

Fall 2012 Graduate Philosophy Department Courses

PHIL-GA 1000; Pro-seminar; W 12-3; Paul Boghossian and Crispin Wright

This course is for first year PhD students in the Philosophy Department only.

PHIL-GA 1103; Advanced Introduction to Philosophy of Mind; Tuesday 4-6; Ned Block

This course is a Small Discussion Seminar. Attendance is limited to NYU Philosophy Ph.D. and M.A. students only, except by permission of the instructor.

PHIL-GA 1251; Advanced Introduction to British Empiricism; W 5-7; Don Garrett

This course will focus on the treatments provided by John Locke, David Hume, and Thomas Reid of five central philosophical topics: (i) the nature of sense perception and sensory representation; (ii) the justification of belief; (iii) causation and free action; (iv) memory, the self, and personal identity; and (v) the foundations of morality. Locke, Hume, and Reid had important, distinctive, and sharply contrasting views on all of these topics. Hume's views were developed, in large measure, against Locke's; and Reid's were developed, in large measure, against Locke's and Hume's. Themes of the course will include the varieties of naturalism; the relation between theories of causation and theories of free agency; and the dialectic of realism, reductionism, and projectivism as it applies to such topics as causality and morality.

PHIL-GA 2285; Ethics: Selected Topics; M/W 7-9; Derek Parfit

This course will meet for the first seven weeks of the semester.

We shall discuss various questions about reasons, ethics, and meta-ethics, some of which will be chosen by those attending this seminar.

PHIL-GA 2296; Philosophy of Language; M 5-7; Jim Pryor

We will examine a variety of issues concerning Frege's Problem and anaphora in language and thought. Discussion will include, but is intended not to presuppose familiarity with: dynamic treatments of donkey anaphora, work by "direct reference" theorists especially in the late 1980s and 1990s, Kit Fine's "semantic relationalism", "mental file folder" models of cognitive equivalence, and techniques from functional programming of the sort surveyed at <http://lambda.jimpryor.net/>.

PHIL-GA 3003; Topics in Epistemology; TH 11-1; David Chalmers

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Structuralism and Skepticism

Structuralism is very roughly the thesis that the key to understanding the world is understanding its structure: that is, understanding the way it is organized into an abstract structure of relations. Varieties of structuralism have been developed in recent years in many areas of philosophy: perhaps most influentially in metaphysics, philosophy of science, philosophy of mathematics, and social and political philosophy, but also in the philosophy of mind and language, epistemology, metaphilosophy, and other areas.

The first two-thirds of this seminar will focus on structuralism in all of these areas: distinguishing different versions of structuralism, drawing connections between them, and investigating the both the prospects and the problems for various structuralist views. The final third will examine the bearing of structuralism on issues about skepticism, and especially the prospects for what I have called the "structuralist response to skepticism". The seminar will be conducted informally and largely oriented around discussion.

Notes: (1) The seminar is "topics in epistemology" mainly because it has to be topics in something. There will be a reasonable amount of epistemology, especially toward the end, but really it is "topics in philosophy". (2) We'll be focusing more on the sort of structuralism that originates with Carnap and Russell (proceeding through Maxwell, Lewis, and others) than the sort that originates with Saussure (proceeding through Levi-Strauss, Lacan, and others), but if there turn out to be productive connections to investigate between the two traditions, it would be interesting to discuss them.

PHIL-GA 3004; Topics in Metaphysics; T 1-3; Hartry Field

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The broad topic will be the idea that some discourse is "factually defective": its statements "aren't fully factual", "there's no determinate fact of the matter" as to whether they are true, or some such thing. There are many kinds of discourse about which "factual defectiveness" claims are often made: discourse about what is funny or about what is attractive; moral discourse (by expressivists), and sometimes normative discourse more generally; indicative conditionals; counterfactual conditionals; probability claims (both epistemic probability and physical probability); epistemic modals; vague discourse; paradoxical sentences; and much more. (Many advocate "factual defectiveness" claims in some but not all of these areas.) On the other hand, the whole idea of factual defectiveness has been challenged, and it has proved hard to explain. In the course we'll look at some examples, probably from the list above, but certainly not everything on the list. One question will be how best to treat the individual examples, but I want to at least have at the back of our minds the question of whether a unified theory of all cases is likely to be possible. I don't know yet which of the areas of discourse we'll cover, and this might be determined partly by the interests of the class; but my guess is that we'll start with indicative conditionals, using the first half of Jonathan Bennett's **A Philosophical Guide to Conditionals** as one main reading for the first few weeks.

PHIL-GA 3005; Topics in Ethics; TH 1:30-4:20, 4-6; Dale Jamieson and Peter Singer

This course will alternate between meeting at Princeton and NYU. The Thursday 1:30-4:20 session will be held at Princeton; the Thursday 4-6 session at NYU

Consequentialism

We will discuss such topics as the nature of consequentialism and its historical background, methodology in moral philosophy, the plausibility of various consequentialist principles and theories of value, consequentialist approaches to distributive justice, the demandingness of consequentialism, population ethics, and animal ethics.

PHIL-GA 3400; Thesis Preparation Seminar; W 12-2; Peter Unger

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