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BRIEF COURSE DESCRIPTION

Philosophers and political theorists have debated the question of the nature of freedom in the western intellectual tradition at least since the Stoics. Yet questions regarding the interpretation of experiences of those whose voices have been denied by the very subjugation of which they speak have emerged in new and ever more poignant ways in recent decades. The current situation calls for a forum that brings both sets of questions into dialogue.

On the philosophical side, long-running discussions of the nature of freedom have included, for example, the supposed distinction between "negative" and "positive" notions of freedom, and the relation between freedom and agency, autonomy, (human) rights, power, and so on. In addition, in recent years theorists have re-introduced neo-republican conceptions of freedom, on the one hand, as well as expressed greater skepticism toward neo-liberal and individualistic treatments of freedom. In other areas of social theory, however, the challenge of understanding the experiences of what many label "subjugation" or "oppression" without condescendingly imposing external ideals of individualism, agency, or secular self-determination – not to mention the question of whether and how "the subaltern" can "speak" – has come to be taken much more seriously.

The plan for this summer school is to bring these two lines of investigation into contact. We will conduct a careful, critical analysis of debates about the nature of freedom (or liberty), its relation to concepts such as autonomy, rights, and democracy, and attend to the social implications of various dominant understandings of freedom in the contemporary global context. At the same time, we will examine accounts of experiences of what has been labeled "subjugated" and "oppressed" existences, both from the first- and third-person point of view. We will attend to the question of interpretation, looking closely at issues of cross-cultural communication and the dangers of cultural imperialism.

In the end the goal will be to enrich and disturb standard assumptions about freedom, liberation, and oppression operative in western, liberal discourses, while, at the same time to search for possibilities to enhance the conditions of freedom, whatever those turn out to be.

Central European University's summer school (CEU SUN), established in 1996, is a program in English for graduate students, junior or post-doctoral researchers, teachers and professionals. It offers high-level, research-oriented, interdisciplinary academic courses as well as workshops on policy issues for professional development, taught by internationally renowned scholars and policy experts (including CEU faculty). Application from all over the world is encouraged. Financial aid is available.

Extended application deadline: March 31, 2010

For further academic information on the course and on eligibility criteria and funding options please visit the web site at

<http://www.summer.ceu.hu/freedom>

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