

FALL 2017 GRADUATE SEMINARS

Phil275A, Pierre Keller – Proseminar in Metaphysics and Epistemology

I intend to develop the origins of the divide between contemporary analytic and continental philosophy in a disagreement about the relationship between conceptual and metaphysical analysis (Kant's scholastic conception of philosophy) and the pursuit of our purposes in the world as human beings engaging with each other in a norm-guided manner (Kant's world or cosmopolitan concept of philosophy). Kant uses the skills of conceptual analysis but argues that the significance of conceptual analysis is only to be understood in terms of the difference that such analysis makes to what we do as agents engaging with other agents in the world (the full significance of the first half of Kant's Critique, the Transcendental Doctrine of the Elements, emerges only in its second half, the Transcendental Doctrine of Method). In this way, Kant anticipates the criticism of the analytic-synthetic distinction in the German idealist and in the American pragmatist traditions and also provides a normative pragmatic reading of Plato's metaphysics and its normative commitment to the institution of a republic in thought. I plan to go through the Transcendental Doctrine of Method in the Critique step by step and show how the Doctrine of Method reconstructs the first half of the Critique as well as the history of metaphysics, epistemology, science, morals and religion. I will also offer you an account of how the Critique relates to pre-critical and post-critical thought.

Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* provides a template for reading much of contemporary analytic and continental metaphysics and epistemology. The received readings of Kant trend to an extreme realism (Guyer, Adams, Burge and their students) or representationalism (Henrich, Allison, Pippin and their students) which have their origins in the former case in contemporary modal realism and in the latter case in the effort to appropriate linguistic analysis in the Strawsonian tradition to an analysis of representational consciousness. We will look at Strawson's analytic reconstruction of Kant as a "purely descriptive metaphysics" in *The Bounds of Sense* (and Rorty's critique of that project in "Strawson's Objectivity Argument") and its appropriation by Allison and Pippin. Kripke on normativity and direct reference and self-reference and the relevance of his modal realism to Kant's distinction between analytic and synthetic a priori and empirical judgments will also be discussed. I also want to look at Robert Brandom's appropriation of Rorty, Sellars, Kant and Hegel especially in the first half of his *Reason in Philosophy*. I also will have a rather fundamentally different take on the relation of the main line of argument in Hegel and in Heidegger's *Being and Time* to Kant than the one that is widely accepted. We will discuss the development of the pragmatist tradition of Kant-appropriation inaugurated by C S Peirce and pushed in a more overtly Kant-critical direction in John Dewey's discussion of time and Kant's Copernican Revolution, in W. V. Quine on "Two Dogmas of Empiricism," as well as in Donald Davidson's radicalizing critique in on "The Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme," and Richard Rorty's "The World Well-Lost".

Phil 280: Howard Wettstein – Wittgenstein's *On Certainty*

Wittgenstein's *On Certainty* – co-taught with Larry Wright

PHIL 281: Michael Nelson – Practical Reasoning

The topic of this seminar is practical reasoning, the nature of deliberation, decision, and intention. The first several weeks will be spent discussing two pillars of the contemporary work on practical reasoning: Donald Davidson and Elizabeth Anscombe. We will then focus primarily on two topics that I will argue are connected: The question of the connection between intention and belief, which concerns the issue of the source of the norms of practical reasoning, and the connection between the norms of practical reasoning and the notion of practical rationality, on the one hand, and the basic principle of morality on the other.

The seminar will be linked with Luca Ferrero's seminar in the winter. While one can take either seminar individually as just a regular seminar, there is also the option of taking both seminars in such a way that one can write, over the period of both terms, a single, more extensive and substantive paper that will serve as the basis of the grade for both seminars. In that case, students will receive a grade of IP (in progress) at the end of the fall term and then will receive the same grade for both seminars at the time of completion of the paper. To take advantage of this option, however, it will be necessary to enroll in a 272a/b for the seminars; talk to Gerardo for help with that. At the end of the fall term, students will be requested to submit either a draft or at least an outline of a paper. The motivation is two fold. First, it is designed as a way of trying to ease the demands of the quarter system for graduate studies. Second, and not entirely unrelated, it is designed to allow students interested in developing a more extensive paper, which requires more than the 10 weeks of a quarter system term to develop, an opportunity to work on and submit a more significant, well developed and well researched term paper for a seminar. This will help ease the transition to post-course work requirements, where more substantive work than a typical seminar paper is demanded.

Phil 282: Andreja Novakovic – Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*

This seminar will cover the first three sections of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* – “Consciousness”, “Self-Consciousness”, and “Reason” – which Hegel had initially planned to publish on their own, under the title *Science of the Experience of Consciousness*. What is this experience of consciousness and what does a science of it yield? We will approach these broader questions by focusing on the transitions between the various “shapes” in order to reconstruct Hegel's argument in some detail.

Phil 282: Adam Harmer – Leibniz's Labyrinths: Freedom, Continuity, Infinity

G.W. Leibniz writes that “...there are two labyrinths of the human mind, one concerning the composition of the continuum, and the other concerning the nature of freedom, and they arise from the same source, infinity” (*On Freedom*, 1689). The composition of the continuum asks how a continuous thing—such as a line, or motion, or even space and time—can be built up from parts. Are the parts indivisible things, e.g. infinitely small points, instants, etc.? Or are they divisible things, e.g. finite line segments, spans of time, etc.? Either answer leads to difficulties. If the parts are infinitely small, how can they build anything at all? If the parts have some finite size, how can that be squared with the infinite divisibility of lines, motions, etc.? The nature of freedom involves other difficulties, and is explicitly formulated in theological terms: if God knows everything that is going to happen, how can humans act freely? If freedom is an illusion,

how can people be morally responsible for their choices? Does this mean that God is responsible for the presence of evil in the world?

According to Leibniz, each of these problems is nearly intractable, and can only be resolved by means of a subtle, philosophical treatment of the infinite. Despite the centrality of these two topics to Leibniz's philosophical system and Leibniz's clear indication that both problems arise from the same source—namely, the infinite—it is rare to find discussions of these two “labyrinths” alongside one another. In this course, we will put Leibniz's engagement with the problem of the composition of the continuum into conversation with his account of freedom, rooting them both in a discussion of Leibniz's philosophy of the infinite, with the aim of achieving new insight on all fronts.