

Spring 2014 Graduate Philosophy Department Courses

PHIL-GA 1000; Pro-seminar; Tuesday 12-3; Jim Pryor/Stephen Schiffer

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

PHIL-GA 1101; Advanced Introduction to Epistemology; Tuesday 5-7; Jane Friedman

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.

In this class we'll think about epistemology's central (although not always favourite) character: knowledge. In the last decade or so some new issues and debates have cropped up with knowledge taking a starring role. We'll use chapters of Williamson's *Knowledge and Its Limits* as jumping off points and think about a number of related debates. Here are a few: we'll think about whether knowledge is an attitude, whether knowledge has any role to play in a good psychological theory, what sort of theoretical roles it might play, where knowledge might fit in decision-theoretic and Bayesian frameworks, whether knowing entails knowing that one knows, whether knowledge is defeasible, and more. This class counts as an "Advanced Introduction" and although we're focusing on knowledge, we'll thereby be touching on a number of central issues in contemporary epistemology (some were already mentioned, but also classic questions about justification, evidence, internalism and externalism, scepticism and so on).

PHIL-GA 2320-001; History of Philosophy; Wednesday 11-1; Jessica Moss

Aristotle clearly holds that there are important psychological, cognitive, and ethical differences between humans and animals. Unlike animals we can think, have beliefs, have knowledge, perform calculations, grasp universals, grasp value-properties like the just and the noble, have desires for things as ends and as means to ends, use language, act in the strict sense, be virtuous in the strict sense, form cities, and be happy. It is less clear just what, if anything, Aristotle takes to be the fundamental difference that underlies and unifies all these others.

The aim of the course is to work toward a unified theory of Aristotelian rationality. We will focus on selections from *On the Soul*, *Posterior Analytics*, and *Nicomachean Ethics*, with supplements from other

works; at some points we will look back to Plato, and ahead to the Stoics, to help understand Aristotle's views in context.

No prior study of Aristotle is required: the course will serve as an introduction to some aspects of his psychology, epistemology, and ethics, and suggestions for introductory background readings will be provided. (A good place to start if you're starting from scratch: C. Shields, *Aristotle* (Routledge).)

Those who are not NYU graduate students must obtain the instructor's permission to attend.

PHIL-GA 2320-002; History of Philosophy; Thursday 1:10-3:10; Don Garrett

The seminar will be devoted to close analysis of some central texts in political philosophy from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, with special attention to issues about the political authority, political obligation, contract, natural law, and rights. Authors will include Hobbes, Spinoza, Locke, Rousseau, and Hume.

PHIL-UA 3003; Topics in Epistemology; Thursday 4-6; Paul Boghossian/Crispin Wright

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.

The Seminar will investigate the following issues:

1. How should a priori knowledge be characterised?
2. Why suppose there is any a priori knowledge?
3. How impressive are the extant doubts about it?
4. How is a priori knowledge accomplished?

Readings will be drawn from the contemporary literature and will include works by Sosa, Casullo, Williamson, Jenkins, Bonjour, Bengson, Chudnoff, Wright, Boghossian, among others.

PHIL-UA 3004-001; Topics in Metaphysics; Tuesday 3-5; Kit Fine

This seminar will deal with a bunch of related topics concerning essence, modality and ontology. The reading will be centered on some critical papers that are destined to appear in a volume on my work,

but I hope to spend a fair amount of time covering the background to these papers and the views of other philosophers. My intention is that the seminar should be helpful both to the specialist and to someone with a more general interest in these areas.

PHIL-UA 3005-001; Topics in Ethics: Time and Value; Wednesday 2-4; Samuel Scheffler

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.

This seminar will deal with a number of questions about value that have a significant temporal dimension. These may include questions about our responsibilities to future generations, about compensation for historical injustices, about whether there are obligations to remember past people or events, and about the nature of historical value. We will also consider some questions of value that implicate time in a different way; these are questions that are specific to a particular stage of human life, such as childhood or middle age. Finally, we will consider some puzzles about the reasonableness of various attitudes – including regret, remorse, affirmation, hope, and despair – toward one's own past actions or future prospects.

PHIL-UA 3005-002; Topics in Ethics; Wednesday 4-6; David Velleman

We will explore moral issues raised by information technology, such as privacy, anonymity, self-presentation, and community. We will focus on developing philosophical theories of these under-theorized phenomena, not on specific applications.

Those who are not NYU graduate students must obtain the instructors permission to attend.

PHIL-GA 3011; Topics in Philosophy of Physics; Thursday 11-1; Tim Maudlin

This course will be focused on space and time, and particularly on the idea of a space-time geometry. It will fall into roughly two parts. The first will look at the historical development of accounts of space-time structure from Aristotle through Newton's account of absolute space and time, Neo-Newtonian space-time, Special Relativity and (somewhat impressionistically) General Relativity. The main aim of this part will be to understand how the attribution of a structure to space and time (or space-time) can be used in the physical explanation of phenomena. Students will be expected to master the basics of Special Relativity, which will require no more mathematics than algebra. We may (depending on interests of the students) devote some time to Newton's dispute with Leibniz and more recent arguments between substantialists and relationists concerning space-time.

The second part will be an overview of my recent work reformulating the foundations of topology, and the consequences of casting space-time theory in terms of this new mathematical structure. If there is time, we will look particularly at the possibility that space-time is a fundamentally discrete structure rather than a continuum.

The main texts will be:

Larry Sklar, *Space, Time and Space-Time*

Nick Huggett (ed.), *Space from Zeon to Einstein*

Tim Maudlin, *Philosophy of Physics: Space and Time*

PHIL-GA 3400; Thesis Preparation Seminar; Monday 4-6; Sharon Street

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