Philosophy Honours Courses
Semester 2
2017/2018

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 Lob'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
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.