

FALL 2001 FACULTY SEMINAR
Directed by Peter Dews,
Distinguished Visiting Professor in the Humanities

The Center for the Humanities invites applications from faculty interested in participating in the Fall 2001 Faculty Seminar directed by Peter Dews, Distinguished Visiting Professor in the Humanities. Up to ten faculty members will be selected as Fellows to meet weekly to discuss selected readings on the seminar theme "Modernity and the Problem of Evil." The seminar will meet Tuesdays from 4:15-6:00 p.m. A weekly lunch meeting will also be scheduled, and it is expected that the seminar group will continue their lunch meetings into the spring semester.

Seminar Theme:

For many thinkers after Nietzsche, the concept of evil is simply a residue of an outdated theological perspective on the world. For others it remains an indispensable part of our ethical vocabulary, especially when we confront the moral atrocities of the twentieth century, including the Holocaust. In this seminar we will explore modern uses of the concept of 'evil', and some of the major problems they raise. Right at the beginning of the continental philosophical tradition, Kant's *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone* raises three crucial questions which have remained central to debates about evil: 1) Can the use of this concept be justified in purely philosophical terms, or does it require a rethinking of the relation between religious and philosophical discourse? 2) Can human beings be motivated by the sheer perverse desire to do harm or wrong, or must there always be some underlying motive of self-interest, as Kant claims?

3) Can evil be 'explained' or at least made intelligible (for example, psychoanalytically or sociologically)? Or is our notion of evil essentially intertwined with a sense of ultimate resistance to comprehension? In this seminar, we will track philosophical debates around these issues through a range of nineteenth and twentieth-century thinkers, including Schelling, Nietzsche, Hannah Arendt, Hans Jonas, Emil Fackenheim and Emmanuel Levinas.

Workshop:

To allow faculty to prepare for the seminar, a week-long summer workshop will be scheduled for August 20-24. Faculty will meet to discuss readings suggested by Professor Dews. Johanna Meehan will lead the summer workshop and a stipend of \$650 will be provided to participants.

Application Procedure:

To apply faculty are asked to submit a 1-2 paragraph description of their interest in the seminar topic.

Deadline for Applications:

Applications must be turned in by Monday, April 9, 2001 to Tyler Roberts, Interim Director of the Center for the Humanities.

Review Committee:

The Center for the Humanities Advisory Board will review the applications.