**Department of Philosophy**

**Module descriptions 2013/14**

**Level C (i.e. normally 1st Yr.) Modules**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **MODULE TITLE** | **Problems of Philosophy** |
| **MODULE CODE** | **26778** |
| **CREDIT VALUE** | **20** |
| **CONVENOR** | **Various** |
| **ASSESSMENT METHOD** | **Two 1500 word essays (each contributing 25% to the final module mark); one two-hour centrally-timetabled exam (which contributes the remaining 50%)** |
| **TEACHING METHOD** | **Weekly one-hour lecture; fortnightly one-hour seminar** |
| **SEMESTER** | **1 & 2** |

**DESCRIPTION**

This is a 20-credit module running across both semesters, introducing a range of key philosophical problems most of which which practically everyone with a philosophical temperament has puzzled over before:

* Scepticism. (how can I know anything at all about the world?)
* Free will. (how can I think and act freely, if all my thoughts and actions are determined by the laws that govern the Universe?)
* The existence of God. (does S/He exist?)
* Realism vs antirealism. (to what extent is reality distinct from how it appears?)
* The mind/body problem. (is the mind just the brain?)
* Personal identity. (what is it about you that makes you the same person as you were years ago?)
* Utilitarianism vs. Deontology. (are actions morally right and wrong ‘in themselves’, or are they so just because of the effects they have on people’s happiness etc?)
* Ethical obligation. (do we have obligations to others?)
* Moral relativism. (Are moral values absolute or do they vary from one culture/person to others?)
* The requirements of justice. (Who should have what?)

The lectures will be delivered by five different members of staff, and so the module also provides an effective way for students to get to know the dept. and to experience a variety of teaching styles.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **MODULE TITLE** | **Philosophy of Science: Methods, Ethics, and the Limits of Science** |
| **MODULE CODE** | **26776** |
| **CREDIT VALUE** | **10** |
| **CONVENOR** | **Various** |
| **ASSESSMENT METHOD** | **Assessments: 1 x 1500 word essay and 1 x class test or take-home exam (each contributing 50% to the final module mark).** |
| **TEACHING METHOD** | **Weekly one-hour lecture; fortnightly one-hour seminar** |
| **SEMESTER** | **1** |

**DESCRIPTION**

Science has shaped every aspect of the modern world, through technological innovation and through an increased understanding of ourselves and of our environment. This course is an introduction to the philosophical issues surrounding science. Specifically, the questions to be considered include the following:

* What is science, and what distinguishes it from non-science and from pseudo-science?
* Are the results of science especially certain or especially objective?
* Is there a special method common to all sciences?
* Is there scientific progress?
* Are there any questions science can't answer?
* Are the claims of science more secure than those of religion, or are our scientific beliefs ultimately based on faith?
* Can science be socially and politically neutral?
* What responsibilities do scientists have? - to animals, to human subjects, and to society?
* Should ethical limits be placed on the scope of scientific research?

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **MODULE TITLE** | **Reasoning** |
| **MODULE CODE** | **26779** |
| **CREDIT VALUE** | **10** |
| **CONVENOR** | **Prof. Scott Sturgeon** |
| **ASSESSMENT METHOD** | **Semester-long multiple choice test using in-class ‘clicker’ technology** |
| **TEACHING METHOD** | **Weekly one-hour lecture; fortnightly one-hour seminar** |
| **SEMESTER** | **1** |

**DESCRIPTION**

Modern life bombards us with information meant to convince. Unfortunately a great deal of it is what the philosopher Harry Frankfurt calls ‘bullshit’. To a rough first approximation, bullshit is information meant to sway both opinion and action which is put forward independently of its relation to reality or evidence. This module investigates the nature of bullshit. And the aim is two-fold: to increase your capacity to spot bullshit and its propagators, but to develop intellectual tools useful in counteracting bullshit: avoiding it in your own work, and identifying it in the arguments of others. The end of the module will move to looking at some formal methods related to this, which will enable students to make an informed choice about whether to choose *Formal Logic* or *Informal Logic* in Semester 2.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **MODULE TITLE** | **Ethics: How Should We Live?** |
| **MODULE CODE** | **26770** |
| **CREDIT VALUE** | **10** |
| **CONVENOR** | **Dr. Mark (/Joss) Walker** |
| **ASSESSMENT METHOD** | **Assessments: 1 x 1500 word essay and 1 x class test or take-home exam (each contributing 50% to the final module mark).** |
| **TEACHING METHOD** | **Weekly one-hour lecture; fortnightly one-hour seminar** |
| **SEMESTER** | **1** |

**DESCRIPTION**

This module is an introductory course on moral philosophy. It will introduce some of the most important views and debates in moral philosophy, focusing on normative ethics and ethical theories. The module addresses the basic questions of moral philosophy, for example:

• How should we live?

• Which actions are right and wrong?

• What makes actions good or bad?

• What is a good life?

• What kind of a person should I be?

In the first part of the module, we will use these questions to address the basic methods of moral philosophy. The rest of the module focuses on ethical theories as attempts to answer these and related questions. We will first learn about the utilitarian tradition of ethical thinking. Utilitarians begin from the simple thought that it is always right to do whatever makes things go best. They then argue that the more happiness an outcome contains the better it is. This means that we should all aim at bringing about as much happiness as possible. We will look at the details of this view and the main arguments for it, and then consider cases in which making people happy seem intuitively wrong: you shouldn’t kill a child for body-parts even if this would save dozens of lives. The problems of utilitarianism will then be used to motivate the introduction of alternative deontic ethical principles and ethical theories. The second half of the module explores non-utilitarian ethical principles such as the distinction between doing and allowing and the doctrine of double effect. These principles have important consequences when we consider ethical questions related to, for example, war and abortion. Finally, the module will introduce the main deontic ethical theories: Kantian ethics, W.D. Ross’s intuitionism and Aristotelian virtue ethics. The aim of the module is to show by using concrete examples that all these views can tell us something important about how we are to live.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **MODULE TITLE** | **Epistemology: What and How do We Know?** |
| **MODULE CODE** | **26769** |
| **CREDIT VALUE** | **10** |
| **CONVENOR** | **Prof. Scott Sturgeon** |
| **ASSESSMENT METHOD** | **Assessments: 1 x 1500 word essay and 1 x class test or take-home exam (each contributing 50% to the final module mark).** |
| **TEACHING METHOD** | **Weekly one-hour lecture; fortnightly one-hour seminar** |
| **SEMESTER** | **1** |

**DESCRIPTION**

Epistemology is the philosophical study of knowledge. Topics to be covered include: the definition of knowledge; scepticism; internalism vs. externalism and justification; coherentism vs. foundationalism and justification; perception; the problem of induction.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **MODULE TITLE** | **Philosophical Traditions** |
| **MODULE CODE** | **26774** |
| **CREDIT VALUE** | **10** |
| **CONVENOR** | **Dr. Iain Law** |
| **ASSESSMENT METHOD** | **Assessments: 1 x 1500 word essay and 1 x class test or take-home exam (each contributing 50% to the final module mark).** |
| **TEACHING METHOD** | **Weekly one-hour lecture; fortnightly one-hour seminar** |
| **SEMESTER** | **1** |

**DESCRIPTION**

Departments of Philosophy within Britain tend to fall within the ‘analytic tradition’, exclusively examining the views of Western philosophers. This module breaks with tradition and gives an introduction to alternative views (which we continue to examine in later years) and giving students a chance to get a taste for different – sometimes less conventional – approaches. As the module is research-led the exact content will vary depending upon the module convenor. Example traditions examined include Eastern philosophy (examining, e.g., the philosophy of change and harmony; Confucianism; Buddhist questions about the nature of the self and the value of desire) and the Continental tradition (examining, e.g., existentialism, nihilism, and phenomenology, and getting an introduction to philosophers such as Nietzsche, Sartre, and Kierkegaard).

The course will mainly consist of close reading of selected primary sources, with a close eye as to how the material studied may connect with other issues/themes raised on the course. Students will get an introduction to some of the basics of the tradition(s) as well as an insight as to how they connect with the more traditional analytic practices.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **MODULE TITLE** | **Formal Logic** |
| **MODULE CODE** | **26771** |
| **CREDIT VALUE** | **10** |
| **CONVENOR** | **Dr. Darragh Byrne** |
| **ASSESSMENT METHOD** | **Two coursework assessments (each contributing 25% to the final module mark); one one-hour centrally-timetabled exam (which contributes the remaining 50%).** |
| **TEACHING METHOD** | **Weekly one-hour lecture; weekly one-hour seminar** |
| **SEMESTER** | **2** |

**DESCRIPTION**

Logic is concerned with the evaluation of arguments, and thus with the very foundations of philosophy. In formal logic this project is pursued using special abstract languages known as ‘propositional logic’ and ‘quantified logic’. In this module, students learn to translate English sentences into formulas of logical symbolism, and to assess the validity of arguments couched in those formal terms. Some applications of the formal machinery to standard philosophical problems will be considered along the way.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **MODULE TITLE** | **Informal Logic** |
| **MODULE CODE** | **26772** |
| **CREDIT VALUE** | **10** |
| **CONVENOR** | **TBA** |
| **ASSESSMENT METHOD** | **Two coursework assessments (each contributing 25% to the final module mark); one one-hour centrally-timetabled exam (which contributes the remaining 50%).** |
| **TEACHING METHOD** | **Weekly one-hour lecture; weekly one-hour seminar** |
| **SEMESTER** | **2** |

**DESCRIPTION**

Logic is concerned with the evaluation of arguments, and thus with the very foundations of philosophy, and so whatever kinds of philosophy you are most interested in, you require a working knowledge of logical concepts. In the formal logic module, students acquire this competence by learning a special abstract language (featuring formulas you may have encountered before, like this: ∀x[Fx → Gx]) and learning how to construct proofs couched in that language.

However this approach is not for everybody – while some students enjoy formal symbolism and the puzzle-solving which proof-construction involves, others recoil from symbols and find the puzzles a little dry. So in this module we offer an alternative informal route into competence with logical concepts. Topics include logical consequence, consistency and inconsistency, deductive and inductive inference, truth-functionality, logical scope, quantification, and identity.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **MODULE TITLE** | **Philosophy of Religion** |
| **MODULE CODE** | **26775** |
| **CREDIT VALUE** | **10** |
| **CONVENOR** | **Dr. Elizabeth Miller** |
| **ASSESSMENT METHOD** | **One 1500 word essay and one one-hour centrally-timetabled exam (each contributing 50% to the final module mark).** |
| **TEACHING METHOD** | **Weekly one-hour lecture; fortnightly one-hour seminar** |
| **SEMESTER** | **2** |

**DESCRIPTION**

Philosophy of religion is the rigorous philosophical study of religious beliefs, doctrines and arguments. In this module we will discuss such central questions in the field as:

* Are there successful arguments for the existence of God?
* Are there successful arguments against the existence of God?
* What attributes does/should God have?
* Is it rational to believe in God without evidence?
* Are religious doctrines coherent?
* Is there life after death?
* Is religion compatible with science?
* Can there be miracles?

Through discussion of such questions, we will cover a range of philosophical positions in the philosophy of religion and evaluate such positions critically. The module will develop the ability to argue philosophically, analyze and evaluate the arguments of others, and interpret philosophical literature.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **MODULE TITLE** | **Political Philosophy: Can Power be Legitimate?** |
| **MODULE CODE** | **26777** |
| **CREDIT VALUE** | **10** |
| **CONVENOR** | **Dr. Iain Law** |
| **ASSESSMENT METHOD** | **One 1500 word essay and one one-hour centrally-timetabled exam (each contributing 50% to the final module mark).** |
| **TEACHING METHOD** | **Weekly one-hour lecture; fortnightly one-hour seminar** |
| **SEMESTER** | **2** |

**DESCRIPTION**

This module introduces some of the fundamental issues of Western Political Philosophy. In particular, it will discuss the nature of political authority and obligation, the role and function of the state, and the purposes and justification of government. This will pave the way for a discussion of what is arguably the central question of political philosophy: ‘Why should I obey the state?’ The module will be taught through an examination of four of the key texts of Western political thought.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **MODULE TITLE** | **Moral Problems: An Introduction to Applied Ethics** |
| **MODULE CODE** | **26773** |
| **CREDIT VALUE** | **10** |
| **CONVENOR** | **TBA** |
| **ASSESSMENT METHOD** | **One 1500 word essay and one one-hour centrally-timetabled exam (each contributing 50% to the final module mark).** |
| **TEACHING METHOD** | **Weekly one-hour lecture; fortnightly one-hour seminar** |
| **SEMESTER** | **2** |

**DESCRIPTION**

Fundamental ethical disagreements in our society just do not seem to go away. These disagreements often concern matters of life and death and in many cases they lead to intense and emotional debates and sometimes even to violence. This module (in applied ethics) explores whether philosophy can offer us tools to make progress in debates about some of the most interesting ethical questions today. The topics covered include terrorism, treatment of animals, euthanasia, immigration and affirmative action. Each topic is introduced via two readings that defend philosophically opposing views about the ethical controversy in question. These readings will be both high quality, and accessible to students at this level. The module offers you an opportunity to learn some of the most interesting work recently done in applied ethics and practice the skill of evaluating philosophical and ethical arguments. You will also be able to explore your own views on the covered ethical questions and to defend them both in discussions and in writing.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **MODULE TITLE** | **Ancient Philosophy: Plato and Aristotle** |
| **MODULE CODE** | **26768** |
| **CREDIT VALUE** | **10** |
| **CONVENOR** | **Dr. Jussi Suikkanen** |
| **ASSESSMENT METHOD** | **One 1500 word essay and one one-hour centrally-timetabled exam (each contributing 50% to the final module mark).** |
| **TEACHING METHOD** | **Weekly one-hour lecture; fortnightly one-hour seminar** |
| **SEMESTER** | **2** |

**DESCRIPTION**

Plato and Aristotle are said to be the most important philosophers of Ancient Greece. They are often also called the founding fathers of philosophy. In this module, Plato’s and Aristotle’s main philosophical ideas in both theoretical philosophy and ethics are introduced by looking in detail at reasonably short excerpts of Plato’s and Aristotle’s original texts. Working through parts of their central texts and thoughts, we will come to understand why Plato and Aristotle have played such a huge role in the development of Western philosophy and thought and why they continue to be relevant today.

The module begins by focusing on Plato’s method: the Socratic dialogues as a quest for correct definitions. Through the Meno dialogue it then moves on to consider Plato’s remembrance based theory of knowledge and his theory of forms. In Plato’s ethics, the module will focus on Glaucon’s challenge in the Republic: why should we act justly even if it is not in our personal interests? We will consider Plato’s answer to this question, which has its basis in the harmonious functioning of the soul. With Aristotle, we begin from Aristotle’s claims about explanations and the view about the fundamental structure of the reality this leads to. On this view, all reality has purposiveness built into it. The module ends by considering Aristotle’s theory of virtue and flourishing as it is presented in the first books of the Nichomachean Ethics.

The lectures will present the main ideas of each one of the 10 topics covered on the module. For the seminars, students will be given short excerpts of the original texts to read and study questions to answer. At the seminars students will present their answers to the questions and investigate Plato’s and Aristotle’s views critically with the guidance of the seminar-convener.

**Department of Philosophy**

**Module descriptions 2013/14**

**Level I (i.e. normally 2nd Yr.) Modules**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| MODULE TITLE | Sex Ethics and Philosophy |
| MODULE CODE | 23955 |
| CONVENOR | Dr Iain Law |
| ASSESSMENT METHOD | Two 1500 word essays (each contributes 50% to the final module mark) |
| TEACHING METHOD | Weekly two-hour lecture plus optional seminar |
| SEMESTER | 1 |

**DESCRIPTION**

This module will concern issues in the Philosophy and Ethics of sex. It will cover topics such as: liberal versus ‘traditional’ understandings of the function of sex; the harm principle; consent and competence to give it; what laws the state should/may impose relating to sex; the permissibility of contraception, homosexuality, pornography and prostitution. The module employs the topic of sex as a route into fundamental issues in ethics and philosophy concerning liberalism, the law, the nature of ethics and related issues.

## *Preparatory reading and textbook for the module:*

* Igor Primoratz (1999). *Ethics and Sex*. Routledge.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| MODULE TITLE | Speaking of Things |
| MODULE CODE | 26763 |
| CONVENOR | Dr Darragh Byrne |
| ASSESSMENT METHOD | Two 1500 word essays (each contributes 50% to the final module mark) |
| TEACHING METHOD | Weekly two-hour class; fortnightly one-hour seminar |
| SEMESTER | 1 |

**DESCRIPTION**

When you speak, write or think, your sentences or thoughts are *about* particular constituents of the world. This phenomenon is *reference* and this module examines the most important attempts that philosophers have made to explain it. 20th century authors tended to regard this as primarily a question about the relation between certain *words* (nouns) and the objects they pick out, and so the topic forms the most natural introduction you could hope for to philosophy of language (an area you’re likely to pursue in Third Year, even if only indirectly through modules in metaphysics, meta-ethics, etc.). But we also refer to objects in *thought*, so reference is an issue for the philosophy of mind (and further, to epistemology, meta-ethics, etc.) as well as one for philosophy of language.

We’ll begin with the classic debate between theorists who consider the relation between a word of the kind at issue and its referent to be *direct*, and those who hold it to be mediated by something like the speaker’s *conception* of the referent. We’ll explore the theories of two important advocates of the latter view – Frege and Russell (each of whose views concern thought as well as language) and we’ll assess how they deal with puzzles such as that thrown up by words and thoughts (e.g. of fictional characters) that appear to lack referents altogether. Theories of the Frege/Russell kind were subjected to fierce (and, the orthodoxy has it, fatal) attack in the 1970s and 80s by philosophers such as Kripke and Putnam, and new versions (broadly naturalistic in character) of the *direct reference* view emerged. We’ll examine these debates and assess the new theories. Next we’ll turn our attention to *semantic externalism*, a striking doctrine in the philosophy of mind and language that came to prominence through reflection on that new theory. This is (roughly) the view that the identity of a thought or word-meaning *depends on its referent*, and so in a sense cannot be wholly constituted by what’s going on in a thinker/speaker’s brain. Although this thesis belongs to the metaphysics of mind, it has repercussions in epistemology, where philosophers have brought considerations about reference to bear in a new attempt to rebut Cartesian scepticism. If time permits, we’ll also consider another issue on the metaphysics/epistemology border: the *anti-realism* about reference itself which is promoted by advocates of semantic holism such as Quine and Davidson.

**Recommended Preparatory Reading:**

* Lycan, W., 2008: *Philosophy of Language*, Routledge; Ch. 1-4.
* Martí, G., 2011: ‘Reference’, in Kolbel, M. & Garcia-Carpintero, M., (eds.) *Continuum Companion to the Philosophy of Language*, London: Continuum.
* Devitt, M., 1998: ‘Reference’, in E. Craig (Ed.), *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, (available on-line from the University Library).
* Putnam, 1981: ‘Brains in a Vat’, in his *Reason, Truth and History*, CUP.
(Often available on-line.)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| MODULE TITLE | Elements of Logic and Metaphysics |
| MODULE CODE | 26764 |
| CONVENOR | Prof. Ian Rumfitt |
| ASSESSMENT METHOD | Two 1500 word essays (each contributes 50% to the final module mark) |
| TEACHING METHOD | Weekly two-hour lecture; fortnightly one-hour seminar |
| SEMESTER | 1 |

**DESCRIPTION**

The aim of the module is to introduce students to some of the basic concepts of philosophical logic and metaphysics, and to begin to explore relationships between these concepts in a rigorous way.

We shall begin by looking at the notion of logical consequence, and the related notions of logical possibility and logical necessity. This will lead us to investigate other notions of necessity, notably that of metaphysical necessity, and to trace relations between the various notions of necessity and other central philosophical concepts, such as knowability a priori. That in turn will lead us to investigate the closely linked notions of identity, essence, substance and existence. We shall also consider whether there is any sense in which a cause necessitates its effect; this will involve distinguishing between, and then analysing, different types of causal statement. If time permits, the module will also include a brief introduction to philosophical theories of truth. By the end of the module, students should have an understanding of the central concepts of, and of some basic theories in, philosophical logic and metaphysics which can underpin more advanced modules in these areas.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| MODULE TITLE | History of Analytic Philosophy |
| MODULE CODE | 26791 |
| CONVENOR | Dr. Nicholas Jones |
| ASSESSMENT METHOD | Two 2000 word essays (each contributes 50% to the final module mark) |
| TEACHING METHOD | Weekly two-hour lecture; fortnightly one-hour seminar |
| SEMESTER | 1 |

**DESCRIPTION**

The dominant philosophical tradition in the English-speaking world, including here in Birmingham, is the analytic tradition. The tradition grew out of attempts to understand the nature of logic and mathematics by thinkers such as Frege and Rusell. This led to the development of powerful new logical techniques (now taught in first-year logic) that were subsequently brought to bear more widely, in the study of knowledge, language, science, the mind and morality. This module examines some moments in the development of this tradition, telling the story of the birth of analytical philosophy, through to the rise and fall of logical positivism. We will cover such thinkers as:

* Frege (on language: concept and object, sense and reference)
* Russell (on judgment, logical analysis, descriptions and truth)
* Wittgenstein (on logical atomism)
* Carnap and Ayer (on logical positivism)
* Quine (on analyticity, truth by convention, and necessity)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| MODULE TITLE | Feminist Philosophy |
| MODULE CODE | 26782 |
| CONVENOR | Dr. Scott Wisor |
| ASSESSMENT METHOD | Two 2000 word essays (each contributes 50% to the final module mark) |
| TEACHING METHOD | Weekly two-hour lecture; fortnightly one-hour seminar |
| SEMESTER | 1 |

**DESCRIPTION**

This module addresses some of the key debates in feminist philosophy. It begins with a general overview of feminism, of the agenda and interests that appear to mark out feminist philosophy in general, and of the breadth and diversity of feminist thought. The course may cover feminist approaches to, among other things, metaphysics, epistemology, philosophy of language, ethics, political philosophy, and applied issues.

After considering competing views on how feminism and feminist philosophy should be conceived, the module will address a range of contemporary issues in feminism. Key questions may include

* What is gender? What is sex? How should these and other social categories be understood?
* Do men and women have distinctive ways of knowing? Do traditional accounts of knowledge discount the experience of oppressed groups?
* What are implicit biases and stereotype threat, and what do they mean for how we act and understand the world?
* How does gender interact with other individual features, such as race, ethnicity, class, and sexuality?
* How should individuals and institutions evaluate and address traditional feminist issues including pornography, prostitution, cosmetic surgery, norms of beauty, standards of sexuality, marriage, the gendered division of labour, hate speech, and sexual harassment?
* How should individuals and institutions evaluate and address newer feminist concerns including war, terrorism, climate change, the resource curse, migration, global poverty, labour standards, and international trade?

This is a module for anyone who wants to think more about how feminist analysis can contribute to our understanding of the social world around us, and the various urgent problems we face within it.

***Suggested Reading:***

* Elizabeth Hackett and Sally Haslanger (eds.), *Theorizing Feminisms* (OUP 2005)
* Ann Cudd and Robin Andreasan (eds.) *Feminist Theory: A Philosophical Anthology* (Blackwell 2005)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| MODULE TITLE | The Ethics and Politics of Climate Change |
| MODULE CODE | 26780 |
| CONVENOR | Dr. Jussi Suikkanen |
| ASSESSMENT METHOD | Two 2000 word essays (each contributes 50% to the final module mark) |
| TEACHING METHOD | Weekly two-hour lecture; weekly one-hour seminar |
| SEMESTER | 2 |

**DESCRIPTION**

Climate Change is one of the greatest ethical challenges faced by humans today. Most of the issues surrounding climate change are also highly controversial. This module will begin with a brief introduction to the most up-to-date science and economics of climate change. We will then explore the following sorts of ethical and political questions raised by climate change:

* What should we do as individuals about climate change?
* What should governments do?
* How should we react to uncertainty and controversy about the future course of climate change?
* Who should compensate the victims of climate change?

In the first part of the module we will follow John Broome’s book *Climate Matters* to investigate what we should do about climate change as individuals on the one hand, and what governments should do about it on the other. This part of the module introduces duties of justice and beneficence as duties towards future generations, and engages with Derek Parfit’s much discussed non-identity problem. It also explores how we should understand reasoning under uncertainty.

The second part of the module covers the main questions of environmental ethics focusing mainly on the question of whether animal and plant life ought to be protected for its own sake or whether the environment only has value in so far as it is valuable for humankind. The last part of the module will consider more practical ethical questions related to climate change. These questions will concern topics such as carbon offsetting, geoengineering, population control, vegetarianism, direct action and cap and trade.

The module will be taught by weekly two-hour lectures and weekly one hour small-group seminars. The lectures will introduce the main arguments and views on the topic of the given week. There will be a required reading for each week’s seminar. At the seminars, students will work in teams to prepare for short presentations and debates done at the end of the seminar.

***Suggested Reading:***

* Broome, John (2012): *Climate Matters – Ethics in a Warming World* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company).
* Gardiner, Stephen et al (eds.) (2010): *Climate Change – Essential Readings* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| MODULE TITLE | Logic: Its Limits and Scope |
| MODULE CODE | 26792 |
| CONVENOR | Prof. Ian Rumfitt |
| ASSESSMENT METHOD | One course-work problem set; and one 2-hour centrally-timetabled May/June exam |
| TEACHING METHOD | Weekly two-hour lecture; weekly one-hour seminar |
| SEMESTER | 2 |

**DESCRIPTION**

Is there any way to make a mathematics of reasoning? If so, what would it look like? What would be its scope, and what would be its limits? One set of questions concern the extent to which we can adequately represent the subtleties of natural language reasoning in a regimented, mathematical language. Another is whether we can make a system which gives all and only the right results. We will see that we can accomplish much of what we would hope to, but not all of it.

The structure of the module is as follows. We will begin by reviewing logical argument in English, focusing on the ‘propositional connectives’ - 'and', 'or', and 'if...then' (which should be familiar from the first-year logic modules). We will then develop, in a fairly careful way, the formal logic of just these connectives, known as propositional logic. We will prove that the system is both ‘sound’ and ‘complete’, in roughly the sense that every result given by the logic is right, and every right result for the logic is given by it. We will see, however, that propositional logic can only represent a small fragment of the reasoning that is representable by ‘quantificational’ or ‘first-order’ logic, to which you were introduced in first year. We will see how quantificational logic captures the logic of the sub-propositional connectives, ‘for all’ and ‘there is’, in addition to capturing the logic of the propositional ones. We will then devote a considerable amount of class time to showing that this system is sound and complete as well, despite its expressive richness, but that it nevertheless has important limitations.

***Recommended preparatory Reading:***one or other of

* Hodges, W., *Logic*
* Tomassi, P., *Logic*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| MODULE TITLE | Experience and Reason: Early Modern Philosophy |
| MODULE CODE | 26781 |
| CONVENOR | Dr. Alastair Wilson |
| ASSESSMENT METHOD | Two 1500 word essays (each contributes 50% to the final module mark) |
| TEACHING METHOD | Weekly two-hour lecture; weekly one-hour seminar |
| SEMESTER | 2 |

**DESCRIPTION**

This module examines the resurgence of philosophical theorizing and debate which took place in Europe in the 1600s and 1700s, alongside the 'scientific revolution'. It focuses on philosophers from the 'Early Modern' period broadly construed, including Descartes, Berkeley, Leibniz, Locke, Hume and Kant as well as a range of lesser-known figures. We will examine their views on a range of topics in metaphysics and epistemology, introducing the main themes of the era – particularly those that shaped the landscape of contemporary philosophy. These themes will include:

* Scientific developments and their impact on philosophy.
* Rationalism and empiricism.
* Perception and the external world.
* The nature of substances, essence and modality.
* Personal identity and the self.
* Attitudes to God and religion.

***Recommended preparatory Reading:***

* Markie, P.: “Rationalism vs. Empiricism” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (online).
* Bennett, J. (1971): *Locke, Berkeley, Hume* (Oxford University Press).
* Cottingham, J. (1988): *The Rationalists* (Oxford University Press).

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| MODULE TITLE | The Ethics of Killing |
| MODULE CODE | 26826 |
| CONVENOR | Dr. Jeremy Williams |
| ASSESSMENT METHOD | Two 2000 word essays (each contributes 50% to the final module mark) |
| TEACHING METHOD | Weekly two-hour lecture; weekly one-hour seminar |
| SEMESTER | 2 |

**DESCRIPTION**

One of the Ten Commandments is ‘Thou shall not kill’. But the Bible doesn’t, of course, forbid *all* killing. And few of us, whether we have religious commitments or not, are strict absolutists about killing (people, in other words, who believe that taking a life is categorically never morally permissible). Indeed, most of us believe, at the very least, that it is permissible to kill a villainous attacker in self-defence to avoid being killed oneself. Someone might say that, while killing is not always wrong, it is always wrong to kill *the innocent*. But is even this true? What, for instance, of the woman who wants to end her pregnancy, thereby killing her innocent fetus? Or the doctor tending to a terminally ill patient who desperately wants to die, but cannot self-administer the lethal dose of morphine that would end his suffering? Or the pilot sent on a bombing raid to destroy an enemy military target, who knows that, if he completes his mission, nearby civilians will unavoidably be caught in the blast? This module examines when killing is wrong, why it is wrong when it is wrong, and how far these moral judgments can and ought to be taken into account in law and policy-making. Topics on which we are likely to focus include abortion, euthanasia and assisted suicide, self-defence, terrorism, and war.

The module opens with an examination of some relevant background issues in the philosophy of death, such as the meaning and nature of death, the relationship between death and personal identity, and complexities in assessing the badness of death for the one who dies. It is expected that war and self-defence in particular will be cornerstones of the module, with other likely topics including (depending on what is being offered in other modules from year to year) abortion, euthanasia, and the killing of animals. In studying practical questions about killing in various contexts, participants in the module will also thereby become conversant with a number of important issues in ethical theory of more general significance, such as the distinctions between doing and allowing, intentional and foreseen harm, eliminative and opportunistic agency, and so on. And they will also consider the relationship between the ethics of killing at the level of individual choice and the design of domestic and international laws regulating and prohibiting killing. Where the latter is concerned, students are likely to become acquainted not only with debates concerning the feasibility and potential consequences of implementing different laws and policies, but also, where appropriate, with debates within political philosophy over public justification and state neutrality (that is, over whether the state must refrain from coercing citizens on the basis of reasonably disputed metaphysical or ethical doctrines).

***Indicative readings:***

* Judith Thomson, ‘A Defense of Abortion’, *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 1 (1971): 47-66.
* Jeff McMahan, *Killing in War* (Oxford University Press, 2009)
* Jonathan Quong, ‘Killing in Self-Defense’, *Ethics* 111 (2009): 507-537
* Michael Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars*, Fourth Edition (Basic Books, 2006)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| MODULE TITLE | The Mind-Body Problem |
| MODULE CODE | 26762 |
| CONVENOR | Dr. Elizabeth Miller |
| ASSESSMENT METHOD | Two 1500 word essays (each contributes 50% to the final module mark) |
| TEACHING METHOD | Weekly two-hour lecture; fortnightly one-hour seminar |
| SEMESTER | 2 |

**DESCRIPTION**

This module introduces central issues in contemporary philosophy of mind, focusing on the problem of whether our mental experience, especially its subjective character, can be incorporated into the naturalistic, scientific picture of the world. The first part of the course will survey such philosophical theories of the mind as dualism, behaviourism, the identity theory, and functionalism. The second half of the course will discuss some more specific issues in philosophy of mind and cognitive science: Can we solve the mystery of consciousness? Can the contents of our thoughts depend on external factors about which we do not have authoritative knowledge? What is the nature of intentionality? Can computers think?

## *Suggested reading:*

* John Heil *A* *Contemporary Introduction to the Philosophy of Mind*, 2nd ed. (Routledge)