Core Theoretical Philosophy I and II

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Ross S 434

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This course offers an advanced survey of some central themes in contemporary theoretical philosophy, drawn from recent work in metaphysics, epistemology, and the philosophies of mind, language, and science. While it is designed to provide background for those who pursue graduate-level research in these areas, it is not an introductory course. (Those who do not have some undergraduate preparation in these areas are advised to discuss remedial work with the course directors as soon as possible.)

Requirements and Evaluation

All students are required to complete the required readings, submit the essays and/or paper, and participate in seminar discussions. Evaluation is on the following basis:

Weekly Comments and Class Participation 25%
Three Essays (due: October 9, November 13, December 11) 75%

Comments and Participation: Before noon of the Thursday preceding each class meeting, you must post a comment to the class Moodle page on any one claim or argument drawn from that week’s required readings. Your comment should consist of a brief observation or criticism, something that interests you, puzzles you, or seems incorrect to you (no longer than 300 words). Your comments will form the basis of our weekly discussions and will be assessed for your class participation grade, provided that you are present in the seminar on the relevant day. You may without penalty take two ‘passes’ and post no comment for that week.

Essays: The essays for the course are due on the dates indicated above. Essay topics will be distributed roughly two weeks in advance of the due date. All essays are required and should be 2500-3000 words in length (3000 words is a strict upper limit).

Late Penalties: Weekly comments are not accepted late; other work may be accepted late at the discretion of the course directors, subject to a penalty of 2.5% per calendar day or fraction thereof.

PHIL 5801

PHIL 5801, taken in conjunction with 5800, provides a forum for further discussion of central themes in contemporary theoretical philosophy. It is designed to prepare students to write the comprehensive exam in theoretical philosophy. It covers the same topics as PHIL 5800, with additional readings, discussions, and colloquia to broaden one’s grasp of the field.

In addition to the required readings for PHIL 5800, students in 5801 are required to complete the required readings for PHIL 5801, as well as some or all of the recommended readings, to attend the discussion seminars and the departmental Philosophy Colloquium (a schedule is available). Evaluation will be based on a written comprehensive final exam in theoretical philosophy, which will range over the
eleven topics covered in this course. The exam will take place in early January, on a date to be decided. At the discretion of the course directors, students may also be asked to defend the written examination orally. A list of questions will be distributed in advance, from which the exam questions will be drawn.

Reading Schedule

Readings with one asterisk (*) are required for PHIL 5800, readings with two asterisks (**) are required for PHIL 5801, and readings with no asterisk are recommended for PHIL 5801. All required readings are available on Moodle; all recommended readings are available either by accessing the relevant journal or have been put on reserve at Scott Library (please consult with us if there are any readings that you are unable to locate).

Sept 8: Introduction (MAK & HJ)
No readings assigned

Sept 15: Externalism and Intentionality (HJ)
* Kripke, S, Selections from Naming and Necessity.

** Davidson, D., “Knowing One’s Own Mind”, in his Subjective, Intersubjective, Objective. (2001)
** Brown, "The Incompatibility of Anti-Individualism and Privileged Access",

Millikan, "Biosemantics"

Sept 22: Natural Kinds (MAK) [Colloquium: Ron Mallon]


R. Millikan, “Historical Kinds and the ‘Special Sciences,’” Philosophical Studies 95 (1999)


Sept 29: **Analyticity, A Priori Knowledge, and Conceptual Analysis (HJ)**

* W.V. Quine, “Two Dogmas of Empiricism,” *From a Logical Point of View* (Harvard University Press, 1953),


I. Kant, Introduction to the B—editition of The Critique of Pure Reason, §§I—V


Oct 6: **Propositional Attitudes (HJ)**

* Kripke, S., “A Puzzle about Belief”, in Martinich (ed.).

**Saul, J., 'Substitution and Simple Sentences', *Analysis* 57.2, 1997


Chalmers, D. “Foundations of Two Dimensional Semantics”


McDowell, J., “Singular Thought and the Extent of Inner Space”, in his *Meaning, Knowledge, and Reality*.

Quine, W.V., “Quantifiers and Propositional Attitudes”, in Martinich (ed.).

Davidson, D., “On Saying That”, in his *Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation*.


Oct 13: **Explanation (MAK) [Colloquium: Laura Franklin Hall]**


W. Salmon, *Causality & Explanation*, Chap 4

B. Van Fraassen, “The pragmatic theory of explanation”


**First Essay Due Monday, October 9 at 11 pm on Moodle**

Oct 20: **Reductionism & Emergentism (MAK) [Colloquium: John Doris]**


*J. Fodor, “Special Science (or the Disunity of Science as a Working Hypothesis),” *Synthese* 28 (1974)*


J. Fodor, "Special Sciences: Still Autonomous after All These Years," *Philosophical Perspectives* (1994)


Oct 27: **Reading Days (No Class)**

Nov 3: **Concepts (MAK)**


Nov 10: **Semantics, Pragmatics, and Descriptions (HJ)** [Colloquium: Ishani Maitra]

* Grice, H. P. “Logic and Conversation” in his *Studies in the Way of Words.*
* Davidson, D. “What Metaphors Mean” in his *Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation.*
* Anderson, L. and Ernie Lepore, E. “Slurring Words”
  (http://www.mit.edu/~shaslang/resch/AndersonSW.pdf)

** Donnellan: “Reference and Definite Descriptions”, in Martinich (ed.) *The Philosophy of Language.*


Second Essay Due Monday, Nov 13 at 11 pm on Moodle

Nov 17: **Foundationalism, Coherentism, Contextualism & Relativism (HJ)** [Colloquium: Sandy Goldberg]


**McFarlane, J., “Relativism and Knowledge Attributions,”
  (http://sophos.berkeley.edu/macfarlane/papers.html)

Descartes, R., Meditation I.
McDowell, J., “Knowledge and the Internal”, in Sosa and Kim.

Nov 24: **Naturalized Epistemology (MAK)**


Dec 1: *Philosophical Method and Experimental Philosophy (HJ & MAK)*


Third Essay Due Monday, December 11 at 11 pm on Moodle

Comprehensive Exam – to be scheduled for early January