

PHIL 200 :: PROSEMINAR

I. Course Description:

The proseminar is for first year philosophy graduate students only. Instead of having a single topic, it covers a wide range of central issues in mainstream analytic philosophy from the past several decades. A UCSD Philosophy faculty member will visit the class each week to provide an expert's perspective on each topic. In addition to familiarizing you with some "classic" or at least important articles, creating a common stock of knowledge among your year group, and acquainting you with the faculty, it is designed to help you hone your reading, writing, presentation, and thinking skills to a level that is sufficient for graduate course work. You will be encouraged to think and reflect on your writing style and philosophical approach more generally.

II. Texts:

Required: All texts will be made available electronically.

III. Requirements:

Six Short Papers (60%): Each paper should focus on clarifying the main thesis and central argument(s) of one of the assigned articles. You may, if you wish, gesture at an interesting issue or problem posed by the paper that it itself does not address. In addition to being accurate, it is of the utmost importance that papers be clear, precise, and well-organized. Each paper should be about 1000, but no more than 1250 and no less than 900 words. You may write more than six papers and drop your lowest grade. You may also write a paper on an article that you are responsible for presenting in class. Papers are due by midnight the day before class. They should be sent to me as an attachment to an e-mail (Word or PDF format).

For some helpful tips on writing philosophy papers, I recommend the following web-page:

<http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html>

Class Presentation (20%): Each student will be responsible for two 15-minute presentations. A sign-up sheet will be distributed the first day of class.

A presentation consists of setting out some central argument(s) in a portion of the assigned reading (typically an article or book excerpt), together with raising questions and framing discussion. The actual time spent initially presenting the material should be no longer than

15 minutes, although the presenter should be prepared to help guide the subsequent discussion. It is often helpful to prepare a handout. The presentation grade will be based on either the second presentation alone or on the average of the two presentations, whichever grade is higher. I will also try to provide short written feedback on both presentations.

Class Participation (20%): An ideal participant will contribute to the discussion with helpful questions (clarificatory or otherwise) and objections or suggestions that are useful and to the point. Frequency of participation can vary significantly even among ideal participants. For example, one person can make an excellent contribution with a few well-timed and very insightful comments, and another can make an excellent contribution by more frequent comments and clarificatory questions that help solidify and deepen our understanding of the material. These are just examples; there are many ways to contribute. The main thing is not to be afraid to speak up. At the same time, we have a number of participants, so you should never feel that you have to “take over” the discussion either. I completely appreciate that the happy medium can be difficult to gauge here, and that presentations and class discussions can be the source of some anxiety as a result. As such, please feel absolutely free to talk me any time during the term about how you are doing in either of these areas – or indeed about anything else relating to how you are settling into the program

Date	Reading Assignments	Guest faculty	Presenters
1 23 rd Sept	Introduction	Kerry McKenzie	
2 30 th Sept	1. W.V.O. Quine, "Two Dogmas of Empiricism" 2. Gila Sher, "Is There a Place for Philosophy in Quine's Theory?"	Gila Sher	Ayoob Emily

3 7 th Oct	1. Part I, Spinoza's ethics (40 pages) 2. M. Della Rocca, 'A Rationalist Manifesto: Spinoza and the Principle of Sufficient Reason'	Don Rutherford	Emily Joseph
4 14 th Oct	1. TBC 2. TBC	Rick Grush	Markus Hailey
5 21 st Oct	1. B. Williams, "Ethical Consistency" 2. D. Brink, "Moral Conflict and Its Structure." For background, please also read Ross, 'The Right and the Good', chap 2.	David Brink	Hailey William
6 28 th Oct	1. G. Frege, 'On Sense and Reference' 2. S. Kripke, 'A puzzle about belief'	Sam Rickless	Markus Joseph
7 4 th Nov (me away) 2.30pm	1. TBC	Matt Fulkerson	N/A
8 18 th Nov	1. Earman and Salmon, <i>Introduction to the Philosophy of Science</i> (1992), Chapter 2, Part III: The Confirmation of Scientific Hypotheses: Probability, pp. 66-84. 2. D. Lewis, "A Subjectivist's Guide to Objective Chance"	Chip Sebens	N/A

9 2 nd Dec	1. Harry Frankfurt, "Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility" 2. Peter F. Strawson, "Freedom and Resentment"	Dana Nelkin	Ayoob Shawn
10 9 th Dec	1. Lewis, "Radical Interpretation" 2. Stalnaker, <i>Inquiry</i> , ch. 1	Jennifer Carr	Shawn William