

FALL 2012 GRADUATE COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

4000/6000-LEVEL COURSES

STUDIES IN MODERN PHILOSOPHY: “Berkeley, Hume, and Reid” PHIL 4311/6311

Instructor: John Tienson

Day/Time: Monday, Wednesday 12:40-2:05

Distribution Requirement: History

A study of the metaphysics and epistemology of George Berkeley (1685-1753), David Hume (1711-1776), and Thomas Reid (1710-1796).

Berkeley was an idealist. He argued that the only things that exist are minds and their ideas; there is no such thing as matter or material substance and all causes are mental. Berkeley’s arguments are surprisingly difficult to answer.

Hume is perhaps the only avowed skeptic among the great western philosophers. He argued, for example, that we cannot have any reason to believe that there are external objects or that events have causes, that none of our reasoning concerning matters of fact is justified, and that our belief that persons continue to exist over a period of time is a mere fiction. Hume is counted among the great philosophers in large part because of the philosophical problems posed by these skeptical arguments.

Early in his career, Reid was a follower of Berkeley. Reading Hume’s *Treatise of Human Nature* in 1739—the year the last parts of the *Treatise* were published—led him to reject most of his Berkeleyan views. Reid originated the common picture according to which Hume saw that Berkeley’s arguments apply to mind as well as matter, so that Hume’s skepticism is the *reductio ad absurdum* of notions that led to Berkeley’s idealism and that were already present in the philosophies of Descartes and Locke—especially their notion of ideas. In response to this tradition Reid developed a comprehensive and systematic philosophy centered on a defense of common sense. Having rejected ideas in the sense in which his predecessors used the word, Reid developed a sophisticated and important account of perception.

Philosophical comparisons with other figures in modern philosophy will be made throughout the course. For reasons having to do with their very different philosophical methods as well as their doctrines and arguments, the study of these three early modern philosophers can serve as an excellent preparation for a *critical* appreciation of much of 20th and 21st century analytic philosophy.

RECENT CONTINENTAL: “Julia Kristeva’s Philosophy of *Bios*”
PHIL 4441/6441

Instructor: Pleshette DeArmitt

Day/Time: Thursday 2:30-5:30

Distribution requirements: Continental/Practical

Description:

This course will focus on a central theme in recent Continental thought, that is, *bios* in all its senses-- life as existence, as biological life, as life cycle, as narrative (biography and autobiography), as well as its relationship to power (and powerlessness). The course will take up this theme in two ways: (1) the content of the course will entail a focused study of Julia Kristeva’s important work on *bios* in her recent writings, which brings biological, psychical, and political life together, and (2) the assignments for the course will allow students to develop a conference paper on a figure in 20th C. Continental philosophy who seriously engages with the topic of *bios*, including, but not limited to, Agamben, Beauvoir, Derrida, Esposito, Foucault, Irigaray, Kofman, and, of course, Kristeva. (See “Assignments” for full details.)

All the meanings of *bios* listed above are creatively and powerfully thought through in Julia Kristeva’s writings over the last decade. This course will be devoted to a careful study of Kristeva’s later works, in particular those that are engaged with the political philosophy of Hannah Arendt and the psychoanalytic thought of Melanie Klein. In addition to examining Kristeva’s volumes on Arendt and Klein, we will read selections from her recently published collection of essays, *Hatred and Forgiveness*, taking up themes such as vulnerability and disability, maternal passions, feminine fatigue, and love, hate, and forgiveness.

Course Goals:

This course has several intersecting goals: (1) to expose students to current area of research and debate in Continental philosophy, (2) to engage with the important feminist thought of Kristeva (as well as those of Arendt and Klein), and (3) to give students (especially graduate students) an in-course opportunity to develop a conference paper, which can ideally form the basis for a journal article. Graduates student will be expected to submit their seminar papers to an upcoming conference and undergraduates will be strongly encouraged to do so as well. (See below for some possible ideas. More will be discussed in the course.)

Written Requirements:

1. **Mid-term paper:** All students (graduates and undergraduates) will be expected to write a short, mid-term paper on Kristeva’s engagement with the notion of *bios* (approximately 4-6 pages).
2. **Seminar paper:** All students will be required to write a seminar paper on the topic of *bios*.

- a) **Undergraduates:** will submit an 8-10 page paper on Kristeva's thought (which may incorporate the work done for the mid-term). The professor will help students find appropriate forums for presentation of their papers.
- b) **Graduates:** will be expected to write a conference-ready paper and thus will submit a 3,000-word paper (standard conference length) on the theme of *bios* in the thought of a 20th C. Continental philosopher who treats the subject of *bios* in a serious and substantial manner. The paper topic and authors will be selected in consultation with the professor. Depending on enrollment, graduate students may be asked to present part or all of their seminar papers. The professor will assist students in selecting a venue to submit their work and with the submission process.

SPECIAL TOPICS IN PHILOSOPHY: "Egoism and the Foundations of Morality: Mandeville, Smith, Rousseau"
PHIL 4801/6801

Instructor: Remy Debes

Day/Time: Tuesday 2:30-5:30

Distribution Requirement: History, Practical

The question of egoism has distracted moral philosophy since antiquity. Not always well appreciated, however, is the historical and intellectual place of one of egoism's most radical advocates, the eighteenth century philosopher Bernard Mandeville. In his *Fable of the Bees*, Mandeville articulated a version of egoism that was unique in three ways.

First, Mandeville's argument was psychologically sophisticated in ways all previous considerations of egoism had not been. In particular, it had genealogical and psychoanalytic elements that foreshadowed by more than a hundred years Nietzsche's analysis of egoism. Second, Mandeville advanced a far more radical claim than all earlier egoist arguments, namely the *explicit* claim that all publicly acclaimed "virtue" is nothing but the upshot of private "vice," an in particular, of selfish desires (which in part, Nietzsche would also echo). Correspondingly, Mandeville argued that the best, most flourishing social state actually rested fundamentally on the practice of vice, and, in particular, the relentless (if masked) pursuit of self-interest. Third, Mandeville's theory is distinguished by the fact that, at least for a short time, it was his theory, not the Hobbesian view that dominated the early eighteenth century, let alone some more classical version of egoism, that other moral philosophers sought to contend with. In particular, this was true for Adam Smith and Jean Jacques Rousseau, who were writing in the second half of the century.

Smith and Rousseau were especially keen to refute Mandeville, and the focus of this course will be to understand why this was so, as well as to evaluate the differences between their respective attempts to turn back Mandeville's egoism. Several goals will loom large. (1) We will try to distinguish the psychological from the ethical dimensions of Mandeville's egoism, as well as to place his theory in some broader historical context viz. its place with respect to earlier and later egoistic doctrines. (2) We will give special attention to the fact that both Smith and Rousseau saw in the idea of "sympathy" (i.e. some kind of capacity to share in the experiences and feelings of others) a key resource to defeating Mandeville, even though Smith and Rousseau had very different notions of

sympathy. (3) We will pay special attention to the ways in which Smith marshaled ancient elements of Stoic philosophy in his own theory, and we will ask whether this suggests that his dispute with Mandeville is after all an extension of the old dispute between epicurean and stoic doctrine. (4) Most important, we will try to understand why Smith and Rousseau saw in Mandeville's theory fundamental challenges to core enlightenment values of liberty, freedom, and equality – for, indeed, this was a crucial worry uniting (if only loosely) Smith and Rousseau against Mandeville. In this respect we will ask: Why does egoism threaten these liberal values? Why does Mandeville's theory, in particular, raise such worries (i.e. in a way that, say, Hobbes does not)? How do we reconcile Smith's rejection of Mandeville's theory with the usual reading of Smith as a proponent of self-interest viz. its positive influence in the marketplace? Can self-interest and a commitment to liberty be reconciled in a way that, on the one hand, doesn't simply grant unfettered freedom to the pursuit of self-interest, but, on the other hand, still preserves the belief in a free market? Finally, how do Rousseau's worries about egoism differ from Smith's, and what sense of liberty, freedom, and equality does Rousseau seek to preserve?

7000/8000-LEVEL COURSES

SEMINAR IN A MAJOR FIGURE: "Plato" **PHIL 7020/8020**

Instructor: Tim Roche
Day/Time: Monday 5:30-8:30
Distribution: History, Major Figure

A careful reading of some of Plato's so-called "late period" dialogues, including the *Sophist*, the *Statesman*, and selections from *Phaedrus*, *Philebus*, and *Lysis*. We will also look back at some relevant sections of the *Republic* and, if possible, also study the complex and difficult inquiry found in the *Theaetetus*. The *Sophist* suggests that it is the first of a series of three dialogues devoted to defining the natures of the sophist, the statesman, and the philosopher. We have the first two of these studies, but we do not have an entire dialogue by Plato devoted to giving an account of the philosopher. One aim of this seminar, then, will be to consider, on the basis of what we find in the extant dialogues, what Plato might have said about the nature of the philosopher had he completed his trilogy.

SEMINAR IN CONTINENTAL PHILOSOPHY: "Hermeneutics" **PHIL 7030/8030**

Instructor: Shaun Gallagher
Day/Time: Tuesday 5:30-8:30
Distribution: Continental, Theoretical

Hermeneutics is the theory and practice of interpretation. Philosophical hermeneutics has a rich

history which, since the 18th century, is primarily traced out in German texts. After a quick reading of Plato's *Ion*, we'll read a selection of texts in the historical development of hermeneutics from Chladenius to Heidegger. We'll then focus on Gadamer's *Truth and Method* and the various debates that Gadamer had with Betti, Habermas, Derrida, etc. Finally we'll ask about recent developments and possible future developments in hermeneutics.

SEMINAR IN NORMATIVE PHILOSOPHY: "Collective Responsibility"
PHIL 7040/8040

Instructor: Deborah Tollefsen
Day/Time: Thursday 5:30-8:30
Distribution: Analytic, Practical

We hold individual human beings morally responsible for their actions. We praise and blame individual human behavior as moral or immoral, good or bad, virtuous or vicious. Our practice of holding individual human beings responsible seems to presuppose that agents have certain capacities. Which capacities are necessary and/or sufficient for moral agency is hotly contested. Does moral agency require radical freedom? Does it require deliberative and rational capacities? Does it require certain affective attitudes?

It also seems that we are inclined to hold groups (for example: corporations, committees, juries, research groups, and mobs) morally responsible. At least we are sometimes inclined to attribute praise and blame to groups and to morally appraise collective actions. But are we to understand collective moral responsibility in the same way as we understand individual moral responsibility? Can groups be moral agents? Can moral responsibility be distributed among group members? Can a random collection of people be held morally responsible? Does the structure of a group contribute to the conditions under which we are likely to attribute moral responsibility to the group?

This seminar will explore these and many more questions. We will consider closely a number of different theories regarding the nature of collective moral responsibility, the nature of different types of groups and, as a result, we will also explore a number of different theories regarding moral responsibility and moral agency. We will focus on articles by Margaret Gilbert, Larry May, Virginia Held, Harry Frankfurt, P.F. Strawson, Peter French, David Copp, Deborah Tollefsen, and many others.

To whet your appetite consider the following case (a fanciful one, but actual collective acts of violence are easy to find as well):

A group of 500 people murder (and so intentionally kill) a man by doing the following: each person takes an ordinary pushpin and sticks the pin in to the man's heart. The man slowly bleeds to death and the 500 gleefully watch. No one pushpin kills the man. After all, it is just a pin! So, no individual act of pushing the pin in to the man's heart is the cause of his death. If no individual caused his death, then no one individual can be held morally responsible for his death. Yet, surely someone is responsible! The group of 500 seems a likely candidate. But how we can hold this group morally responsible if we cannot hold each individual morally responsible?

SEMINAR IN SOCIAL AND POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY: “Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau”
PHIL 7541/8541

Instructor: Bill Lawson
Day/Time: Monday 2:30-5:30
Distribution: History, Practical

A systematic reading of the works of Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and Rousseau. The works include, *The Leviathan*, *The Two Treatises of Government*, and *The Social Contract*. There will be a major paper due.

COLLOQUIUM: “Foucault’s *The Archaeology of Knowledge*”
PHIL 8051

Instructor: Mary Beth Mader
Day/Time: Wednesday 5:30-8:30
Distribution Requirements: Continental, Theoretical

This advanced seminar is devoted to close examination of Michel Foucault’s 1969 book, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. The book is Foucault’s most sustained and difficult theoretical work about his philosophical approach. It treats historiography, philosophy of the sciences, philosophy of language, epistemology of the social and the nature of epistemological change. In preparation for the course, students should have read Foucault’s *The Order of Things* prior to its start.

Emphasis in written assignments will be upon focused, individual, philosophical research on topics and sources strictly linked to the text studied. Enrolled students may propose preferred forms of work for all graded assignments, and I will seek to accommodate those proposals. Master’s students may enroll in the course with instructor permission.

It is likely that this course will be co-taught with a visiting Erasmus Mundus professor. In that case, the above course description applies only to the half of the semester that I would teach.