Topics in Philosophical Methodology
Philosophy 7070

Fall 2013

I. PROF. POLGER

Department of Philosophy
206A McMicken Hall
Office Hours: open door and by appointment

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II. LOCATION & TIME

210 McMicken Hall
Thursday, 3:35-5:50

III. COURSE SYNOPSIS

What is philosophy? Is philosophy possible? If so, how do we do it? If not, why not? Self-consciousness about philosophical methods and goals periodically becomes more acute. We are currently in one of those phases. This is a course in the methodology of philosophy, equally in the epistemology of philosophy. Sometimes this topic is called meta-philosophy, in special cases metametaphysics, or in general the philosophy of philosophy.

IV. TEXTS

Many required readings will be posted on Blackboard or otherwise made available electronically. There are also three required books:

• Frank Jackson, From Metaphysics to Ethics: A Defense of Conceptual Anayysis (Oxford)
• Herman Cappelen, Philosophy Without Intuitions (Oxford)
• Timothy Williamson, The Philosophy of Philosophy (Blackwell)

V. ASSIGNMENTS

There will be three kinds of assignments for this class:

A. Papers. All students will prepare a paper written according to American Philosophical Association (APA) Eastern Division submission standards (online). The most crucial bit of information about the format is that the approximate and maximum length is 3,000 words (approximately 10-12 typed double-spaced pages.) I will provide suggestions and guidelines for paper structures and topics, but the topic must be distinct from your presentation topic.

Graduate students beyond their first year may propose to write a paper of 4,000-6,000 words, or a co-authored paper (with another student in the class) of 7,000-9,000 words. (I do not promise
to accept all proposals.) The details of such a paper will be negotiated with me on a case by case basis.

**B. Presentations.** During our first meeting I will assign all students to make presentations during a future class meeting. Assignments will be made using a suitably arbitrary system of my own design. There will be no swapping, bartering, auctioning, or selling of assigned days. Students will each make one presentation to the class in which they (a) give a concise overview of the reading assigned for presentation that is informed by the other required and non-required readings, and outside literature as necessary; and (b) critique one argument that was put forth in one of the required readings for that week.

If, in preparing for your presentation, you discover that some reading other than but related to the one assigned (e.g., by the same author, commenting on the assigned reading, recently published on the same topic) is better or more appropriate, you may suggest that we change the assigned reading. For best effect, you should suggest this more than a week in advance so that other students have time to read the thing(s) you suggest.

Students do not have to submit written papers when the make their presentations; but it is useful to distribute at least an outline or handout. Powerpoint slides will not be permitted for this purpose. You will be graded on your presentation style as well as content.

**C. Case Studies.** All students will be assigned to analyse a case study of philosophical method. This will be a thought experiment, real or imaginary case, or similar. By noon on the day of the class meeting for Week 4, each student will upload to Blackboard (under Discussions) a brief description and initial analysis of the case study (about 300-600 words), the details of which will be described in class. Throughout the semester students will be called upon to apply the classroom discussion to their case study.

By noon on November 26, each student will upload a written paper of about 1000-1500 words in which they explain as thoroughly as possible their metaphilosophical assessment of how the case study works or should be taken to work.

*Late assignments will be penalized at a rate of 30% per calendar day, starting the moment that the assignment is due.*

V. **GRADES**

Grades for this class will be based on four factors. These will contribute to the final grade as follows:

- **Case Study Initial Description** 10%
- **Presentation** 20%
- **Case Study Final Assessment** 15%
- **Paper** 55%
In addition there is an expectation of class participation which may modulate your final grade by as much as one increment from its computed value, e.g., turn either a B+ or an A into an A-.

Attendance is mandatory. If you miss two meetings, your final grade will be penalized 20%. If you miss three meetings, then unless you can document extraordinary circumstances you will fail the class if you do not withdraw.

VI. THE FINE PRINT

You are responsible for knowing and following all University and College regulations, for example with respect to registration, drop or withdrawal, and grading status. It goes without saying, but we will nevertheless, that this course will be conducted according to the University’s Student Code of Conduct. Any student who is academically dishonest will at least fail the course; further actions may be taken. Please familiarize yourself with the University’s guidelines on academic integrity, online at <http://www.uc.edu/studentlife/conduct/guide.html>.

Any student who, because of a disabling condition, needs special arrangements to meet course requirements must contact us immediately so that the appropriate arrangements can be made. (All disabilities must be documented with the University and us.)

Any student who requires accommodation for religious observances must notify the instructor in advance.

You are expected to show respect for your classmates and the instructors. This means that you will turn off telephones before class, and only use laptop computers and other electronic devices for class-related activities. Checking email, sending and receiving text messages, and listening to music are not among the permitted class-related activities.

The readings and schedule are subject to change. You should expect to be treated with respect and fairness by the instructor and by your classmates.
TOPICS IN PHILOSOPHICAL METHODOLOGY

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University of Cincinnati
Fall 2013

KEY TO ICONS

® Required reading
¶ Deep background (very optional)
◮ Global/historical overview
★ Every graduate student should read this sooner or later (the sooner the better), because most philosophers will expect you to know this information and/or this specific article/chapter.
★★ Really.

Suggested Background


Week 1. August 29. Moore and the “Man on the Clapham Omnibus”


**Week 2. September 5. The Linguistic Turn: Ordinary Language and Positivism**


**Week 3. September 12. No Meeting This Week: Case Study Assignment**
Week 4. September 19. Philosophy Without Intuitions


<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/intuition/>

Chalmers, David. Author’s manuscript. Intuition: A Minimal Defense.

Week 5. September 26. Quine and Naturalism


Make-Up. September 29 (Sunday): The Psychological Critique of Intuition


**Week 6. October 3. Defense of Philosophical Intuition as Such**


Horgan, Terence and David Henderson. 2001. The A Priori Isn't All It Is Cracked Up To Be, But It Is Something. *Philosophical Topics* (2001), 219-250. (web)


**Week 8. October 17. The Canberra Plan and the New Analysts**


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**Week 10. October 31. Experimental Philosophy: Burning the Armchair**


Scholl, Brian. 2008. Two Kinds of Experimental Philosophy (and their methodological dangers). (web)

**Week 11. November 7. Doubts About Burning Armchairs**


**Week 12. November 14. Post-Millennial Philosophy, à la Williamson**


**Week 13. November 21. More Philosophy of Philosophy, à la Williamson**


**Extra Friday Meeting, November 8 or 22?**

**Week 14. November 28. Thanksgiving**

**Week 15. December 5. Post-Millennial Philosophy, Other Views**


