WALTER BENJAMIN

Professor Buck-Morss  
spring 2019  
Political Science (PSC 80602)  
Monday 6:30—8:30

In-depth readings of a wide range of Walter Benjamin’s writings in historical-political context, from World War I and the Bolshevik Revolution, to World War II and the Vichy Regime. We will focus on philosophical method. What in his way of working escapes certain modern and post-modern dead-ends of theory? Excerpts from all 5 volumes of his Selected Works (Harvard) will be consulted.

Week 1 (1/28)   Introduction

Week 2 (2/4)   “The Task of the Translator” (1921), Selected Works I, pp. 253-63.  


[Ruin. Wish Image. Fossil. Fetish]

Week 6 (3/4)   SHORT PAPERS DUE (6-8 pages) Discussion

Week 7 (3/11)   NO CLASS

Week 8 (3/18)   “Moscow,” (1927) II, pp. 22-46 (or Moscow Diary)  


Week 11 (4/8)   Essays on Baudelaire (and Adorno-Benjamin exchange of letters)

Week 12 (4/15) Phantasmagoria: Dream House; Public Space: Hausmanization, Private Space: Interior- Konvoluts E, I, K, O; (and Flaneur, Sandwichman, Whore)

(4/22) SPRING VACATION

First reading of: “On the Concept of History” (1940) IV, pp. 389-400.


FINAL PAPERS DUE DURING EXAM WEEK (10-15 PAGES)