



DIVISION OF EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Narrative Section of a Successful Application

The attached document contains the grant narrative and selected portions of a previously funded grant application. It is not intended to serve as a model, but to give you a sense of how a successful application may be crafted. Every successful application is different, and each applicant is urged to prepare a proposal that reflects its unique project and aspirations. Prospective applicants should consult the current Summer Seminars and Institutes guidelines, which reflect the most recent information and instructions, at

<https://www.neh.gov/grants/education/summer-seminars-and-institutes-higher-education-faculty>

Applicants are also strongly encouraged to consult with the NEH Division of Education Programs staff well before a grant deadline.

Note: The attachment only contains the grant narrative and selected portions, not the entire funded application. In addition, certain portions may have been redacted to protect the privacy interests of an individual and/or to protect confidential commercial and financial information and/or to protect copyrighted materials.

Project Title: Emmanuel Levinas: Ethics of Democracy
Institution: University of Buffalo (SUNY)
Project Director: Richard Cohen
Grant Program: Summer Seminars and Institutes (Seminar for Higher Education Faculty)

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Project Title: **Emmanuel Levinas: Ethics of Democracy**

Institute: University at Buffalo (SUNY)

Project Director: Richard A. Cohen

Grant Program: NEH Summer Seminars and Institutes

2. NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

a. Nature of the Request

This proposal is for a one-week Seminar for College and University Teachers on “Emmanuel Levinas: Ethics of Democracy.” Emmanuel Levinas is now considered one of the most important philosophers of the 20th century for having grounded meaning, truth and politics in an ethics rooted in the obligations of moral responsibility: putting the other person first. Building on one previous related NEH Seminar of 2017, the proposed Seminar will be held at the University at Buffalo (SUNY), July 20-24, 2020 and is designed for sixteen participants seeking sustained intellectual engagement with Levinas’s thought as a profound and relevant framing to grasp the interrelationships which bind freedom to democracy and democracy to ethics.

b. Project Development

Previous experience directing a 2017 one-week NEH Seminar on “Emmanuel Levinas: Morality, Justice and the Political,” has helped shape and improve the current proposal in several ways. Because participant feedback from fall 2017 was quite positive (see Appendix), the previous format and mechanics have been retained as a model for the proposed Seminar. Nonetheless, changes have been made. First of all, the topic has been altered from the earlier and broader issue of ethics (morality, justice) and politics to a more specific focus on ethics, democracy and freedom. Second and accordingly, the daily reading assignments have been adjusted to highlight problems and challenges specific to democratic theory and practice.

Previous experience has reinforced other Seminar components. For instance, the classroom readings remain short and closely related inter-textually to produce a coherent intellectual development manageable within a one-week time frame. So, too, the basic format whereby participants share in reading texts out-loud to initiate, stimulate and guide discussion has been retained. Finally, informal and voluntary lunch and dinner gatherings will also be continued because these enhance greater inter-personal bonding, intellectual engagement, and overall enjoyment of the Seminar week.

It should be recognized, as well, that the current proposal is also modelled and has been refined based also on the experience of five previous one-week long Levinas Philosophy Summer Seminars held from 2013 to 2018 (with a sixth LPSS scheduled for July, 2019) also directed by Cohen and McLachlan.

c. Intellectual Rationale

Since the eighteen century, the peoples of the world have come to common agreement that democracy is the political system which best respects the human dignity of each and all in social concert. Levinas has boldly declared: "It is not one regime possible among others, but the only suitable one." Still, there are those who radically challenge the wisdom and worth of democracy. Fascist, Nazi and totalitarian regimes have shown that democracy cannot be taken for granted. All the more reason, then, to justify democracy in moral responsibility, first of each person for the other, and derived therefrom of the responsibility of each person for all others, the quest for justice. Levinas's thought extends and deepens the venerable tradition of the West, beginning with Plato, Aristotle and the Bible, for which politics is part of ethics, despite and opposed to the partisans of power and so-called "realpolitik" who would contest the relevance of ethics for politics altogether.

Levinas's thought is an important and original contribution to contemporary political thinking. To begin with, he challenges the accounts of the two political theorists who have most influenced Western political thought hitherto: Thomas Hobbes, on the side of realpolitik and John Locke, on the side of liberal democracy, the latter an enormous influence on America's "founding fathers." Hobbes reverses the ethical grounding of politics by grounding ethics in politics. That is, he argues that the State not only keeps social order, but institutes it. Without the State, life is war, the "war of all against all." Given this outlook, the State alone becomes the ultimate and irreproachable arbiter and sanction of justice. "Reasons of state" are final, sovereign, without appeal. The Seminar will review texts by the Nazi jurist Carl Schmitt for the extreme expression of such a political view. In contrast, Locke's liberal democratic vision of the political, adopted by Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Paine, John Stuart Mill and John Rawls, among others, discovers the source of justice in the inalienable dignity of each human being, and therefore in the rule of law, human rights, and the rights of minorities. To defend and promote human rights – as intended by the American "Declaration of Independence" and Constitutional "Bill of Rights" – provides the standard by which to judge the justice or injustice of the State. Levinas stands with this latter tradition, whereby the State is not source of justice but in its service.

Certainly Levinas rejects the Hobbesian vision of the State's absolute sovereignty without appeal. In this he joins Locke, and Plato, and Aristotle, and the Bible, defending a politics judged by ethics. Nonetheless, he disagrees with Locke as well because for Levinas human dignity does not arise out of each individual taken alone, out of self-expression or self-interest, but rather arises in social communication, in a putting of the other person first. The source of ethics, for Levinas, lies in one person taking responsibility for another, in selfhood as being *for-the-other* before being for-oneself. Thus he interprets both Hobbes

and Locke as overvaluing war, for Hobbes a war of wolves, for Locke a war of freedoms. For Levinas, in contrast, humanity does not arise out of conflict, but in responsibility, first of all my responsibility for you, and then built on this and derived from this on my responsibility for all others. Both responsibilities recommend democracy. The notion of monadic individualism, whether built on power or freedom, is contest as an ideological abstraction, borrowed from a combination of scientific-analytic positivism and market economics, but insufficient as a theory of the political. Ethics, and hence humanity, arise in responsibility – such is Levinas’s thesis. Levinas thus defends democracy as the best political regime because it respects individuals in their common endeavors as social beings. Contra the Hobbesian power State which subdue wolves and the Lockean contract State which limits but isolates freedoms, politics for Levinas is “covenantal,” serving morality, the care of each for each and, in the name of justice, the care of each for all.

Such a politics would be democratic because based in human conversation, debate, argument, criticism, transparency, and all that binds finite humans moving together as a community toward goodness and justice. “This is why democracy,” Levinas writes, “is the necessary prolongation of the State. It is not one regime possible among others, but the only suitable one. This is because it safeguards the capacity to improve or to change the law by changing – unfortunate logic! – tyrants, these personalities necessary to the State despite everything.” “Tyranny” may seem an old fashioned word, but it is a real political danger especially in our contemporary world of bigness in everything. Individuals increasingly feel anonymous, depersonalized and helpless in the face of big business, big government, big education, big administration, and so on. Individual freedoms seems increasingly corrosive of the various bonds of community, from family to Church to athletic clubs and so on. The same negative and abstract individualism in its isolation becomes increasingly susceptible to

the sirens calls of dictatorial politics. Democracy, in contrast, respecting others, conversing and deliberating together, reaching temporary consensus by majority vote, joins people in the quest for the common good by aiming for a common justice.

The seminar is for one week, with participants in residence on campus or near the campus of the University at Buffalo, Buffalo, NY. There will be ten formal meetings, five in the morning and five in the afternoon, in which participants engage in animated conversation on the above topics, guided by assigned readings and the Directors facilitating the exchange of ideas. The Director are fully available to participants at all times, including for help with special projects including the critique of manuscripts. In the past five LPSS and one NEH Seminar participants have bonded over classroom discussions, informal hallway discussions, shared lunches on campus, and dinners at nearby restaurants. All the texts used in the seminar are in excellent English translations. Discussion of original languages and translation choices can also arise and is not discouraged.

Cohen, McLachlan and Saldukaityte have worked closely together for the past six years at six previous one-week seminars. The five Levinas Philosophy Summer Seminars (LPSS), with twelve participants from around the world, without stipends or fees, like the proposed NEH Seminar have been focused on the ethical philosophy of Levinas. The first LPSS first was held in Vilnius, Lithuania (Levinas's birth country), July 2013, on the topic "Emmanuel Levinas: The Origin of Responsibility." The second LPSS was held at the University at Buffalo, July, 2014, on "Levinas and Kant: The Primacy of Ethics." The third was at John Cabot University, Rome, Italy, July, 2015, on the topic "Levinas: Eros and Ethics." The fourth LPSS was held at the Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, California, July, 2016, on the topic "Free Speech and Difficult Freedom." The 2017 NEH Seminar was on the topic "Emmanuel Levinas on Morality, Justice and the Political," at the University at Buffalo

(SUNY). The fifth LPSS was on the topic “Ideology and Justice,” July, 2018, held at the University of Chicago Center, Paris, France. An upcoming 2019 LPSS on the topic “Irresponsibility and Politics,” is to be held at the Center for Jewish History in New York City.

Interactions of participants of previous NEH and LPSS Seminars with Cohen, McLachlan and Saldukaityte continue to this day. Furthermore, important publications have resulted. Most outstanding, two academic journals with contributions by participants have been published, edited by Cohen and Saldukaityte: *Religions*, online journal (reviewed), special issue, “Levinas and the Political,” Volume 9-10, number 3 (Basel, Switzerland, 2019); and *Levinas Studies*, Vol. 11, Volume 11, fall 2017 (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press).

The proposed NEH Seminar benefits teaching and scholarship in the humanities in several ways. First, the seminar is itself a week-long series of intensive discussions whose form and content are central to the humanities: a concern for the meaning and value of the human as such, with a special focus on democracy and its ethical significance. Second, directors and participants will share with one another their own experiences and questions as teachers and scholars in the humanities. No discussion of the bond between democracy and ethics can be complete without a concomitant inquiry into the role of pedagogy, public opinion and media in politics. Finally, participants are encouraged to discuss their pedagogical practices – courses, curriculum, methods - and receive feedback based on the teaching experiences of their professional colleagues.

The length of the program – one week – is based on the experience of one previous NEH seminar and five LPSS which all worked very nicely within this time frame. Readings, topics and conceptual developments are sufficiently targeted and the discussions sufficiently intense, that one week has proven to be neither more nor less than the time needed for thorough (though not exhaustive) consideration. Also experience has shown that

over the week trust and bonding develop sufficiently to produce a genuine and ongoing intellectual and social atmosphere of collegiality, of free and critical exchange of ideas.

d. Program of Study

The Seminar will meet Monday-Friday, 10:00 am to 12:00 noon, 1:30 pm to 5:00 pm, with lunches and three dinners together voluntarily. Prior to gathering in Buffalo, participants are sent via email attachments containing the readings, short selections from Hobbes, Locke, Kant, Jefferson, Mill, Rawls and Schmitt. Participants are also sent copies of the day-to-day syllabus with reading assignments attached.

Cohen, McLachlan and Saldukaityte have learned to complement their skill sets and relations to the participants. Cohen, owing to his pre-eminence as a Levinas scholar, has generally led morning sessions, beginning on Monday with a brief overview, and thereafter as moderating commentator. McLachlan, also a Levinas scholar, helps answer student inquiries, supplementing and/or providing a different perspective than that of the Director. Thereby two different though non-competing interpretative viewpoints are offered to aid in the group's effort to grasp the issues at hand. Cohen, McLachlan and Saldukaityte are available to all participants at all times.

Participants make substantial positive contributions to discussions, each bringing a different skill set of scholarship, pedagogic experience, and perspectives of various academic disciplines and life experience. At the start of each session, assigned texts are read out loud by the participants, sparking ensuing comment and discussion, without any privileging of commentators, making sure that everyone gets a hearing and all points of view are considered. Everyone is encouraged to contribute to group discussions, whether

this means asking questions, extending or criticizing ideas, or opening up new avenues of inquiry.

Beyond the two journals published, it is also possible that future conferences on democracy and ethics, or closely related topics, will be organized by Cohen, McLachlan and/or Saldukaityte, to which NEH Seminar participants will be invited, to give papers or to simply attend.

Thematically, the Seminar and readings are arranged to unfold as follows.

Democracy is a political regime designed to protect and enhance human freedoms in the variegated arena of public activity and discourse, including, respecting and reinforcing community engagements such as are found in family, neighborhood, religion, entertainment, commerce, environment, culture, and the like. Democracy, as Lincoln famously declared, is that noble “experiment,” that still “unfinished work” of establishing rule “of the people, by the people, for the people.” Though in principle the people rule, in fact a smaller set of persons serve as political functionaries, as governors, mayors, town councils, clerks, judges, police, soldiers, tax collectors, and the like. Thus rulers and ruled are distinguished, even if in democracy sovereignty ultimately lies with the people. The problem of democracy, then, is (1) to guarantee that the few keep the interests of the many foremost; and toward that end, (2) to curb the natural tendency of power to become selfish, as Lord Acton’s famous formula underscored.

Power corrupts, this is an established fact. The final political corruption of power is tyranny. How does democracy keep tyranny at bay? We have seen that for Levinas the Hobbesian State, based on might, represses rights too greatly, while the Lockean State, upholding legal rights, is not sufficiently attuned to the bonds of human community. Levinas’s affirms the claims of the community by basing the “humanity of the human” in

moral responsibility. For Levinas it is moral responsibility that gives meaning to family, nation, tradition, religion, legal rights and power in the first place. Thus the humanity in each person is a responsibility for the other, not a given, not an abstraction, but the difficulty of moral vigilance. Subjectivity, then, is responsibility, and this responsibility is what Levinas calls “difficult freedom,” neither tool-like slavery nor angelic will, but *bound freedom*, freedom bound by ethical obligations. Politics, then, and democracy most especially, is the effort to respect and even encourage such moral responsibility, which it does in the name of justice.

While tyranny suppresses freedom too greatly, anarchy protects it too little. Democracy is the middle way, keeping rulers in harness by their periodic replacement in elections, keeping laws and governance “for the people” by public review, in free speech and press, in public legislative bodies and their deliberations, in governmental transparency, by minority rights, and the like, to encourage public input and ensure rulers and policy makers, and their laws, rules and governance, remain responsive to public opinion, keeping lines of communication open between rulers and ruled, horizontally and vertically.

Just as freedom is difficult, democracy is difficult. Thus the Seminar begins on Monday with an examination of political *irresponsibility*, that is to say, in the Levinasian context, an examination of freedom unchecked by ethical responsibility. The first reading is a seemingly non-political text, a chapter from Soren Kierkegaard’s 1843 book, *Either/Or*, on aesthetic freedom. In a discussion of how to avoid boredom, Kierkegaard suggests the “method” of attending to the *inessential* in order to spark interest. Here is sensationalism, an explicitly “aesthetic” path: to stimulate interest by the arbitrary, the subjective. Our concern is not with Kierkegaard, however, but with the political afterlife of this notion of *aesthetic arbitrariness*.

The arbitrariness which delights Kierkegaard's aesthete is exactly what Carl Schmitt equates with freedom altogether, and uses to attack human rights and democracy altogether, in his book, *Political Romanticism* (1919), selections of which the Seminar will read. For Schmitt freedom is always and necessarily irresponsible, a romantic diversion from the true aim of the State, which is power. Because democracy defends freedom, it always fails and must be avoided. What Schmitt proposes instead is Dictatorship, the unfettered rule of the Leader, the unquestioning obedience of the people.

Schmitt's argument is neat but fallacious for two reasons. First, freedom is not reducible to arbitrary choice. Second, even though freedom allows a certain arbitrariness, or it would not be free, dictatorship far from overcoming arbitrariness is the epitome of it, and therefore makes matters worse rather than better.

Levinas too attacks arbitrary and unattached freedom, which he calls "the temptation of temptation," in an eponymous article of 1964, the next Seminar reading. There he writes: "What is tempting is to be simultaneously outside everything and participating in everything." Freedom as non-commitment or non-coercion, as "freedom from," whether Lockean or Sartrean, is but a truncated notion of freedom. Freedom, for Levinas, is always already obligated, even if it shirks its responsibilities; it is always therefore "difficult." Such is a more accurate depiction of freedom, and it shows that the first significance of freedom is not negation but obligation.

These discussions of freedom occur on Monday and Tuesday. From Wednesday to Friday, the discussion is dedicated to the elaboration of the ethical significance and the social and political consequences of "difficult freedom," especially as incorporated in democratic theory and practice. To grasp the nature of subjectivity as "difficult freedom," we turn first to relevant selections from Levinas's two basic philosophical writings, *Totality*

and Infinity (1961) and *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence* (1974), and then to texts selected from his shorter writings.

In *Otherwise than Being*, Levinas raises the central issue of ethical-politics as follows: “The true problem for us Westerners is not so much to refuse violence as to question ourselves about a struggle against violence which, without blanching in non-resistance to evil, could avoid the institution of violence out of this very struggle.” Thus Levinas distinguishes bad violence from good violence, without ultimately defending violence. The power of political violence, then, must be constrained by justice. Of such justice Levinas notes in an article from *Entre Nous* that it is: “A justice always to be perfected against its own harshness.” “The very excellence of democracy,” he continues, “whose fundamental liberalism corresponds to the ceaseless deep remorse of justice: legislation is always unfinished, always resumed, a legislation open to the better.” Especially on Thursday and Friday, the Seminar will attempt to tease out the meaning of such highly compressed formulations, seeking to understand how politics and ethics, freedom and popular government, are bound in democracy.

e. Project Faculty and Staff

Richard A. Cohen is an eminent Levinas scholar. He is author of four single-author books on Levinas; English translator and/or editor of four of Levinas’s books; and has published extensively beyond these. Cohen studied under Levinas at the University of Paris-Sorbonne in 1974-1975. James McLachlan is Professor of Philosophy and Religion at Western Carolina University, and has co-directed five Levinas Philosophy Summer Seminars as well as one NEH Seminar in 2017. He, too, has been a university professor for many years and has published many scholarly pieces. Jolanta Saldukaityte has also assisted at five

previous LPSS and one NEH Seminar. She was principle organizer of the centennial conference on Levinas held at the University of Vilnius, Lithuania, in April 2006, and has published several articles on Levinas's philosophy, and co-edited, with Cohen, two academic journals issues dedicated to Levinas.

The proposed NEH Seminar is part of the ongoing research of all three of its organizers. Cohen is presently writing a book on ethical politics, in which Levinas, and the topic of the proposed Seminar, figure prominently. McLachlan is presently writing a monograph entitled *Levinas and Existentialism*, which is centered on questions of ethics and political thought. Jolanta Saldukaityte recently appeared on a Lithuanian television talk show, "Beyond Here and Now," to expound on the topic of Levinas's ethics, and is currently writing two articles on Levinas.

The University at Buffalo is a major research university, located in a large metropolitan area, able, eager and experienced in providing on-site support and assistance to make sure the proposed NEH Seminar is run smoothly and efficiently, and in a manner welcoming to each participant. Please see in the Appendix, letters from appropriate UB administrative program directors affirming on-site UB support.

f. Summer Participants and Selection Committee

The committee is made up of Cohen, McLachlan and Saldukaityte, all qualified Levinas scholars and all experienced in successfully running week-long Levinas summer Seminars. Committee members each review candidate applications (letter of intent and resume) and rank them. Rankings are then compared and the best candidates selected. If any openings remain undecided, the Committee enters into discussion to select the most qualified applicants. The committee screens applicants to favor those with a strong

scholarly background in or to complement the thought of Levinas and the topic of the proposed NEH Seminar. Scholars from a variety of disciplines – philosophy, political science, history, sociology, law, etc. – are encouraged to apply. Applicants will be asked to send a letter of application, explaining the reasons why they are applying, and a resume, in order to show and to enable evaluating applicants' past record of scholarly and pedagogical engagement, current qualifications and ongoing research and pedagogical commitment related to the specific topic "Emmanuel Levinas: Ethics of Democracy."

In addition to the impressive publicity effort the NEH conducts, we will advertise the Seminar on various conference/seminar websites, and in appropriate academic journals.

g. Project Outreach

The UB College of Arts of Sciences Information Technology Services will provide website design and content meeting the highest standards of accuracy and convenience. This website will be used to help recruit prospective NEH Summer Scholars and provide intellectual and practical resources, including website links, for participants. It will also disseminate the intellectual content of the project more widely to make it available beyond its primary audience of NEH Summer Scholars. Seminar recruitment will also derive from Facebook publicity, websites of related societies (e.g., North American Levinas Society; Society for Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy), and dissemination through email announcements. The previous related NEH Seminar of July 2017 received thirty applications (sixteen were accepted); the previous five PSS Seminars received approximately twenty five applicants each for ten accepted. The Director and Co-organizer receive several emails during the year inquiring of the when, where, and topic of the next Seminar. Host institutions of the latter have also offered open invitations to host future LPSS Seminars.

h. Institutional Support

The seminar will be hosted by University at Buffalo where Richard A. Cohen has been a full time faculty member since 2008. The university fully supported a LPSS Seminar in 2014 and an NEH Seminar in 2017, providing administrative and housing support (see Appendix). Past LPSS and NEH Seminars are advertised on the current website (<http://arts-sciences.buffalo.edu/jewish-thought/news-events/levinas-seminar.html>) of the Department of Jewish Thought, and a dedicated UB website for the proposed NEH Seminar of 2020 will be created, providing linkages to bibliographies, texts available on line, as well as all relevant practical information for the seminar.

Seminar participants will have full access to university internet, to all university libraries, and dining halls. The university offers centrally located campus housing, with dining facilities; assistance will be provided for participants who seek nearby hotel accommodations as well (see Appendix). Advance email correspondence with participants will help facilitate their travel and stay in Buffalo to make it both productive and pleasant.

4. APPENDICES

a. Day by Day Schedule

Monday: *Democracy and Problem of Irresponsible Freedom*

Self-introductions. Welcome and introductory remarks by Cohen: the problematic of democracy and freedom; overview of Levinas. Readings: Soren Kierkegaard, *Either/Or*, "The Rotation Method"; Carl Schmitt, *Political Romanticism*, selections from 70-162. Kierkegaard: countering boredom through arbitrary choice: aesthetic freedom. Schmitt: equation of liberal-democratic freedom with aesthetic freedom; denunciation of democracy for its abstract, dehumanized and unmoored "political romanticism"; defense of absolute political authority of willful Dictator.

Tuesday: *Freedom as Temptation of Temptation and its Ethical Critique*

Readings: Levinas, "The Temptation of Temptation" (1964), from Emmanuel Levinas, *Nine Talmudic Readings*, 30-50. Similar to Schmitt's critique of aesthetic freedom, Levinas describes and criticizes aesthetic freedom for the irresponsibility of its detachment. "What is tempting is to be simultaneously outside everything and participating in everything." (34) Levinas contrasts such irresponsibility to "difficult freedom" (37), the "freedom of responsibilities" (37). Deeper than contract theory, Levinas discerns "an undeniable responsibility, beyond commitments made" (46), "an original fidelity" (49). Radically opposing Schmitt's arbitrary attack on arbitrariness, Levinas criticizes the "decisionism" of a purely voluntary or willful freedom on the basis of a more accurate phenomenological grasp of embodied human will, and the ethical responsibility through which the humans as mortal and

vulnerable beings arise. Bound or “difficult” freedom, then, which is to say, moral responsibility, is not some bonus or luxury, but lies at the source of all that has significance, and as such serves as the justification and standard for a democratic politics.

Wednesday: *Invested Freedom as Responsible Subjectivity*

Readings: Levinas, from *Totality and Infinity*: “Infinity and the Face,” 194-197; “Ethics and the Face,” 197-201; “Reason and the Face,” 201-204; from *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*: “Essence and Signification,” 11-14; “Sensibility,” 14-15; “Being and Beyond Being,” 15-16. Topic: what is Levinas’s account of subjectivity as responsibility? What does it mean: subjectivity as being-for-the other person, as “a suffering for his suffering, without light, that is, without measure” (OBBE, 18)? What does it mean: transcendence of other person as ethical imperative? What are the conceptual repercussions of thinking the ethics of responsibility – rather than ontology, or science, or aesthetics – as first philosophy?

Thursday: *Freedom, Violence and Democracy*

Readings: Levinas, from *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, 177: “The true problem for us Westerners is not so much to refuse violence as to question ourselves about a struggle against violence which, without blanching in non-resistance to evil, could avoid the institution of violence out of this very struggle”; Levinas, *Collected Philosophical Papers*, “Freedom and Command,” 153-161; Levinas, *Is it Righteous to Be?*, “the Awakening of the I” (182-187). Levinas: “... the very foundation of democracy. One can debate decisions; there is no human decree that cannot be revised” (IRB, 183). If freedom is “defined” as responsibility, and democracy serves freedom, then democracy must accordingly serve a justice serving

morality. Because humans are finite, justice is an ongoing effort to create a world in which humans can behave morally to one another without fault: giving food to the neighbor, for instance, should not deprive others of food. Morality without justice is mere sentimentality; but Justice which does not serve morality becomes tyranny. Democracy intended as the political regime best suited to maximize morality through justice.

Friday: *Justice and Democracy*

Reading: Levinas, from Levinas, *Entre Nous*: "Philosophy, Justice, and Love," 103-121; and "The Other, Utopia, and Justice," 223-233; from Levinas, *Outside the Subject*, "The Rights of Man and the Rights of the Other," 116-125. Justice for Levinas is ensured by the State but does not originate in the State (contra Hobbes). Nor is it some steady state in the sky. Humans develop across time and history, and so does the unfolding of justice. No State is ever just enough because never has the moral integrity of all persons been secured let alone guaranteed, nor ever will this occur owing to chance and changes yet unforeseen. It is because Levinas defends "justice always to be perfected against its own harshness," that he declares "the very excellence of democracy, whose fundamental liberalism corresponds to the ceaseless deep remorse of justice: legislation is always unfinished, always resumed, a legislation open to the better." (EN, 229-230). Democracy is the effort to negotiate the double transcendence responsibility: to the other person, the independence or absoluteness of the for-the-other of morality; and toward all others, the universality or extra-territoriality of justice. "The capacity to guarantee that extra-territoriality [justice] and that independence [morality] defines the liberal state and describes the modality according to which the conjunction of politics and ethics is intrinsically possible" (OS, 123).

b. Selected Reading List

Selections from the following books by Emmanuel Levinas:

Beyond the Verbe, transl. Gary D. Mole. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Entre Nous, transl. Michael B. Smith and Barbara Harshav. New York: Columbia University Press.

Humanism of the Other, transl. Nidra Poller. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Is it Righteous to Be? Interviews with Emmanuel Levinas, ed. Jill Robbins. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence, transl. Alphonso Lingis. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff.

Outside the Subject, transl. Michael B. Smith. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Totality and Infinity, transl. Alphonso Lingis. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press.

Unforeseen History, transl. Nidra Poller. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Selections from other books:

Soren Kierkegaard, "The Rotation Method: An Essay in the Theory of Social Prudence," from Soren Kierkegaard, *Either/Or*, Volume 1.

Carl Schmitt, *Political Romanticism*, transl. Guy Oakes. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.

Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology*, transl. George Schwab. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.

Participants will directed to or sent selected short readings from Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*; John Locke, *Two Treatises on Government*; Immanuel Kant, "What is Enlightenment?", "Perpetual Peace"; Thomas Jefferson, *the Foundations of American*

Freedom, ed. Saul K. Padover; John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*; John Rawls, *Theory of Justice*; Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*; Gustave le Bon, *The Crowd*; Franz Neumann, *Behemoth*.

There is an extensive secondary literature on Levinas. Participants will be encouraged to read some of Richard A. Cohen's writings, especially from his latest book: *Out of Control* (NY: SUNY Press, 2016), especially its discussions of ethics, politics, and democracy.