GRADUATE COURSE · REALIST PHENOMENOLOGY

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Adolf Reinach and Dietrich von Hildebrand

Their Most Important Contributions to Realist Phenomenology and Perennial Philosophy

ADOLF REINACH · DIETRICH VON HILDEBRAND · JOSEF M. SEIFERT

Taught by Prof. Dr. phil. habil. Josef M. Seifert

30 November - 12 December 2026 · Mariastern Cistercian Convent, Gwiggen near Bregenz, Austria

"The study of philosophy aims not at knowing what people have thought, but at understanding the truth of things."

Thomas Aquinas, De Coelo et Mundo I, lect. 22, no. 9

Course Profile

This graduate-level course explores the central contributions of Adolf Reinach and Dietrich von Hildebrand, two major founders of objectivist and realist phenomenology. Their work will serve not merely as a historical subject, but as a point of departure for an independent philosophical inquiry into knowledge, the person, value, beauty, law, ethics, God, and religion.

The course is offered by Professor Dr. phil. (PhD) habil. Josef M. Seifert, President and Founder of the Dietrich von Hildebrand Institute of Philosophy and Realist Phenomenological Research. It will take place in the peaceful setting of Mariastern Cistercian Convent near Lake Constance, where Austria, Germany, and Switzerland meet.

Course at a glance	Details
Dates	30 November - 12 December 2026
Format	15 sessions of approximately 90 minutes, taught five days per week; Thursdays and Sundays are free. **Sessions (Nov. 30, Dec. 1,2,4,5, 7, 8) 14:15-15:45; 16:15-17:45, (Dec. 9 16:15-17:45) CET (Vienna-time); Dec 11, 9-11:45 Q&A session; dialogue with Professor Seifert; 14:00-16:00 written exams; 16-17:45 oral exams.**
Participation	In person in Gwiggen/Bregenz (strongly recommended) or online **via Zoom: https://lmu-munich.zoom-x.de/j/67865271717?pwd=WIOX9TKvfNGxgjQZgtkEoHebPnZ6Dj.1 If there is any problem with connecting via Zoom, you can connect via WhatsApp +436645129816.**
Language	English
Instructor	Prof. Dr. phil. habil. Josef M. Seifert
Tuition	€ 600. If taken with the subsequent seminar, 800€ for both courses (instead of 1200). Participants who have financial needs, are, upon explaining their financial situation and academic status, welcome to apply for a partial tuition scholarship.

Intellectual Aim

Reinach and Hildebrand defended philosophy as objective knowledge of beings, essences, and necessary laws. The lectures will present their decisive insights, critically examine selected positions, and develop their contributions further in the spirit of perennial philosophy. The aim is to return to the things themselves and to ask how reality is, rather than merely cataloguing what these two great philosophers have said about it.

The Five Areas of Study

(They will be covered consecutively, each in three 2 hr. sessions)

1. Theory of Knowledge and the Foundations of Realist Phenomenology

The opening part examines the receptive transcendence of knowledge: the mind's capacity to reach beings and essences that do not depend on consciousness. Reinach's and Hildebrand's accounts of necessary essences, essential laws, a priori knowledge, and evidence will be contrasted with transcendental idealism, constructivism, and relativism. Special attention will be given to Hildebrand's development of the cogito and the philosophical justification of our knowledge of the real world.

2. Philosophical Anthropology and Personalism

The second part addresses the person and personal acts. Topics include Reinach's distinction between social and solitary acts and the a priori foundations of law, as well as Hildebrand's account of the three centers of the person - intellect, will, and heart - and his philosophy of affectivity and love.

3. Philosophy of Values and Ethics

This part studies the distinction between the morally good and the morally right; critiques of eudaemonism, utilitarianism, and Kantian ethics; Hildebrand's three categories of importance; value responses; moral and non-moral values; ethical value blindness; virtues and vices; good and evil actions; and the roots of moral goodness and moral evil.

4. Philosophy of Beauty

The fourth part presents Hildebrand's account of objective beauty, with particular attention to the higher spiritual and metaphysical beauty of sensible forms in nature, the visual arts, and music, together with a critique of aesthetic subjectivism.

5. Philosophical Knowledge of God and Philosophy of Religion

The final part examines philosophical knowledge of God, religious acts, the sacred, and the nature of religion. It considers Reinach's fragment on the philosophy of religion and Hildebrand's work on God as the supreme object of love, along with trust, repentance, humility, kindness, and other religiously grounded attitudes and virtues.

Academic Options and Assessment

Participants may attend without seeking a grade or certificate of successful completion. Those seeking formal recognition may choose among several forms of academic work.

- Certificate of attendance: issued to every participant by the Dietrich von Hildebrand Institute of Philosophy and Realist Phenomenological Research.
- Pass grade: a scholarly report of approximately 12 pages covering at least three lecture units.
- Three graded options: (i) an additional 20-page paper on a topic approved by Professor Seifert, DEADLINE Feb 15, 2027;
- (ii) a written examination with ten questions (Dec. 12, 2026), or (iii) an oral examination (Dec. 12, 2026).
- Written work must include a declaration that it is original, contains no plagiarism, and was not generated by artificial intelligence.
- No national or international accreditation agreements regulate the credit number obtained through these courses. This Decision will be made, based on the status and reputation of the Professors and of the DHIP and the quality and level of the courses, by the Universities in which students are enrolled in different programs and faculties.

Who Will Benefit

The course is especially relevant to master's and doctoral students working on Reinach, Hildebrand, realist phenomenology, personalism, ethics, aesthetics, metaphysics, philosophy of law, or philosophy of religion. It will also benefit students and professionals in theology, religious studies, law, medicine, education, and the humanities whose work engages anthropological, ethical, legal, or metaphysical foundations.

The course may be particularly useful for students considering the planned FUS master's program beginning in spring 2027, with its special focus on Dietrich von Hildebrand's philosophy, and for researchers intending to work with the Reinach or Hildebrand archives in Munich, Steubenville or Olomuc.

Applications

Applicants seeking in-person participation and formal academic recognition should submit academic credentials, a sample of academic writing, and at least one academic recommendation confirming readiness for master's- or doctoral-level study. Applications should be received by 15 October 2026. Later applications may be considered while places remain available. Those attending only via Zoom and/or are not seeking formal academic recognition, do not need to submit academic records and may apply until November 27 2026.

Capacity: up to 35 participants may be admitted to the lecture course in person, and up to 100 students or Seniors may participate via Zoom.

Applications to be mailed to: J.Seifert@lmu.de; jmmbseifert12@gmail.com;

Location, Accommodation, and Study Environment

The course will be held at Mariastern Cistercian Convent in Gwiggen near Bregenz.

Zisterzienserinnenabtei Mariastern A-6914 Hohenweiler Gwiggen 1. Telefon: +43 5573 82234. mail: pforte@**mariastern-gwiggen**.at.

How to get there from Bregenz: https://www.rome2rio.com/de/s/Bregenz/Abtei-Mariastern-Gwiggen?msclkid=0e0a175f4ae41fab81eb7df34d0505a5&utm_source=bing&utm_medium=cpc&utm_campaign=MADS_SEM_DE_DSA&utm_term=%2Fde%2F&utm_content=DSA_GEN_DE_ALL

The convent offers a lecture room and a limited number of reasonably priced guest rooms (60 €/night. Shared rooms 30€/per person). Three daily meals are offered there to up to 35 persons.(1 meal 12€, two 24 €, three 36 €/day). As space is limited (5 rooms at single occupancy, 10 beds at double occupancy), reservations ought to be made soon and some participants may need to look for accommodations nearby:

- Pension Seeblick, Allgaustrasse 126, 6912 Hörbranz - approximately 20 minutes on foot.
- Tsing Dao, Allgaustrasse 117, 6912 Hörbranz - approximately 20 minutes on foot.
- Cistercian Abbey of Mehrerau in Bregenz - approximately 32 minutes by bus or 12 minutes by car or taxi; contact: kloster@mehrerau.at.

Additional hotels and hostels are available in Hörbranz, much closer to the course venue than Mehrerau Abbey, and in Bregenz, among them is the fine Conference Hotel Schloss Hofen. If we find a great benefactor, we could organize the whole conference in the 450 years old castle of Wolf Dietrich von Raitenau, later the archbishop of Salzburg who built much of the marvelous old town that attracts millions of people to Salzburg.

Meals and room in the lecture hall are served in The Abbey Mariastern for up to 35 persons (3 meals 36 €/day; 2 meals 24 €; 1 meal 12 €).

Please make room and meals reservations in the Abbey directly through Sister Emmanuela Mariastern phone: +43 5573 82234. Or mail: pforte@mariastern-gwiggen.at. The same if you want to make reservations at a Hotel.

Free Time and Cultural Program

Mornings, Thursdays, and Sundays are free for reading, study, private conversation, and recreation. Lake Constance and the Pfänder mountain offer opportunities for walking, hiking, and boat trips. Possible excursions include St. Gallen and its celebrated Baroque

abbey library, Reichenau Island with its early medieval churches, and Mainau Island with its renowned gardens of four seasons.

An optional two-day visit to Salzburg, guided by Professor Seifert free of charge, is proposed for 13-14 December 2026. Salzburg, the Mozart-city, was his home for 27 years and was praised by Alexander von Humboldt, one of the greatest word-travellers of his time, in 1776, when Mozart just was 20 years old, as one of the world's most beautiful cities and regions of the world.

> *I consider the regions around Salzburg, Naples, and Constantinople to be the most beautiful in the world.*
>
> Alexander von Humboldt

Tuition and Scholarships

Lecture course: 600 €.

Course plus subsequent seminar: 800 € in total instead of 1200 €.

Students in financial need may apply for a partial tuition scholarship by submitting information about their academic achievements, financial situation, and needs. Tuition is payable upon acceptance by transfer. IBAN and account information will be communicated upon acceptance.

Payment reference: Tuition course DHIP, Nov/Dec. 2026

Selected Reading

The complete course bibliography includes works by Reinach, Hildebrand, Seifert, Rudolf Otto, Max Scheler, and John R. White. The following titles provide an orientation.

- Adolf Reinach, Concerning Phenomenology; On the Theory of the Negative Judgment; On the Concept of Number; On the Nature of Movement; The A Priori Foundations of Civil Law; Introduction to Philosophy.
- Dietrich von Hildebrand, What Is Philosophy?; The Nature of Love; Ethics; Aesthetics, vols. 1-2; Transformation in Christ; Liturgy and Personality.
- Josef Seifert, The Receptive Transcendence of Knowledge and the 'Fourth Cogito'; Discours des Methodes; Sein und Wesen (Being and Essence); Gott als Gottesbeweis (GOD AS Proof of Himself, The Moral Action; Person and Truth (G); The Dispute about Truth (G), True Love.
- Rudolf Otto, The Sacred; Max Scheler, Problems of Religion; John R. White, Scheler's Argument for God's Existence from Religious Acts.

About the Instructor

Josef M. Seifert.; b. 1945 Married, six children and 12 grandchildren. Presently, since 2020, he is teaching at the Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich (LMU). He was Assistant Professor at the University of Salzburg (1969-1975), former Professor and Founding Director of the Ph.D. program in philosophy at the University of Dallas (1973-1982), founder and Director of the International Academy of Philosophy in Irving (Dallas), Texas (1980-1985), Founding Rector (1986-2014) and Professor (1986-2017) of the International Academy of Philosophy in the Principality Liechtenstein (IAP; IAP-PUC -2004-2012; IAP-IFES – 2010-2017), former Professor at the Pontifical Catholic University of Chile and IAP-PUC (2004-2012); Dietrich von Hildebrand Chair at the Instituto de Filosofia Edith Stein in Granada (IAP-IFES, 2011-2018).

He is the main living representative of realist phenomenological and personalist philosophy and leading scholar of Dietrich von Hildebrand, Adolf Reinach and realist phenomenology. He has published 57 philosophical books in 26 languages and close to 500 articles in 12 languages as well as 9 literary works including a novel in German.