Philosophy Faculty Reading List and Course Outline 2018-2019

PART II PAPER 01:
METAPHYSICS

SYLLABUS

- **Realism and idealism**: varieties of realism; conceptual schemes; transcendental arguments.
- **Particulars and properties**: the contrast of particular and universal, and of abstract and concrete; realism about universalism and alternatives.
- **Causation**: causation and agency; realism about causation, for and against; direction of causation.
- **Time**: dynamic versus block conceptions; the direction of time; the existence and persistence of entities in time.
- **Persons**: their persistence; animalism and alternatives.

COURSE OUTLINE

Many of the topics in the syllabus will be familiar to those who have taken Philosophy IA and IB, but some are new.

The topic of realism and its alternatives is central. The basic issues are to what extent the world is independent of our cognition of it and whether there is a unique true story of the world or whether there are many non-equivalent stories, all equally correct.

Another new topic is particulars and properties. A third is time, where the issue of what belongs to the world, and what to our perspective on the world, is again central.

Another subtopic here is about how we should understand the persistence of objects over time. This links in turn to the section on persons, which introduces some metaphysical questions about the nature and persistence of persons.

Prerequisites

Students who have not taken Philosophy in IA and IB will need to study some introductory texts in metaphysics and epistemology (see below).

Objectives

Students taking this paper will be expected to:

1. Acquire a more thorough and detailed knowledge of some of the main metaphysical claims and arguments than in Part IB.
2. Acquire an understanding of how these claims and arguments relate to one another.
3. Engage in close criticism with the claims and arguments studied.
4. Develop their own powers of philosophical analysis and argument through the study of metaphysics.
5. Develop their ability to think independently about philosophical problems and arguments.
6. Understand and engage critically with the principal metaphysical theses of the set text.

Preliminary Reading

Introductory texts and guides for those new to the subject (recommended to others as well!):


Additional suggestions:

VAN INWAGEN, Peter, Metaphysics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993). Also available online at: http://lib.myilibrary.com/?id=313762

READING LIST

An asterisk* indicates an important or classic item.

REALISM AND IDEALISM

Varieties of Realism

*PUTNAM, Hilary, Reason, Truth and History (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), chs. 1-3. Also available online at: http://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511625398. [Readable defence of 'internal realism']

*VAN INWAGEN, Peter, Metaphysics (Boulder, CO: Westview, 2002), ch. 5 'Objectivity'. Also available online at: http://lib.myilibrary.com/?id=313762. [A good introduction from a strong realist perspective]


BUTTON, Tim, The Limits of Realism (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), chs. 1 & 8-11. Also available online at: http://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199672172.001.0001. [Chs. 1 and 8 discuss "external" or "metaphysical realism"; chs. 9-11 survey alternatives]


Relativism and Alternative Conceptual Schemes

*DAVIDSON, Donald, Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), ch. 13 'On the very idea of a conceptual scheme' (pp. 183-198). Also available online at: http://doi.org/10.1093/0199246297.003.0013


BUTTON, Tim, The Limits of Realism (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), chs. 18 & 19. Also available online at: http://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199672172.001.0001


Transcendental Arguments

*KANT, Immanuel, Critique of Pure Reason, B274-9 and the footnote to Bxxxix, 'The Refutation of Idealism'. [Ideally the N. Kemp Smith translation] Also available online: http://www.phil.pku.edu.cn/resguide/Kant/CPR/contents.html


BENNETT, Jonathan, 'Analytic Transcendental Arguments', in P. Bieri, ed., Transcendental Arguments and Science (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1979), pp. 45-64. [Difficult, but offers an interesting transcendental argument and a subtle take on the accusation of verificationism]


BUTTON, Tim, The Limits of Realism (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), chs. 12 - 14. Also available online at: http://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199672172.001.0001. [Fairly readable exegesis and defence of Putnam's brain-in-vat argument, and a comparison with a similar argument from Davidson; all opposed to the idea of 'modest' transcendental arguments]


The Contrast of Particular and Universal, and of Abstract and Concrete

*LOUX, Michael, Metaphysics: A Contemporary Introduction. 3rd ed. (London: Routledge, 2006), ch. 3 'Concrete particulars I: substrata, bundles, and substances'. Also available online at: http://lib.mylibrary.com/?id=54342  
BURGESS, John P., and Gideon ROSEN, A Subject with No Object (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), Part IA: 'Introduction'. Also available online at: http://doi.org/10.1003/19825126.003.0001


STRAWSON, Peter F., 'Skepticism and Naturalism: Some Varieties' (London: Methuen, 1985), ch. 1 'Scepticism, naturalism and transcendental arguments'. [Attempts to give a Humean response to scepticism with a place for transcendental arguments]

Related Recent Material


PARTICULARS AND PROPERTIES

General


http://www.jstor.org/stable/2254337


*RUSSELL, Bertrand, The Problems of Philosophy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1912), chs. 9 & 10. Also available online: https://www.dawsonera.com/abstract/9780191509025

CAUSATION

General


Causation and Agency


Realism about Causation, for and against


Direction of Causation


TIME

Dynamic versus Block Conceptions


The Existence and Persistence of Entities


PERSONS

Their Persistence


NOONAN, Harold, Personal Identity. 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2003), chs. 1, 7-11. Also available online at: http://lib.myilibrary.com/?id=9511


Animalism and Alternatives


We welcome your suggestions for further readings that will improve and diversify our reading lists, to reflect the best recent research, and important work by members of under-represented groups. Please email your suggestions to phillib@hermes.cam.ac.uk including the relevant part and paper number. For information on how we handle your personal data when you submit a suggestion please see https://www.information-compliance.admin.cam.ac.uk/data-protection/general-data.