Core Theoretical Philosophy I and II

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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:

PHIL 4800
Weekly Comments and Class Participation  20%
First essay (due: Feb 12)     20%
Term paper (due: April 12)    60%

PHIL 5800
Weekly Comments and Class Participation  25%
Three essays (due: Feb 12, March 12, April 12)  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 (4800 and 5800): 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. Both graduates and undergraduates must submit the first essay; only graduate students must submit the following two essays. Essays should be 2500-3000 words in length (3000 words is a strict upper limit).

Term Paper (4800): This paper may be on any topic within the purview of the course, subject to the approval of the course directors, not to exceed 5000 words. We will also offer some suggestions for possible topics. It will include as a graded component of 10% a bibliographic note to be submitted by March 12.

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. At the discretion of the course directors, students may also be asked to defend the written examination orally. Sample questions will be distributed in advance.

Reading Schedule

Readings with one asterisk (*) are required for PHIL 4800/5800, 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).

Jan 8: Introduction (CV & MAK)

Jan 15: Realism and Anti-Realism (CV & MAK)

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


Davidson, D., “The Method of Truth in Metaphysics”, in his Inquiries.
Davidson, D., “The Inscrutability of Reference”, in his Inquiries.
Jan 22: **Natural Kinds (MAK)**


Dupre, “Natural Kinds and Biological Taxa,” *Philosophical Review* 90 (1981), 66-91
Milikan, “Historical Kinds and the ‘Special Sciences,’’ *Philosophical Studies* 95 (1999)

Jan 29: **Semantic Externalism: Perceptual and Social (CV)**


**Davidson, D., “Knowing One’s Own Mind”, in his *Subjective, Intersubjective, Objective*. (2001)

Kripke, K., *Naming and Necessity.* (1972)
Davidson, D., “Truth and Meaning”, in his *Inquiries.*
Davidson, D., “Radical Interpretation”, in his *Inquiries.*

Feb 5: **Concepts (MAK)**


Feb 12: **Language and Thought (CV)** (FIRST ESSAY DUE)

*Davidson, D., “Rational Animals”, in his *Subjective, Intersubjective, Objective.*
*Davidson, D., “The Second Person”, in his *Subjective, Intersubjective, Objective.*


Davidson, D., “Talk and Thought”, in his *Inquiries.*
Davidson, D., “The Emergence of Thought”, in his *Subjective, Intersubjective, Objective.*


Feb 19: **NO CLASS** (Reading Week)

Feb 26: **Innateness (MAK)**


Sober, “Innate Knowledge,” *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*

March 5: **Reductionism and Functionalism (MAK)**


March 12: **Rule-Following and Meaning (CV)** (SECOND ESSAY DUE/BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE)


McDowell, J., “Wittgenstein on Following a Rule”, *Synthese* 58, 1984

March 19: **Normativity of Meaning and Content (CV)**


**Davidson, “A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs”, in his Truth, Language and History.

March 26: **Epistemic Internalism, Externalism and Contextualism (CV)**


**Lewis, D., “Elusive Knowledge”, in Sosa and Kim.**

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

April 2: NO CLASS (Good Friday)

April 5 (Monday): **Epistemology Naturalized (MAK)**


April 12: THIRD ESSAY DUE/TERM PAPER DUE