

# Seminar Descriptions 2023-2024

## Fall 2023

### 800-Level Graduate Seminars

#### **Prof. Douglas, PHL 800/880 (ProSeminar & Seminar in Philosophy of Science)**

Topic: Values & Science

There is a current robust discussion of the proper role for values in science, especially social and ethical values. While science is often portrayed as “value-free,” even defenders of the value-free ideal for 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. The argument from inductive risk expands these locations for values in science to include scientific inference. Many philosophers now reject the value-free ideal, but 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 history of the debate, 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. 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 (conducting one on a classmate’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. The course will thus cultivate these professional skills: 1) how to orient oneself in an academic literature, 2) how to scope manageable projects, 3) how to conduct and receive peer review, 4) how to deliver presentations, and 5) how to write and edit papers.

**Prof. Rauscher, PHL 810/850 (Seminar in the History of Philosophy)**

Topic: Hegel's Philosophy of Right

We will read the entire Philosophy of Right and cover the whole gamut of topics Hegel discusses. The seminar will begin with a brief overview of Kant's stress on freedom in his own political philosophy, look at Hegel's Phenomenology very briefly to understanding recognition and the social nature of human beings, and then concentrate on the Philosophy of Right.

**Prof. Ruiz, PHL 897 (Feminist Epistemologies)**

Topic: tbd

Please contact Prof. Ruiz for more information

**400-Level Seminars**

**Prof. Kendig, PHL 480 (Philosophy of Science)**

PHL480 Philosophy of Science focuses on fundamental questions concerning the nature and development of scientific knowledge and understanding. Part I focuses on the nature of scientific understanding and how scientific knowledge can be known. In Part II we focus on historical and philosophical problems and approaches to science. Is science best understood in terms of a reductionist or antireductionist framework? Is 'innateness' a scientific category? Is a theory-first or practice-first approach better for understanding

scientific knowledge production? And, what is the role of replication in experimental methodology? Part III centers on how these and other concepts and approaches facilitate—and in some cases thwart—the search for knowledge in specific scientific disciplines. We investigate the distinct categories, underlying assumptions, and structural frameworks that are revealed through studies in philosophy of biology, chemistry, anthropology, cognitive science, and neuroscience. This course will focus a bit more on anthropology.

**Prof. Hedrick, PHL 417 (Seminar in 19<sup>th</sup> Century Philosophy)**

This course is an in-depth look at the main currents in European philosophy during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. We will examine the writings of the following major figures: Friedrich Schiller, G. W. F. Hegel, Karl Marx, Søren Kierkegaard, and Friedrich Nietzsche (special focus on Hegel and Nietzsche), closing with a brief look at some of the currents of American pragmatism. Topics include: consciousness, self-consciousness, and knowledge; God and faith; the Enlightenment, capitalism, history and progress; the nature of morality and freedom; human nature and sociality; the distinctive character of modernity.

**Prof. Rauscher, PHL 416 (Hegel)**

This undergraduate class will also look at Hegel's philosophy of right, with a little less stress on comprehensiveness. *Graduate students should take the Fall 810 seminar!*

**Prof. Godden, PHL 418 (Seminar on 20th Century Philosophy)**

This class explores the confluence of two streams of philosophical thought: pragmatism and analytical philosophy. We begin roughly at the end of the story, with Richard Rorty's final book *Pragmatism as Anti-Authoritarianism*, appearing a decade before his death in 2007. This text is used as an entry point to a retrospective and prospective study of the

pragmatic and analytic traditions. Retrospectively, we examine of the influence of the American pragmatists Peirce, James, and Dewey on the analytical tradition—focusing on their effect on the “linguistic turn” in philosophical method, widely taken to be characteristic of the analytical approach. The legacy of this influence is located in challenges to the core tenets of empiricism (e.g., as seen in the work of the Logical Positivists): (i) the conceptual distinction between the analytic and synthetic, which was to provide a foundation for apriori knowledge, and (ii) the thought that there is an experiential “given” to provide the epistemological foundations of empirical knowledge of the world. Prospectively, Rorty’s work provides a doorway to contemporary pragmatic thought culminating in the works of the “Pittsburgh School”: Sellars, Brandom, and McDowell. There we explore two related themes: those elements of the analytical, empiricist tradition that can, in some sense, be recovered, and how philosophy ought to be practiced in their absence.

## **Spring 2024**

### **800-Level Graduate Seminars**

#### **Prof. Katz, PHL 801 (Teaching Philosophy)**

**Topic:** Teaching Pedagogies

The main goals of the seminar are: (i) to explore a variety of pedagogical approaches and classroom management strategies; (ii) to pair each student with a faculty mentor who observes and gives feedback on their teaching; (iii) to provide a constructive space for workshopping course materials and a teaching dossier; (iv) to create a supportive community of student teachers; (v) to help students to prepare for the job market. To that end, the seminar has four main projects:

- (1) The Teaching Dossier: Over the course of the semester, we will workshop the following components of a teaching dossier:

- statement of teaching philosophy
  - sample syllabus for an introduction to philosophy course
  - sample syllabus for a course in your area of specialization
  - graphical summary of the results of your student evaluations
- (2) The Teaching Demo: Each student will design a unit for an introductory philosophy course that they might teach, including readings, assignments, etc. They will then prepare and deliver to our seminar a 30-minute class session introducing this unit (including time for lecture, in-class exercises, discussion, etc.).
  - (3) The Mock Teaching Interview: Two classmates will prepare questions for a 10–15 minute teaching interview; another student will be the job candidate. Everyone observes and takes notes on the performance of the candidate, and there is a feedback session immediately following.
  - (4) The Teaching *Practicum*: The practicum has 2 parts. Part 1 (Observation): Each student will observe a faculty member's course and then meet with that faculty member to discuss pedagogy. Part 2 (Supervised Practice): Each student will deliver a guest lecture for this same faculty member and then meet to discuss their evaluation.

**Prof. Lotz, PHL 820 (Seminar in Continental Philosophy)**

**Topic:** Formalization and Value. From Husserl to Marx

In this seminar we will think about the question "What is a Thing?" via reading the first part of Husserl's *Crisis*, Heidegger's *The Question Concerning the Thing*, *On Kant's Doctrine of the Transcendental Principles*, Marcuse's *One Dimensional Man*, Heidegger's *The Question Concerning Technology* and chapter one and six of Marx's *Capital*. The idea is that the entire debate about reification and the modern crisis of experience and reason in critical theory needs to be grounded in Husserl's concept of formalization (mathematization of nature) and Marx's concept of value in *Capital* (mathematization of the social). Be prepared for a challenge.

**Prof. Grey, PHL 810 (Seminar in the History of Philosophy)**

**Topic:** Spinoza

The works of Baruch Spinoza were widely condemned and banned in early modern Europe, yet his ideas have had a powerful influence on many subsequent philosophical movements. In this seminar, we will engage in a close reading of his most important work, the *Ethics*, as well as selections from his political works and correspondence. Primary text readings will be paired with readings from recent scholarly literature on Spinoza's philosophy. Our main goal will be to critically evaluate Spinoza's arguments for his most distinctive philosophical positions. These include free will skepticism, the identity of mind and body, the fallibility of introspective self-knowledge, the reduction of natural right to power, and the primacy of education and mutual understanding among human goods. A secondary goal of the seminar, however, is to evaluate his central methodological assumption—namely, the belief that metaphysical views about human nature can be used to support substantive ethical and political conclusions about how human beings ought to live.

## **400-Level Seminars**

**Prof. Katz, PHL 411, Aristotle**

**Topic:** Aristotle's *De Anima* and *Nicomachean Ethics*

In his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, Hegel says of Aristotle: "he was one of the richest and deepest of all the scientific geniuses that have as yet appeared—a man whose like no later age has ever yet produced." In this course, we immerse ourselves in some of Aristotle's most challenging and fascinating works, with a primary focus on his theory of the soul and his ethics. Through close textual reading, seminar-style discussions, lecture, and writing, we study key texts in which Aristotle discusses such topics as the nature of

the soul, perception, imagination, thinking, understanding, the moral virtues, practical wisdom, happiness, and friendship.

**Prof. Bluhm, PHL 462, Philosophy of Mind**

In this course we will examine the way in which the mind has been understood in philosophy and in psychology and cognitive science. Topics covered will include introspectionism, behaviorism, functionalism, psychoanalysis and neuroscience. We will critically assess these different perspectives, including the similarities and the differences between philosophical and psychological theories and mutual influences between the disciplines. In the case of psychological approaches to the mind, we will also emphasize the way in which assumptions about the nature of the mind shape the methods that are viewed as appropriate for studying the mind.