7AAN2050 Methodology of the History of Philosophy
Syllabus – Academic year 2012/13

Basic information

Credits: 20
Module Tutor: Professor J. R. Milton
Office: 607
Consultation time: Monday 12:00–13:00
Semester: First
Lecture time and venue: Monday 13:00–15:00, Room TBA

Module description

This course will give students a broad overview of rival approaches to the study of the history of philosophy, and will provide them with training in research methods to be applied to such study. Students will be introduced to the problems involved in the interpretation of historical texts, including those originally written in English, translated into English, or read in the original languages. They will get an overview of the variety of primary sources that can be used, and the problems involved in the interpretation of different kinds of these. They will be introduced to the tools of research: library catalogues, databases, websites etc. The knowledge that students will acquire will serve as a foundation for further, more specialised research in specific areas of the history of philosophy, as well as giving them an appreciation of the more general problems of the discipline as a whole.

Assessment methods and deadlines

- Formative assessment: 1 x 2,000–3,000-word essay, due by end of semester or as otherwise instructed.
- Summative assessment: 1 x 4,000-word essay, due Monday 21 January 2013.
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<th><strong>Week One</strong> 1 October</th>
<th>Introduction: Ways of doing the history of philosophy</th>
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<td><strong>Week Two</strong>  8 October</td>
<td>The history of philosophy and history</td>
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<td><strong>Week Three</strong> 15 October</td>
<td>The history of philosophy and biography</td>
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<td><strong>Week Four</strong> 22 October</td>
<td>Fragments and testimonia: how to do the history of philosophy when the original works have not survived</td>
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<td><strong>Week Five</strong> 29 October</td>
<td>Problems raised by works of unknown or disputed authorship</td>
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**READING WEEK**

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<th><strong>Week Six</strong> 12 November</th>
<th>Using personal papers: drafts, letters, journals, etc.</th>
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<td><strong>Week Seven</strong> 19 November</td>
<td>Printing and publishing histories</td>
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<td><strong>Week Eight</strong> 26 November</td>
<td>Literary forms: dialogues and treatises</td>
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<td><strong>Week Nine</strong> 3 December</td>
<td>Studying philosophy in translation</td>
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<td><strong>Week Ten</strong>  10 December</td>
<td>Esoteric and exoteric works: concealment and dissimulation</td>
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Suggested essay questions

1. Should the History of Philosophy be seen as a branch of philosophy, or as a branch of history, or as both?


There are also several relevant essays, notably those by Gary Hatfield and Daniel Garber, in Tom Sorell and G. A. J. Rogers (eds.), *Analytic Philosophy and History of Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

2. How much can the knowledge of a philosopher’s life contribute to the interpretation of his or her thought?

For this essay it would be useful to discuss the life and writings of at least one philosopher in some detail.


Essays on other topics may be submitted, but the proposed title **must** be approved by the module tutor.
Suggested additional readings


