

# Spring 2016 Graduate Philosophy Department Courses

## **PHIL-GA 1000; Pro-seminar; Wednesday 2-5 ; Paul Boghossian/Kit Fine**

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

## **PHIL-GA 1003; Logic for Philosophers; Thursday 1:15-3:15; Hartry Field**

The course will deal with a number of different topics in logic that are of philosophical interest, with an emphasis more on breadth of coverage and the understanding of key concepts than of depth of coverage; when it comes to the more complicated proofs the focus will be more on the general strategy than on all the hairy details. The exact topics might depend a bit on the interests of students, but are likely to include such things as: validity, soundness and completeness (of logics); ordinal and cardinal numbers; computability and computable enumerativity; a bit of elementary model theory, including categoricity and various sorts of nonstandard models; incompleteness (of theories); and a bit of non-classical logic.

## **PHIL-GA 2109; Kant's Critique of Pure Reason; Thursday 11-1; Anja Jauernig**

It is hard to overstate the importance of Kant in the history of philosophy. Most of 19th century and early 20th century philosophy (including but not limited to German Idealism, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, phenomenology, American pragmatism, neo-Kantianism, and early analytic philosophy), as well as important neo-Kantian strands in the contemporary philosophical arena (in philosophy of mind, epistemology, philosophy of science, and ethics), cannot be properly understood unless they are viewed against the background of Kant's philosophy. In this seminar, we will be reading (almost all of) Kant's main work, the Critique of Pure Reason, which is the foundation for his system. Our goal will be to make as much sense of as much of it as best as we can. Arguably, the Critique is one of the most difficult philosophy books ever written, but also one of the most rewarding.

Readings: Immanuel Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, edited and translated by Paul Guyer and Allen Wood, Cambridge University Press, 1999.

Supplementary: Kant, Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics, edited and translated by Gary Hatfield, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

## **PHIL-GA 2114; Wittgenstein; Tuesday 4-6; Paul Horwich/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 focus on Wittgenstein's radical metaphilosophy, on his discussions of meaning, rule following, experience, and privacy, and on his treatments of issues within epistemology and the philosophy of mathematics. Our plan is start with a critical scrutiny of his view of what constitutes a philosophical problem, of how such problems should (and should not) be addressed, and of what can be accomplished by engaging with them. We'll then proceed to examine his implementation of these metaphilosophical ideas in the other above-mentioned areas. Our primary text will be the *Philosophical Investigations*, with excerpts from others of the later writings, including the *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics* and *On Certainty*.

## **PHIL-UA 3003-001; Topics in Epistemology; Monday 4-6; Jane Friedman/Miriam Schoenfield**

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### **Epistemic planning**

What sort of activity are we engaged in when we make epistemic evaluations? One recent suggestion has been that in making epistemic evaluations we are expressing our epistemic plans (plans about what to believe, for instance). In this seminar we'll look carefully at this meta-epistemological suggestion as well as some competing ones, e.g., that our epistemic evaluations serve the function of promoting epistemic coordination. Some of the proponents of these pictures add to them the thought that the fundamental epistemic good is truth or accuracy (the thought underlying accuracy-first epistemology). We'll look at these different meta-epistemic views and think about their applications to first-order debates such as those concerning the Uniqueness thesis (the claim that there is always a uniquely rational way to respond to a body of evidence) and internalism and externalism in epistemology. We'll also take up the thought about epistemic planning and try to get some insight into the notion via some recent discussions in epistemology about: reflection principles (principles that tell us to defer to the attitudes of our future selves when they are known), the possibility of genuinely diachronic epistemic norms, no-lose investigations, bootstrapping and more. People whose work we'll likely be reading include Rachael Briggs, Sinan Dogramaci, Hartry Field, Daniel Greco, Brian Hedden, Sophie Horowitz, Richard Pettigrew, Susanna Rinard, Karl Schafer, Michael Titelbaum and Seth Yalcin.

## **PHIL-UA 3003-002; Topics in Epistemology: The Psychology of Philosophy; Monday 11-1; Michael Strevens**

What is going through the heads of philosophers doing a priori philosophy? Focusing on the classic case of philosophical analysis (aka the method of cases, "conceptual analysis", and so on), we will bring empirical psychology, and in particular the psychology of concepts, to bear on answering the question. Naturally, we will give special attention to the epistemology of it all: does empirical psychology debunk philosophical claims to a priori knowledge? I am especially interested in the contrary possibility, that such claims can be *defended* by recourse to empirical psychology (and a few other things). Note that this is not a class about experimental philosophy as such, but we will be reading work from experimental philosophers that bears on the big epistemological issue.

## **PHIL-GA 3003-003; Topics in Epistemology; Tuesday 2-4; Harvey Lederman**

This course will be on Frege's puzzle. Each week we will discuss one recent paper, sometimes discussing one or more older papers as background. Below is a selection of recent work we may read:

Cumming, 'Variabilism'; Rieppel, 'Names, Masks and Double Vision'; Dorr, 'Transparency and the Context-Sensitivity of Attitude Reports'; Yalcin, 'Quantifying in from a Fregean Perspective'; Fine, selections from Semantic Relationism; Pryor, 'Mental Graphs', Kripke, 'Unrestricted Exportation and Some Morals for Philosophy of Language'; Ninan, 'Counterfactual Attitudes and Multi-Centred Worlds'; Magidor, 'Myth of the de Se'; Chalmers, 'Belief and the Objects of Credence'; Braun, 'Russellianism and Psychological Generalization'; Saul, 'Substitution and Simple Sentences'

The following may be assigned as background: Frege, 'On Sense and Reference'; Kripke, 'Puzzle about Belief'; Schiffer, 'Naming and Knowing'; Kaplan, 'Demonstratives'; Quine, 'Quantifiers and Propositional Attitudes'; Selections from Salmon, Frege's Puzzle, Lewis, 'Individuation by Acquaintance and by Stipulation', Lewis, 'Attitudes De Dicto and De Se'.

## **PHIL-GA 3005; Topics in Ethics; Thursday 3:30-5:30; Peter Unger**

Even as compared to what he or she can do, almost all well-to-do people do little, or nothing, over the course of their lifetime, to help prevent the early deaths and great suffering of people in the poorest parts of the world. Is it morally wrong for a well-to-do person to behave like this - perhaps about as horribly wrong as committing negligent homicide, as with fatal drunken driving? But, might it be that, in helping some of the world's neediest, each of us will contribute to still greater harm coming to a greater numbers of other needy people? In its main part, this

course will center on these questions, which concern both moral matters and issues of concerning what are, in fact, the net consequences of our available well-intended actions. As well, this main part will address certain other moral questions, most closely related to the moral aspects of the most central issues.

After the main part of the course, we will investigate questions about what it is that, just for herself, and with all moral considerations placed aside, a person relevantly like each of us most strongly or deeply values: Is it a very long and experientially happy life that we each most prize – or do we also value, at least as greatly, being in certain relations with others? It is very hard to get a credible answer to this question, and also to other questions we will encounter here. In this second part of the course, our investigation will be very largely work in psychology, more so than it is work in what's currently considered philosophy.

## **PHIL-GA 3010; Topics in the Philosophy of Mind; Tuesday 11-1; Jonardon Ganeri**

### **Advanced Topics in Buddhist Philosophy of Mind**

The motivating assumption of this course is that philosophy of mind is a transcultural undertaking: the search for a fundamental theory of mind must never limit itself to the intuitions and linguistic practices of any one community of thinkers but should be ready to learn from diverse cultures of investigation into the nature of mind and mind's involvement in world. The aim will provide an advanced discussion of topics in the philosophy of mind that can profitably be approached through an engagement with Buddhist philosophical tradition. One set of questions concerns the explanatory role of attention. Buddhist philosophers argue that a myth has pervaded much thinking about the mind, the myth of self as centre of autonomous agency. What explains our freedom from passivity is rather the nature of attention: attention is already active worldly involvement. Attention, however, is disunified: like memory, it is not a single psychological kind. The distinct kinds of attention include selective and sustained attention, retentive and reflective attention, attention through language to the world beyond one's horizons and from other perspectives, attention to one's own mind, and attention to the minds of others. Distinct kinds of attention have distinct roles in explaining conscious perceptual experience and the unity of consciousness. Other kinds of attention explain our ability to think about what is not perceptually present, in memory, testimony, self-knowledge and social cognition. A second set of questions concerns the nature of the first-person perspective: what is it for a thought to count as "mine"? Is consciousness reflexive? Is selfhood a performative act of self-appropriation? Is the concept of self as owner of experience distinct from the concept of self as agent of thinking? We will explore these questions through close readings of selected Buddhist texts in conjunction with contemporary analytical philosophical discussion thereon, including chapters from the convenor's book in manuscript.

**PHIL-GA 3400; Thesis Preparation Seminar; Wednesday 2-4; Samuel Scheffler**

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

**Cross-listed Courses:**

**PHIL-GA 1008; Topics in Bioethics: Neuroethics; Monday 6:45-8:45 Mathew Liao**

Neuroethics has two branches: the neuroscience of ethics and the ethics of neuroscience. The former is concerned with how neuroscientific technologies might be able to shed light on how we make moral decisions, as well as on other philosophical issues. The latter is concerned with ethical issues raised by the development and use of neuroscientific technologies. Topics include whether neuroscience undermines deontological theories; whether our moral reasoning is inherently biased; whether there is a universal moral grammar; the extended mind hypothesis; the ethics of erasing memories; the ethics of mood and cognitive enhancements; “mind-reading” technologies; borderline consciousness; and free will and addiction.

**PHIL-GA 3304; Rule of Law; M/W 11-12:15; Jeremy Waldron**

Course information can be found here: <https://its.law.nyu.edu/courses/description.cfm?id=15299>