Proseminar in Metaphysics and Epistemology  
PHIL 5800-001 (or 5550-001)  
Spring 2012

Weekly seminars: Wednesdays, 3:00-5:30pm, HLMS 185

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Professor</th>
<th>E-Mail Address</th>
<th>Office</th>
<th>Office Hrs</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Graeme Forbes</td>
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<td>W 2-3pm*, TH 3-4pm</td>
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<td>by appt</td>
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*For 18 Jan, 25 Jan, & 1 Feb only  
* *Instructor of record, i.e., course coordinator

Course Description

This team-taught pro-seminar in metaphysics and epistemology will focus on five important areas in metaphysics and epistemology, and will consist of five three-week sections. A different person will teach each section.

The general topics to be covered, in order, are as follows:

- Modal logic (Forbes)  
- Skepticism, direct awareness, and direct realism (Tooley)  
- Properties (Oddie)  
- Modal epistemology and the a priori (Hanna)  
- Ontology, mereology, and ontological dependence (Koslicki)

Course Requirements

(1) For the first section of the course, homework problems will be assigned.

(2) For each of the other four sections of the course, a short paper will be required.

**Length:** 5-7 pages, or about 1500-2000 words, each.

**Topics:**

(i) One’s paper is to be on some topic covered in the section in question.  
(ii) Choose a topic that is sufficiently circumscribed that you can discuss it thoroughly, rather than a large topic where you can only skim the surface.  
(iii) A list of some possible topics will be made available before the beginning of each of the last four sections of the seminar, so that you can be thinking about what your essay will be on well before the paper is due.
(iv) Especially if you want to write on a topic other than those suggested, we recommend discussing your topic in advance with the relevant professor, to check that it is a good topic for a short paper.

**Due dates:** Each of the four papers is due by noon on the Monday following the last class of the section in question. See the schedule below for exact dates.

**Submission:** Papers should be submitted in the form of hard copies.

**Content:** Your papers should be written like professional journal articles. Accordingly, they should have the following elements:

*Thesis:* Your thesis should be non-trivial, and it should be stated clearly and explicitly, early on. Your thesis can be a positive philosophical point that connects up in some clear way with the readings, or it can be a criticism of a claim or argument advanced in the readings.

*Argument:* Your argument for the thesis should start from premises that would seem plausible to the great majority of people, including most people who have not already accepted your thesis.

*Replies to objections:* Consider how someone doubting your thesis might object to your argument, and say why these objections ultimately do not persuade you.

Because these papers are quite short, do not spend more than a page explaining or setting up the issue, and avoid all digressions. Aim at a polished paper, free of errors of grammar, punctuation, spelling, word usage, formatting, and the like.

**Due Dates for Papers**

Paper 1: Monday, February 27: **A paper on a topic from Section 2: Skepticism, Direct Awareness, and Direct Realism.**

Paper 2: Monday, March 19: **A paper on a topic from Section 3: Properties**

Paper 3: Monday, April 16: **A paper on a topic from Section 4: Modal Epistemology and the A Priori.**

Paper 4: Monday, May 7: **A paper on a topic from Section 5: Ontology, Mereology, and Ontological Dependence.**

**Readings**

One text has been ordered for the course, and is available from the University bookstore:

The readings for Section 1 of the seminar, sessions 1-2, will be circulated in advance, via e-mail.

Two of the readings (one for Forbes, one for Oddie) are available online via the URL links listed on the syllabus below.

All of the other readings, with the exception of those from Huemer’s book, will be available on the University library’s E-Reserve.

To get electronic copies from E-Reserve, go to http://libraries.colorado.edu/search/p, enter the name “Hanna”, select the course PHIL 5800, and you will see a list of all of the readings that are available. (The password for the course was included on the copy of the syllabus that was sent as an attachment to everyone individually.)

Course Schedule: Sections, Topics, and Readings

Section 1: Modal Logic

Wednesday, January 18: Modal Logic – Part 1
Graeme Forbes, The Metaphysics of Modality, Chapter 1, Sections 1-3.

Wednesday, January 25: Modal Logic – Part 2
Graeme Forbes, The Metaphysics of Modality, Chapter 2, Sections 1 and 2, and, if time permits, Chapter 3, Section 4.

Wednesday, February 1: Counterfactual Conditionals
D. Lewis, “Counterfactual Dependence and Time’s Arrow”
K. Fine, “Critical Notice of D. Lewis, Counterfactuals”

Section 2: Skepticism, Direct Awareness, and Direct Realism

Wednesday, February 8: Skepticism and an External, Physical World
Wednesday, February 15: Direct Awareness: Physical Objects or Sense Data?


**Wednesday, February 21: Foundationalism and the Principle of Phenomenal Conservatism**


**Section 3: Properties**

NB. Do not be intimidated by the length of the reading list. Compulsory readings for each session are starred. The optional readings are for those who become interested or want to write on a related topic.

The article “Properties” by Chris Swoyer and Francisco Orilia in the *Stanford Encyclopedia* is a general useful resource (though it has nothing on the final session – namely Gardenfors’s new theory of properties).

**Wednesday, February 29: The problem of universals: Strict Nominalism and Class Nominalism**


**Wednesday, March 7: The problem of universals 2: Resemblance nominalism**

*Price, H.H. Thinking and Experience* chapter 1

Wednesday, March 14: The problem of universals 3: A new theory of properties


Section 4: Modal Epistemology and the A Priori

Wednesday March 21: Classical Work

C.I. Lewis, “A Pragmatic Conception of the A Priori”
W.V.O. Quine, “Two Dogmas of Empiricism”
W.V.O. Quine, “Epistemology Naturalized”
B. Russell, Selections from The Problems of Philosophy

Wednesday April 4: Neo-Classical Work

A. Casullo, “Kripke on the A Priori and the Necessary”
Philip Kitcher, “A Priori Knowledge”
Philip Kitcher, “A Priori Knowledge Revisited”
S. Kripke, Selections from Naming and Necessity
Hilary Putnam, “Analyticity and Apriority: Beyond Wittgenstein and Quine”

Wednesday April 11: Recent Work

G. Bealer, “Modal Epistemology and the Rationalist Renaissance”
H. Field, “Apriority as an Evaluative Notion”
P. Maddy, “Naturalism and the A Priori”
T. Williamson, “How Deep is the Distinction between A Priori and A Posteriori Knowledge?”

Section 5: Ontology, Mereology, and Ontological Dependence

Wednesday April 18: Ontology as the Study of What There Is (Exists)

W. V. O. Quine, “On What There Is”
Rudolf Carnap, “Empiricism, Semantics and Ontology”
Donald Davidson, “The Logical Form of Action Sentences”

Wednesday April 25: Classical and Non-Classical Mereology

David Lewis, Selections from Parts of Classes.
Ted Sider, Selections from *Four-Dimensionalism*.

**Wednesday May 2: Essence, Necessity, Ontological Dependence and Grounding**

Kit Fine, “Essence and Modality”
Kit Fine, “Ontological Dependence”

**Abbreviations Used in Grading Papers (Hanna)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AGR</td>
<td>Lack of agreement in number, gender, or tense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AWK</td>
<td>Awkward: an ill-sounding or ungrammatical construction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIT</td>
<td>No citation or improper citation: footnote or page reference required, in correct format</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CN</td>
<td>Inappropriate contraction: please write out the entire word or phrase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEL</td>
<td>This symbol or word should be deleted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EX</td>
<td>This term or phrase is not self-explanatory: please define it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INF</td>
<td>Split infinitive: never split an infinitive unless <em>not</em> splitting it will produce a barbarism (OK, I’m a grammatical fanatic. But it’s better than the Grammatical End of the World as We Know It.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ME</td>
<td>Be more explicit: please give more details or further elaboration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MS</td>
<td>More support needed: this claim requires more defense than you give it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NP!</td>
<td>Nice point!: an interesting remark or persuasive argument</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NS</td>
<td><em>Non sequitur</em>: this claim does not follow from the premises you’ve supplied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NT</td>
<td>I question the truth of this claim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PE</td>
<td>Punctuation error</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PG</td>
<td>Start a new paragraph here</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RF</td>
<td>The referent of this word is not obvious: please disambiguate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RP</td>
<td>Repetitious or redundant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE</td>
<td>Sentence error: a sentence fragment or run-on sentence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SP</td>
<td>Spelling error</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TC</td>
<td>This word or phrase is too colloquial: please use a less slangy equivalent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TL</td>
<td>This sentence is too long: please break it up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>This sentence seems conceptually unclear or muddled to the reader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VA</td>
<td>This sentence seems excessively vague or ambiguous to the reader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WW</td>
<td>Wrong word: this word is either a malapropism or else does not accurately capture what you intend to mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X</td>
<td>Apparent typographical error</td>
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