Blackboard. You are responsible for reading and reflecting on all assigned texts prior to the class meeting.


**Assessment Process**

“Have I found a way to make this course relevant for my training and practice in psychotherapy and qualitative researcher, my future professional work in psychology, and my everyday life?” Or, for non-psychology students: “Have I found a way to make this course relevant for my training and practice in my academic discipline, my future professional work, and my everyday life?” In my view, your response to this question is the preeminent criterion by which your participation in the course should be evaluated. Obviously, this is a self-assessment, one which I cannot evaluate directly. I will formally assess the quality of your work on the following assignments:
1) Brief written reflections on each reading, including one appreciative comment, one critical comment, and one issue for further inquiry; about ½ page for each reading (2-3 cogent sentences for each comment); one email copy submitted to Dr. Adams by noon on Wednesday, plus one copy for you to refer to during class. (10% of your final grade)
2) Two scholarly papers (each worth 25% of your final grade): One oriented by the philosophy of Buber and the other by Gadamer; each on a theme of your choice (the themes can be the same or different across the two papers); each with an explicit focus on the philosopher's relevance for the theory and practice of psychotherapy or research; each 10-12 pages. (Non-psychology students may make arrangements, with Dr. Adams, for their papers to have a different thematic focus.)
4) Oral Presentation: Formal oral presentation in class, showing how you are drawing from the philosophy of Buber or Gadamer in your actual psychotherapy work or in your research. 20 minutes total: 10 minute presentation plus 10 minutes of class discussion in response. (15% of final grade)
5) Symposium Presentation: Formal scholarly presentation of your paper on either Buber or Gadamer and psychology; 20 minute presentation plus discussion (15% of final grade). Invitations to attend the symposium will be sent to psychology and philosophy students and faculty.
6) Overall course participation: Attendance; timely completion of all assignments; quality and consistency of engaged participation in class. (10%)

All assignments and activities will be described thoroughly in class. All written work for the course is to be typed, double-spaced, with 12-point font, in APA style. Plus and minus grading will be used for all grades. Attending every meeting of class is required, as this is necessary for individual success and for a successful course overall. If an extraordinary circumstance makes it impossible for you to be in class, please notify me as soon as you can.

I expect you to demonstrate academic integrity in this course. Please consult Duquesne’s website at http://www.duq.edu/student-conduct/code-of-conduct/academic-integrity.cfm in order to inform yourself of our policies. In our current Google/YouTube/Facebook/Twitter/etc. society, it is easier than ever to violate a policy, perhaps without being fully aware that you are doing so. However, even an unintentional breach of integrity is subject to sanctions. I will not tolerate academic dishonesty of any kind. This refers to cheating, plagiarism, and all other types of academic dishonesty. Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to, using material from the web, another person’s work, or from books or articles without properly acknowledging the source. If I suspect that you have violated a policy I will follow the investigation and (if necessary) sanction procedures outlined by the University. I strongly encourage you to speak with me, at any time during the course, if you have questions about issues or situations regarding academic integrity.

The course as described in this syllabus may be revised during the semester according to the needs and interests of the class. I look forward to our collaboration this semester!

~ Will W. Adams