NYU Gallatin School of Individualized Study
The Self and the Political: Plato to the Present
IDSEM UG 1067
Fall 2014
Fridays, 9:30-12:15
Classroom location: 1 Washington Pl room 527
Instructor name: Rosanne Kennedy
rtk1@nyu.edu
Office: Gallatin 1 Washington Place, room 831 (until mid/late October) then 411 Lafayette St, 3rd floor
Office hours: Thursdays, 10:00-12:30 and Fridays, 12:30-2:00. And by appointment.

Course Description:

The Self and the Political: Plato to the Present
What defines the “self”? Is it possible to “know thyself”? Or is the self something opaque, unknowable, secret, or in the parlance of psychoanalysis, the effect of unconscious drives? Is selfhood an internal experience or does that very experience come from outside, from others? Is the self primarily autonomous, or the consequence of social and political forces? How do definitions of gender and/or race come into play when we define ourselves or others? What, then, are the possibilities and limitations of “self-fashioning” – in what ways are we free to (re) invent ourselves? – in what ways are we limited? These questions are important not only in terms of self-understanding, but also because the answers have political implications. In this course, we will thus consider how different authors imagine both the self and its relation to the political. We will begin by reading classic definitions of the self: Plato, Seneca, Montaigne. We will then turn to modern theorists of the self: Rousseau, Nietzsche, Freud, Foucault, and contemporary theorists.

Course Objectives/Learning Goals:

By the end of the semester, students will be able to:
1) Understand different understandings of the self and subjectivity.
2) Explain the political and social implications of the ways in which the self is understood and how they are mutually constitutive.

Required Texts:

Plato. *Apology*.


**Required Assignments:**

Students are required to write a two-page response paper to each week’s readings. These essays are due at the beginning of each class session. The aim of the papers is to allow students to develop their thoughts and reactions to the reading assignments in preparation for class discussion. The intention is also to give students the opportunity to improve their critical writing skills. As students will be continuously writing throughout the term, no final seminar paper will be due. As a seminar based largely on class discussion, active participation and attendance are imperative. More than two unexcused absences will adversely affect the final grade.

**Grading:**

Weekly Papers: 70% (the lowest two grades will be dropped)

Participation and Attendance: 30%

**Academic Integrity:**

“As a Gallatin student you belong to an interdisciplinary community of artists and scholars who value honest and open intellectual inquiry. This relationship depends on mutual respect, responsibility, and integrity. Failure to uphold these values will be subject to severe sanction, which may include dismissal from the University. Examples of behaviors that compromise the academic integrity of the Gallatin School include plagiarism, illicit collaboration, doubling or recycling coursework, and cheating. Please consult the Gallatin Bulletin or Gallatin website (http://gallatin.nyu.edu/academics/policies/integrity.html)”

**Electronic Devices:**

Laptops and Tablets are allowed for note taking. Cell phones should be turned off.
Seminar Schedule:

September 5: Introduction

September 12:
Plato. *Apology* (entire text).

September 19:
Seneca *Letters from a Stoic* (pp. 33-151).

September 24:
Montaigne. *Essays* (Book I: 2,3,4,8,9, 18-21, 26, 30, 31; Book II: 2, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10,11, 30).

October 3:
Rousseau. *Reveries of the Solitary Walker*. (entire text)

October 10:
Marx. *Communist Manifesto* (entire text).
Marx. “Ten Theses on Feurbach” (available online).

October 17:

October 24:

October 31:

November 7:

Foucault. *History of Sexuality, vol. 1*

November 14:

Foucault. *History of Sexuality, vol. 1.*


November 21:


November 28: Holiday

December 5:

Kathleen Stewart. *Ordinary Affects* (1-80).

December 13:

Kathleen Stewart *Ordinary Affects*. (81 –end).