



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

**Philosophy Honours Courses
2017/2018**

SEMESTER 1

(Please note courses may clash – please check carefully before choosing.)

Ancient Theories of Knowledge

Course Organiser: Inna Kupreeva

Seminars: Tuesday 14:10-16:00

Introduction to the main theories of mind of Greek philosophy (Plato, Aristotle, Epicurus and Stoics), with sessions on Pre-Socratics, Greek medical schools, and Neoplatonism. We shall consider questions of definition and structure of the soul, its main functions, the seat of the soul in the human body, the problem of mind and the mental; place of mind in the world.

Belief, Desire and Rational Choice

Course Organiser: Wolfgang Schwartz

Seminars: Monday 14:10-15:00 **Tutorials:** tba

This course introduces the basics of contemporary decision theory, discusses general norms on rational belief and desire, and investigates whether decision theory can serve as a functionalist framework to define the concepts of (graded) belief and desire.

Feminism

Course Organiser: Elinor Mason

Seminars: Tuesday 13:10-14:00 **Tutorials:** tba

In this course we will examine philosophical approaches to feminism and feminist issues. Topics covered may include inequality in the work place and in family structures; global feminism; the relationships between lesbian and feminist philosophy; issues around sex and sexuality, including the objectification of the female body, pornography and prostitution.

Kant

Course Organiser: Alix Cohen

Seminars: Monday 14:10-16:00

The work of the German Enlightenment philosopher Immanuel Kant continues to have an extraordinary influence in philosophy. As well as its contributions to metaphysics, epistemology, the philosophy of mind, and moral philosophy, it offers one of the most significant and intricate reflections on the nature of philosophy itself. This course provides an introduction to some of the central issues in Kant's philosophy. Its main objective is to engage the student in a critical and detailed analysis so as to gain a firm understanding of both the overall structure and the central theses of one of the most important works in the history of philosophy. It will highlight the role of Transcendental Philosophy in the wider context of Kant's philosophy as well as its importance for the further development of philosophy.

Knowledge, Ignorance and Power

Course Organiser: Aidan McGlynn

Seminars: Monday 12:10-13:00 Tutorials: tba

This course will introduce and examine a range of topics at the intersection of epistemology and political/social/feminist philosophy, examining our actual epistemic practices in light of the relations of power and subordination that exist between differently placed groups in society, and looking at different proposals for how this should shape our theorizing about knowledge and ignorance.

Meta-Ethics

Course Organiser: Michael Ridge

Seminars: Thursday 11:10-13:00

If ethics is the general investigation of what is right/wrong, good/bad, what one may/ought to do, etc. then metaethics is the investigation of the nature of ethical judgments and facts. This involves questions about: (i) the objectivity and psychology of ethical judgment, (ii) the existence, nature and knowability of ethical facts, and (iii) the meaning of ethical terms and the sentences in which they figure. This course will introduce students this area of philosophy, which is an interesting arena for the interaction of moral theory, metaphysics, ontology, moral psychology, and the philosophy of language. We consider a wide range of metaethical theories which may include non-naturalism, emotivism, error-theory, naturalism, expressivism, and fictionalism. Through this, students will gain an overview of twentieth century meta-ethics and exposure to some recent developments. In addition to students interested in ethical theory, this course will be relevant to those interested in metaphysics, epistemology, and the theory of meaning.

Modal Logic

Course Organiser: Anders Schoubye

Lectures: Tuesday 16:10-18:00

This course is a follow-on course to Logic 1 focusing predominantly on modal extensions of classical propositional and first-order logic. Modal logic is standardly known as the logic of necessity and possibility, but this course will also focus on so-called deontic logic (the logic of obligations and permissions), epistemic logic (the logic of knowledge), and possibly temporal logic (the logic of time).

Philosophy: Fun and Games

Course Organiser: Michael Ridge

Lectures: Thursday 16:10-18:00

In this course we investigate the very concept of a game, the relationship between that concept and the concept of play, the way games figure in the good life and the normative role of games and play in Utopia. We also discuss some of the more interesting uses to which the concept of a game, and the closely associated concept of a constitutive rule, have been put in other areas of philosophy - e.g. moral theory and the philosophy of language. The aim is to bring insights from the philosophy of games proper to bear on the use philosophers working in other areas have made of the concept of a game.

Philosophy of Mathematics

Course Organiser: Casey McCoy

Lectures: Friday 11:10-13:00

A sketch of the views of Plato and Aristotle through to Kant and Mill. The various foundational positions: realism, logicism, constructivism, formalism and finitism. Logicism. Varieties of formalism. Finitism and Hilbert's programme. The significance of Godel's Incompleteness Theorems and related results concerning truth and computability. Constructivism and intuitionism. The emergence of axiomatic set theory as foundation for all mathematics. Set-theoretic realism. Structuralism. The applicability of mathematics and the indispensability of mathematics.

Philosophy of the Scottish Enlightenment

Course Organiser: Andrew Mason

Lectures: Wednesday 11:10-13:00

The course will present the thought of leading thinkers, such as Francis Hutcheson, David Hume, Adam Smith and Thomas Reid, focusing on their ethical and aesthetic views. Subjects covered will include such topics as the role of reason and sentiment in moral judgement, the idea of a moral sense, the standard of taste, virtue,

justice, duty, and freedom and necessity. The relevance of these ideas to modern debates will also be discussed.

Philosophy of Time

Course Organiser: Alasdair Richmond

Lectures: Tuesday 09:00-10:50

This course will offer detailed seminars on key philosophical issues in the philosophy of time, tense and persistence, both classical and modern. No detailed logical or metaphysical expertise will be assumed, and the course is intended to be accessible to students with a wide range of philosophical interests and aptitudes.

Political Philosophy

Course Organiser: TBA

Lectures: Monday 11:10-12:00 Tutorials: tba

The course will be divided into two related parts, each concerned in some way with contemporary liberalism. The first part will examine Rawls' Justice as Fairness and his conception of political liberalism. The second part will address the question of what restrictions on individual liberty modern states are justified in imposing.

Realism, Relativism, and Reality

Course Organiser: Michela Massimi

Lectures: Thursday 09:00-10:50

This course provides an introduction to the vast arena of philosophical inquiry that goes under the names of realism and relativism in science. What is truth in science? And why do experts disagree on scientific evidence? What good might relativism be? The course is structured in two Parts. In Part I, we read some classical texts (from Quine's ontological relativity, to Goodman's ways of world making and Rorty's epistemic relativism, among others). Part II of the course zooms into contemporary debates on realism in science and on the values of truth, objectivity, disagreement and progress in scientific research.

The Computational Mind

Course Organiser: Mark Sprevak

Seminars: Wednesday 09:00-10:50

Computation appears to be our best hope for explaining how the mind works. Over the past forty years, computational models have scored numerous successes in explaining various mental phenomena. Today, computation dominates cognitive science. This course introduces the computational approach to the mind and explores some foundational questions and challenges that it faces. Topics covered by the course include: What is a computation? If the mind is a computer, what kind is it? Is computation a real feature of brain, or a projection of our interests? Can consciousness be explained by computation? Are cognitive computations in the brain or do they spill into the environment?

The Early Continentals: Hegel and Nietzsche

Course Organiser: Dave Ward

Lectures: Monday 10:10-11:00 Tutorials: tba

This course will introduce students to the ideas of Hegel and Nietzsche, and examine the influence these thinkers had on the analytic and continental traditions in philosophy. The course will focus on reading and understanding key passages from Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit and Nietzsche's Genealogy of Morals. An important background figure on the course will be Kant, and we will begin by reading some important sections from his Critique of Pure Reason. We will compare and contrast the ways in which Hegel and Nietzsche both sought to articulate and overcome philosophical problems inherited from Kant. Where helpful, we will also take brief detours into the works of other thinkers who influenced or reacted to Kant, Hegel and Nietzsche, such as Fichte, Schelling and Schopenhauer. By the end of the course we will be in a position to appreciate and assess the historic trajectory of philosophical thought that runs from Kant through Hegel and Nietzsche, and look ahead to the divergent paths this trajectory has taken in contemporary philosophy.

The Nature of Moral Understanding

Course Organiser: David Levy

Seminars: Tuesday 11:10-13:00

The central question we will address is: what is the nature of the understanding someone has when he or she engages with moral challenges? These challenges arise in relatively ordinary situations of the kinds presented in life, literature and film. These situations include decisions about what to do, wondering how to live, questions of whether one is under a moral obligation, contemplation of shame or guilt. We will consider, for example, what makes something a moral matter, whether I have a duty to myself, whether others can oblige me and whether morality is principally about what to do. The course is in three sections. First we will compare the predominant approach to morality with an alternative. Second we will consider specific moral phenomena like forgiveness, individuality and remorse. Third we will consider the interpersonal dimension of morality as seen in argument, persuasion and absurdity.

The Philosophy of Well-Being

Course Organiser: Laura Candiotta

Seminars: Tuesday 16:10-18:00

This course will examine well-being, a central issue in practical philosophy. It has three parts. In part 1 and 3 we examine the main theories of well-being, with an in-depth look at perfectionism. In part 2 we analyse some case studies regarding well-being and applied ethics, within an empirically informed debate.

The Philosophy of Wittgenstein

Course Organiser: David Levy

Seminars: Tuesday 14:10-16:00

This course will study Wittgenstein's early and later philosophy, concentrating on the *Tractatus Logico-philosophicus* and *Philosophical Investigations*. We will learn to read Wittgenstein's own work, especially the *Tractatus* and the later sections on rule-following and private language. The course will highlight the differences between his earlier view of language and his later view based on language-games, while also noting the considerable points of continuity in Wittgenstein's philosophy. This course is oriented around a single philosopher and his work, but attention will also be given to the connections between Wittgenstein's philosophy and enduring problems in philosophy as seen in the work of Plato, Descartes and Kant.

Themes in Epistemology

Course Organiser: Martin Smith

Seminars: Wednesday 11:10-13:00

This course introduces students to a number of major ideas and themes in contemporary epistemology. We will examine debates about the nature of knowledge and of justified belief, and cover topics including scepticism, contextualism, pragmatic encroachment, knowledge-first epistemology, reliabilism and a little formal epistemology.

Theories of Mind

Course Organiser: Paul Schweizer

Lectures: Thursday 14:10-16:00

What is a mind, what are the essential characteristics distinguishing mental from non-mental systems? Two key features traditionally offered in response to this question are (1) representational content: mental states can be about external objects and states of affairs, they can represent and bear content or meaning; (2) conscious experience: only minds are consciously aware and have subjective, qualitative experiences, roughly, there is something it is like to be a mind. A central aim of the course will be to examine the extent to which these two features can be captured or explained by computational and/or physicalist methods, and to explore some of the conceptual issues basic to Cognitive Science and Artificial Intelligence as theoretical approaches to the mind.

Theory of Virtue

Course Organiser: Andrew Mason

Lectures: Tuesday 10:10 – 11:00 Tutorials: tba

The course will introduce students to central ideas in the theory of virtue from the ancient, early modern and contemporary periods, illustrating the development of this area of moral philosophy, the various ways in

which the concept of virtue has been interpreted, and the different views which have been held about its significance for ethics.

SEMESTER 2

(Please note courses may clash – please check carefully before choosing.)

Ancient Aesthetics

Course Organiser: Andrew Mason

Lectures: Monday 17:10-18:00 Tutorials: tba

The course will examine theories of beauty and the arts (especially, though not limited to, poetry and drama) in ancient thinkers, especially Plato and Aristotle; thinkers from later antiquity may also be included. Topics discussed will include the nature of beauty, artistic representation or imitation, censorship and the place of art in education, and the concept of tragedy. The impact of ancient aesthetic theories on later thought may also be considered.

Ancient Ethics

Course Organiser: Andrew Mason

Lectures: Monday 12:10-13:00 Tutorials: tba

The course will examine theories of virtue and the good in ancient thinkers. We will use Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics as our main text, but comparisons will be made with the views of Plato and of Hellenistic philosophers. Topics discussed will include the human good, moral and intellectual virtues, responsibility, pleasure, friendship, and the place of philosophy in the good life. The impact of ancient theories of virtue on later thought will also be considered.

Ancient Theories of Existence

Course Organiser: Dory Scaltsas

Seminars: Wednesday 11:10-13:00

The course will examine different ancient theories of being. We discuss some Presocratic approaches to the problem of being (notably, Heraclitus and Parmenides), Plato's theory of forms and Aristotle's theory of substance, and the ontologies of the most prominent Hellenistic schools (Epicurean, Stoic and Sceptic).

Applied Ethics

Course Organiser: TBA

Seminars: Monday 10:10-11:00 Tutorials: tba

This course will consider the application of ethical theory to cases, imagined and real. This year, special emphasis will be given to the issue of humanity and its relations to rights, needs and genetic enhancement. The first part of the course will begin with topics that have received considerable philosophical debate, such as abortion and euthanasia. From these we will move toward contemporary issues, e.g. future challenges arising from the application of technology to medical science. Overall we will be concerned to understand the role that applied ethics can play in meeting these challenges. Similarly we will be seeking to understand the limits of applied ethics and philosophy, more generally, in these arenas, especially in contrast to the considerations that may apply in making social policies.

We will not be discussing the following topics that often feature in applied ethics courses: engineering, environmental, legal, medical, healthcare, information, political ethics or animal rights.

Ethics of Artificial Intelligence

Course Organiser: Mark Sprevak

Lectures: Wednesday 09:00-11:00

The aim of this course is to introduce students to a range ethical issues that arise regarding current and future artificial intelligence (AI). The main questions we will consider are listed in the course summary. No previous familiarity with the literature on AI will be assumed.

The classes will be primarily discussion based, so students are expected to have done the reading

in advance of class. During class, students will work in small teams to answer a question (approximately 1 per team) based on the reading for the week. They may be instructed to argue for a particular case (pro or contra). They may be asked to assess the merits of a given view. They may be asked to look for counterexamples to a generalisation or fallacies with a specific argument. In second part of the class, we will come together to discuss what each group has achieved to see how it helps us to answer our questions.

Food for Thought: The Ethics of Food Choices

Course Organiser: Anders Schoubye

Lectures: Tuesday 14:10-16:00

The purpose of this course is to consider and discuss some of the ethical challenges related to current food production practices, food consumption, and food policies. The course will cover issues such as (a) the moral status of non-human animals, i.e. whether non-human animals have rights, (b) arguments in favor of adopting vegetarian or vegan diets, (c) environmental and health related costs of food production and the recent focus on local, organic, and "sustainable" foods, (d) food policy choices that have disproportionately negative impacts on minorities and children.

Free Will and Moral Responsibility

Course Organiser: Patrick Todd

Seminars: Tuesday 16:10-18:00

The course covers the main issues in the philosophical debates about freedom, determinism, and moral responsibility. Among the more specific topics that may be addressed: Formulations of determinism; historical responses; Frankfurt style examples (designed to show that moral responsibility for an action does not require the ability to act differently); Strawson's account of the reactive emotions; compatibilist theories about the nature of responsibility and freedom; moral luck; the difference between excuses and justifications; the relevance of ignorance; collective responsibility.

Freedom and the State: The Social Contract

Course Organiser: Alix Cohen

Seminars: Monday 14:10-16:00

This module looks at some classic theories of the state and of political obligation, such as those of Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Kant and Rawls, and asks you to decide whether you accept their answers to questions of this kind, or whether you can find better ones. Why do we have a government? What is it for? Is it just that, human beings being what they are, they have to have someone to keep them in order? Or is there some other reason, some better reason? People talk a lot about political freedom. But is there really any such thing as a free society? Doesn't the very existence of governments and laws mean it's impossible for us to live together and be free at the same time? Why should we obey the law? Is it just because we'll be punished if we don't, or is there a better reason? Does it make a difference who made the law?

Logic, Computability and Incompleteness

Course Organiser: Wolfgang Schweizer

Seminars: Thursday 14:10-16:00

This course will focus on key metatheoretical results linking computability and logic. In particular, Turing machines and their formalization in first-order logic, linking uncomputability and the halting problem to undecidability of first-order logic. We will then study recursive functions and their construction, followed by first-order formalizations of arithmetic, particularly Robinson arithmetic and Peano arithmetic. We will then turn to the topic of the arithmetization of syntax and the diagonal lemma, before proceeding to prove some of the main limitative results concerning formal systems, in particular Gödel's two incompleteness theorems, along with allied results employing the diagonal lemma, including Tarski's Theorem and Löb's Theorem.

Philosophical Issues in Evolution

Course Organiser: Alistair Isaac

Lectures: Tuesday 10:00-10:50 Tutorials: tba

This course will offer detailed seminars on key philosophical issues in evolution and evolutionary theory. No background in biology or life-sciences will be assumed, and the course is intended to be accessible to students with a wide range of philosophical interests and aptitudes.

The Philosophy of Fiction

Course Organiser: Aidan McGlynn

Seminars: Monday 11:10-12:00 Tutorials: tba

This course will introduce and examine a number of philosophical issues raised by fiction, covering topics at the intersection of aesthetics and epistemology, metaphysics, and the philosophies of language and mind: the nature of fiction; whether fictional characters exist and if so, what they are; whether we can gain real-world knowledge from engaging with fiction; the problem of "imaginative resistance" (why we cannot 'suspend disbelief' on things like principles of morality when engaging with fiction); and the "paradox of fiction" (how can we, for example, fear Darth Vader when we don't believe he really exists), and whether we need a new psychological state (an 'alief' in Gendler's terminology) to solve it.

Philosophy of Law

Course Organiser: Martin Smith

Seminars: Friday 14:10-16:00

This course will introduce students to a number of topics and questions in contemporary philosophy of law. There will be particular emphasis on the ways in which philosophy of law overlaps and interacts with legal theory and with other branches of philosophy such as moral philosophy, political philosophy and epistemology. Topics to be covered in the course may include the normativity of the law, the relationship between law and morality, standards of legal proof, the presumption of innocence, the nature of legal precedent and of legal reasoning, the legal notion of evidence, legal rights and obligations and the ultimate aims of a legal system. The course may also include, in any given year, an examination of legal topics of particular contemporary interest, such as the use of 'cold hit' DNA evidence in the courtroom or the corroboration rule in Scots law.

Philosophy of Religion

Course Organiser: Patrick Todd

Seminars: Group 1 Thursday 11:10-13:00, Group 2 Thursday 14:10-16:00

The course will cover a range of issues in contemporary philosophy of religion. Topics covered will include reason and faith; the nature of religious language; issues connected with the idea of God, including the concepts of eternity and omnipotence; arguments for belief in God (including ontological, cosmological and teleological arguments); the problem of evil; the relation of religion to morality.

Philosophy of Time Travel

Course Organiser: Alasdair Richmond

Seminars: Friday 11:10 – 13:00

There are now (literally) scores of philosophical articles relating time travel to a host of interesting metaphysical and epistemic problems centred around (e.g.) laws of nature, personal identity and free will. Students will be encouraged to engage critically with such issues through the works of such important figures as David Lewis, Kurt Gödel, D. H. Mellor and Robin Le Poidevin, amongst others.

Puzzles and Paradoxes

Course Organiser: Brian Rabern

Seminars: Wednesday 09:00-10:50

The course provides an overview of a number of famous philosophical puzzles and paradoxes, and important attempts to solve them.

Science, Nature and Social Values

Course Organiser: Michela Massimi

Lectures: Thursday 11:10-13:00

The course, consisting of lectures and seminars, addresses some central issues in contemporary philosophy of science. How does science represent nature? And to what extent do social values and human interests enter into the scientific image? Looking at the debate on natural kinds (across the physical, life and social sciences), but also at long-standing controversies on the nature of causation and laws of nature, this course explores the extent to which scientific investigation of nature might (or might not) be shaped by us as human agents with specific values and interests.

Self, Agency and the Will

Course Organiser: Till Vierkant

Seminars: Tuesday 16:10-18:00

This course will provide an introduction to one of the most exciting debates in the interdisciplinary field between philosophy and the cognitive sciences. The course will examine the relationship between our phenomenal sense of agency and the sub-personal behavioural control layers that scientific psychology and the neurosciences describe.

Perception and Action: From Inner Zombies to the Predictive Brain

Course Organiser: Keith Wilson

Seminars: Monday 13:10-14:00 Tutorials: tba

This course examines conceptual issues arising from recent empirical work on the nature of perception and action. The topics include philosophical, psychological, neuroscientific, and computational perspectives on issues such as: What is perception, and how does perception relate to action? Is the picture of action as controlled by 'inner zombie systems' correct (and in what ways, if any, would that affect our views of action and of conscious control)? What does change-blindness really suggest about our knowledge of the visual scene? Does 'sensorimotor contingency theory' offer an adequate account of perception? Is sensory substitution (the use of one modality, such as touch, to replace another, such as vision) possible? What is the role of prediction in the construction of perception and action? What is attention, and how does it relate to conscious perceptual experience?

Phenomenology: Merleau-Ponty

Course Organiser: Dr Dave Ward

Seminars: Monday 16:10-17:00

This course will introduce students to the 20th century philosophical movement of Phenomenology. Originating with the work of Edmund Husserl, Phenomenology attempts to ground substantive philosophical claims concerning metaphysics, epistemology, philosophy of mind, and beyond, in a careful articulation of the ways in which our experience of the world is structured. After introducing Phenomenology via some key ideas from Husserl's work, the course will focus on Merleau-Ponty's influential 1945 work, *Phenomenology of Perception*. There, Merleau-Ponty argues that proper attention to the structures that characterize thought and experience reveals that we are fundamentally embodied creatures, and that this has important consequences for our understanding of mind, language, metaphysics and epistemology. After spending the majority of the course (weeks 3-8) exploring ideas and arguments of key sections of *Phenomenology of Perception* in detail, the final weeks of the course will consider how Merleau-Ponty applied his views to aesthetics and ethics, and how other thinkers such as Heidegger and Sartre pursued Husserl's research programme in different ways.

Spinoza and Leibniz

Course Organiser: Pauline Phemister

Seminars: Friday 14:10-16:00

The course will introduce students to the philosophical systems of the gigantic figures in the history of philosophy, Spinoza and Leibniz. It will explore how, while responding critically to but still working within the framework of Cartesian dualism, Spinoza and Leibniz respectively transformed the Cartesian philosophy in two radically different directions, resulting in (i) Spinoza's absolute monism and, in critical response also to Spinoza, (ii) the dynamic, pluralist philosophical system of Leibniz.

The Philosophy of Simone Weil

Course Organiser: David Levy

Seminars: Tuesday 11:10-12:00 Tutorials: tba

This course will study the philosophy and philosophical works of Simone Weil from her Cartesian roots to her later Platonic moral philosophy, as well as her impact on post-war, English-language philosophers.