

Spring 2015

Department of Philosophy

Graduate Course Descriptions

http://www.buffalo.edu/cas/philosophy/grad-study/grad_courses.html

PHI 528 Philosophy of Language

Professor David Braun
Tuesday 1:00-3:50
Class #23936
Permission of Instructor

We will discuss indexicals and indexical attitudes. Indexicals are expressions whose reference and content can shift from context to context. Paradigm cases include 'I', 'now', 'here', 'she', and 'today'. Indexical attitudes are attitudes, such as belief, that dispose one to utter sentences that contain indexicals. Examples include beliefs that an agent might express by uttering the sentences 'I am hungry', 'She is from Utah', 'The time is now 1:15', and 'There is smoke here'. We will begin with David Kaplan's theory of indexicals. We will then consider John Perry's and David Lewis's arguments that indexicals and indexical attitudes pose problems for traditional views about propositions and attitudes. We will next consider Cappelen and Dever's recent book, *The Inessential Indexical*, which claims that many philosophers (including David Lewis) have drawn the wrong lessons from Perry's and Lewis's arguments. This will lead us into an examination of the semantics of attitude ascriptions. We will next consider attitude ascriptions that are commonly said to attribute first-person attitudes, even though they do not contain indexicals, for instance, 'John wants to eat' and 'Mary expects to leave soon'. We may look at papers that argue (or assume) that Perry's and Lewis's views have important consequences for epistemology, ethics, and other areas of philosophy outside of philosophy of language and mind. Required work: Short (two to three page) papers nearly every week during the semester, a seminar paper of twelve to fifteen pages, and a one-paragraph abstract for the latter paper, due several weeks before the long paper.

This will be an advanced course in philosophy of language. I will assume that all students in the seminar have taken a course equivalent to UB's Philosophy 328 (Philosophy of Language) and Philosophy 315 (Symbolic Logic). Kaplan's theory of indexicals uses possible-worlds semantics, and so do many theories of propositional attitude ascriptions. I will introduce this technical material as well as I can, but those who have taken the equivalent of UB's Philosophy 519 (Topics in Logic) or Philosophy 619 (Modal Logic) will find this material easier than those who have not. This course will be open to matriculated graduate students in philosophy. All others must have my permission to enroll.

PHI 561 Plato

Professor Jiyuan Yu
Thursday 1:00-3:50
Class #23938

We will read the Apology, the Gorgias, the central part of Republic, and the first part of the Parmenides. Selections from other dialogues that deal with related issues will also be discussed. The focus will be on the development of ethics from Socrates to Plato. Issues to be discussed include Socratic elenchus, moral skepticism and certainty, the relation between virtue and knowledge, the unity of virtue, the division of the soul, the relation between morality and metaphysics, and the philosopher-king dilemma. Requirement: one seminar presentation and one major research paper (worth 50% of your final grade).

Text: Plato: Complete Works, edited by John Cooper, Hackett, 1997

PHI 598 Young Kant (Special Topics)

Professor James Lawler
Wednesday 1:00-3:50
Class #22387

Understanding Kant's "pre-critical" philosophy is central to appreciating his three critiques. Overshadowed by the critiques, the early work stands on its own as a central contribution to the development of the philosophy of its time. It not only prepares the way for the critiques, but constitutes a hidden background without which they cannot be adequately understood. Here we find Kant's great cosmology, which is what Kant later regarded as the "thing-in-itself," persisting in his notion of the noumenal, and of the intelligible world. Although he finally decided that his grand cosmological vision could not be demonstrated, what cannot be strictly known can still be conjectured, and justifiably believed. The same applies to the proofs for the existence of God, including the "only possible proof" that remains implicit in the first critique. The only writer about whom Kant ever dedicated a major work, *Dreams of a Spirit-Seer Elucidated by Dreams of Metaphysics*, was Emanuel Swedenborg. Kant here explores a conjectural metaphysics of matter and spirit, and further formulates the meaning of "the intelligible world," providing the ontological framework of his later ethics. If only one of Swedenborg's spirit-seeings proved valid, how feeble must be the metaphysical dreams of philosophers!

Text: James Lawler, *The Intelligible World: Metaphysical Revolution in the Genesis of Kant's Theory of Morality*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013.

PHI 604 Teaching Philosophy

Professor Neil Williams
Monday 1:30-2:30
Class #22384

PHI 605 Supervised Teaching

Professor Neil Williams
Arranged
Class #14716

PHI 619 Modal Logic (combined with 417)

Professor John Kearns
M W 4:00-5:20
Class #23937

This course will survey standard systems of modal logic, with an emphasis on propositional modal logic. Considerable emphasis will be placed on proving results in and about the various systems. Kripke-style possible-worlds semantics will be explored, and we will also investigate some alternative types of semantics. We will consider and discuss philosophical issues concerning modality. The exact mix of topics covered will be partly determined by the composition of the class. Students will be given frequent homework assignments. There will be a midterm and a final exam, but no paper.

PHI 634 Decision Theory, with Application to Moral Psychology

Professor James Beebe
Tuesday 4:00-6:50
Class #22389

This course will introduce the central ideas of decision theory and game theory and will apply them to certain topics in moral psychology like altruistic behavior, collective action, and social contracts. We will begin with a survey of the basics of probability and some common mistakes people make in probabilistic reasoning. No prior knowledge of probability or decision theory is required.

See HUB Registration site for Individual Tutorial Course Sections with Philosophy Department Faculty to be Arranged with Permission of Instructor:

PHI 599 Graduate Tutorials (Arranged with Professor)

PHI 702 MA Thesis Guidance Tutorials (Arranged with Professor)

PHI 704 Dissertation Guidance Tutorials (Arranged with Professor)

See Office of the Registrar for policy and registration requirements
<http://registrar.buffalo.edu/schedules/index.php>

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