

Place and Experience: A Course in Philosophical Topography

Referring to the Westmoreland landscape that figures in one of Wordsworth's most famous poems, 'Michael', the English poet Laureate Seamus Heaney writes in one of his essays of the Wordsworthian landscape that it is both 'humanised and humanising'. The landscape, or more generally, the place, is thus seen by Heaney as itself having a human character, while it also makes human those who live within it. The mutuality between place and human being that is suggested here will be a central theme in this course as we explore the way in which place, and the sense of place, connect with notions of self and identity, with the nature of action and the structure of content, and with concepts of space and time. The course will draw on literary sources such as Heaney and Wordsworth, but it will also examine the way in which the idea of place (and associated notions of landscape and homeland – *Heimat*) connects up with contemporary thinking in both the Analytic and Hermeneutic traditions – particularly with the work of Donald Davidson and Martin Heidegger. The course will make reference both to my 1999 book, *Place and Experience* (Cambridge UP) and also my 2006 volume *Heidegger's Topology* (MIT). The course will be wide ranging in its compass exploring issues that are central to contemporary philosophical thought, but also connecting with issues in geography, anthropology, sociology, history, music, literature and film.

Selected reading:

I have provided more material here than is required – students should aim to read at least some of the readings assigned to each session – the aim is to have some familiarity with the issues to be discussed, but detailed knowledge of the readings will not be assumed Readings [4] and [6] have not been assigned to any particular session, but are included because they provide a different perspective on the issues in a way that relates to contexts outside the purely philosophical.

1. Jeff Malpas, *Place and Experience* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).
2. Jeff Malpas, *Heidegger's Topology* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2006).
3. 'Philosophy's Nostalgia', in Hagi Kenaan and Ilit Ferber (ed.), *Philosophy's Moods* (Dordrecht: Springer, forthcoming, 2011).
4. Jeff Malpas, "'The Role of Memory": Image, Place and Story in the Films of Wim Wenders', in James Phillips (ed.), *Cinematic Thinking: Philosophical Approaches to the New Cinema* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008), pp.146-159.
5. 'Place and human being', in Frank Vanclay et al (eds.), *Making Sense of Place* (Canberra: NMA, 2008), pp.325-331.
6. Jeff Malpas, 'Philosophizing Place in *The Joshua Tree*', in Mark Wrathall (ed.), *U2 and Philosophy* (Chicago: Open Court, 2006), pp.45-59; an extract from the essay also appears on the site www.popmatters.com authored by George Reisch.

7. Jeff Malpas, 'Locating Interpretation: The Topography of Understanding in Heidegger and Davidson', *Philosophical Topics* 27 (1999), pp.129-148.
8. Jeff Malpas, 'Comparing topographies: across paths/around place', *Philosophy and Geography* 4 (2001), pp.233-240.
9. Jeff Malpas, "The Thinking of World: On the Significance of Heidegger's Later Philosophy", unpublished.

The texts selected here are intended to provide the basic material around which the course is built, however, emphasis will be on engaging with the issues at stake rather than merely with the texts as such.

Programme of Sessions:

- I. 04.06.2010 (Fri.): 16-18h - Introduction: What is Philosophical Topography – [1]: Intro plus Chapt 1; [8]
- II. 05.06.2010 (Sat.): 11-13h and 15-17h – Self, Place, and Space [1], Chaps 3, 4 & 5; [7]
- III. 06.06.2010 (Sun.): 11-13h and 15-17h – Self, Place, and Time: [1], Chaps 6 & 7; [3]
- IV. 11.06.2010 (Fri.): 11-13h and 15-17h – Reading Heidegger Topologically – [2] Intro & Conclusion; [7]; [9]
- V. 12.06.2010 (Sat.): 11-13h and 15-17h – *Ethos* and *Topos*: the ethics and politics of place – [1], conclusion; [2] conclusion; [5]
- VI. 13.06.2010 (Sun.): 11h30-14h30 – Conclusion and Discussion: Philosophy and Topography [1] Conclusion; [2] Conclusion; [3]; [7]

Each session will focus around lectures by Prof Malpas; sessions II-V will comprise lectures in the first 2-hr period with the second 2-hr period devoted to student presentations. These presentations will allow students to develop their own approach to a topic related to the general theme of the session, and will be the basis for written papers that will be submitted following the completion of the course and in accord with the requirements of the Philosophy department .