Drawing on his recent work in the philosophy of the human sciences (as distinguished from the natural sciences by ontological rather than methodological considerations), Caws revisits some issues in the theory of literature, stressing the role of the individual reader, who incorporates into his or her own lifeworld the material evoked by the text.

It challenges the largely unspoken assumption that there exists a common domain (a sort of Popperian World III) populated by signs and meanings, authors and works, memes or rhizomes or influences and other like objects. The domains in which these things do have their being are idiosyncratic and only partially overlapping, needing to be created afresh (like literary works themselves) in repeated episodes of reading and thinking. This has consequences for the understanding and teaching of literature and culture generally.

Peter Caws
University Professor of Philosophy, Professor of Human Sciences
George Washington University

The Lekton and the Lifeworld

Wednesday, March 11
4:30 p.m.
Guerlac Room, A.D. White House

Reception to follow.

Peter Caws's research interests include contemporary continental philosophy, social and political philosophy, existentianalism and phenomenology, and philosophy and technology. He is author of Surire, Structuralism: The Art of the Intelligible and Yourick's World: Science and the Knowing.