

**COURSE DESCRIPTIONS  
GRADUATE COURSES, SPRING 2016**

Department of Philosophy  
University of Memphis

**Tim Roche**

**STUDIES IN ANCIENT PHILOSOPHY**

PHIL 4/6211

TTH 1:00-2:25, CL 329

<History>

**PLATO AND THE METHOD(S) OF PHILOSOPHY**

It is widely believed that Socrates (the historical Socrates who lived between 469 B.C.E. and 399 B.C.E.) motivated Plato to turn away from his interest in pursuing a career in politics to engage in the study and writing of philosophy. In particular, Plato's disgust with what he took to be the unjust execution of his mentor impelled him to write philosophical dialogues, most of which feature a character named "Socrates" as the primary discussant. Many scholars also believe that we have a rough idea of the chronological order of the composition of the Platonic dialogues, and divide them accordingly into the so-called "early period", middle-period", and "late period" of Plato's career. (While it is not necessary to accept the claim that we know the chronology of the dialogues, it is helpful to use the mostly agreed upon period divisions of the dialogues for the purpose of organizing our inquiry in this class.) Three other points will help to reveal what this class is about. First, in the late period dialogues, *Sophist* and *Statesman*, Plato indicates that he is composing a trilogy of dialogues aimed at discovering the natures of the sophist (*sophistēs*), the statesman (*politikos*), and the philosopher (*philosophos*). We possess the first two dialogues of this planned trilogy, but from the evidence we have, the dialogue *Philosopher* was never written. This fact prompts the question, 'what was Plato's conception of a philosopher?' We can go further and ask 'what do *we* think a philosopher is, and how does our view compare with Plato's?' Second, it is natural to suppose that what distinguishes a philosopher from others who have and exercise other forms of expertise is the *type of rational activity distinctive of the philosopher*. This idea leads us to consider the question of *method*: 'What is the distinctive or characteristic method(s) of inquiry and reasoning that pertains to the philosopher?' Third, it is true, for the most part, that the early, middle, and late period dialogues employ and/or examine and discuss three different methods of inquiry/reasoning. For the early period dialogues reveal a "Socrates" who employs the method of the *elenchos* (testing, refutation, cross-examination), the middle period dialogues employ and discuss the methods of hypothesis and dialectic, and several late period dialogues introduce a new way of engaging in

dialectic, one called the method of collection and division. We will study a number of early, middle, and late dialogues in order to try to answer the questions we have raised about method and the nature of the philosopher. A final, and to me, fascinating question to be discussed in the class is the following: if, in the last period of his life, Plato came to the conclusion that the method of hypothesis, dialectic, or collection and division, not the method of the *elenchos*, was the distinctive method of the philosopher, then did Plato abandon his belief that Socrates was a proper philosopher?

The class will read all or parts of the following dialogues: *Euthyphro*, *Apology*, *Laches*, *Charmides* (early period), *Clitophon*, *Meno*, *Phaedo*, *Republic*, *Phaedrus* (middle period), and some sections of *Theatetus*, *Philebus*, and *Sophist* (late period). Graduate students (and interested undergraduates) will also read the very recent book, *Clitophon's Challenge: Dialectic in Plato's Meno, Phaedo, and Republic* by Hugh Benson.

#### TEXTS

*Plato: Complete Works*, eds. J. Cooper & D.S. Hutchison, Hackett, 1997. ISBN: 9780872203495. This text or its equivalents is required. (The meaning of "equivalents" will be discussed in class.)

*Clitophon's Challenge: Dialectic in Plato's Meno, Phaedo, and Republic*, Hugh Benson, Oxford University Press, 2015. ISBN: 9780199324835. This text is also required. Students needing help obtaining access to the text should contact me to discuss the matter.

#### COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Undergraduates: Regular attendance, a midterm paper, and a final paper.

Graduate Students: Regular attendance, a class presentation, and a final paper.

**Deborah Tollefsen**

**PHILOSOPHY OF MIND**

PHIL 4/6421

MW 12:40-2:05, CL 409

<Theoretical>

<Cognitive Science Certificate>

#### **IS HUMAN COGNITION UNIQUE?**

One of the central questions exercising contemporary philosophers of mind and those interested in comparative psychology is whether or not human cognition is unique. Animals clearly exhibit intelligence, but many have wanted to maintain the view that, although we are evolutionarily continuous with animals, humans exhibit capacities that no other non-human species exhibit.

This position isn't new. The history of philosophy is littered with attempts to distinguish human beings from animals. What is new about recent debates is the reliance on empirical research and a movement away from appeal to properties such as rationality and intelligence to characteristics that are of a more social nature.

In this course we will read two recent books by theorists who argue that human beings are unique. The first, *Mindshaping: A Framework for Understanding Human Social Cognition* (MIT Press, 2013) by Tadeusz Zawidzki (Professor, Philosophy, George Washington University), argues that the essential difference between human and non-human animals consists in human's capacity to shape each other's mind in ways that make them easier to understand and interpret.

The second, *A Natural History of Human Thinking* (Harvard University Press, 2014) by Michael Tomasello (Professor of Evolutionary Anthropology, Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology, Leipzig, Germany) argues that what makes human cognition distinctive is our ability to engage in forms of collective intentionality including shared goals and shared intentions.

Prof. Zawidzki will join the course for one week in March. He will give a lecture and engage with students on the topic of his book.

This course fulfills one of the requirements for the graduate certificate in Cognitive Science.

This course has the following prerequisite: introduction to philosophy (1101 or 1102) and elementary logic (1611) or permission of the instructor.

Texts:

*Mindshaping: A Framework for Understanding Human Social Cognition* (MIT Press, 2013)

*A Natural History of Human Thinking* (Harvard University Press, 2014)

Requirements:

Class participation in discussion

Class presentation (each student will be required to present a synopsis on a chapter and to facilitate discussion by introducing questions and background or secondary literature)

10-15 page research paper. The topic must be approved ahead of time by the instructor. Deadlines for abstracts, outlines, and rough drafts will be set by the instructor and meeting those deadlines will contribute to the overall paper grade.

**Bill Lawson**  
**Seminar in Normative Philosophy**  
PHIL 7/8040  
M 2:30-5:30, CL 213  
<Practical>

**John Locke, Frederick Douglass, Derrick Bell: Themes from the Work of Bill Lawson**

This course offers an examination of the writings of Bill E. Lawson in the area of African American philosophy. It will focus on his writings on slavery, music, environmental racism, Derrick Bell, and academic Philosophy. This course will explore the work of Lawson and discuss his writings against the backdrop of the history of racism and the African American Experience. His research will be read as part of ongoing debates regarding the place of race, language, and political action in the realm of public policy in the United States. In this regard, three of the major issues to be considered will be Derrick Bell's thesis regarding the permanence of racism, *social disappointment* as a condition arising from the black experience, and racism, philosophy and music. The course will include readings from the following texts: Lawson and McGary, *Between Slavery and Freedom*, Derrick Bell's *Faces at the Bottom of the Well*. We will read selected articles by Lawson and other materials needed to provide the context for his research projects.

**Tom Nenon**  
**Seminar in Modern Philosophy**  
PHIL 7/8301  
Thursday, 5:30-8:30, CL 409  
<History>

**Kant's Practical Philosophy**

A study of the Critique of Practical Reason.

**Mary Beth Mader and Verena Erlenbusch**  
**Seminar in Metaphysics**  
PHIL 7/8414  
M 5:30-8:30, CL 213  
<Theoretical>

### **The Metaphysics of Sex and Gender**

This course is an advanced introduction to current philosophical debates on gender and sexuality and focuses chiefly on the metaphysics of these categories. We will survey representative examples of some of the most influential and stimulating ways of conceptualizing sex and gender in various philosophical traditions. Issues to be treated include: essentialism about sex and gender; Freudian psychoanalytic theory of sexuality and its critics; Foucault's genealogy of sexuality; various forms of social constructivism (social kinds, phenomenology, performativity); the history of the science of sex and the importance of gender for scientific models of sex; intersex; and the role of sexual orientation and gender identity in conceptions of sex, gender, and sexuality.

**Dr. Mark Conley**  
**Cognitive Science Seminar: What is Literacy?**  
PHIL 7/8514  
W 2:20-5:20, FIT 405  
<Theoretical>