Philosophy Department
Graduate Courses Spring 2012

PHIL-GA 1000
Pro-Seminar
Wednesday 4-7
Don Garrett/Beatrice Longuenesse

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

PHIL-GA 1104
Philosophy of Biology
Monday 6-8
Laura Franklin-Hall

PHIL-GA 2222
Clinical Ethics
Monday 6-8:30
Matthew Liao

Physicians and nurses will present for discussion and theoretical analysis the ethical issues that they encounter in their Medical Center work. Reading will be drawn from medical and philosophy literature.

PHIL-GA 2280/ LAW-LW.11687 (Law School)
Equality and Egalitarianism
Wednesday 2-3:50
Samuel Scheffler

The focus on this seminar will be on the nature of equality as a moral and political value. We will pay special attention to the relation between equality and justice and to the relation between equality and responsibility. We will also consider the status of equality as an ideal of social and political relations. Readings will include selections from some or all of the following authors, among others: Elizabeth Anderson, G.A. Cohen, Ronald Dworkin, Liam Murphy, Thomas Nagel, John Rawls, Thomas Scanlon, and Seana Shiffrin.

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

24 Jan	Paul Horwich (NYU)
31 Jan	Gideon Rosen (Princeton)
7 Feb	Hartry Field (NYU)
14 Feb	Ted Sider (Cornell)
21 Feb	Stephen Yablo (MIT)
28 Feb	John Divers (Leeds)
6 March	Ian Rumfitt (Birkbeck London)
13 March	*Spring break*
20 March	Kit Fine (NYU)
27 March	Tim Williamson (Oxford)
3 April	Dave Chalmers (ANU & NYU)
10 April	Christopher Hill (Brown)
17 April	Bob Hale (Sheffield)
24 April	Carrie Jenkins (British Columbia & Aberdeen)
1 May	Crispin Wright (NYU)

PHIL-GA 2296
Philosophy of Language: Truthmaker Semantics
Thursday 2-4
Kit Fine

According to truthmaker semantics, the meaning of a statement is to be understood in terms of the conditions that are wholly relevant to its truth. In this seminar, we will develop truthmaker semantics, especially in its application to natural language; and we shall also attempt to explain why the approach is superior in a number of respects to possible worlds semantics and other versions of situation semantics.

PHIL-GA 3005
Topics in Ethics
Tuesday 1-3
Ralf Bader

The Metaphysics of Value

This course addresses metaphysical and formal questions regarding the nature and structure of values. Drawing on metaphysical tools and formal machinery, we will investigate the structures of different value theories, identify their presuppositions and implications, as well as evaluate their plausibility. By examining the underlying metaphysical and axiological structures, traditional ethical questions can be clarified, our understanding of competing theories and principles can be enhanced, choice-points at which theories diverge can be identified, and desiderata that should be met and constraints that have to be satisfied can be determined. All of this allows us to rule out a number of candidate theories, clarify long-standing ethical disputes

and get a better understanding of what the correct final theory will look like.

The course will be structured around three main areas of focus:

1. Distinctions in value. We will analyse a number of important distinctions in value theory and examine how they interact, in particular: (i) intrinsic v. extrinsic, (ii) final v. non-final, and (iii) conditional v. unconditional. Special consideration will be placed on accounts of conditional intrinsic value as well as on theories of extrinsic final value.

2. Organic unities and additivity. We will examine the different kinds of value interactions that can take place. In particular, we will focus on (i) how value and parthood considerations interact and the conditions under which values can be represented by an additive function, (ii) different models of how additivity can fail, such as organic unities as well as the intensification, attenuation, enabling and disabling of value, (iii) implications for the debate between contextualist and invariantist accounts of value.

3. Agent-relativity. We will explore different models of agent-relativity, examining how agent-relative and agent-neutral values interact and how they can be integrated into all-things-considered evaluations. We will also look at the distinction between personal and general good and how it is related to that between agent-relative and agent-neutral value, as well as at whether there is such a thing as good simpliciter or whether what is good is always good for someone.

PHIL-GA 3011
Philosophy of Physics
Wednesday 11-1
Tim Maudlin/David Albert

The topic of the course will be statistical and probabilistic explanation in general, and the more particular application of statistical reasoning in physics. We will discuss the nature of the "reduction" of thermodynamics to statistical mechanics, in particular the exact probabilistic or statistical assumptions used by Maxwell and Boltzmann. Then we will discuss how one might extend this sort of explanation beyond thermodynamics, with attention to several problems including 1) how to account for various different "directions of time" (viz. the causal arrow and the asymmetry of epistemic access) 2) the prospects for a reduction of all the special sciences to physics plus some probabilistic posit 3) the possibility of an explanation for the low-entropy state of the Big Bang. We will read Albert's Time and Chance, parts of Sklar's Physics and Chance, and at least some of Sean Carroll's From Eternity to Here and Roger Penrose's Cycles of Time. We will also look at some of the original papers of Maxwell and Boltzmann.

PHIL-GA 3400
Thesis Seminar
Thursday 4:30-6:30
David Velleman

Bioethics Courses:

Advanced Introduction to Environmental Ethics
Thursday 6:45-8:45
Benjamin Sachs

Topics in Bioethics
Tuesday 6:45-8:45
Collin O'Neil

Undergraduate Courses Open to Graduate Students:

PHIL-UA 73
Set Theory
T/TH 12:30-1:45
Kit Fine

Prerequisite: PHIL-UA 70

The course will cover the basics of set theory. The required text is 'Introduction to Set Theory' by Jech and Hrbacek (3rd edition), Chapman and Hall (available from NYU bookstore). We will more or less go though the chapters of the book in order. Among the topics to be covered are: the axioms of set theory; Boolean operations on sets; set-theoretic representation of relations, functions and orderings; the natural numbers; theory of transfinite cardinal and ordinal numbers; the axiom of choice and its equivalents; and the foundations of analysis. If time permits we may also consider some more advanced topics, such as large cardinals or the independence results.

The emphasis will be on the technical material, although there will also be some philosophical discussion. Students will be required to do exercises each week. Roughly half of these assignments will be handed in and graded. Each week there will be a review section run by the TA, Olla Solomyak. There will be a mid-term exam and a final exam. The two exams will count for 20% and 30% of the final grade, respectively, the assignment for 50%.

The course will start from scratch; no background in mathematics or logic is strictly required. However, a background in logic will be helpful; and a certain degree of technical sophistication will be essential.