

Philosophy Department

Graduate Courses Spring 2013

PHIL-GA 1000; Pro-Seminar; Wednesday 1-4; Thomas Nagel/Samuel Scheffler

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

PHIL-GA 1175; Life and Death; Wednesday 6:45-8:45; William Ruddick

Memory and Commemoration.

Memories strongly influence how we lead and assess our lives, as well as how we face our own death and cope with the death of others. Hence, we would seem to have a large stake in avoiding and correcting the errors and pathological losses of memory to which we are prone. Yet some forgetting and amnesias have benefits, and so too, do sketchy and altered memories—for example, for avoiding idle regrets and for constructing engaging narratives. Likewise, selective and “doctored” memories often serve our commemorative practices, as well as community cohesion, but also communal self-deception and aggressive patriotism. What then are reasonable and morally defensible epistemic standards for remembering and forgetting? In short, when and how much should accuracy and fullness of memory matter?

In exploring these matters, we will take up the following, time and discussion permitting: Personal identity, memory chains, and amnesias; errors of memory and perception; selective “embroidered” memory & narration; purposeful forgetting, buried or suppressed memories and self-deception; grief and living in the past; obituaries, memorials, and obligations “to never forget”; desires for how and how long one is remembered after death; remorse, forgiveness, and punishment; tradition, patriotism, and war.

PHIL-UA 1210; 20th Century Continental Philosophy; Thursday 4-6; John Richardson

The course will examine the relation between Nietzsche and Heidegger on core issues in metaphysics, epistemology, and ‘ethics’. How do their positions differ, and how would/does each argue his own side against the other? For Nietzsche we’ll use selections from his mature works and notebooks. For Heidegger we’ll begin with a fairly quick look at *Being and Time*, focusing on its phenomenological method and its pragmatist and existential themes—to set

these in relation to Nietzsche. Then we'll turn to Heidegger's later stance (after his 'turn'), which he develops deliberately against Nietzsche; we'll weigh Heidegger's critique, as well as an extrapolated Nietzschean counter-diagnosis of Heidegger.

PHIL-GA 2285; Ethics: Selected Topics; Wednesday 4:30-6:30; Sharon Street

Moral Epistemology and the Self

In this course, we will explore the idea that the subject matter of ethics is something that comes into view as one "steps back" from more and more of what is contingent about oneself and one's own finite evaluative perspective, and "looks out" from an increasingly universal standpoint on the world. For the full course description, please see <https://files.nyu.edu/ss194/public/sharonstreet/Teaching.html>.

PHIL-GA 2295; Research Seminar on Mind and Language: Necessity; Tuesday 4:15-7:15/Monday 5-6; Stephen Schiffer/Stephen Neale

PHIL-GA 3004; Topics in Metaphysics; Tuesday 1-3; Kit Fine

Partial Content.

This seminar will be as much in the philosophy of language and philosophical logic as in metaphysics. I wish to investigate the notion of partial content, intended as a refinement of the notion of consequence. I shall show how the 'state space' or 'truthmaker' semantics provides a natural framework within which this notion, and its variants, might be defined. I will compare my account of the notion to those in the literature and consider its application to a variety of topics, including imperative and deontic logic, the theory of confirmation, the concept of verisimilitude, and the logic of belief. In some ways, the present seminar will be a continuation of my previous seminar on truthmaker semantics (which focused on the applications to linguistics), but no previous acquaintance with the previous seminar or with the truthmaker approach will be required.

PHIL-GA 3009; Topics in Philosophy of Science; Thursday 1:30-3:30; Hartry Field/Paul Horwich

The course will be on the nature of probability, including both epistemic probability (rational degree of belief) and physical probability (chance) and the connections between them.

Under epistemic probability we will include such questions as:

In what ways is the idea that we have numerical degrees of belief an idealization?
How might we usefully lower the level of idealization?
Of what significance is the fact that it is an idealization to the idea of epistemic probability?
What's the relation between numerical degree of belief and belief simpliciter?
What connection is there between rational degree of belief and actual degree of belief?
To what extent is rational degree of belief uniquely determined by the evidence? (Or, by the evidence plus other factors.)
How (if at all) does epistemic probability illuminate confirmation?
Do the standard models for how to update degrees of belief need generalizing? How should we accommodate newly thought of hypotheses?
Principles of indifference.
Putnam's argument against Carnapian inductive logic.

Under chance we will include such topics as:

Single-case vs. non-single-case chance.
Ultimate physical (micro-level) chance vs. macro-level chance. Is chance compatible with determinism?
Does micro-level chance make sense only within dynamical laws?
Is macro-level chance partly epistemic? What about micro-chance?
de Finetti's program.
How physical symmetries affect macro-chances.
Confirming hypotheses about chance: likelihood theory.
How beliefs about chance affect epistemic probabilities: the Principal Principle and its variants.
Irrealism about chance.

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.

PHIL-GA 3010; Topics in Philosophy of Mind; Monday 11-1; Jesse Prinz

Recent Issues in Consciousness

The seminar will examine recent work in consciousness studies, with an emphasis on issues that have an empirical dimension. Topics will include first- and second-order theories of conscious awareness, the content of experience, attention, cognitive phenomenology, the unity of consciousness, enactive perception, consciousness in non-human animals, among others.

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.

PHIL-GA 3400; Thesis Seminar; Wednesday 11-1; Tim Maudlin

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

BIOETHICS COURSES

BIOE-GA 1008; Topics in Bioethics: Neuroethics; Thursday 6:45-8:45; S. Matthew 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.

BIOE-GA 2222; Clinical Ethics; Monday 6-8:30

Physicians, nurses, and clinical ethicists from NYU and other medical centers will present cases and issues drawn from their clinical work and medical ethics teaching for ethical analysis and review.

The course will meet at the NYU Langone Medical Center, 550 1st Avenue. There is transportation on regular NYU buses.