

GRADUATE SEMINARS 2016-17

FALL 2016

Phil275: Proseminar – Harmer: Composition, Identity, and Persistence)

This course will investigate responses to the following question from both early modern (i.e. 17th & 18th century) and contemporary philosophers: In what case do some things compose some other thing? *For example:* when do some bricks compose a house? When do some cells compose a plant? When do some organs, bones, etc. compose an animal? Further, what relation does a thing bear to the parts of which it is composed? Is a house an entity in its own right? Or, is it merely many bricks standing in certain relations to one another? Should we answer this question one way in the case of artifacts, such as houses, and another way in the case of living things, such as human beings? Finally, under what conditions does an object persist? What kinds of loss or addition of parts are compatible with the persistence of an object? If an object is nothing but a certain arrangement of parts, can it persist at all? We will examine the answers to these sorts of questions given by John Locke, Gottfried Leibniz, Peter van Inwagen, Trenton Merricks, and Theodore Sider among others.

Phil281-001: Seminar – Keller: Kant's Pluralism, Hegel's Phenomenology and the Historical A Priori

We will explore a reading of German idealism (including Kant) in terms of our embeddedness in a natural-social process that is intrinsically systematic and normative. The temporal significance of signs is taken to be pervasive and is articulated in consequence in terms of the systematic difference that they make to us as self-conscious agents who engage in social cooperation, competition and dialogue. We will focus on the general and systematic conception of normativity that emerges out of our temporal self-constitution as social and purposive agents in the world in Kant's conception of the conditions for the possibility of experience. It will be shown that Kant ties the conditions of the possibility of experience to the conditions for our social-practical agency in history. It will be argued that Kant's transcendental philosophy comes to its full articulation only in the conception of the "History of Pure Reason" with which it ends. Kant's conception of nature and of thought, especially of science as a process that unpacks itself in time and history is taken up by Hegel in the *Phenomenology* and *Encyclopedia* (and later by the Neo-Kantian tradition through which it comes to influence Husserl, Heidegger, Koyré and Kuhn). On my reading, Foucault and others such as Cassirer, Heidegger and the late Husserl have not over-historized Kant, but have if anything underestimated the deep roots of Kant's conception of the a priori in the very possibility of a social and cultural history of humanity. It is recommended that you read Kant's first Critique and the last two of Kant's works, the *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* and the *Conflict of the Faculties*. You might also find it eye opening to read at least some of the selections in the Sebastian Luft (ed.) *Neo-Kantian Reader*. If you want to start reading Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* that is good too, but understanding the argument has taken me a life-time, so I don't mind if you wait until the course.

Phil281-002: Seminar – Wettstein: Bugbee's *Inward Morning*

A couple of years back I did a seminar on Martin Buber's *I and Thou* and we (I) profited from a careful reading with in-depth discussion. This time we turn to Henry Bugbee's journal, an important if relatively unknown work of philosophy, also a text in which analytic philosophy meets phenomenology. Bugbee works out a distinctive path through life, one informed by profound philosophic reflection. Philosophy becomes a way of enriching the human way in the world.

Phil283: Seminar – Macnamara: Moral Address

It is widely thought that moral blame is a form of moral address. In this class, we will consider what it means to say that moral blame is a form of address. We will also use speech act theory to explore just what kind of address blame is.

WINTER 2017

Phil275: Proseminar – Reath (Moral Theory)

This seminar will survey some central issues in contemporary moral theory. We will begin with questions about the nature of reasons for action: what is a reason for action? What is the connection between reasons and desires or motives? The balance of the seminar will then survey (all too briefly, I am afraid) some of the main currents in contemporary moral theory—rational (deontological) intuitionism, consequentialism, contractualism, contemporary Kantianism and virtue theory.

Phil280: Seminar – Novakovic (Ideology and Critique)

In this seminar we will read classical and contemporary texts in the tradition of Critical Theory that deal with the problem of ideology for social criticism and with the possibility of what it calls “ideology critique”. The questions we will address are: What is ideology? Is it pervasive in social life? Does it present a particular problem for the possibility of social criticism? What would a critique of ideology look like?

Phil281: Seminar – Wrathall – Reason and Unreason

We will look at various attempts to understand the interplay between reason and unreason in human existence. I will be interested in tracking changes in the ways in which reason itself is understood, as well as ways in which the distinction between reason and its other is delimited and enforced. We may study works by Heidegger, Schopenhauer, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Foucault, or others.

Phil283: Seminar – Ferrero (Diachronic Intentional Agency)

In this seminar we will investigate the distinctive human ability to engage in temporally extended intentional activities. We will discuss the structure of the temporal unity of such activities and how it differs from the simpler continuity of other forms of temporally extended agency. We will then investigate the relation between future-directed intendings and the actions or activities that are their alleged objects. We will also consider issues about the rational authority of future-directed intentions and what it takes to secure the agent's autonomy over time. In the second half of the seminar, we will consider questions about the temporal integration of plans over time and how they affect the complexity of our goals; we will then discuss the norms and grounds of diachronic practical rationality (and whether they differ from the norms and grounds of theoretical diachronic rationality). If time permits, we will also consider questions about the relation between the temporal structure of intentional agency and the distinctive axiology, if any, of temporal agents.

Phil 283: Graham - Functions

SPRING 2017

Phil275: Proseminar – Reck (Varieties of Analysis)

In this proseminar we will compare several notions of analysis as they have played a role in the analytic tradition, together with some paradigmatic examples of their application. This includes the stereotypical procedure of identifying necessary and sufficient conditions for a concept, sometimes misleadingly identified with “analysis” in general, but also Carnapian explication and Strawsonian connective analysis, among others. The readings will include several classic texts by Frege, Russell, Tarski, Carnap, Quine, and Strawson, as well as more recent secondary literature on these texts and on the general topic of analysis.

Phil280: Seminar – Muller (Aristotle on Agency)

The course will concentrate on Aristotle’s account of both human and animal agency. Topics will include human/animal nature, human/animal cognition (including practical thought), responsibility, and *akrasia*. Readings will include selections from *Nicomachean Ethics/Eudemian Ethics* (esp. EE 2, NE 3, 6, 7), *De Anima*, *De Motu Animalium*, and others.

Phil281: Seminar – Clark (Nietzsche)

Phil283-001: Seminar – Jaworska (Margins of Agency)

What can we learn about foundational issues and concepts in moral theory and moral psychology (autonomy, valuing, reasons for action, moral responsibility, etc.) by studying cases of “agency at the margins:” for example, addiction, Alzheimer’s disease, lesions in the prefrontal cortex, frontotemporal dementia, psychopathy, early childhood? Readings from contemporary literature.

Phil283-002: Seminar – Nelson (Particulars)

What is an individual thing, a particular person, cat, tree, house, or rock? Is individuality basic and primitive, or is it instead to be analyzed in general terms? Are individuals just, say, bundles of co-instantiated properties, or is individuality at the metaphysical ground floor? And, assuming the latter, what are the basic individuals, are they just mental particulars (Russellian sense-data), spacetime points, space and time being the only fundamental particulars in reality, or concrete particulars, and, if the last, are the only fundamental concrete particulars atomic or are medium-sized dry goods, like people, cats, trees, and houses, also genuine particulars? The seminar will begin with these classical metaphysical issues, where we will look at arguments for and against the bundle theory of individuals and “bare particulars,” also asking about the relationship between a particular and its characterizing essence, or its definition that answers what the thing is, the thesis of the identity of indiscernibles and Max Black’s famous counterexample to that thesis, and other related topics. We will then face the same issue but from a different direction, by asking about the nature of singularity in thought; that is, in virtue of what is a thought about a particular object in the world. We will read part 1 of Strawson’s *Individuals*, following with discussions on the nature of demonstrative thought and self thought influenced by Strawson, in particular the Oxford group of Gareth Evans, (the early) John McDowell, (the early) Christopher Peacocke, and John Campbell.