

GRADUATE SEMINARS 2024-25

FALL 2024

Philosophy 275A, Proseminar in Epistemology, Peter Graham (Monday, Noon-3pm)

Philosophy 282, Dylan Shaul (Monday, 3-6pm): Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*.

In this seminar, we will read the whole of G. W. F. Hegel's most famous work, *The Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807). Hegel's *Phenomenology* traces a grand odyssey of human experience through various forms of consciousness, self-consciousness, and reason; the history of Western civilization from Ancient Greece and Rome to the Enlightenment, the French Revolution, and German Romanticism; and the development of art and religion from Ancient Persia, India, Egypt, and Greece to Christianity, all culminating with an account of Absolute Knowledge, i.e. philosophy itself. We will work to understand the *Phenomenology* on its own terms, and consider its relevance for our own self-understanding today.

Philosophy 283, Howard Wettstein (Wednesday 11am-2pm): Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling* and related material from the Kierkegaard corpus.

Fear and Trembling is an account of the biblical story of the *Akedah*, the binding of Isaac, and needs to be seen against the background of other biblical texts, e.g. Chapter 22 of Genesis. The *Akedah* presents multiple challenges: how to understand God's aim in issuing this test of Abraham; how to understand Abraham's silent acceptance of the test and his subsequent behavior; the moral evaluation of God's imposing the test and of Abraham's behavior. Time permitting, we may also look at the Book of Job for another striking challenge to God's goodness.

Philosophy 283, Agnieszka Jaworska (Friday 11am-2pm): Margins of Agency

What can we learn about foundational issues and concepts in moral theory and moral psychology (autonomy, valuing, reasons for action, moral responsibility, etc.) by studying cases of "agency at the margins:" addiction, Alzheimer's disease, lesions in the prefrontal cortex, frontotemporal dementia, psychopathy, early childhood? Readings from contemporary literature.

Philosophy 284A, Pierre Keller (Tuesday 3-6pm): Foundations of Logic, Pragmatism and Phenomenology

Philosophy 276, 3rd and 4th year research seminar, Michael Nelson (Thursday 5-7pm)

WINTER 2025

Philosophy 275B, Proseminar, Barry Lam: Pragmatics in the Philosophy of Language

This proseminar will be a survey of speech act theory and the theory of conversational implicature found in JL Austin and HP Grice's work in the middle of the 20th century, and then turn to contemporary feminist developments of speech act theory in the philosophy of language.

Philosophy 280, Erich Reck: The Logic of Articulation

In his new book, *Moral Articulation* (2024), Matthew Congdon argues for the importance of the notion of articulation to understand moral concepts and the dynamics of moral practices. As he puts it, his goal is to elaborate the “logic of articulation”. In some recent talks (including one at UCR last spring), I have argued that a related notion of articulation played a central, although implicit and underappreciated, role in Thomas Kuhn’s *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962), there connected with the dynamics of science. In this seminar we will compare what these two authors mean by “articulation” and why they think it is philosophically significant. For both, “articulating” means much more than “putting things into words”. A crucial further ingredient is the “logical structuring” of concepts and practices, sometimes with radical re-structurings and transformative shifts as the result. A main goal of the seminar will be to understand that aspect better, by juxtaposing Kuhn’s and Congdon’s discussions.

Philosophy 283, Michael Nelson: Temporality

Contemporary metaphysics of time begins with McTaggart and that’s where we’ll begin, looking at his distinction between A and B theories or tenser and detenser theories of time and his arguments against both theories in his argument for the unreality of time. We’ll then read several articles from the analytic metaphysics tradition, working up to Kit Fine’s nonstandard realist views of tense and several extensions and defenses of his fragmentalist metaphysics. One of the core problems that arise is that of the movement of time, change of time, or moving now. To address this lacuna, we will turn to Sartre’s temporality chapter from *Being and Nothingness* to develop a novel account of the movement of time. Key themes are that we should be realistic about tense and a plausible realism of tense requires realism of aspect as well.

Philosophy 283, Eric Schwitzgebel: Robot and Alien Consciousness

We will attempt to assess under what conditions we would be warranted in thinking that a robot, AI system, or naturally-evolved space alien would, or would not, be conscious. Readings will mostly be philosophy but will also include selections in science fiction, Artificial Intelligence research, and astrobiology.

Philosophy 283, Coleen Macnamara: The Nature and Norms of Praise

Philosophy 284-B, Pierre Keller

In the first quarter of this two-quarter seminar sequence, we explored the philosophical foundations of phenomenology and of pragmatism as well as the critical idealism of the Marburg school (Cohen, Natorp, Cassirer). We discussed the dynamic structural foundations of 20th century thought in Peirce, Dewey, Cassirer, Husserl, Heidegger, Weyl, Brouwer, Ortega, Kuhn, Agamben, von Uexküll, Foucault.

We concluded the seminar with a systematic development of the political and legal basis of Kant's philosophy beginning with the A-Preface to the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Kant's conception of the *Critique of Pure Reason* as a fundamentally public critical process of self-knowledge in the Age of Critique was worked out and systematically defended. Kant found this authority challenging conception to be too dangerous to pursue once the kingship of Frederick the Great and the enlightenment Age of Frederick gave way to a less tolerant sovereign and an age of revolution. Kant turned to responding to the misinterpretations of the Critique still dominant today which he began to address beginning with his new motto from Bacon and the new Preface. We worked out Kant's pragmatism and his experimental method in the development of metaphysics as science as it is made explicit beginning with the B-Preface to the Critique (in response to the Garve-Feder phenomenalist and metaphysical realist misinterpretation of Kant). The relevance of Kant's Copernican scientific revolution to this systematic conception of philosophy, to the development of modern science from Copernicus to Kepler, to Newton and Leibniz and to 20th century philosophy and science was systematically developed. The systematic conception put forward by Kant especially in the B-Preface inspired Charles Sanders Peirce in the development of his pragmatic experimental philosophy and in his use of the term "pragmatism" to refer to it. The bearing of Kant's conception of the Copernican revolution and that of Peirce on John Dewey's attempt at a Copernican revolution was taken up. Dewey's criticism of Kant's Copernican revolution was discussed and its connection to Norman Kemp Smith's influential misinterpretation of Kant's purported "Copernican hypothesis" worked out.

In the winter quarter, we will work through Kant's conception of the fundamentally social, pragmatic and public conception of Critique with a focus on the part of the Critique of Pure Reason that remained unchanged from the first edition, the second half of the Critique, the Transcendental Doctrine of Method. As always, we will proceed with the microscopic care owed to great philosophy, microscopic care that must also keep systematic structure and philosophical conception ever before one's eyes. And we will also look at the way Kant returns to his initial project of the critique of authority in his final works after the death of Friedrich Wilhelm II (and a less pressing need to heed political authority), especially the Conflict of the Faculties and the

Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View displaying his demonstrative support for the ideals of the French revolution. Kant here became the spearhead of radical political Romanticism and of Fichte's revolutionary cosmopolitan conception. We will hear from those who are already expert on this or who wish to become experts. And finally, we will close with the brilliant way Karl Jaspers, Hannah Arendt, the young Habermas and the French generation of 1968, Foucault, Deleuze, Lyotard and Derrida took up this (early and) late critical Kant (against the background of Vuillemin's reconstruction of Kant's Copernican revolution and its aftermath).

SPRING 2025

Philosophy 275C, Proseminar in Value Theory, Myisha Cherry

Philosophy 282, Jozef Muller

Philosophy 282, Adam Harmer: Monads or Monism? Leibniz on the Structure of Reality

This course will offer an opinionated introduction to the philosophy of Leibniz, following the lead of my current book project. Leibniz notoriously argues that reality ultimately consists of monads: unextended, immaterial, mind-like entities. In his considered view, matter is not fundamentally real, but merely a phenomenon, which is somehow grounded (or "well-founded", as Leibniz puts it) on monads. One major line of argument that gets Leibniz to this conclusion is his so-called "Argument from Unity". This argument is both polemical—it is directed against Descartes and the Cartesians—and philosophical—it offers a general analysis of materiality and the consequences this has for the nature of reality. Leibniz's argument, though powerful, relies on certain commitments about the structure of reality. This makes his argument vulnerable to objections stemming from certain types of monism. We will explore these objections and consider how Leibniz might augment his argument in order to overcome them.

Philosophy 282, Sasha Newton: Self-Consciousness

This seminar offers an overview of contemporary theories of self-consciousness, examining how they compare with the approaches of Sartre, Kant, and Hegel. Our primary focus will be consciousness of oneself in thinking, judging, and inferring, though we will also examine it in perception, imagination, action, moral judgment, and emotion for comparative purposes. Additionally, we will consider how the different historical approaches to the topic inform our understanding of the consciousness of others.

Philosophy 283, Kim Frost: Anscombe's Philosophy of Agency

Anscombe is a giant of twentieth-century philosophy of agency. In this seminar we will try to work out how her action theory - which is not, as such, an ethical topic - is connected to her ethical work, by examining her conceptions of intentional action, voluntary action, and human action. We will read *Intention*, some related articles and lectures by Anscombe (especially focused on voluntary and human action, and her subtle divergence from Aquinas on these), and

some (long, but rewarding) interpretive articles from the 2022 volume *The Anscombean Mind*. I will point out good supplementary material as we go. (There is a bunch these days.) In the last couple of weeks, when we get to more speculative material that comes too late to determine which papers students write, I may also assign some work by Michael Thompson, by way of comparing and contrasting, and in order to see why Thompson thinks we need a prior logical examination of the very idea of a practice (much as Anscombe thought we need a prior logical examination of the very idea of intention) before we can develop ethical theory well.