

GRADUATE SEMINARS 2019-20

FALL 2019

Philosophy 275A, Adam Harmer – Proseminar in Metaphysics and Epistemology

This seminar will survey some of the main (and ongoing) disagreements among metaphysicians, including the question of fundamental individuals, essential and accidental properties, (indeterminate) states of affairs, and ordinary objects. We will work through the recent volume “Current Controversies in Metaphysics” (ed. Elizabeth Barnes, Routledge, 2017), filling in some background as needed.

Philosophy 283, Howard Wettstein –

The aim of the seminar is to come to grips with Spinoza’s idea of seeing the world under the aspect of eternity. Part of the work will be exploring the related ideas in the work of Thomas Nagel, his paper on the absurd as well as parts of his book, *The View from Nowhere*. And part of the work will be exploring God’s speech “From the Whirlwind” in the Book of Job.

Philosophy 283, Myisha Cherry – Feminist Philosophy and the Politics of Negative Affect

Feminist philosophers have played an important role in drawing philosophical attention to the epistemological, moral, and political significance of emotion. When we turn our attention to contexts of wrongdoing, injustice, and oppression, reactive attitudes such as anger and resentment, guilt and shame become especially salient. Relevant philosophical questions include: what is the nature and moral valence of these reactive attitudes – and what insights do feminist approaches add to our understanding of them? What role do emotions of anger, guilt, and shame play in how we understand, navigate, and respond to wrongdoing? How is their expression and uptake structured by practices of sexism, racism, and other forms of oppression?

This course will deepen our understandings of feminist philosophy of the emotions, as well as feminist moral psychology. Topics covered will include anger and resentment, contempt, guilt and shame, as well as the dynamics of calling out and apologizing, and affective practices of ally-ship and solidarity.

Philosophy 284A, Pierre Keller – Dynamic Structuralism and Cosmopolitanism

A dynamically structuralist (and cosmopolitan) conception will be developed and defended in which the systematic unity of the arts, the sciences and philosophy is preserved and articulated. We will start by bringing Ernst Cassirer’s dynamic structuralism to light. The Copernican revolution will be developed in its dynamic structuralism and the new dynamic structuralist paradigm in the sciences explored. Roman Jakobson’s dynamic structuralist paradigm in linguistics, literature and the arts will be brought together with von Jakob Uexküll’s structural-functionalism in biology and with Henri Poincaré’s group theoretical and intuitionist approach and Hermann Weyl’s dynamic structuralism in mathematics (and Weyl’s purely infinitesimal geometry for physics). There will be a concerted effort to show the place of biology in the new paradigm, with specific reference to biosemiotics and the school of Tartu. Also the connection of Cassirer’s dynamic structuralism to Wilfrid Sellars’ interpretation of Kant’s Copernican revolution, to Sellars’ rejection of the “myth of the given,” to his conception of “Time and the World Order” and to his “philosophy of pure process” will be developed to prepare the way for Phil 284B. Phil 284A will be linked with my PHIL284B in the winter. While

one can take either seminar individually, you will have the option of taking both seminars and writing a single, more extensive 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 (8 units) at the time of completion of the paper. Students taking the linked course option will be required to write a detailed outline or rough draft at the end of the fall quarter.

There will be a separate translation and discussion component of the seminar consisting of untranslated texts by Hermann Cohen, Paul Natorp, Ernst Cassirer and Hermann Weyl. Successful completion of this section may count as completion of the first half of the seminar sequence, and will also satisfy the German language requirement.

Philosophy 285A, Michael Nelson – Moral Constitutivism: Moral Rationalism, Agency and Morality

The seminar will focus on a version of moral constitutivism based on Kant's Formula of Humanity, which states, crudely, that one should always treat the humanity of a person as an end in itself and never as a mere means. The hope is that we can formulate a principle that is plausibly both at the heart of all moral requirements, in the sense that, whenever someone acts immorally, it is because they have violated that principle, and a principle of practical reason and rationality, so that, whenever someone x acts immorally and so violates that principle, x has also thereby acted contrary to what x should, in the most inclusive sense, do.

Phil 285A will be linked with Luca Ferrero's PHIL285B in the winter on constitutivism. While one can take either seminar individually, there is also the option of taking both seminars in such a way that one can write, over the period of both quarters, a single, more extensive 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 (8 units) at the time of completion of the paper. Students taking the linked course option will be required to write a detailed outline or rough draft at the end of the fall quarter.

WINTER 2020

Philosophy 275B, Peter Graham – Proseminar in Metaphysics and Epistemology

Philosophy 280, Erich Reck – The Dynamics of Reason

For the last few decades, Michael Friedman has investigated the "dynamics of reason". To do so means, roughly, tracing the ongoing interactions and inter-dependencies between philosophy, the sciences, and society from Kant to the early 20th century, with special focus on changes in our understanding of "*a priori* reasoning" and related notions (the "relativized *a priori*", "conceptual change", "scientific revolutions", "rationality" and "relativism", the rise of "scientific philosophy", etc.). The underlying assumption, for Friedman and his followers, is that core developments in the history of philosophy, and with them some current debates, are hard to understand without factoring in these interactions. Friedman's project builds on earlier works by Gerd Buchdahl, to whom he owes the term 'dynamics of reason', and by Ernst Cassirer, e.g. his 4-volume *Erkenntnisproblem*. In this seminar we will focus on Friedman's own views, including their gradual broadening. The goal will be to understand what he means by "reason", how he

sees it as “dynamic”, and what the significance is for current views about the role of philosophy.

Philosophy 283, Coleen Macnamara – The Ethics of Blame

Philosophy 284B, Pierre Keller – Robert Brandom’s Hegel

Robert Brandom’s massive and brilliant new book on Hegel: *A Spirit of Trust: A Reading of Hegel’s Phenomenology* will be the focus. Discussion of the book will involve looking at both the parts of Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit* that Brandom discusses and the parts of Hegel’s *Phenomenology* that he does not discuss. We will also be concerned with the roots of Brandom’s reading of Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit* in the thought of Wilfrid Sellars and with Brandom’s reading of Hegel and of Kant. The dynamic structuralism that I take to provide the best and most comprehensive reading of Hegel and of the Copernican revolution and indeed of science and of its relation to philosophy and to literature will provide a point of contrast.

Philosophy 285B, Luca Ferrero – Constitutivism

In this seminar, we will investigate the structure and promise of so-called ‘constitutivist’ theories, which purport to ground the authority of some normative pressures (most notably those of morality) and to derive their substantive content on the basis of the constitutive features of some items or activities (most notably, agency). The main focus of the seminar is on the constitutivist strategy in its most general form (as it applies to various normative domains, from epistemology to morality) and whether it can address a variety of challenges, including the ‘shmagency objection’, the bad-action problem, and the worry of formalism. Time permitting, we will consider the relationship between constitutive arguments and transcendental arguments.

Phil 285B will be linked with Michael Nelson’s PHIL285A on moral constitutivism from the Fall. While one can take either seminar individually, there is also the option of taking both seminars in such a way that one can write, over the period of both quarters, a single, more extensive 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 (8 units) at the time of completion of the paper. Students taking the linked course option will be required to write a detailed outline or rough draft at the end of the fall quarter.

Philosophy 276, Eric Schwitzgebel – 3rd and 4th Year Research Workshop

A workshop for 3rd and 4th year students working on their Proposition or Dissertation Prospectus, meeting 2 hours per week. 3rd year students working on a Proposition are advised to sign up for both Winter and Spring quarters. 4th year students working on a Prospectus are advised to sign up for the Winter quarter, though they may sign up for both quarters. Students will present work in progress to the seminar and will receive feedback on their projects. Students who sign up for 4 units of Phil 276 and complete a draft of their Proposition during the quarter may receive a grade for the workshop and count it as one of the 15 courses required for the PhD.

SPRING 2020

Philosophy 275C, Andrews Reath – Proseminar in Value Theory

This seminar will survey 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 some of the main currents in contemporary moral theory—rational (deontological) intuitionism, consequentialism, contractualism, contemporary Kantianism and virtue theory.

Philosophy 281, Jozef Muller – The *Nicomachean Ethics*

We will be reading the *Nicomachean Ethics*.

Philosophy 282, Maudemarie Clark – Nietzsche’s Philosophical Psychology

Philosophy 283, Agnieszka Jaworska –

Philosophy 283, Kim Frost – The Will

This seminar will be exploratory. I want to get a sense for some different ways philosophers have thought of the will as an explanatory principle and their relative merits. We’ll start in the middle with Hyman’s *Action, Knowledge, and Will* which criticizes “the modern theory of the will and its incomplete demise”. We’ll supplement working through the first six chapters of Hyman’s book with glances at primary texts in some (not all) of e.g. Descartes, Hobbes, Locke, Hume, Reid, Berkeley, Bentham, Mill, Ryle, and Wittgenstein, and perhaps some more contemporary causal action theory literature which plausibly retains many of the (purportedly bad) commitments that Hyman criticizes. Then we’ll briefly look back to Aristotle, Aquinas (and maybe Duns Scotus) and Kenny’s reading of their views about the will. (Kenny is an inspiration for Hyman’s book.) Then we’ll look forward to Kantian conceptions of the will as practical reason, looking at Rödl, perhaps Korsgaard, perhaps Engstrom (or Reath), and maybe Kant himself on the distinction between *Wille* and *Willkür*. Depending on student interest, in the last week or two we’ll have a quick look at critiques of faculty psychology, or Hegel, or O’Shaughnessy, or two-way powers literature, or Holton on weakness of will, or, you know, whatever. Ideally, by the end of the quarter we will have assembled a kind of laundry list of mistakes (esp. equivocations and illegitimate reifications) one could make in theorizing about the will, a list of the guilty and wrongfully accused, and suggestions for reform.

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