4AANA101 – Introduction to Philosophy
Syllabus – Academic year 2015/16

Basic information

Credits: 30
Module Tutors: Dr Wilfried Meyer-Viol (Logic), Dr Julien Dutant (Metaphysics, coordinator), Dr Clayton Littlejohn (Epistemology, Ethics)
Offices: Philosophy Building 601 (Dr Wilfried Meyer-Viol), 602 (Dr Julien Dutant), 412 (Dr Clayton Littlejohn)

Semesters: both
Lecture times and venues*: First mini-term: Tue 11-12 and Wed 12-13, Edmond J Safra Lecture Theatre, King’s Building. Rest of the year: Tue 9-10, K4U.12, King’s Building
GTA:s: Fintan Mallory (Logic), Sergio De Souza Filho, David Jenkins (Metaphysics), Amanda Alves Moreira, Nathan Oseroff (Epistemology), Thomas Byrne, Justin Hagerman (Ethics)

*Please note that tutorial times and venues will be organised independently with your teaching tutor

Module description (plus aims and objectives)

Aim This module is intended for first year undergraduates, in particular PPE and PPL students, who will be beginning their study of philosophy at degree level as part of a wider course of study. It aims to provide a grounding in the subject that will give students a basic familiarity with central areas of philosophical thought, as well as providing some appreciation of the interconnected, systematic nature of Philosophy as a whole, and thus serving as a foundation on which more specialised study can be built.

Description The module offers a broad overview of topics and techniques in four key branches of the discipline: Logic, Metaphysics, Epistemology and Ethics. It runs for twenty weeks over the autumn and spring semesters, with a five-week block devoted to each of the four key areas. The Logic block consists of two one-hour lecture and one one-hour exercise class per week. The Metaphysics, Epistemology and Ethics blocks consist of one one-hour lecture and one one-hour seminar per week.

Objectives By the end of the module, the students will be able to demonstrate intellectual, transferable and practicable skills appropriate to a level 4 module and in particular will be able to demonstrate that they have:

- Awareness and understanding of the central concepts, theories and arguments of some main areas of Philosophy: Logic, Metaphysics, Epistemology and Ethics.
- The ability to apply valid critical and argumentative techniques to these and other areas of the subject.
- Familiarity with selected key texts, with the ability to summarize and analytically criticize the arguments and positions of others.
- The ability to develop philosophical views of their own, which they are prepared to defend or amend in the light of criticism from others.

Detailed descriptions of the content and objectives of each block are given in the outline below.
Assessment methods and deadlines

- **Formative assessment:** Logic exercises plus three x 1,000 words essays. Essay to be submitted to your seminar tutor by email at 16:00 on:
  - Fri Dec 11 (Metaphysics)
  - Fri Feb 26 (Epistemology)
  - Fri Apr 1 (Ethics)

- **Summative assessment:** one x three-hour exam (100%).

Outline of lecture topics (plus suggested readings)

**Weeks 1-5: Logic.** This block is an introduction to propositional logic. It will make students acquainted with the notions of logical consistency and logical validity, the language of propositional logic, truth-tables and the truth-tree methods (tableaus) to check for validity and consistency. Its aims are to allow students to understand core logical notions, identify logically valid arguments, read and construct logical formalizations as they are used in academic philosophy articles and make them aware of common logical fallacies and non-logical argumentation.

For this part of the module students attend two one-hour lectures per week. The lectures are common with module 4AANA003 (Elementary logic).

**Week one** Sept 22-23 : Consistency and validity
**Week two** Sept 29-30 : Logical connectives
**Week three** Oct 6-7 : Logical connectives
**Week four** Oct 13-14 : Propositional tableaus
**Week five** Oct 20-21 : Propositional tableaus

**Suggested reading:**
Tutorial on [http://logic.philosophy.ox.ac.uk/](http://logic.philosophy.ox.ac.uk/).


**Weeks 6-10 Metaphysics.** This block is an introduction to Metaphysics. Its aim is to familiarize students with some of its central debates in order to enable both further study and independent thought on metaphysical topics and their connections with other areas of philosophy. Four weeks are devoted to classic issues (persistence, persons, identity, free will) and one to more original ones (social groups and kinds). The issues are interconnected and together cover a significant amount of core metaphysical notions such as parthood, time, existence, possibility, reference, particulars and properties, causation.

**Suggested readings**
Most readings come for three books. They are an excellent source of further readings on our topics and on metaphysics more generally:


Sider's brief introduction to CDM is a clear and thoughtful presentation of what metaphysics is. You may want to start there. There is also a clear textbook that you can use throughout the course:

Week six Nov 3: Persistence
T. Sider (2005) "Persistence", ch. 7 of RE.

Recommended additional readings

Week seven Nov 10: Personal Identity

Recommended additional readings

Week eight Nov 17: Identity

Recommended additional readings
S. Kripke (1980) lectures 1 and 2 of Naming and necessity, Harvard University Press.

Week nine Nov 24: Social Groups and Social Kinds
S. Halsanger (2000) "Gender and Race: (What) are they? (What) do we want them to be?" Noûs, 34:1, 31-55.
K. Ritchie (2013) "What are groups?" Philosophical Studies 166:2, 257-72.

Week ten Nov 31: Free Will

Semester 2, weeks 1-5: Epistemology. This block is an introduction to Epistemology.
1. Knowledge & Epistemic Luck
Sosa, E. How to Defeat Opposition to Moore. Philosophical Perspectives 13: 141-153

2. Regress & Perception
3. Induction
Hume, An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding, Section 4
Strawson, "The Justification of Induction", Introduction to Logical Theory
Recommended

4. Disagreement
Zagzebski, "Ethical and Epistemic Egoism and the Ideal of Autonomy"

5. Skepticism
Recommended
Byrne. How Hard are the Skeptical Paradoxes?

Semester 2, weeks 6-10: Ethics. This block is an introduction to Ethics.

1. Death & Well-Being
Epicurus, Selections
Lucretius, Selections
Frances Kamm, “The Asymmetry Problem: Death and Prenatal Nonexistence”
Nozick, Anarchy, State, and Utopia

2. Consequentialism
Mill. Utilitarianism
Vallentyne, “Against Maximizing Act Consequentialism”
Norcross, “Two Dogmas of Deontology”

3. Kant's Ethics
Kant, Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals
Recommended
Baron, "On the Alleged Repugnance of Acting from Duty"

4. Pluralism & Particularism
W.D. Ross, The Right and the Good
Jonathan Dancy, “Ethical Particularism and Morally Relevant Properties”

5. Animals
Singer, "All Animals are Equal" [Good to refer to because it is a classic in the field, but the important argument is the marginal cases argument and you can find that in the Norcross reading. The Norcross reading is much more entertaining and it touches on some important questions about responsibility that we’ll discuss in the lecture.]
Kant, Lectures on Ethics
Norcross, “Puppies, Pigs, and People”
Recommended
Korsgaard, “Fellow Creatures"
Suggested Questions for Essays

Metaphysics
Suggested essay questions will be posted on Keats.

Ethics and Epistemology
1. Is death bad for the one who dies? If so, why? If it is not, why not?
2. Would it be bad for a person to be plugged into the experience machine?
3. Can a reasonable and morally conscientious person decide to do something that they know isn’t for the best?
4. What is the separateness of persons objection? What, if anything, does it tell us about consequentialism?
5. Would a morally good person be moved by the motive of duty?
6. Are there any general moral principles? Will there always be a general principle to cover the cases we’re in?
7. Is it ever permissible to make a lying promise?
8. Is inductive reasoning a source of knowledge and justification? Is it possible to justify the use of inductive reasoning?
9. What distinguishes knowledge from merely true belief?
10. If it’s possible for someone to have a mental life like yours and be systematically deceived, is it possible for you to know anything at all? Is it possible to know that you’re not systematically deceived?
11. If you discover that a peer disagrees with you about something, what should you do next? Does the discovery of such a peer require you to be conciliatory and suspend judgment or can it be acceptable for you to ‘stick to your guns’? Is it possible for a disagreement between you and a peer to be reasonable?
12. To know anything at all, must some things be known directly or immediately without any inference from anything else we believe?