

Philosophy 80200 – Proseminar

Fall 2020

Wed 11:45-1:45; online

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I. Epistemology

1. Aug 26 – Plato, *Meno*.
2. Sept 2 [P] – W.V. Quine, “Epistemology Naturalized”; []
Lorraine Code, “How Natural Is Epistemology Naturalized?” []

II. Metaphysics

3. Sept 9 – (a) Aristotle, *Categories* 1-5 and Aristotle, *Physics* I.1, 6-8; []
(b) Aristotle, *Physics* II.1-3, 7-9 [].
4. Sept 16 [P]– Averroes-Ghazali debate on causation [];
Hume, “Of the Idea of Necessary Connection” (*Enquiry*) []
5. Sept 23 – Jonathan Schaffer, “Is There a Fundamental Level?” [];
Kerry McKenzie, “Fundamentality” []
6. Sept 30 [P]– John Dupré, “Is ‘Natural Kind’ a Natural Kind Term?” [];
Sally Haslanger, “Gender and Race: (What) Are They? (What) Do We Want Them To Be?” []

III. Ethics

7. Oct 7 – Philippa Foot, “Morality as a System of Hypothetical Imperatives” [];
John McDowell, “Is Morality a System of Hypothetical Imperatives?” []
[Oct 14: CUNY Monday; no class]
8. Oct 21 [P] – Friedrich Nietzsche, “Second Essay: “‘Guilt’, ‘bad conscience’ and related matters” pp.35-67 in *Genealogy of Morality* [];
Michel Foucault, “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History” [];

V. Mind & Language

9. Oct 28 – H.P. Grice, “Logic and Conversation” [];
Ishani Maitra, “Subordinating Speech” []
10. Nov 4 [P] – Tamar Gendler, “Alief in Action (and Reaction)” [];
Eric Schwitzgebel, “Acting Contrary to our Professed Beliefs” []
11. Nov 11 – Ruth Millikan, “A Common Structure for Concepts of Individuals, Stuffs, and Real Kinds” [];
Herman Cappelen, “Conceptual Engineering: The Master Argument” []

IV. Politics

12. Nov 18 [P] Marx, “Alienated Labor”[]; Cornel West, “A Genealogy of Modern Racism”[];
[Nov 25: CUNY Friday; no class]
13. Dec 2 – John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty* (chapters II & III) [];
Elizabeth Anderson, “Social Movements, Experiments in Living, and Moral Progress: Case Studies from Britain’s Abolition of Slavery” []

VI. Aesthetics

14. Dec 9 – [P] Paul Taylor “Literature and Race” [];
Anne Eaton “Feminist Philosophy of Art” []

Description

- The Proseminar is restricted to and required for students entering the Ph.D. program. The primary goal is to get students accustomed to graduate-level writing, seminar discussion, and presentation skill. It is also designed to cover a wide range of areas in philosophy in an effort to broaden exposure. Everyone may have some expertise in some of these areas, but none in all. Thus, the emphasis is on development of skills for critically engaging new material, rather than bringing prior knowledge to bear. Unlike other seminars, the goal is not building up knowledge in one area, but on honing philosophical skills that can be applied more generally. In our selection we have aimed to achieve balance in various dimensions so far as that is possible in a series of 14 classes, though above all we have tried to make sure all the readings are interesting and excellent contributions on important and stimulating topics that will be productive for us to engage with collectively. We think they will interact in interesting and often open-ended ways, and we hope you enjoy reading them.

Requirements

- Readings must be done in advance of each session. Try, as you read, to think of issues you’d like to bring out in discussion.
- Participation is required. If you are not comfortable talking in seminars, this is an opportunity to get some practice. If you tend to talk too much, you can practice trying to cut back or involve others in discussion.
- Every other week (indicated by a [P]), beginning September 2, submit a 2-page (double-spaced, 600 words) paper in class, pertaining to one of the readings for that day or from the previous session. If you choose the previous session’s readings, try to avoid repeating issues that came up in discussion that week. Use the space carefully (avoid excessive exposition, but say enough to set the stage). Focus on a specific argument or claim, and raise an objection, clarify an issue, or offer an alternative.
- Two presentations (to be scheduled on the first day). About 10 minutes in length, not longer. Handouts are strongly encouraged; Powerpoint and other presentation tools can be used but are optional. Avoid mere exposition or attempting complete coverage. Raise issues, with a critical focus, that promote discussion and expose core themes in the readings.
- The class is graded pass/fail. Unexcused absences or missing assignments can result in failure, which would have consequences for your future in the program. To pass you need only do your papers, show up, and participate. This is the one class where you can stop worrying about grades and simply focus on developing your skills and understanding as we engage collectively in a wide-ranging set of issues.