SCHOOL OF DIVINITY, HISTORY AND PHILOSOPHY

ACADEMIC SESSION 2017-2018

PH2538: Metaphysics, Epistemology, and Language

15 credits, 11 weeks

PLEASE NOTE CAREFULLY:
The full set of school regulations and procedures is contained in the Undergraduate Student Handbook which is available online at your MyAberdeen Organisation page. Students are expected to familiarise themselves not only with the contents of this leaflet but also with the contents of the Handbook. Therefore, ignorance of the contents of the Handbook will not excuse the breach of any School regulation or procedure.

You must familiarise yourself with this important information at the earliest opportunity.

COURSE TEAM
Dr Ulrich Stegmann (course coordinator)
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TIMETABLE
Time and place of classes (or refer students to the portal/MyTimetable)

Students can view their university timetable at
http://www.abdn.ac.uk/infohub/study/timetables-550.php

COURSE DESCRIPTION
This course provides students with an introduction to central issues in
metaphysics and epistemology. The emphasis is on introducing some of the
central issues in these areas; issues that have shaped the contemporary
debate. In addition to introducing a number of central issues in metaphysics
and epistemology, this course also teaches and further develops a number of
essential skills including extracting and evaluating philosophical arguments,
critical writing, and the application of logical concepts to philosophical
problems.

INTENDED AIMS AND LEARNING OUTCOMES
The course aims at giving students an organized and updated overview of
problems and issues of metaphysics and epistemology, and increasing
students’ abilities to deal with philosophical problems in these areas.
The course’s main learning outcomes are the following:
– Knowledge and understanding of key arguments in metaphysics and
epistemology;
– Intellectual skills such as: ability to articulate philosophical arguments, clarity and rigour of thought and expression in oral and written form, understanding of and ability to criticise issues and arguments presented by others, ability to use technical philosophical terminology accurately;
– Practical skills such as: ability to engage in disciplined discussion with others, ability to marshal complex information, engaging in autonomous and self-motivated learning, thinking creatively, self-critically and independently, ability to use the library and relevant C&IT software/hardware;
– Transferable skills such as: ability to identify and understand issues and arguments, ability to articulate and develop arguments, engaging in respectful participation in group discussion, ability to offer critical expositions of positions proposed by others, acquisition of the discipline of learning, ability to write well-structured and reasoned essays

LECTURE/SEMINAR PROGRAMME
1 one-hour lecture, and 1 one-hour tutorial per week. Tutorials start in week 2. Lectures 1-5 and the first five tutorials will be devoted to epistemology, whereas lectures 6-10 and the last five tutorials will focus on metaphysics.

Week 1
Lecture 1: Introduction to Epistemology & Gettier Problem

Week 2
Lecture 2: Foundationalism
Tutorial 1: The Gettier Problem

Week 3
Lecture 3: Coherentism
Tutorial 2: Foundationalism
Week 4

Lecture 4: Naturalised Epistemology & Reliabilism
Tutorial 3: Coherentism

Week 5

Lecture 5: Scepticism
Tutorial 4: Naturalised Epistemology & Reliabilism

Week 6

Lecture 6: Laws of Nature I
Tutorial 5: Scepticism

Week 7

Lecture 7: Laws of Nature II
Tutorial 6: Laws of Nature as Regularities

Week 8:

Lecture 8: Natural Kinds
Tutorial 7: Laws of Nature as Necessities

Week 9

Lecture 9: Physicalism and Supervenience
Tutorial 8: Natural Kinds

Week 10

Lecture 10: Mental Causation
Tutorial 9: Physicalism and Supervenience

Week 11
Lecture 11: General Review
Tutorial 10: Mental Causation

READING LIST

PART I, EPISTEMOLOGY

Lecture 1: Handout-1 “Introduction & Gettier problem”.

Lecture 2: Handout-2 “Foundationalism”.

Lecture 3: Handout-3 (“Coherentism”)

Lecture 4: Handout-4 “Naturalized epistemology & reliabilism”

Lecture 5: Handout-5 (“Introduction to scepticism”)
Tutorial 5: Reading: TBA

PART II, METAPHYSICS

* indicates the required reading for tutorials (there are no required readings for lectures)
Tutorial 6: Laws of Nature as Regularities

Optional background reading:
Pages 3-12 [introduces key issues]
[detailed overview]

Tutorial 7: Laws of Nature as Necessities

Optional background reading: see above

Tutorial 8: Natural Kinds

Optional background reading:
Norton. Section 3.1, Pages 892-896. [accessible survey of natural kinds, esp.
Kripke and Putnam]
especially Lecture 3, pp. 118-129. [a classic argument for natural kinds and
microstructuralism]
Robin Hendry (2006). Elements, Compounds and Other Chemical Kinds,
Philosophy of Science, 73: 864–875. [defends natural kinds in chemistry]

Tutorial 9: Supervenience
University Press. Pages 117-124 (ch. 8)

Optional background reading:
Jaegwon Kim 2005 *Philosophy of Mind*, Westview Press, chapter 9 [on supervenience and physicalism]


**Tutorial 10: Mental Causation**


*Optional background reading:*

Jaegwon Kim 2005 *Philosophy of Mind*, Westview Press, chapter 8

Jaegwon Kim 2005 ‘The supervenience argument motivated, clarified, and defended’ (see above for bibliographic details). Pages 50-69 [advanced]

**ASSESSMENT**

First attempt

Participation 20%; Pre-tutorial quizzes 20%; 500-word essay 20%; take-home exam 40%

**Resit**

2500 word essay on an assigned topic and to be completed within a set time period (100%)

To view the CGS Descriptors please go to MyAberdeen- Organisations- Divinity, History, & Philosophy Student Information for Undergraduates. The link to the CGS Descriptors is on the left hand menu.
PLEASE NOTE: In order to pass a course on the first attempt, a student must attain a Common Grading Scale (CGS) mark of at least E3 on each element of course assessment. Failure to do so will result in a grade of no greater than CGS E1 for the course as a whole.

If you submit your work on time, you can expect that feedback will normally be provided within three working weeks (excluding vacation periods) of the submission deadline.

ESSAYS
Formal requirements: You are discouraged from using quotations and footnotes because they count towards the word limit (the bibliography does not). Work which is either too long or too short (± 5%) will be penalised.
General: The main goal of the essay is to think about some (perhaps only one or two) of the issues raised in the course and then articulate your considered view about it. This includes defending a clearly stated thesis. Advice on writing philosophical essays is in the “Guidelines on Writing a Philosophy Paper”, available on the course website.

LIST OF ESSAY TOPICS
The list of essay topics will be announced on the course website (MyAberdeen) at the beginning of the course.

ASSESSMENT DEADLINES
Essay due date: 9 March 2018, 3 pm

Take Home Exam due date: 7 May 2018, 3 pm. The take-home exam will be made available at 3 pm on Monday 30 April 2018 on MyAberdeen.

SUBMISSION ARRANGEMENTS
Submit a .doc or .docx file and include the word count.
Submit by the due date through MyAberdeen. No hard copy is required.

In advance of uploading, please save the assignment with your student id number listed in the filename, i.e. 599999999 PHxxxx Essay 1.
When asked to enter a title for the assignment, please enter a title identical to the name of your saved assignment, i.e. 59999999 PHxxx Essay 1. To help us comply with our anonymous marking policy, please remove any immediately identifying information (e.g. your name) from your work.

Please note: failure to submit by the due date (unless a prior arrangement has been made) will result in a deduction of marks. Where no submission is received, this will result in a mark of zero.

Please note: Safeassign text matching software will be used, however the School of Divinity, History and Philosophy reserves the right to also submit material to TurnitinUK when deemed necessary.

EXAMINATION
Information on the take-home exam will be provided early in the course.
General exam guidance will be given in the Student Handbook.)

Past exam papers can be viewed at http://www.abdn.ac.uk/library/learning-and-teaching/for-students/exam-papers/.