

Fall 2013 Graduate Philosophy Department Courses

PHIL-GA 1000; Pro-seminar; W 3-6; John Richardson and David Velleman

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

PHIL-GA 1003; Logic for Philosophers; Tuesday 1-3; Jim Pryor

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.

Description Forthcoming.

PHIL-GA 1100; Advanced Introduction to Metaphysics; Thursday 11-1; Peter Unger

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.

Being an Introduction to Metaphysics, this course presupposes no previous familiarity with the subject, although many students will be familiar with some discussions of some of the topics to be covered, which include the relationship between the mental and the physical, the nature and (at least alleged) occurrence of real choice (or "free will"), the conditions for a person to survive, from earlier times to later times, and questions regarding the nature of time, including ways in which time may be similar to, and yet also perhaps very different from space.

It will be ensured that this course is indeed an Introduction to this huge area of philosophy by that fact that the students will do all the reading required of the undergraduates taking Professor Unger's undergraduate course in Metaphysics, which he will also be offering during this same Fall Semester.

It will be ensured that this course will include Advanced material by the fact that, in addition to reading everything that the undergraduates do, the students in this graduate course will read a lot more as well, which additional material will go beyond what's brought up in the undergraduates' assigned reading. Some of this additional reading will concern, primarily, further discussion of the topics already mentioned, and the rest will concern, primarily, other metaphysical topics.

Students enrolled in the course will complete two writing assignments. The first will be to write a very short paper, 5–9 pages, due shortly after the middle of the semester, on a topic already discussed in the course. The second will be determined by the outcome of the first assignment. In some cases, the student will be encouraged to expand and develop his or her short paper, turning it into a paper in the range of 15–20 pages. In other cases, the students will write a second very short paper, also of 5–9 pages, on a completely different metaphysical topic discussed in the course. In both sorts of cases, students' second papers will be due one week after the last class session of the course.

PHIL-GA 2280; Political Philosophy; Thursday 4-6; Aaron James

This seminar will consider recent literature on global justice, with special emphasis on "practice dependent" approaches. Topics will include the relationship between interpersonal morality and political philosophy, the role of social interpretation in political justification, and specific areas of interest such as human rights, international law, the global economy, and the global commons.

PHIL-GA 2295; Research Seminar on Mind and Language; M 5-6/T 4-7 David Chalmers and Michael Strevens

Speakers TBA

PHIL-GA 2297; Vagueness/Indeterminacy; Tuesday 11-1; Paul Egre

Vagueness and Tolerance

We will discuss recent work on vagueness from various domains, including logic, epistemology, formal semantics and the philosophy of language. Our leading thread will be the question whether the phenomenon of vagueness in language, and in particular the conception of vague predicates as tolerant (C. Wright), warrants a revision of the laws of classical logic -- as several of the founding fathers of logic hinted (Frege, Peirce, Russell) -- or whether tolerance should be treated by holding on to a classical semantics with an adequate pragmatic module attached to it (viz. Williamson). We will start with a review of various nonclassical treatment of vague predicates (including super- and sub-valuationism, truth-functional three-valued models, and fuzzy accounts), which will be compared to the strict-tolerant account developed recently developed in joint work with P. Cobreros, D. Ripley and R. van Rooij. I will argue that this framework combines a number of appealing features from those rival approaches, while allowing us to remain much closer to classical logic. The framework will be further compared to other accounts in its vicinity (in particular Zardini's tolerance logic, and Smith's fuzzy approach). Further aspects will be discussed, such as: the impact of granularity on our intuitions of tolerance ; how vague idiolects are coordinated under the assumption of tolerance ; the relevance and scope of probabilistic

treatments of vagueness ; what the sources of tolerance intuitions might be (indiscriminability vs. semantic indeterminacy).

PHIL-GA 2320-001; History of Philosophy; Wednesday 1-3; Cheryl Misak

This course will explore the philosophical connections between Peirce, James, Ramsey and Wittgenstein.

In the early 1900's, pragmatism was the talk not only of its birthplace, Cambridge Massachusetts, but also of Cambridge England, where Russell and Moore were savaging James's theory of truth. Peirce's work, however, was almost unheard of in England – indeed, it was in danger of vanishing from the philosophical landscape altogether. But the view of pragmatism in Cambridge England was about to change. In the early 1920's, Frank Ramsey was taking a serious interest in Peirce and Wittgenstein was gripped by James.

Ramsey laid the groundwork for decision theory and made significant contributions to logic and epistemology. He was working on a book on truth, cut short by his death at the age of 26, which would have changed the trajectory of pragmatism. In this manuscript, Ramsey is as critical as Russell and Moore of James's instrumentalist account of truth, on which truth is what works for an individual or a community. He was attracted, rather, to Peirce's more sophisticated thoughts about how truth is connected to success, practice and action. He was also drawing on Peirce for his most famous result – the idea that belief comes in degrees which can be measured by action, especially in betting contexts. And Wittgenstein was culling from James some important thoughts about faith, psychology, the primacy of practice, and the relationship between meaning and use. These and other topics will be examined.

PHIL-GA 2320-002; History of Philosophy; Wednesday 6-8; Beatrice Longuenesse

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.

Self-Consciousness in Kant's Critique of Pure Reason

In the Critique of Pure Reason, Kant argues that self-consciousness and consciousness of objects are mutually conditioning: self-consciousness is a necessary condition of consciousness of objects, and conversely consciousness of objects is a necessary condition of self-consciousness. However, Kant also argues that consciousness of oneself as a subject is quite distinct from consciousness of oneself as an object. Indeed, as the subject of thought (what is referred to by 'I' in Descartes' proposition 'I think') I can never be an object of knowledge. According to Kant, the early modern notion of a mind or thinking substance rests on precisely the illusion that the referent of 'I' in 'I think' can be known as an object.

The purpose of this seminar is to try to disentangle the complex web of Kant's views about self-consciousness, consciousness of objects, consciousness of oneself as a subject, and consciousness of oneself as an object. To do this we shall focus our reading on the two chapters in the Critique of Pure Reason which are mainly devoted to these issues: the Transcendental Deduction of the Categories in both editions (1781 and 1787), and the Paralogisms of Pure Reason, also in both editions. The seminar will begin with a discussion of the chapters in the Critique that lead up to the Transcendental Deduction of the Categories, to introduce Kant's vocabulary and the set of problems that motivate Kant's argument in the Transcendental Deduction.

Primary Text: Immanuel Kant, Critique of Pure Reason. Transl. Paul Guyer and Allen Wood, Cambridge University Press. Optional: Prolegomena to Any Metaphysics, Gary Hatfield, ed., Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy, Cambridge University Press.

PHIL-GA 3001; Topics in Philosophical Logic; Thursday 1:15-3:15; Hartry Field

Paradoxes of Truth and Vagueness

We'll look at some paradoxes of truth and related notions, and also at some quasi-paradoxes of vagueness, and at some reasons for thinking the two kinds of paradoxes connected and should have a solution with key features in common.

I expect to argue that in both cases, the best hope for adequately dealing with the paradoxes involves weakening classical logic, but that in both cases the task of getting an adequate logic is difficult—more difficult even than I appreciated when I wrote *Saving Truth From Paradox*. Currently available logics are simply inadequate, both for vagueness and for truth and related notions.

The intent of the course is both to give a sense of some of the existing literature on truth and vagueness and to focus on some problems that the existing literature doesn't properly handle and for which it is reasonable to think a better treatment is possible.

We may eventually look also at alleged paradoxes of validity, and/or at various doxastic paradoxes, though these are unlikely to be a main focus of the course.

PHIL-GA 3400; Thesis Preparation Seminar; W 4-6; Thesis Prep Seminar

This course is only open to PhD students in the Philosophy Department.