

Seminar Descriptions for 2020-2021

Fall 2020

PHL 800/880—Proseminar/Seminar in Philosophy of Science (Douglas)

Science and Values

Weds. 7:00–9:50 pm

What role should values, particularly social and ethical values, play in science? While science is often portrayed as “value-free,” even defenders of the value-freedom of science acknowledge the importance of social and ethical values in science—in helping to shape research agendas, in placing ethical restrictions on methodologies, and in shaping how the results of research get used. As a result, contemporary philosophy of science is in the midst of a robust discussion on values in science. This debate has led many philosophers to reject an ideal for science that aims for value-freedom. However, what ideal should replace the value-free ideal remains very much contested.

This seminar will discuss the current debate over values in science, considering the myriad ways in which values are seen to influence science (both legitimately and illegitimately), the competing norms concerning these influences, and the implications of these arguments for our understanding of science in democratic societies. We will consider the role of both epistemic and non-epistemic values, the nature of objectivity and bias, and the justification of scientific claims. Key arguments to be considered will be the epistemic priority of evidence and whether values are more subjective (and thus less reliable) than evidence.

This course will center on this debate as an example of an ongoing and robust philosophical debate, and one with profound practical import. We will use this example to examine how philosophical debate proceeds, how to learn from and intervene in such debates, and how to craft one’s own research agenda against the backdrop of ongoing academic work. Students will develop their own research project in the space of the discussion over values in science; such a project will focus on a particular area of science and/or a particular aspect of the current debate. Students will learn how to do formal peer review (doing so on each other’s work) and how to present their work formally. Finally, the seminar should result in a paper which could be submitted to a journal or conference. Required readings include *Current Controversies in Values and Science* (edited by Kevin Elliott and Daniel Steel, 2017).

PHL 810/820 – Seminar in History of Philosophy/Continental Philosophy (Lotz)

Marxist Philosophies

Mon. 7:00–9:50 pm

In many contemporary philosophical discussions, Marx and Marxism have been reduced to simplistic doctrines centered on exploitation, class struggle, and alienation; thereby dismissing these complexly intertwining epistemological and metaphysical questions within the horizon of a critical theory of society. In this seminar we will read and discuss major positions that emerged within the history of European Marxist thought and philosophy of the last 150 years. We will focus on philosophical and social aspects of these positions, while

paying less attention to economic theory (narrowly conceived), political philosophy and political movements. Though the scope of literature and figures in this field is vast, we will try to cover central aspects of structural Marxism, Humanism, Value Form Theory, Austro Marxism, Feminist Marxism, and Post-Operatism. Authors discussed will be, among others, Althusser, Marcuse, Adorno, Fromm, Lukacs, Lenin, Korsch, Negri, Frederici, Luxemburg, and Dunayevskaya. Perhaps we will figure out why Sartre's famous statement that Marxism "remains the philosophy of our time. We cannot go beyond it" might still be valid.

Format: Classical format; i.e., 45 minute introductory lecture by the instructor, followed by a presentation and/or free discussion

Evaluation: Protocol; 1-2 oral presentations about the scheduled class reading, combined with a 3 page write-up; final "conference style" 12-15 page paper (with up to two drafts discussed with ProfLotz)

Spring 2021

PHL 801 – Seminar in Teaching Philosophy (Katz)

Thurs. 3:00-5:50 pm

The seminar's aim is to help students to find ways to teach well and efficiently. We focus on PHL 101, since this is the one course most of our students will eventually teach. Seminar assignments include a teaching demo, a mock teaching interview, designing a syllabus and several assignments for PHL 101, and compiling a teaching dossier. Students bring their work to class, where we discuss it and offer suggestions.

Students also work with a faculty mentor (teaching a 100-300 level course) on the following: observing the mentor's teaching (for one lecture) and discussing his/her teaching strategies; guest lecturing for the faculty mentor (observed by the mentor) and then meeting to discuss the student's performance. (This faculty mentor will then be in a good position to contribute a teaching letter to the student's teaching dossier.)

We also devote as much time as is needed to discuss classroom dynamics: how to prevent or resolve conflicts, how to create and maintain an inclusive classroom environment, how to handle difficult or disruptive students.

In addition to these practical matters, we also read about, discuss, and reflect on various theories of teaching and learning. As Aristotle argues, expertise requires knowing "the 'why' and the cause" (*Metaphysics* A.1 981b28-30). The theoretical readings we cover will help students to understand *why* certain approaches might work better than others, so that they can make the best possible decisions about their teaching.

PHL 840 – Seminar in Value Theory (Whyte)

Tues. 7:00–9:50 pm

Environmental Justice and Anti-Colonial Philosophy

The seminar will explore the intersection of bodies of literature covering environmental justice and anti-colonial theory: Indigenous feminism and resurgence theories, coloniality of power, settler-colonial theory and landscapes of power theory (from environmental sociology). The seminar will connect these theories against ongoing analysis throughout the semester of the recent activism resisting North American expansion of the fossil fuel industries.

PHL 850 – Seminar in Social and Political Philosophy (Peters)

Weds. 7:00-9:50 pm

Freedom, Sovereignty, and Decolonization: Readings in Contemporary Indigenous and Black Political Philosophy

This seminar examines four interrelated questions, a) what frameworks should we utilize to interpret the histories of colonialism and anticolonial resistance? b) how do Black and Indigenous political philosophies contribute to theoretical and practical project(s) of decolonization? c) what is the relationship between Indigenous and Black political philosophies of decolonization? d) how can Black and Indigenous political philosophy aid our analyses of contemporary politics. Themes explored in the course include Indigenous erasure, chattel slavery, capitalism, racialization, and the imposition of sex and gender norms. Throughout the semester special attention will be paid to the similarities and differences between Black and Indigenous conceptions of decolonization, sovereignty, freedom, internationalism, the sacred, history, feminisms, and artistic productions. We will read contemporary interdisciplinary monographs and articles that utilize Indigenous and Black political philosophy to analyze critical approaches to de/colonial formations.

PHL 897/WS 897 – Seminar in Feminist Theories, Epistemologies & Pedagogy (A. Smith)

cross-listed as WS 897, and with ENG, SOC, and TE

Tues. 4:10-7:00 pm

General course description: Foundational knowledge, theory, epistemology, and pedagogy in women's and gender studies from a multi-disciplinary, global perspective. This course serves as the gateway course to the graduate specialization in Women's and Gender Studies in the College of Arts and Letters.