**Graduate Course Descriptions**

**Department of Philosophy**

**Spring 2015**

**Recent Anglo-American Philosophy**

PHIL 4422/6422

John Tienson

M/W 12:40-2:05

< Analytic / Theoretical >

A selective, historical survey of the analytic tradition in philosophy from the turn of the twentieth century to about 1980.

It is useful to think of philosophy in the analytic tradition as having entered a new phase around 1980: a particular set of problems in the philosophy of mind came to the fore, replacing philosophy of language at center stage. Philosophers who made this transition and those who have entered the field of analytic metaphysics and epistemology (broadly construed) since then take a certain body of literature, ideas, and arguments as common ground. This “common currency” derives from writings of Kripke, Putnam, Burge, Quine, and Wittgenstein, among others—as well as from works earlier in the century to which these authors were responding (such as Frege, Russell, and the logical positivists).

One aim of this course will be to acquaint students with this body of common currency. Since analytic philosophy was language-focused philosophy throughout much of its career, many of the issues discussed in the course will be issues in the philosophy of language.

**Seminar in Major Figures: “Derrida and the Ethics and Politics of Sacrificial Economy”**

PHIL 7020/8020

P. DeArmitt and K. Saghafi

Thursday 2:30-5:30

<Major Figure/Continental>

**Description:** This course will be devoted to a thematic study of several early and middle period works by the late French-Algerian philosopher. Derrida (1930-2004), author of over 80 books and numerous articles and essays, left behind a vast body of work that continues to grow with posthumous publications. Perhaps the best introduction to Derrida’s thinking is to examine his treatment of a problematic across a number of his writings. In this course, we will trace Derrida’s thinking of a certain “logic of sacrifice” or “sacrificial economy” from some of his earliest and best known writings, such as *Of Grammatology* and *Writing and Difference*, to middle period works like *The Gift of Death*. In these texts and others, Derrida examines the sacrificial logic and its economy that is at the core of Western thought, religion, and culture by engaging with thinkers as diverse as Rousseau, Hegel, Lévi-Strauss, Bataille, and Levinas. The rich body of work on sacrifice by French thinkers, including Marcel Mauss, Claude Lévi-Strauss, and Jean-Pierre Vernant, will be taken into consideration in our study of Derrida’s work.

**Race and Science**

PHIL 7040/8040

Luvell Anderson

Tuesday 2:30 – 5:30

<Analytic/Theoretical>

“Every reputable biologist will agree that human genetic variability between the populations of Africa or Europe or Asia is not much greater than that within those populations,” writes philosopher Anthony Appiah in his seminal article “The Uncompleted Argument: Du Bois and the Illusion of Race.” Many claim that race is a social construct and lacks a biological basis. Yet, notions of race continue to appear in scientific research.

In this course, we will examine the ways race has been and continues to be used in science and medicine. We will be concerned with how such uses might impact ordinary conceptions of race. We will look at both historical and contemporary texts. Some of the figures we will explore include Johann Blumenbach, François Bernier, Kant, de Gobineau, Du Bois, Appiah, Lucius Outlaw, Francis Galton, Evelyn Hammond, Lisa Gannett, Robin Andreasen, Quayshawn Spencer, Koffi Maglo, and Dorothy Roberts.

**Seminar in Epistemology:  From Individual to Collective Epistemology**

Philosophy 7421/8421

Deborah Tollefsen

Monday 2:30-5:30

<Analytic/Theoretical>

This seminar will begin by introducing students to basic concepts, issues, and debates in epistemology including doxastic voluntarism (do we have control over our beliefs and are we responsible for them?), knowledge and justification (is knowledge justified true belief? What is justification?) and testimony (are we justified in relying on the word of others?).  Having established a foundation in epistemology we will then turn to consider recent debates regarding the nature of group belief, group knowledge, group cognition, and group testimony.

**Cognitive Science Seminar**

PHIL 7514/8514

Professors David K. Oller and Stanley P. Frankin

Wednesday 2:20-5:20

< I assume: Analytic/Theoretical >

Please contact Professors Oller ([koller@memphis.edu](mailto:koller@memphis.edu)) and/or Frankin ([franklin@memphis.edu](mailto:franklin@memphis.edu)) for the course description.

**History of Sovereignty**

PHIL 7541/8541

Verena Erlenbusch

Wednesday 5.30-8.30

<Continental/History>

This course will introduce students to the rich and varied history of the concept of sovereignty. The course will be divided into three thematic sections. In weeks one to six, we will explore the articulation of sovereignty in the works of early modern political theorists. Weeks seven to twelve are dedicated to an examination of the ways in which the theories developed by early modern philosophers have been taken up by continental philosophers in the twentieth and twenty-first century. The last three weeks consider the articulation of a concept of sovereignty as self-determination, in particular as it has been proposed by Black philosophers.

Readings include works by Jean Bodin, Hugo Grotius, Thomas Hobbes, Baruch de Spinoza, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Walter Benjamin, Carl Schmitt, Michel Foucault, Giorgio Agamben, Marcus Garvey, and W.E.B. DuBois.

Seminars will consist of an introduction to the material and a workshop portion. Each week a student will present a draft of their final paper; another student will act as commentator. Presentations will be followed by a Q&A session.

Requirements: presentation, commentary, 15-page final paper on an approved topic of student choice, participation in Q&A sessions.