

Spring 2017 Graduate Philosophy Department Courses

PHIL-GA 1000; Pro-seminar; Tuesday 1-4; Sam Scheffler/Sharon Street

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

PHIL-GA 2283; Aesthetics; Wednesday 2-4; Rob Hopkins

Images and their contents

What are images? What kind of content do they possess? And what about them enables them to possess those contents?

We use 'image' to talk about both pictures and mental states such as visualizing. Pictures contrast with other communicative devices, such as sentences, both in what they represent (the kinds of content they express), and how they represent it (the means by which they express those contents). Similarly, we might think, mental images contrast with thoughts, at least in the kind of content involved. In the mental realm, however, another contrast looms, between mental imagery and perception. Here the difference looks to lie, not in content, but in the attitude borne to it. (Perhaps there is a loosely parallel contrast within 'external' images, between photographs and handmade pictures.)

We'll explore the territory these contrasts open up. The course will be roughly divided in three, moving from the content of images in general, to theories of its expression by communicative devices, such as pictures, and ending with accounts of mental imagery and the states that involve it. These three lines of inquiry will feed into each other, and as we proceed certain assumptions underlying the contrasts above will be questioned. We won't confine ourselves to images that are visual. We'll explore literature from philosophy of mind, phenomenology and the still young study of the semantics of images.

PHIL-GA 2285; Ethics: Selected Topics; Thursday 4-6; Peter Unger

This course will be organized around two main issues, though we will discuss some other matters as well.

One main issue will concern the value for us of living a long life, the longer the better, providing that the quality of our lives is usually quite high, and we are usually quite happy people. With this issue, we will discuss the question of the quite certain cessation of our lives, during the next century or so, and what is an appropriate attitude for us to take toward our termination.

The other main issue will concern what one must do, morally speaking, toward saving the lives of others, both when such saving will come at relatively little cost to one and also, as will happen only rarely, when it will cost one the loss a limb or, even, the loss of one's life.

PHIL-GA 2295; Research Seminar on Mind and Language; Monday, 5:30-6:30; Tuesday 4-7; Stephen Schiffer/Crispin Wright

The topic this semester is skepticism, broadly construed, and the weekly roster is:

- 24 JAN Stephen Schiffer
- 31 JAN Jim Pryor
- 7 FEB Hartry Field
- 14 FEB Lara Buchak –
- 21 FEB Jennifer Nagel
- 28 FEB Crispin Wright
- 7 MARCH Susanna Rinard
- 21 MARCH Keith DeRose
- 28 MARCH Paul Boghossian
- 4 APRIL Krista Lawlor
- 11 APRIL Amia Srinivasan
- 18 APRIL Susanna Siegel
- 25 APRIL Clayton Littlejohn
- 2 MAY Jane Friedman

PHIL-GA 2296; Philosophy of Language; Wednesday 12-2; Jim Pryor

A survey of work in dynamic semantics, especially in 1980s and 1990s, and focusing primarily on anaphora and presupposition.

PHIL-GA 2320; History of Philosophy: Selected Topics; Monday 11-1; David Velleman/Jessica Moss

Aristotle's ethics and contemporary Aristotelians

We will devote roughly half the course to the study of core topics in Aristotle's ethics such as: ethical naturalism, happiness, virtue, practical reason, and the nature of action. In the other half of the course we will discuss contemporary ethicists who associate themselves with Aristotle or are associated with him by others — for example, Elizabeth Anscombe, Philippa Foot, John McDowell, Michael Thompson, and Bernard Williams.

PHIL-UA 3001; Topics in Philosophical Logic; Thursday 11-1; Hartry Field

Non-classical logics for truth, properties and indeterminateness

The course will primarily be on the prospects for an adequate theory of truth and properties in non-classical logics, but we will also look at the use of such logics in dealing with vagueness and other types of indeterminacy. The focus will be on theories that retain “naive” principles about truth and property-instantiation by either restricting the law of excluded middle or accepting contradictions (or both), but that keep the standard structural rules of logic. But there will also be some discussion of substructural approaches.

We will look at a lot of new work (since my 2008 book). One theme will be the need to handle distinct kinds of conditionals together, and the complexities involved in doing so. Another will be paradoxes of validity, and a third will be the idea that all resolutions of the paradoxes just lead to new “revenge paradoxes”. This last connects up with some of the issues involved in applying non-classical logics to vagueness. We may also discuss whether non-classical logics can help with the idea of an indefinitely extensible ontology.

PHIL-GA 3005; Topics in Ethics; Monday 3:30-5:30; Dale Jamieson

The concept of love seems shallow, culturally specific in content, and open to question about how far it travels both in time and space. Yet we often speak of love in remarkably realist terms (including some of those who deny its existence), and claims about “who loves whom” are ubiquitous, apparently falsifiable, and often very important to the people who make them. The apparently odd behavior of the concept leads some to question whether the English word ‘love’ is univocal, raising questions about how such claims can be established and how we know when we may be multiplying senses beyond sense. Finally, while it may not be true that “all you need is love” there is no denying its apparent centrality in our lives. In this seminar we will discuss the

extent to which, and in what ways, the concept and the phenomenon of love are relative, resilient, fragile, and context-sensitive. We will also discuss the objects and sources of love.

Readings will be drawn from philosophers such as Frankfurt, Jenkins, Jollimore, Langton, Murdoch, Paul, Pettit, Kolodny, Setiya, and Velleman.

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

This class will focus on space and time. We will work through Michael Friedman's Foundations of Space-time Theories with particular attention to learning the basics of coordinate-free representations of spatio-temporal structure.

PHIL-GA 3010; Topics in the Philosophy of Mind; Wednesday 4-6; Paul Boghossian/Paul Horwich

Meaning and Normativity

We plan to examine foundational questions about meaning, normativity, and the relationships between them. More specifically:

-- What is it for concept or a property to be normative? Both the evaluative and the prescriptive are said to be 'normative' notions -- but is there anything that unites them? What stands in the way of naturalism about the normative? What stands in the way of realism about the normative? Can we make sense of relativistic views of the normative domain?

-- Is there such a thing as meaning? How does the meaning of a word bear on what the word stands for and how it's used? In virtue of which of its underlying properties does a word have the meaning it does? Is there typically a determinate fact as to which specific meaning a given word possesses?

-- Does the meaning of a word boil down to some fact about how it ought to be used?

Does boil down to the fact that specific rules for its use are followed? Is the concept, MEANING, a normative concept (like OUGHT and GOOD)? What relevance would affirmative answers to any of these three questions have for the project of giving naturalistic accounts of meaning?

Readings will include work by Kripke, Gibbard, Lewis, McDowell, Ginsborg, Brandom, and others.

PHIL-GA 3400; Thesis Preparation Seminar; Thursday 1-3; Paul Horwich

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.