PHILOSOPHY LECTURES PROSPECTUS: GRADUATE CLASSES

MICHAELMAS TERM 2022
NOTES:

- The normal duration of an event is one hour. Where the class or lecture lasts longer than an hour, the start time and end time will be given.

- By convention, in-person lectures at Oxford begin at 5 minutes past the hour and end at 5 minutes before the hour.

- Unless otherwise specified, the lectures and classes are given for all of weeks 1 to 8.

- Teaching is now taking place in person.

- Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in this Prospectus is accurate at the start of term, but sometimes errors persist. If you think you have found a mistake, please contact James Knight (james.knight@philosophy.ox.ac.uk).
Graduate Classes

Graduate classes are, except where otherwise indicated, intended for the Faculty’s BPhil and MSt students. Other students may attend, and are welcome, provided they first seek and obtain the permission of the class-giver(s).

BPhil Pro-Seminar: Theoretical Philosophy
Various class-givers and times

The Pro-seminar introduces students to study, practice, and standards in graduate-level philosophy. Every starting BPhil student will attend four sessions with one class-giver, then change group midway through term for four sessions with another class-giver. Seminars in Michaelmas Term will cover key material in theoretical philosophy. Class-givers will contact their groups, specifying readings and confirming the class time, in advance of term.

Aristotle on Natural and Supranatural Metaphysics
Prof Michail Peramatzis and Dr Paolo Fait – W. 9 – 11, Worcester College

We shall discuss central passages from Aristotle’s Metaphysics and other related works to address the question of whether and, if so, in what sense the study of natural substances forms an integral part of Aristotelian metaphysical inquiry or whether it is just part of his physics, in which case the parts of the Metaphysics that focus on natural substances might be merely aporetic, aborted projects, ‘springboards’, or serve some other similar subordinate function.

Plan
wk 1: Metaphysics A.1-3 (MP)
wk 2: Metaphysics B (MP)
wk 3: Metaphysics Γ.1-3 (PF)
wk 4: Metaphysics E.1 (MP)
wk 5: Metaphysics Z.17 and H.6 (MP); De Generatione et Corruptione II.10; Physics II (PF).
wk 6: Priority & Unity in Aristotle’s Natural & Supranatural Metaphysics (MP)
wk 7: Metaphysics Λ.6-7; Physics VIII.6-7 (PF)
wk 8: Metaphysics Λ.8-10 (PF)

Reading for week 1
Metaphysics A.1-3; commentary by Ross
Text & Commentary:

Translations:

Introductions:

Commentaries/Discussion of Text:

Monographs and articles:

Plato, eros and education
Prof Dominic Scott – W. 2 – 4, Radcliffe Humanities (Ryle Room)

In this seminar, we shall take a wide-ranging look at Plato’s views on education across a number of different dialogues. We start with the Protagoras and Meno, both considered early works and framed as discussions of moral education, before turning to the Republic.

A striking feature of Plato’s approach to education is the variety of contexts in which he discusses it. For instance, the political dimension of education is very clear in the Protagoras, Meno, and Republic. But we shall also be looking at education in the context of Plato’s erotic dialogues, the Symposium and the Phaedrus. Plato saw the relationship between lover and beloved as partly pedagogical, something that was already recognized in his own culture.

Towards the end of the term, we shall turn to Plato’s last work, the Laws, which brings us back to the political dimension of education. Among other topics, we shall look at whether his views had shifted since the Republic. For instance, had he become more interested in educating a wider number of citizens in philosophy and related areas?

Please note: attendance at this seminar is limited to students taking the MSt in Ancient Philosophy and those taking the ancient philosophy track of the BPhil.
Simone de Beauvoir  
Prof Daniela Dover – M. 4 – 6, Merton College (Americas Room)

For more information, please consult the Canvas site for the course, around the end of week 0.

Wittgenstein  
Prof Bill Child – T. 2 – 4, Radcliffe Humanities (Ryle Room)

The class is intended primarily for Philosophy BPhil and MSt students. 4th year undergraduates reading Computer Science & Philosophy, Maths & Philosophy, or Physics & Philosophy are also welcome to attend. Others may also be admitted if space permits.

Please e-mail me (bill.child@univ.ox.ac.uk) in advance if you would like to come to these classes. If you are in one of the categories specified above (Philosophy BPhil and MSt students; 4th year students studying CSP, MP, or PP) you are entitled to participate; but it will help me to know likely numbers in advance. If you are not in one of those categories, please get in touch anyway; I will get back to you before the first class to let you know if I can accommodate you.

The classes will explore a series of central issues in Wittgenstein’s later philosophy, focusing on the topics of meaning, intentionality, and rule-following. There will be one piece of required reading each week; for four of the classes, this will be taken from Wittgenstein’s writings; for the other four, it will be a book or paper from the secondary literature. There will be a small selection of optional supplementary readings. No prior acquaintance with Wittgenstein’s work is assumed and the required readings should be accessible to those reading Wittgenstein for the first time.

Participants are encouraged to e-mail me before each class with questions about that week’s material that they’d like to discuss in the week’s class. All questions are welcome – no question is too simple or basic to raise. I will do my best to address all questions that I receive in good time before the class.

Reading List
For each class, there is one piece of *required reading*, which participants will be expected to have read beforehand. The required readings are listed below.


**Week 1** Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Remarks*, Parts I-III (pp. 51-74)
Week 2 Ludwig Wittgenstein, *The Blue and Brown Books* pp. 1-44

Week 3 Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* §§143-242


(If possible, try to get hold of the 1985 paperback reprint. It contains a greatly extended version of footnote 87.)


Week 8 Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* §§633-693

Quantification and Metaphysics

Prof Nicholas Jones and Prof James Studd – T. 11 – 11, Radcliffe Humanities (Ryle Room)

This class aims to introduce students to some lively recent debates at the intersection of metaphysics with the philosophy of logic. Some concern foundational questions about various types of quantification and related resources; others concern the use of type theory and other quantificational resources to express and even answer metaphysical questions. We’ll introduce the necessary technical background as we go.

Examples of the kinds of question we will discuss include:

- How is quantification best understood, and how does it relate to variable-binding? Should we take quantifiers to be variable-binding operators subject to a Tarskian semantics or should we follow Frege in treating them as predicates of predicates? Alternatively, should we eschew variables altogether in favour of a predicate-functor logic or “Quine–Bourbaki” notation?
• What types of quantification are legitimate? In addition to first-order quantifiers, should we countenance the quantifiers of type-theory or plural logic? What about further extensions of these systems?

• What are the lessons of “higher-order metaphysics”? For example, what, if anything, does type theory teach us about the structure of propositions or the nature of metaphysical necessity?

Here is a list of the topics we will cover week by week:

Week 1. Qualitativism and generalism
Week 2. Tarskian versus Fregean approaches to quantification
Week 3. Plural quantification and metaphysics
Week 4. Introduction to higher-order metaphysics
Week 5. Against propositional structure
Week 6. Defences of propositional structure
Week 7. Analysing intensional notions in type theory
Week 8. Type-theoretic pluralism

Please see the Canvas page for the suggested readings.

Logicism in the Philosophy of Mathematics
Dr Christopher Scambler – F. 2 – 4, Radcliffe Humanities (Ryle Room)

The recent literature in philosophy of mathematics and philosophical logic is seeing what might be called a “third wave” of logicism, after both its original manifestation and the ‘neo-logicist’ variant. The movement is characterized by use of new techniques in and conceptualizations of higher order logic, and a willingness to involve modality in the formulation of mathematical principles. This course will aim to present some of these recent logicist proposals, to assess their intrinsic merits, and compare them to the earlier manifestations. Roughly the first two-thirds will treat traditional topics in (Neo)logicism through the lens of contemporary developments; the final three weeks will then look at some new proposals of forms of logicism due to Juhani Yli Vakkuri & Zach Goodsell, Sharon Berry, and myself.

The course will be aimed at students with a working knowledge of elementary mathematical logic. Primary readings will need to be read before the session; the secondary provide supplementary material that will also be discussed, and that may in addition interest those already familiar with the primary reading, but that are not necessary to read before the session.

Session 1: Frege
Primary:
Frege: *Grundlagen*, Austin’s translation, Blackwell, 1950, Sections 55-83
Secondary:

Session 2: Russell
Primary:
Russell: *Mathematical Logic as Based on the Theory of Types*, American Journal of Mathematics, 30(3), 1908, pp222-262
Secondary:

Session 3: Quine
Primary:
Secondary:
Quine: *New Foundations*: in *From a Logical Point of View*, HUP 1953

Session 4: The Collapse
Primary:
Secondary:
Goedel: Russell’s mathematical logic: in *Philosophy of Mathematics, selected readings*, Benacerraf and Putnam (eds.)

Session 5: Neo-logicism
Primary:
Ekklund: *Bad Company and Neo-Fregean Philosophy*, Synthese, 170(3), 2009, pp393-341
Secondary Reading:
Wright: Frege’s Conception of Numbers as Objects, Aberdeen University Press, 1983

Session 6: Higher order logicism
Primary:
Sections from Yli Vakkuri & Goodsell: *The Logical Foundations of Philosophy*, manuscript to be circulated (tbc)
Secondary:

Session 7: Logicism via Logical Possibility
Primary:
Selections from Berry: *A Logical Foundation for Set-theoretic Potentialism*, CUP 2022
Secondary:

Session 8: Contingentist Logicism
Primary:
Radical Contingentism and the Foundations of Mathematics, tbc
Secondary:
Hawthorne and Yli Vakkuri: *The Necessity of Mathematics*, Nous, 52, 2018
Leitgeb: *Why Pure Mathematical Truths are Metaphysically Necessary*, Synthese 197 (7), pp3113-3120

**Decision Theory**
Prof Jean Baccelli – Th. 9 – 11, Radcliffe Humanities (Ryle Room)

This graduate class will introduce to selected technical and conceptual topics in the contemporary theory of individual decision-making.

1. **Preference**

2. **Choice**

3. **Expected Utility under Risk**

4. **Expected Utility under Uncertainty**


5. **Non-Expected Utility**


6. **Dynamic Consistency**


7. **Ignorance**


This seminar will be concerned with foundational issues in population ethics and their relevance to a variety of issues in practical ethics. The issues we will discuss will be concerned more with what reasons there are than with matters of axiology. Representative questions in the area in which population ethics overlaps with practical ethics are:

- Is there a reason not to cause an individual to exist, or to prevent an individual from existing, if that individual would have a life that would be intrinsically bad for that individual?
- If there is, what is the nature of that reason and how strong is it? Is it, for example, as strong as the reason not to cause an existing person to suffer an equivalent amount of misery?
- Is there a reason to cause an individual to exist just because that individual would have a good life, or a life that is well worth living? If so, what is the nature of the reason and how strong is it? Is it, for example, much weaker than the reason not to cause a miserable person to exist? If it is, how can that difference be explained?
- Can individuals be benefited or harmed by being caused to exist?
- Is the legal notion of “wrongful life” morally coherent?
- In determining whether it is permissible to cause an individual to exist, how does the good the individual’s life would contain weigh against the suffering it would contain? Is a certain amount of suffering morally offset by an amount of well-being that is equivalent in magnitude? Or is a certain amount of suffering offset only by well-being that is significantly greater in magnitude?
- Do we have reasons to prevent the extinction of human beings? If so, what are these reasons and how strong are they?
- Is there a reason to cause or allow a better-off individual to exist rather than cause or allow a different, less well-off individual to exist? If so, what is the nature of this reason?
- If there is a reason to cause a better-off person to exist rather than a different, less well-off person, does this imply that we have reasons to pursue the genetic enhancement of our progeny?
- Is it defensible to believe that there is a reason to cause a well-off individual to exist when the alternative is that a less well-off individual will exist instead while simultaneously denying that there is a reason to cause a well-off individual to exist when the alternative is that no new individual will come into existence?
- What Parfit calls the “Non-Identity Problem” arises when acts that affect well-being also determine which individuals exist. In these instances, an act can have a bad effect in a person’s life without being worse for that person, as the person would not have existed if the act had not been done. Is the reason not to do such an act as strong as
the reason not to do an act that has an equivalent bad effect that is worse for the person in whose life it occurs? In short, does it matter morally whether a bad effect is worse for someone?

- The Non-Identity Problem arises in many instances in which our acts affect the well-being of animals. If it matters in the case of persons whether an act that has bad effects is worse for individuals, does it also matter in the case of animals?

- Suppose that we cause animals to exist specifically in order to be able to eat them. But we ensure that they have lives that are better than those of most animals living in the wild. We then kill these animals prematurely but painlessly. Does the fact that they would never have existed with good lives if we had not intended to eat them somehow make the practice as a whole permissible?

- If abortion is generally permissible, is it also generally permissible to inflict prenatal injury? If not, how can the difference in permissibility be explained?

My thinking about these questions is still very much in progress – still uncertain and exploratory. I am writing a book on these issues and am eager to discuss them with others. I will begin each seminar by sketching some ideas and arguments but I hope that much of each seminar will be devoted to critical discussions of the problems and of my ideas about them. I want mostly to concentrate on the problems themselves rather than on the literature, but we will also, of course, discuss the published views of the most important writers in the area. I will identify and provide access to the writing that I think is most important as the term progresses but for those who want to do some reading in advance could read some of the following:

Derek Parfit, Reasons and Persons, part 4
Michael Otsuka, “How it makes a difference that one is worse off than one could have been,” Politics, Philosophy, & Economics (2017)
David Boonin, The Non-Identity Problem and the Ethics of Future People (2014)
Derek Parfit, “Future People, the Non-Identity Problem, and Person-Affecting Principles,” Philosophy & Public Affairs 45 (2017)
**Philosophy of Mathematics**  
Prof Alex Paseau – M. 11 – 1, Radcliffe Humanities (Ryle Room)

We will read a selection of works focussed on the metaphysics of mathematics. These will include classic articles in the philosophy of mathematics, chosen according to the interests of the group and presented by students, as well as some of my work in progress.

Readings will be uploaded to Canvas at least a week in advance. The first reading, on mathematics and the physical world (chapter 2 of my forthcoming book *What is Mathematics About*?), will be available from mid-September.

Anyone interested in the philosophy of mathematics is welcome. Graduate students in philosophy, naturally, but also advanced undergraduates, postdocs, students in other departments, and anyone else.

**Philosophy of Physics**  
Prof Adam Caulton– W. 11 – 1, Radcliffe Humanities (Ryle Room)

A schedule will be sent directly to MSt and BPhil students as soon as possible.