



THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH
School of Philosophy, Psychology
and Language Sciences

MSc/PGDipl/PGCert

Philosophical Methods I

PHIL11177

Course Guide 2020-21

People

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Office hours:

Please email Dave Ward (Dave.Ward@ed.ac.uk) to make an appointment if you need to discuss material covered in the course or essay topics.

Course aims and objectives

This course offers an introduction to philosophical methodology, with a particular focus on thought experiments, conceptual analysis and the role of rational intuitions. We will consider a range of different contemporary and historical debates in the philosophy of mind, ethics and epistemology, each of which will involve reflecting on whether and to what extent intuitions and conceptual analysis should be used to inform philosophical reasoning.

Note on pre-recorded and on-campus lectures

This course is delivered through a blend of pre-recorded lectures, live online seminars, and online discussion forums. Pre-recorded lectures will be delivered by a range of faculty. All live online seminars will be delivered by Dr. Dave Ward. Please direct any queries regarding any segment of the course to Dr. Ward (Dave.Ward@ed.ac.uk) in the first instance.

Synchronous online seminars will be held fortnightly from Week 3 at a time to be announced. In asynchronous forum weeks, Dr. Ward will monitor forum discussions (see 'Discussion forums' below).

Intended learning outcomes

On completion of this course, students should:

- Have a grasp of some fundamental issues in philosophical methodology, including the nature and role of thought experiments, rational intuitions, and conceptual analysis.
- Be able to critically analyse and engage with literature by key philosophers in the fields covered by the course
- Be able to present arguments clearly and concisely both within a classroom context and in a 2,500 word essay.
- Exhibit transferable skills in research, analysis and argumentation.



Learning, teaching and assessment

Syllabus: Schedule of lectures, seminars, tutorials and assessments

Week	Topic	Lecturer	Activity
Induction 14 September			
Week 1 21 September	<i>Agency and Acting for a Reason</i>	Dave Ward	Asynchronous forum seminar
Week 2 28 September	<i>Hume on Miracles: The Great Original</i>	Alasdair Richmond	Asynchronous forum seminar
Week 3 5 October	<i>Hume on Miracles: Bayesian Approaches</i>	Alasdair Richmond	Synchronous online seminar: date TBA.
Week 4 12 October	<i>The Open Question Argument and the Paradox of Analysis</i>	Debbie Roberts	Asynchronous forum seminar
Week 5 19 October	<i>Moral Twin Earth</i>	Debbie Roberts	Synchronous online seminar: date TBA.
Week 6			



26 October	<i>Galileo's Falling Bodies, Newton's Bucket, & Einstein's Elevator</i>	Alistair Isaac	Asynchronous forum seminar
Week 7 2 November	<i>Artificial Intelligence & the Chinese Room Argument</i>	Alistair Isaac	Synchronous online seminar: date TBA.
Week 8 9 November	<i>Functionalism, Inverted Qualia, and Blockhead</i>	Suilin Lavelle	Asynchronous forum seminar
Week 9 16 November	<i>Folk Psychology</i>	Suilin Lavelle	Synchronous online seminar: date TBA.
Week 10 23 November	<i>Phenomenology and Cognitive Science</i>	Dave Ward	Asynchronous forum seminar
Week 11 30 November	<i>Phenomenology and Cognitive Science</i>	Dave Ward	Synchronous online seminar: date TBA.

Topics and reading

All the readings below should be available online via the University Main Library, using your MyEd login. If you encounter problems, contact the library or IT for support, or the course instructor (dave.ward@ed.ac.uk).

Week 1 – Agency and Acting for a Reason

We start the course by looking at some issues in the philosophy of action. What is the difference between genuine instances of agency, and things in the world that merely happen? For example, although the physical events involved in your jumping off a diving board might be very similar to those involved in your falling off a diving board, the two scenarios are very different in terms of the way in which your agency is



involved. How should we understand this difference? This week we will look at a few different suggested answers to this question, and think about some of the different methods that philosophers employ when trying to answer it.

Class Reading

Velleman, J.D. (1992) What Happens When Someone Acts?, *Mind* 101, pp.461– 481.

Hornsby, J. (2008). Agency and Alienation. In M. de Caro & D. MacArthur (eds.), *Naturalism In Question*. Cambridge, USA: Harvard University Press. pp. 173-87. [Available [here](#)]

Secondary Reading

Velleman, J.D. (2000/2015) Introduction, in his *The Possibility of Practical Reason (2nd edition)*, Michigan Publishing [available [here](#)]

Hornsby, J. (2004). Agency and Actions. *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement* 55:1-23.

<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/agency/>

Week 2 – Hume on Miracles: The Great Original

This week, we look at a classic, if oft-misrepresented, text from David Hume - Section X of Hume's first Enquiry, the (in) famous 'Of Miracles'. Our focus is on getting clear about (textual and interpretative) details of what Hume might actually have been trying to say and also on which pitfalls we'd be well advised to avoid. We'll look at how a miracle is defined by Hume, what makes miracle testimony problematic, Hume's positive account of induction (yes, there was such a thing) and his account of when miracle-testimony could be rationally compelling. (Yes, Hume did offer a view here too.)

Class Reading

David Hume, *Enquiries Concerning Human Understanding and Concerning the Principles of Morals*, (ed. L. A. Selby- Bigge, revised P. H. Nidditch, Oxford, Clarendon 1975), first Enquiry, Section X, 'Of Miracles'.

Duncan Pritchard & A. Richmond, 'Hume on Miracles', *The Bloomsbury Companion to Hume*, (edd. Alan Bailey & Dan O'Brien, Bloomsbury 2015): 227-44.



Secondary Reading

Stephen Buckle, 'Marvels, Miracles, and Mundane Order', *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, 79, 2001: 1-31. Michael Levine, "Miracles", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2005), Edward N. Zalta (ed.),

<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2005/entries/miracles/>.

Week 3 – Hume on Miracles: Bayesian Approaches

Building on week 2, this week looks at Hume on miracles through the lens offered by Bayesian probability theory. In particular, we consider questions like: What is Bayesianism? How might Hume's argument be recast in Bayesian terms? Which Bayesian interpretations of Hume work best?

Class Reading

Barry Gower, 'Hume on Probability', *British Journal for the Philosophy of Science*, 42, 1991: 1-19.

Secondary Reading

Jordan Howard Sobel, 'On the Evidence of Testimony for Miracles: A Bayesian Interpretation of David Hume's Analysis', *The Philosophical Quarterly*, 37, 1987: 166-186.

Jordan Howard Sobel, 'Hume's Theorem on Testimony Sufficient to Establish A Miracle', *The Philosophical Quarterly*, 41, 1991: 229-237.

Fred Wilson, 'The Logic of Probabilities in Hume's Argument against Miracles', *Hume Studies*, 15, 1989: 255 - 75.

Week 4 – The Open Question Argument and the Paradox of Analysis

G. E. Moore's Open Question Argument is supposed to show that no naturalistic reduction of ethical concepts and properties is possible. One of the ways in which naturalist moral realists have responded to this argument is to invoke the paradox of analysis. This week we aim to examine this argument and this response in order to understand in more detail both the nature of conceptual analysis and the paradox of analysis.



Class Reading

Moore, G. E. (1903) 'The Subject Matter of Ethics' in his *Principia Ethica*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Baldwin, T. (2010) 'The Open Question Argument' in *The Routledge Companion to Ethics*, John Skorupski (ed.), Oxford: Routledge

Secondary Reading

Earl, D. (2007). A Semantic Resolution of the Paradox of Analysis. *Acta Analytica* 22 (3):189-205. Jackson, F. (1998) *From Metaphysics to Ethics* Oxford: Oxford University Press, Chapter 6

Mason Myers, C. (1971). Moore's Paradox of Analysis. *Metaphilosophy* 2 (4):295–308.

Pigden, C. R. (2012). Identifying Goodness. *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 90 (1): 93-109.

Wilfrid Sellars (1964). The Paradox of Analysis: A Neo-Fregean Approach. *Analysis* 24 (Suppl-2):84 - 98.

Smith, M. (2013) 'Moral Realism' in *The Blackwell Guide to Ethical Theory* 2nd ed. Hugh LaFollette and Ingmar Persson (eds.), Oxford: Blackwell

Week 5 – Moral Twin Earth

Terence Horgan and Mark Timmons transplant Hilary Putnam's famous twin earth thought experiment to the moral case. This thought experiment asks us to imagine a twin of our earth where everything is exactly the same except that twin earthlings use 'good' to refer to different things in the world than we do. The intuitions we have about this case are supposed to make problems for various views about the nature of morality. This week we examine this thought experiment and the role of intuitions in detail.

Class Reading

Hare, R. M. (1952) *The Language of Morals* (OUP) p148-50. Horgan, T. and Timmons, M. (1991) 'New Wave Moral Realism Meets Moral Twin Earth' *Journal of Philosophical Research* 16:447-465.



Secondary Reading

David Copp (2000). Milk, Honey, and the Good Life on Moral Twin Earth. *Synthese* 124 (1- 2):113-137.

Joshua Gert (2006). Problems for Moral Twin Earth Arguments. *Synthese* 150 (2):171-183.

David Merli (2002). Return to Moral Twin Earth. *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 32 (2):207- 240.

Michael Rubin (2008). Sound Intuitions on Moral Twin Earth. *Philosophical Studies* 139 (3):307 - 327.

Mark van Roojen (2006). Knowing Enough to Disagree: A New Response to the Moral Twin Earth Argument. Russ Shafer-Landau (ed.), *Oxford Studies In Metaethics*, Volume 1. 161- 94.

Week 6 – Galileo’s Falling Bodies, Newton’s Bucket, and Einstein’s Elevator

Thought experiments have played an important role in the history of science, especially in clarifying the implications of difficult concepts. But how can mere speculation about counterfactual possibilities inform us about the world as it is? We examine several historically important thought experiments through the lens of John Norton’s claim that they should be understood as arguments. Understood as arguments, thought experiments may justify theoretical conclusions, explore novel phenomena, and (crucially) expose and clarify presuppositions.

Class Reading

Norton, J. D. (1995) “Are Thought Experiments Just What You Thought?” *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 26(3): 333–366.

Secondary Reading

Clatterbuck, H. (2013) “The Epistemology of Thought Experiments: A Non-Eliminativist, Non-Platonic Account,” *European Journal for Philosophy of Science* 3(3): 309–329.



Primary Sources

Galileo's falling bodies argument occurs late on the first day of his *Dialogue Concerning Two New Sciences*:

<http://galileo.phys.virginia.edu/classes/109N/tns61.htm>

Newton's "bucket argument" occurs in the Scholium to the Definitions at the start of his *Philosophiae Naturalis Principia Mathematica*:

https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Mathematical_Principles_of_Natural_Philosophy_%281846%29

Definitions (around 81)

Online Resource: <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/thought-experiment/>

Week 7 – Artificial Intelligence and the Chinese Room Argument

Philosophical thought experiments face the same epistemological challenges as scientific thought experiments; they also, however, rely heavily on intuitions and appeal to contentious concepts. Searle's "Chinese Room" thought experiment, which has been enormously influential in philosophy of cognitive science, provides a case study for these issues. From its first statement there have been questions about how the Chinese Room should be interpreted, what tacit assumptions are required to turn it into a rigorous argument, and whether its appeal to intuition is legitimate. Responses at initial publication by commentators from philosophy, cognitive science, and computer science illustrate how these different forms of criticism may be levelled against a thought experiment in an interdisciplinary context.

Class Reading

Searle, J. R. (1980) "Minds, Brains and Programs," *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 3(3): 417–424. *Plus these responses* (also in *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, vol. 3, 1980):

- Abelson, R. P. "Searle's argument is just a set of Chinese symbols," 424–5.
- Block, N. "What intuitions about homunculi don't show," 425–6.
- Dennett, D. "The milk of human intentionality," 428–30.
- Hofstadter, D. R. "Reductionism and religion," 433–4.



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- Minsky, M. “Decentralized minds,” 439–40.
- Rorty, R. “Searle and the special powers of the brain,” 445–6.

Secondary Reading

Read the full set of responses and Searle’s reply, *BBS* 3(3): 417–57.

Turing, A. M. (1950) “Computing Machinery and Intelligence,” *Mind* 59(236): 433–460.

Block, N. (1995) “The Mind as the Software of the Brain,” in Smith and Sternberg (eds.) *An Invitation to Cognitive Science*. MIT Press: 170–185.
<http://www.nyu.edu/gsas/dept/philo/faculty/block/papers/msb.html>

Online Resource <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/chinese-room/>

Week 8 – Functionalism, Inverted Qualia and Blockhead

In week 8 we will be looking at famous thought experiments which challenge the functionalist account of the mind. We will look at Ned Block’s challenges to functionalism along with some possible responses to them. We will also look at Sydney Shoemaker’s version of the ‘inverted qualia’ thought experiment, and discuss its strength as an ‘intuition pump’ for the claim that qualia cannot be functionally reduced.

Class Reading Block, Ned (2003). ‘Troubles with Functionalism’. In Timothy O’Connor and David Robb (eds.), *Philosophy of Mind: Contemporary Readings*. Routledge, pp. 222–33. Available as an e-book, and excerpted in Chalmers (2002), pp. 251–325.

Secondary Reading

Block, Ned (1980), ‘Introduction: What is Functionalism?’. In N. Block (ed.), *Readings in Philosophy of Psychology*, vol. 1. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, pp. 171–84. Available online at:
<http://www.nyu.edu/gsas/dept/philo/faculty/block/papers/1981.whatisfunctionalism.pdf>.

Lycan, William G. (1995). ‘The Continuity of Levels of Nature’. In *Consciousness*. Massachusetts, MA: MIT Press, pp. 37–48 (chapter 4, available online).



Chalmers, David J. (1996). 'Absent Qualia, Fading Qualia, Dancing Qualia'. In *The Conscious Mind: In Search of a Fundamental Theory*, Oxford: Oxford University Press
Philosophy, pp. 247–75. Available online at <http://consc.net/papers/qualia.html>.

Shoemaker, Sydney (1975). 'Functionalism and Qualia'. *Philosophical Studies: An International Journal for Philosophy in the Analytic Tradition* 27 (5): 291–315.

Shoemaker, Sydney (1982). 'The Inverted Spectrum'. *The Journal of Philosophy* 79 (7): 357–81.

Week 9 – Folk Psychology, Eliminativism and Instrumentalism

How do we make sense of the thoughts and behaviours of other people? A popular and plausible suggestion is that we have an implicit and commonsense theory of how minds work – a 'folk psychology' that we draw on in our understanding of other people. But what kind of theory is this? What is the status of the entities it posits – are they real, concrete states, explanatorily useful fictions, or something else? This week we look at some of these questions. Paul Churchland argues that folk psychology is a theory, but a false one that we have good reason to reject. Daniel Dennett argues that folk psychology is the result of adopting a particular kind of explanatory and predictive stance to an explanatory target. We'll look at the way in which Churchland and Dennett argue for these different understandings of folk psychology, and consider the relationship between these issues and some more recent work in philosophy of mind and cognitive science.

Class reading

Churchland, P. M. (1981). Eliminative materialism and propositional attitudes. *Journal of Philosophy*, 78(2), 67-90.

Dennett, D. C. (1991). Real patterns. *Journal of Philosophy*, 88(1), 27-51.

Secondary reading

On folk psychology:

Lavelle, J.S. (2019) *The Social Mind*. Routledge. Ch.2



On Eliminative materialism:

Antony, L. (2007) Everybody has got it: A defense of non-reductive materialism. In B. McLaughlin and J. Cohen (Eds.) *Contemporary Debates in Philosophy of Mind*. Blackwell.

Churchland, P. (1979). *Scientific Realism and the Plasticity of Mind*. Cambridge University press (ch. 4)

Horgan, T., & Woodward, J. (1985). Folk psychology is here to stay. *Philosophical Review*, 94(2), 197-226.

On The Intentional Stance:

Dennett, D. C. (1971). Intentional systems. *Journal of Philosophy*, 87-106.

Who are the folk?

Henrich, J., Heine, S. J., & Norenzayan, A. (2010). The weirdest people in the world?. *Behavioral and brain sciences*, 33(2-3), 61-83.

Lavelle, J. S. (2019). The impact of culture on mindreading. *Synthese*, on-line first 1-24.

Machery, E., 2012. Expertise and Intuitions about Reference. *Theoria* 27 (1(73)), pp.37–54.

Week 10 – Intuitions, Phenomenology, and Cognitive Science

The last weeks of the course return to the history of philosophy, with an eye on its relation to the present. We'll look at some ideas from a 20th Century philosophical movement that is still influential today – 'Phenomenology', the attempt to draw philosophical conclusions from careful reflection on experience. This week we look at Maurice Merleau-Ponty's ideas about the relationship between phenomenological philosophy, psychology, and other areas of enquiry. We'll try to understand Merleau-Ponty's view of the way in which our intuitions about our own minds and their relationship to the world interact with the kinds of understanding of ourselves that come from psychology, anthropology and other subjects.



Class Reading

Merleau-Ponty, M. (1964), *Phenomenology and the Sciences of Man*, in *The Primacy of Perception*, Northwestern University Press. [available on Learn]

Secondary Reading

Romdenh-Romluc, K. (2011) *Merleau-Ponty and Phenomenology of Perception*, ch.1: Merleau-Ponty's Phenomenology (pp. 4-35)

Carman, T. (2009). Merleau-Ponty and the mystery of perception. *Philosophy compass*, 4(4), 630-638.

Smith, David Woodruff, "Phenomenology", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2013 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), available at <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/phenomenology/>

Week 11 – Intuitions, Phenomenology and Cognitive Science

In the final week of the course, we'll look at the ways in which some more recent authors have understood the relationship between phenomenology and cognitive science. Are these straightforwardly compatible and continuous ways of investigating the mind, or is there an unresolvable tension between them? We will consider some different ways of answering this question that have been inspired by Merleau-Ponty's work, as well as some contemporary alternatives.

Class Reading

Gardner, S. (2015). Merleau-Ponty's Transcendental Theory of Perception. In Grist & Gardner (eds). *The Transcendental Turn*, OUP.

Wheeler, Michael (2013). Science Friction: Phenomenology, Naturalism and Cognitive Science. *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement* 72:135-167.

Secondary Reading

Romdenh-Romluc, K. (2018). [Science in Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology: from the early work to the later philosophy](#). In D. Zahavi (ed.) *Oxford Handbook of the History of Phenomenology*: Oxford: OUP, pp. 340-359.



Reynolds, J. (2017). Merleau-Ponty's Gordian knot: Transcendental phenomenology, science, and naturalism. *Continental Philosophy Review*, 50(1), 81-104.

Muller, R. M. (forthcoming). Merleau-Ponty and the radical sciences of mind. Forthcoming in *Synthese* (available online).

Resources

Reading list materials are available via the course LEARN site. Please ensure you have completed the library induction tutorial. Should you have any problems accessing any of the materials for the course please contact the course librarian, Ishbel Leggat: Ishbel.Leggat@ed.ac.uk

Assessment

This course has two components of assessment:

- 500-word essay plan due **Tuesday 10th November 2020** by 12 noon GMT. This is 15% of your mark for this course (see below for more details; see also separately uploaded essay outline form).
- 2,500-word final essay due **Tuesday 15th December 2020**, 12 noon GMT. This is 85% of your mark for this course (see uploaded video for more details about the final essay).
- Participation in the discussion forum (in terms of writing discussion notes and commenting on others' notes) is not assessed as such. However, failure to contribute posts each week during the semester will result in marks of up to 5% being deducted from your overall grade. (For more details see 'Penalties for failure to participate', below.) You will also have the option of submitting a formative essay, prior to your assessed paper, which is due on **Thursday 22nd October 2020**, 12 noon GMT. For more details regarding formative essays, general advice for writing etc. please see your Programme Handbook.

Essay Plan

This method of assessment consists in writing a plan for the final essay. The plan should begin with a short summary, describing your essay topic, the conclusion that you will aim to establish, and the arguments you will use to support that conclusion. This summary should be approximately two paragraphs in length (maximum 500 words). The plan should also include a list of the sections and subsections of the



essay and a bibliography, listing the papers and books that you will draw upon and discuss in the essay.

The essay plan will be marked out of 100. Feedback will be provided, with a particular view to making helpful suggestions and pointers for the preparation of the essay. Markers will be looking for a definite and clearly stated conclusion and for evidence of a sound and well planned argumentative structure that is feasible within the word limit. Markers will also look for a substantial and relevant bibliography that shows evidence of extensive reading into the topic.

Marking and feedback

Both your essay plan and your final essay will be marked using the grade descriptors for the Postgraduate Common Marking Scheme. The feedback on your essay plan will include brief comments and suggestions for improvements for you to reflect on and incorporate before you submit your final essay.

Both your essay plan and your final essay will be marked out of 100. Your final grade for the course will be determined on the basis of all three components of assessment.

Discussion forums

The online discussion forum on Learn is intended for use by online students (i.e. those who will not be attending on-campus seminars). The discussion forum is your space to post any questions or comments you had about the topic each week of the term. The course instructor will monitor the forum and join in with the discussion in those weeks when there is no live online seminar. Participation in the discussion forums for online students is mandatory (see 'Penalties for failure to participate'). Discussion is part of what philosophy is all about; you will find that it's a great way to compose your thoughts, to share your ideas, and hone them with the rest of us.

Penalties for failure to participate

Participation in the weekly discussion forums is for online students. Participation each week is mandatory but not graded. You may miss one week without penalty. But you will lose marks from your overall grade for each week you miss after this.

Students will be deducted 1% for missing 2 weeks, 2% for missing 4 weeks, 3% for missing 6 weeks, and 4% for missing 8 weeks. If a student fails to participate in 10 weeks, then they will be deducted 5% from their grade.

If you have to miss participation for a good reason, please inform the Course Organiser as soon as possible.



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In the first instance, please contact Dr. Dave Ward (Dave.Ward@ed.ac.uk) to discuss anything related to the academic content or structure of the course.