## Philosophy Courses

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See also: CSC 85200 - Computational Logic Seminar [18930] W 2:00-4:00 Room 3209, Prof. Sergei Artemov, 1 credit

Students may also take courses at other schools in the Interuniversity Doctoral Consortium. Choose a school from the list below to see the course schedule for the current semester (where available).

- Columbia University
- Fordham University
- The New School
- New York University
- Princeton University
- Rutgers University
- SUNY Stony Brook

The Graduate Center's Current Student Handbook has information about and instructions for registering for classes at other consortium schools.

**FALL 2013 COURSE DESCRIPTIONS**

**Phil 77400 [15870]**

Reference and Experimental Philosophy

Prof. Devitt

4 credits

Weds. 9:30–11:30

Room 6496
It is usual to think that referential relations hold between language and thoughts on the one hand, and the world on the other. The most striking example of such a relation is the naming relation, the sort that holds between 'Socrates' and the famous philosopher Socrates. Other sorts of words are best seen as having other sorts of referential relations to the world for which various terms are used; for example, 'denotation' and 'application'. Usually, philosophers are interested in reference because they take it to be the core of meaning. Thus, the fact that 'Socrates' refers to that philosopher is the core of the name's meaning and hence of its contribution to the meaning of any sentence—for example, 'Socrates is wise'—that contains the name.

The central question about reference is: In virtue of what does a term have its reference? Answering this requires a theory that explains the term's relation to its referent. Until the 70s, answers were nearly always along descriptivist lines: the reference of a term was determined by descriptions competent speakers associated with it. Then came the revolution, led by Kripke, which rejected description theories for names and some other terms in favor of some sort of causal theory.

How should we get to the truth of the matter about language in general? The received methodology, in both philosophy and linguistics, appears to be that we should consult our metalinguistic intuitions (which in philosophy are often thought to be a priori). In particular, theories of reference seem to have been supported in this way. And the intuitions consulted have been those of philosophers.

This methodology has been challenged recently by Stephen Stich and several other "experimental philosophers". They have proceeded to test the intuitions of the folk, showing that in certain cases these are at odds with those of the philosophers. They take this to discredit the whole enterprise of theorizing about reference. It will be argued in the course that the experimental philosophers are right to be critical of the received methodology but wrong to respond by testing metalinguistic intuitions of the folk. Rather, theories of language, including theories of reference, should be tested against linguistic usage. Examples of such tests will be discussed.

The course will be concerned primarily with theories of reference for singular terms: for proper names like 'Socrates', demonstratives like 'this cat', pronouns like 'she', definite descriptions like 'the last great philosopher of antiquity', and indefinite descriptions like 'a lion'. Anaphoric reference will not be considered. However, there will be some discussion of "natural kind" terms like 'gold' and 'tiger' and "artifactual" kind terms like 'pencil'. Figures to be discussed include Frege, Russell, Kripke, Donnellan, Searle, Evans, Putnam, Grice, Kaplan, Wilson, Neale, Bach, Reimer.

This is not an introduction to the philosophy of language. Anyone wishing to take it who has not already taken a course in the philosophy of language should consult with me before enrolling.
Requirements
(i) A brief weekly email raising questions about, making criticisms of, or developing points concerning, matters discussed in the class and reading for that week. 50% of grade.
(ii) A class presentation based on a draft for a paper (topic chosen in consultation with me). The draft to be submitted before Tuesday of the week of presentation. 20% of grade.
(iii) A 2,500 word paper probably arising from the draft in (ii). 30% of grade.

Learning Goals
Mastery of the contemporary debates about reference

Readings

[Counts towards course satisfaction of Group B]

Phil 76900 []

Philosophy of Social Science

Prof. Greenwood

4 credits
Thurs. 9:30–11:30
Room 7314

The course will focus on a number of philosophical and meta-theoretical questions concerning the nature of social phenomena and social scientific explanation. We will cover topics common to most social sciences, such as the debate between so-called holists and individualists; the nature and problems of structural and functional forms of explanation; the possibility of explanatory laws in social science; and the place of values in social science. We will also cover topics specific to particular social scientific disciplines, such as problems associated with the anthropological understanding of alien cultures, the role of isolative experimentation in social psychology, the presumed autonomy of historical explanation, and the instrumentalist conception of theory in economics. We will also consider the historical evolution of the social sciences, including their institutional development in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Throughout the course, a continuous attempt will be made to provide a general philosophical account of social phenomena. We will try to explicate what Durkheim called the ‘distinct characteristic(s)’ of the varied phenomena we characterize as social in nature, such as social actions, social collectives, and social structures, and the relations between
them (without presuming that there is a single characteristic or set of characteristics common to them all). It is hoped that the working analysis of social phenomena developed will enable us to get a better conceptual grip on the fundamental philosophical questions of social science. It will also hopefully enable us to critically evaluate the pretensions of disciplines such as sociobiology and evolutionary social psychology, and familiar but puzzling claims to the effect that our identities and emotions are socially constructed, and thus the appropriate object of social scientific research.

Contemporary philosophy of social science is in an exciting state of flux, since many of its traditional guiding assumptions and contrasts, derived from scientific empiricist philosophy of science, have been abandoned or qualified in recent years. By returning to the core philosophical questions about social phenomena and social explanation, it is hoped that the course will be able to shed some fresh light on traditional problems and debates, and to identify some emerging contemporary issues.

Social sciences considered will include sociology, anthropology, social psychology, political science, economics and history. No background in social science is assumed, although any background would be an undoubted asset and positive source of course enrichment.

Readings will be based upon book chapters and papers, which I will make available electronically.

[Counts towards course satisfaction of Group B]

[back to course schedule]
Philo 76600 [21667]

Modal Logic

Profs. Fitting & Mendelsohn

4 credits

Tues. 11:45–1:45

Room 6496

Modal logic is usually thought of as the logic of qualified truth: necessarily true, true at all times, and so on. From at least Montague on, quantified modal logic has also been thought of as the natural setting for a logic of intensions. This course will cover the whole range.

We begin with propositional modal logic, presented semantically via Kripke models, and proof theoretically using both tableaus and axiom systems. First-order modal logic will be studied in considerable detail, using possible-world semantics and tableau systems, but not axiom systems. Various philosophical issues will be discussed, amongst which are: the nature of possible worlds, possibilist and actualist quantification, rigid and non-rigid designators, intensional and extensional objects, existence and being, equality, synonymy, designation and non-designation, and definite descriptions in a modal context.

[Counts towards course satisfaction of Group E]

Philo 80200 [21678]

Proseminar

Profs. Prinz & Vasiliou

4 credits

Wed. 11:45–1:45

Room 8203

The Proseminar is restricted to and required of students entering the Ph.D. program. Its purpose is to get students accustomed to graduate-level writing, seminar discussion, and presentation skills.

Philosophy is often said to have started with a metaphysical investigation into the fundamental nature of the world. Stripping away appearances, we want to know, what is
the world reality like? This question will serve as our unifying theme as we explore a
variety of related topics: physicalism (is there an underlying physical nature to
everything?), supervenience (if so, how is everything overlaying that nature related to it),
monism (can everything be thought of, in some significant sense, as one?), material
composition (whether there is just one thing, or many in the world, how are its parts
related to the thing itself?), and, finally, metametaphysics (is it even possible to make
sense of any of these questions?). Most of the readings will be from leading contemporary
philosophers with occasional forays into the works of great thinkers of the past.

Syllabus

[Counts towards course satisfaction of Group A]

In this seminar we will focus on the moral theories of Hobbes, Clarke, Butler, Hutcheson,
Hume, and Bentham but with attention paid also to Cudworth, Cumberland, Locke,
Mandeville, Shaftesbury, Wollast, Price and Smith. We will then examine the
utilitarianisms of J.S. Mill and G.E. Moore, and the deontology of H.A. Prichard and W.D.
Ross. We will examine the original texts and some of the important recent literature about
them and the use of their theories in contemporary ethical theory.

Moralists, ed L.A. Selby Bigge (Oxford, 1899) or the Bobbs-Merrill reprint, ed by Baumrin
1964. One should also obtain facsimile copies of Hobbes's Leviathan and Hume's Treatise.
Recommended as well is The British Moralists and The Internal 'Ought' 1640-1740 by
Stephan Darwall, Cambridge 1995. There will also be some reprints distributed, and possibly presentations by students working on particular moralists. The first seminar will concentrate on Leviathan Chs 13-15. Please reread for this meeting.

[Counts towards course satisfaction of Group D-Modern]

This course will survey a series of topics in the philosophy of the moving image including, the nature of the moving image, whether cinema can be art, the nature of the shot, the nature of narrative, the distinction between fiction and nonfiction cinema, the relation of cinema to the emotions, the relation of cinema to morality, and the question of movie evaluation. Students will be expected to make a class presentation and to write a term paper.

[Counts towards course satisfaction of Group C]

*The first day of class is September 11*

In Part III of the *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics* (Blackwell, 3rd Edition, 1978), Wittgenstein – among other things – makes a critical examination of Russell's theory of the natural numbers as presented in *Principia*. Russell thought that he had shown that his theory of the natural numbers (and nearly enough Frege's too) was in some sense the unique concept of the natural numbers, and that not any structure satisfying the Peano axioms will work to give our notion of
cardinality and counting. Quine (and, more cautiously, Benacerraf) held, as against Russell, that any such structure (called a 'progression') will do for the purposes of cardinality and counting.

Wittgenstein finds the Russelian conception defective. His arguments appear at first to rest on some technical errors (and he does seem to make some), unaware of the resources of Principia Mathematica. Nevertheless, I think that Wittgenstein's discussion can be used to give specific morals as to our concept of the natural numbers, and how it may be different from what it would be in other imagined cultures. (The basic question is when does a computation come to an end, so that we have no further question of the form, "yes, but what number is that?")

In this course we will discuss Russell's views and Wittgenstein's criticisms. I will also present my own conclusions, inspired by Wittgenstein's criticisms (other relevant authors will be discussed as well). Weaknesses in my conclusions, and cases that might be hard to accommodate will be discussed as well. (Even though my work on this subject remains unpublished, we will make manuscripts available to the class.)

This course is another part of my study of the later Wittgenstein, and so in a way a continuation of my last course. However, it does not presuppose that material.

Counts towards course satisfaction of Group B

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*Phil 78700 [21676]*

**Quine and Sellars on Thought and Language**

**Prof. Rosenthal**

4 credits

Thurs. 2:00–4:00

Room 7102

W. V. Quine is known for denying claims of analyticity and other nonextensional aspects of language, and for espousing "the baselessness of intentional idioms and the emptiness of a science of intention" (Word and Object, 221). Wilfrid Sellars, in apparent contrast, is known for holding that thoughts are states posited as having intentional content, whose occurrence is initially established by folk-theoretical reasoning. On his view we come to have first-person access to such states only subsequently, in acquiring the ability to report noninferentially that we are in such states. And he sought to sustain this theory-based realism about intentional states with a broadly functionalist view about both the intentional content of such states and the semantic properties of speech.

Our goal will be to get clear about exactly what all these views amount to, what support Quine and Sellars offer for their respective claims, whether the claims hold up, and the
extent to which their views about intentionality and meaning do actually conflict. We'll also consider what bearing these views have on several aspects of current thinking, e.g., Gricean theories of speaker's meaning, issues about indexicals and about self-reference, the tenability of holism about meaning and belief, and the relation of thought to speech.

We'll begin with Quine's rejection of traditional claims about intentionality and meaning, the use of assignment of logical form as a theoretical tool, and the relation between indeterminacy of translation and inscrutability of reference. We'll then look at Sellars' views about meaning and intentionality, on their own and against the background of Quine's concerns about meaning and content. Does Sellars' realism about meaning and intentionality withstand Quine's strictures? If so, is that due to special aspects of Sellars' view? Would other realist theories of intentionality run afoul of those strictures?

We'll also examine Quine's and Sellars' views about related issues such as the logical form of ascriptions of thoughts, speech acts, and meanings, whether to view such ascriptions theoretically (Sellars) or as a mere dramatic idiom (Quine), the interpretation of quantification and its bearing on ontology, and quantification into nonextensional contexts.

And we'll consider how our conceptions of thinking and of speech each figure in the way we understand and conceive of the other, and the relation of third-person ascriptions of intentional states to our first-person access to those states.

Some material will be available online. The following books will all be on reserve, but we'll rely heavily on them, and so it may be useful to get hold of some of them:

Quine: From a Logical Point of View, The Ways of Paradox and Other Essays, Ontological Relativity and Other Essays (all Harvard University Press), and Word and Object (MIT Press).


[Counts towards course satisfaction of Group A or B]

[back to course schedule]
Phil 77500 [ ]

Ethics

Prof. Ross

4 credits

Tues. 4:15–6:15

Room C415A

This is a general survey of what I take to be the most important, or most interesting, theories of ethics: Hume's projectivism, non-cognitivism, Moore's intuitionism, utilitarianism, Kant, Aristotle, and Rawls' Kantian constructivism, are the focus of this course. The idea is to give those with little background in moral theory a good, graduate level sense of moral philosophy, and for those who are already familiar with these arguments, this is an opportunity to take up a further assessment of these theories and their plausibility.

[Counts towards course satisfaction of Group B]

[back to course schedule]

Phil 76000 [21666]

Plato and the Arts

Prof. Pappas

4 credits

Tues. 6:00–8:00

Room 7314

This seminar will take two paths in studying Plato's conception of poetry and other arts. One path follows the passages in his dialogues that speak of poetry directly, some describing the inspiration (enthousiasmos) behind good poems and others finding imitation (mimêsis) at work in most poetry. We will read Plato's Ion in its entirety and sizeable parts of the Phaedrus and Republic. Shorter selections from Apology and Laws will enter into the course as well.

But Plato's discussion of poetry is never very far removed from his discussions of myth and religious practice; so we will also explore the path that winds among the mythic passages.
in Plato's dialogues. Plato's aspirations in re-writing Greek myth, sometimes imposing a new sense on old myths and more often arriving at a compromise with their antecedent meanings, sheds light on what Plato would like to be possible in Greek verse and drama.

It will also emerge that inspiration and imitation themselves draw upon mythic thinking at unexpected points. We will endeavor to let the mythic illuminate the aesthetic as well as the contrary. In all likelihood we will finish the seminar with a reading of Plato's Theaetetus.

Recent scholarship will help us focus our discussions of the Platonic myths and selections from the Republic.

Primary readings will include the Reeve-Grube translation of the Republic, Nehamas-and-Woodruff's translation of the Phaedrus, and Woodruff's translation of the Ion (all published by Hackett and inexpensively available). We will read the mythic passages from Plato as collected in Plato, Selected Myths, edited by Catalin Partenie (Oxford, 2004).

Note that Selected Myths is not to be confused with Partenie's scholarly anthology Plato's Myths (Cambridge, 2009): the seminar will indeed read some selections from that anthology, but the selections will be available electronically. So will the chapters that we read from Mark McPherran's recent Plato's Republic: A Critical Guide (Cambridge, 2010).

[Counts towards course satisfaction of Group D-Ancient]

[back to course schedule]