

# Spring 2015 Graduate Philosophy Department Courses

## **PHIL-GA 1000; Pro-seminar; Wednesday 2-5 ; Robert Hopkins/Samuel Scheffler**

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

## **PHIL-GA 1003; Logic for Philosophers; Wednesday 12-2; Joel David Hamkins**

This seminar will be a graduate-level survey of topics in logic for philosophers, including propositional logic, modal logic, predicate logic, model theory, completeness, incompleteness, computability theory, set theory and the higher infinite. The material will thus be a mixture of philosophical logic and mathematical logic, and a goal of the course will be to develop the student's ability to treat these concepts with clarity and precision. Class discussion will be based on the instructor's distributed lecture notes, as well some material drawn from the text *More Precisely* by Eric Steinhart.

Course website: <http://jdh.hamkins.org>

## **PHIL-GA 1175; Life and Death; Monday 11-1; Dale Jamieson**

This seminar will be divided into three parts. The first will be concerned with love. We will discuss the extent to which both the concept and phenomenon is relative, resilient, fragile, and context-sensitive. Readings will be drawn from contemporary philosophers such as Setiya, Kolodny, Velleman and Moller. The second part of the seminar will be concerned with death. Readings will be drawn from such philosophers as Epicurus, Nagel, Williams, Bradley, and Scheffler. The third part of the seminar will be concerned with dying. We will read philosophers such as Sumner, but most of our readings will drawn from clinicians and others who have written about their experience with dying people.

## **PHIL-GA 2295; Research Seminar on Mind and Language; Monday 5-6; Tuesday 4-7; Paul Horwich/Crispin Wright**

Varieties of 'realism' and their antitheses

27 JAN- Paul Horwich - Introduction

3.FEB - Gideon Rosen - Fictionalism (and not just about numbers)

10 FEB - Kit Fine - What is metaphysical realism?

17 FEB - Ian Rumfitt - Dummett's legacy

24 FEB - David Wong - Relativism about morals, etiquette, and the law

3 MARCH - Mike Williams - Deflationary quietism

10 MARCH - Sharon Street - Constructivism as the way to avoid skepticism

24 MARCH - John MacFarlane - Truth-relativism

31 MARCH - Paul Boghossian- Aesthetic realism v. relativism

7 APRIL - Dorit Bar-On- Truth and realism

14 APRIL - Seth Yalcin - Expressivism (and not just for normative domains)

21 APRIL – Crispin Wright - Faultless disagreement

28 APRIL - Anthony Appiah - Relativism and Tolerance

5 MAY - Huw Price - Naturalism

## **PHIL-GA 2296; Philosophy of Language; Thursday 4-7; Jim Pryor and Chris Barker**

The goal of this seminar is to introduce concepts and techniques from theoretical computer science and show how they can provide insight into established philosophical and linguistic problems.

This is not a seminar about any particular technology or software. Rather, it's about a variety of conceptual/logical ideas that have been developed in computer science and that linguists and philosophers ought to know, or may already be unknowingly trying to reinvent.

Of necessity, this course will lay a lot of logical groundwork. But throughout we'll be aiming to mix that groundwork with real cases in our home subjects where these tools play central roles. Our aim for the course is to enable you to make these tools your own; to have enough

understanding of them to recognize them in use, use them yourself at least in simple ways, and to be able to read more about them when appropriate.

Course website: [lambda.jimpryor.net](http://lambda.jimpryor.net)

## **PHIL-GA 2320-001; History of Philosophy; Tuesday 11-1; Sarah Broadie**

The seminar will focus on two of Plato's most philosophically rewarding later (post-Republic) dialogues, the *Theaetetus* and the *Sophist*. The *Theaetetus* attempts to define 'knowledge', but along the way raises foundational questions about perception, truth, objectivity, the possibility of false belief/opinion, and the relation of a whole to its parts. While the *Sophist's* main purpose is to define the sophist (or sophistry), its philosophical core is concerned with understanding negation and the possibility of falsehood, and with mapping the relationships of highly abstract 'kinds' such as Being, Difference, and Sameness.

The aim of the seminar is to enhance understanding of challenges confronting early Western philosophy in the attempt to get control of problematic and potentially paradoxical concepts (e.g. knowledge, falsity, negation) whose acceptability and confident use at some level is essential to human rationality. Bound up with the above is the aim of situating relevant contemporary philosophy in relation to the ancient context. One (but not the only) gain of seeing the old in the new and vice versa should be an appreciation of Plato's achievement (its difficulty as well as its freshness and originality) in making basic philosophical moves without the aid of pre-existent special terminology. If originality consists in part in discerning a conceptual possibility before anyone has developed a label for it, then Plato, however remote in many ways, remains a major model or anyway inspiration for our practice as philosophers today (unless, of course, we have decided that originality is no longer a desideratum!).

We shall use the currently best English translations, from the Hackett Collected Works of Plato, ed. John M. Cooper. Hackett have also issued free-standing paperback volumes for the *Theaetetus* and the *Sophist* respectively, and you are strongly advised to use these, because (unlike the whole Collected Works) they contain extremely useful notes and other explanatory material. For the *Theaetetus*, make sure to use M. F. Burnyeat's edition of M. Levett's translation, which has a long and important introduction by Burnyeat; for the *Sophist*, use the edition with notes by translator N. White. It is essential that everyone in the seminar work from the same translations, because we shall engage in close reading of many of the arguments where apparently small differences in the English can make huge differences of interpretation.

## **PHIL-GA 2320-002; History of Philosophy; Tuesday 1:15-3:15; Don Garrett**

David Hume's *A Treatise of Human Nature* has a strong claim to be the most important work of philosophy ever written in English. It is the original source of many of the philosophy's best

known and most influential arguments, including arguments about belief, induction, causal necessity, knowledge of the external world, free will, the role of reason and feeling in motivation and morality, the nature of moral obligation, and the conventional basis of such virtues as respect for property and fidelity to promises. It has inspired approaches widely called “Humean” to a wide range of philosophical topics. It constitutes a compelling articulation and development of at least three basic philosophical orientations: empiricism, skepticism, and naturalism. It is an early exemplar of the powerful idea that cognitive and conative psychology can shed important and even transformative light on philosophical issues. Stylistically, it is a pleasure to read.

At the same time, however, it is often supposed that the *Treatise* is more a collection of clever parts than a consistent and coherent whole. This seminar will involve a complete reading of all three Books of the *Treatise* (“Of the Understanding,” “Of the Passions,” and “Of Morals”) with the aim of discerning whatever underlying coherence it may have through close examination of its individual elements and sustained reflection on their relations to one another. In addition to reading the entire *Treatise*, the seminar will examine some of the most important secondary literature of the last few years on enduring significance of Hume’s philosophy.

### **PHIL-UA 3003; Topics in Epistemology; Monday 6:15-8:15; 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.*

Rational inquiry. In this seminar we will focus on a set of topics loosely centred on the question of how a rational subject conducts herself in inquiry. Some things we'll try to think about: when and whether we should gather further evidence/perform further experiments, how logic is normative for thought, static vs dynamic epistemic norms, the roles that belief and credence play in inquiry, epistemic consequentialism, the place of practical reasons in epistemology, belief revision theory, and more. Some authors we'll try to read: Berker, Buchak, Christensen, Cohen, Fitelson, Gillies, Harman, Hedden, Holton, Kelly, Kolodny, Koralus, MacFarlane, Moss, and others.

### **PHIL-GA 3004; Topics in Metaphysics; Thursday 11-1; Cian Dorr**

#### Time and Modality

We will consider an array of foundational questions in the metaphysics of time and modality, with special reference to the structural parallels between the two domains. In particular, we will focus on three questions about each domain:

(i) Are all true propositions [eternally/necessarily] true, or are some of them [temporarily/contingently] true?

(ii) Is [the present time/the actual world] “metaphysically special”, or are all [times/worlds] “on a par”?

(iii) Is everything [eternally/necessarily] identical to something, or are there things which [could have failed/sometimes fail] to be identical to anything?

The readings for about half of the sessions will be draft chapters of a book I am working on. The other readings will mostly be recent papers in metaphysics, with a few from the philosophy of language and the philosophy of physics.

NB: this seminar will not meet during the first week of the semester, so the first meeting will be on Thursday, February 5th.

### **PHIL-GA 3004-002; Topics in Metaphysics; Thursday 7-9; Kit Fine**

We shall discuss some papers from a collection of papers on my work that is soon to be published by OUP. The papers are centered around six main areas - semantic relationism, arbitrary objects, essence and ground, realism, the logic and metaphysics of modality, and constitution. My aim is to select a number of these papers, one for each week, and to discuss the paper in the context of the current literature on the topic. The seminar should therefore serve as a general introduction to these topics as well as a more advanced guide to the recent research on these topics.

### **PHIL-GA 3005; Topics in Ethics; Wednesday 6:45-8:45; William Ruddick and Jeffrey Blustein, CUNY**

The seminar will address ethical, epistemic, and metaphysical questions raised by memory and memorial practices. Topics include: "access to the Past"; relations of individual and collective memory; inaccurate and false memory assessments; memory suppression, recovery, and loss; grief and regret; historical resentments, forgiveness, and reconciliations; memorials and justice to the dead. Readings from philosophy; psychology and psychiatry; sociology, history, and law.

### **PHIL-GA 3011; Topics in Philosophy of Physics; Thursday 1-3; Tim Maudlin**

This class will cover the problems and some proposed solutions for understanding the picture of the physical world presented by quantum theory. We will begin by learning about the mathematical formalism of the theory, and students should be prepared to master enough of the formalism to solve some simple problems (only algebra is required). We will discuss Bell's theorem and the more recent PBR theorem. The particular detailed theories we will examine are

the spontaneous collapse theory of Ghirardi, Rimini and Weber (GRW), the pilot wave theory (Bohmian mechanics) and the Many Worlds theory.

**PHIL-GA 3400; Thesis Preparation Seminar; Wednesday 2-5; Laura Franklin-Hall**

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