

CONTEMPORARY BRITISH AND AMERICAN PHILOSOPHY

PHIL 3130*01
Fall 2013
M W F 9:30 – 10:20
MACK 224

Instructor: Professor A. Wayne
Office: MACK 331
Office hours: Mondays, 10:30 – 12:00
and by appointment
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Course outline

Contemporary British and American philosophy was shaped in part by the formation of autonomous scientific disciplines in the 19th century. Once mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology, the social sciences and even psychology are pursued independently from philosophy, what is philosophy to become? The main answer for contemporary British and American philosophers has been one or another form of empiricism. This course examines this answer through four influential books.

Texts and course materials

- Ayer, A.J. *Language, Truth and Logic* (Dover, 2nd ed., 1946)
- Hempel, Carl, *Philosophy of Natural Science* (Prentice Hall, 1966)
- Goodman, Nelson, *Fact, Fiction and Forecast* (Harvard, 4th ed., 1983)
- van Fraassen, Bas, *The Empirical Stance* (Yale, 2002)
- Online materials at <http://courselink.uoguelph.ca>. You are responsible for accessing CourseLink regularly. Some course materials and grading comments may only be available on CourseLink.

Course requirements

- 10% Weekly reading responses
- 20% Midterm test
- 35% Essay, 5-7 pages, first paragraph due Nov. 6 (10%), full essay due Dec. 5 (25%)
- 35% Final exam

Reading responses are due at the beginning of each Monday class (and Wed. Oct. 16). They should be 1-2 pages in length (single spaced), and should synthesize and present one to three main points of the reading for the week. Each satisfactory reading response adds 1 percentage point to your final grade, up to a maximum of 10 points (late responses not accepted). Additional in-class exercises may also be a part of this component of your grade.

Additional support

Students with special needs or requiring additional support are encouraged to speak with me as early in the term as possible to ensure that appropriate arrangements are made.

Tentative schedule

<u>Week</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Required reading</u>
Sept. 6	Introduction	
I: Logical Positivism		
Sept. 9	The elimination of metaphysics	Ayer, Ch. 1
Sept. 16	<i>A priori</i> and <i>a posteriori</i> knowledge	Ayer, Chs. 4 and 5
II. Logical Empiricism		
Sept. 23	Theory testing	Hempel, Chs. 2 and 3
Sept. 30	Confirmation	Hempel, Ch. 4
III. Nominalism		
Oct. 7	Laws and confirmation	Goodman, Ch. I
Oct. 16	The passing of the possible <i>Midterm, Oct. 18</i>	Goodman, Ch. II, pp. 31 – 49
Oct. 21	Counterfactuals and dispositions	Goodman, Ch. II, pp. 49 – 58
Oct. 28	Grue and bleen	Goodman, Ch. III
IV. 21st century Empiricism		
Nov. 4	Against analytic metaphysics <i>First paragraph of term paper due</i> <i>Nov. 8</i>	Van Fraassen, Lect. 1
Nov. 11	What is empiricism?	Van Fraassen, pp. 31-49
Nov. 18	Revolutions and conversions	Van Fraassen, Lect. 3
Nov. 25	Philosophy without foundations?	Van Fraassen, pp. 111-117 & 151-152
Dec. 6	<i>Term paper due</i>	
Dec. 13	<i>Final exam (tentative)</i>	

E-mail Communication

As per University regulations, all students are required to check their <uoguelph.ca> e-mail account regularly: e-mail is the official route of communication between the university and its students.

When You Cannot Meet a Course Requirement

When you find yourself unable to meet an in-course requirement because of illness or compassionate reasons, please advise the course instructor (or designated person, such as a teaching assistant) in writing, with your name, id#, and e-mail contact. See the Undergraduate Calendar for information on regulations and procedures for Academic Consideration: <http://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c08/c08-ac.shtml>

Drop Date

The last date to drop one-semester Fall 2013 courses, without academic penalty, is **Thursday October 31**. For regulations and procedures for Dropping Courses, see the Undergraduate Calendar: <http://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c08/c08-drop.shtml>

Copies of out-of-class assignments

Keep paper and/or other reliable back-up copies of all out-of-class assignments: you may be asked to resubmit work at any time.

Student Rights and Responsibilities

Each student at the University of Guelph has rights which carry commensurate responsibilities that involve, broadly, being a civil and respectful member of the University community. The Rights and Responsibilities are detailed in the Undergraduate Calendar: <http://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c14/c14-strightsrespon.shtml>

Academic Misconduct

The University of Guelph is committed to upholding the highest standards of academic integrity and enjoins all members of the University community – faculty, staff, and students – to be aware of what constitutes academic misconduct and to do as much as possible to prevent academic offences from occurring. The Academic Misconduct Policy is detailed in the Undergraduate Calendar: <http://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c08/c08-amisconduct.shtml>

Recording of Materials

Presentations which are made in relation to course work—including lectures—cannot be recorded in any electronic media without the permission of the presenter, whether the instructor, a classmate or guest lecturer.

Resources

The Undergraduate Calendar is the source of information about the University of Guelph's procedures, policies and regulations which apply to undergraduate programs. It can be found at: <http://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/>

If you find yourself in difficulty, contact the undergraduate advisor in your program, or the BA Counselling Office: <http://www.uoguelph.ca/baco/contact.shtml>