# **Department of Philosophy**

# **Module descriptions 2024/25**

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

Please be aware that all modules are subject to availability.

For many of these modules, some experience of studying Philosophy may be required, and you should remember this when choosing your modules. If there is another module that you need to have studied before taking this, it will be stated in the module description.

Please note that at the time this document has been prepared (February 2024) the following information is provisional, and there may be minor changes between now and the beginning of 2024/25 academic year.

**Please note: Forms of assessment are currently undergoing review for 2024/25, and as a result the assessment information listed within this handbook may be subject to change.**

# **SEMESTER 1 MODULES**

## **LI Aesthetics through History**

Module Code: 30872

Credit Value: 20

Semester: 1

Pre-requisites: None

**Module Description**

The first half of the module will introduce philosophical aesthetics through the lens of a number of key historical thinkers. The topics of this part of the module may include topics such as Plato's account and critical evaluation of art focused on the notion of imitation, Aristotle's description of the craft of poetry and his theory the role which tragedy can play in good human life, Hume's pragmatic account of judgments of taste, and Kant's aesthetics focusing on the beautiful and the sublime. The second half of the module will focus recent developments in aesthetics. The topics investigated at this part of the module may include questions such as whether fakes and forgeries have the same amount of aesthetic value as genuine works of art, whether photography is a genuine art form, in what way does music express emotion, can we have genuine emotions when we are immersed with fictions, and what it is for things to be true in fiction.

Indicative readings:

Carroll, Noel (1999): *Philosophy of Art – A Contemporary Introduction* (Routledge)

Graham, Gordon (2005): *Philosophy of the Arts – an Introduction to Aesthetics*, 3rd ed. (Routledge)

Assessment

Two parts:

(a) One 1750 word essay (50%)

(b) One 1750 word essay (50%)

## **LI Science and Nature**

Module Code: 30886

Credit Value: 20

Semester: 1

Pre-requisites: None

**Module Description**

Our day-to-day lives rely in large measure on knowledge acquired from doing science. Science has brought us rockets, solar panels, and medicine. It leads to an ever increasing body of knowledge about the world. But what is science, and how and why does it work so well? Is science very different from history and archaeology? Is homeopathy a science? Does science tell us really about nature independently of us? What must nature be like if science is to be possible? Is science objective in any significant sense? This module explores metaphysical and epistemological questions that arise in general philosophy of science and in the philosophy of the special sciences. Topics will include some of the following: science and pseudoscience, the influence of logical positivism, realism and explanation, laws of nature, chance and determinism, natural kinds, causation, the relationship between science and philosophy, the unity of science, feminist critiques of the objectivity of science.

Suggested preparatory readings:

- Chalmers, A. (2013) *What Is This Thing Called Science?* Open University Press

- Bird, A. (1998) *Philosophy of Science*. UCL Press

- Peter Godfrey-Smith (2003) *Theory and Reality: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Science.* University of Chicago Press

Assessment

Two parts:

(a) 1750 word essay (50%)

(b) 1750 word essay (50%)

## **LI Philosophy of Mental Health**

Module Code: 30841

Credit Value: 20

Semester: 1

Pre-requisites: None

**Module Description**

In Philosophy, mental health is a multi-faceted topic that can be approached from a variety of perspectives, and which is relevant to several different areas, including Philosophy of mind, Philosophy of Science, Ethics, Epistemology, and more. In this module, we aim at exploring in depth some of the main philosophical debates on the topic of mental health. For example:

Are mental struggles genuine illnesses, or are they best thought of as problems in living and as a normal part of the human condition?

Are delusions more irrational than non-delusional beliefs? Are delusions beliefs, or are they another type of mental state altogether?

Are psychiatrists guilty of epistemic injustice towards people with mental health struggles?

Are phenomenological approaches useful in psychiatry? Can phenomenological approaches help us get a better understanding of depression?

Assessment

Two parts:

(a) 1750 word essay (50%)

(b) 1750 word essay (50%)

**LI Experience and Reason: Early Modern Philosophy**

Module Code: 26781

Credit Value: 20

Semester: 1

Pre-requisites: None

**Module 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.

Indicative readings:

Berkeley, George: A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge

Descartes, Rene: Meditations on First Philosophy

Hume, David: A Treatise of Human Nature

Kant, Immanuel: Critique of Pure Reason

Kant, Immanuel: Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics

Leibniz, G.W: New System of the Nature of Substances and their Communication, and of the Union which Exists between the Soul and the Body

Leibniz, G.W: Monadology

Locke, John: An Essay Concerning Human Understanding

Spinoza: The Ethics

Assessment

Two parts:

(a) One 1750 word essay (50%)

(b) One 1750 word essay (50%)

## **LI Elements of Metaphysics**

Module Code: 30074

Credit Value: 20

Semester: 1

Pre-requisites: None

**Module Description**

Metaphysical questions arise in all areas of philosophy, but they can be slippery and require careful handling. This module aims to equip students with a solid grasp of the core concepts of metaphysics, and an understanding of their logical basis. The goal is to provide a 'metaphysical toolkit' to use when students encounter metaphysical concepts and questions elsewhere in their studies. The exact topics covered will vary from year to year but may include: the basic concepts of ontology (existence, properties, and identity), modal concepts (possibility, necessity, conditionals, essence, causation and grounding), the nature of logical consequence and necessity, negation and negative facts, and the radical dialetheist position that permits true contradictions.

Assessment

1 x 2000 word essay (50%) and 1 x 1 hour centrally timetabled exam (50%)

# **SEMESTER 2 MODULES**

## **LI Sex, Ethics and Philosophy**

Module Code: 23955

Credit Value: 20

Semester: 2

Pre-requisites: None

**Module 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.

Assessment

(a) 1750 word essay (50%)

(b) 1750 word essay (50%)

## **LI Feminist Philosophy**

Module Code: 26782

Credit Value: 20

Semester: 2

Pre-requisites: None

**Module 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, and political philosophy. Key questions are likely to include several of the following:

* 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?
* 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, and sexual harassment?
* How should individuals and institutions evaluate and address more recent feminist concerns around 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 ourselves and the social world around us.

Suggested Reading:

• Fricker, Miranda, and Hornsby, Jennifer (eds.), 2000, *Cambridge Companion to Feminism in Philosophy*, CUP.

• Jaggar, Alison and Young, Iris Marion (eds.), *A Companion to Feminist Philosophy*, Blackwell, 1999.

Assessment

* 1 x 1750 word essay OR 10-15mins presentation (50%)
* 1 x 90 min CT exam (50%)

## **LI Logic**

Module Code: TBC

Credit Value: 20

Semester: 2

Pre-requisites: **Students must have taken an introductory formal logic module at their home institution.**

**Module Description**

This is a module on intermediate logic. It follows on from the Level C introduction to logic. Building on the knowledge and skills acquired in the Level C logic module, the module focuses on concepts and theories that commonly feature in contemporary philosophical research. Individual topics will include some of the following:

* A formal introduction to metalogic and metalogical proofs (e.g. of completeness and soundness);
* The nature of logical consequence (including understanding logical consequence via models and/or proofs);
* The nature of logical connectives (e.g. interdefinability and/or the Sheffer stroke);
* A specific investigation of one or more non-classical logics (e.g. three-valued logics, modal logics, relevance logics, free logics);
* The logic of conditionals (e.g. material conditionals, indicative conditionals, counterfactual conditionals);
* Some grounding in the history of logic (e.g. of ancient and medieval precursors to logic as it is practised in the analytic tradition and/or non-Western logical traditions such as Indian or Chinese logic);
* Some grounding in the philosophy of logic.

**Assessment:**

1 x 50 minute in-class test (40%)

1 x 90 minute centrally-timetabled exam (60%).

## **LI Climate and Environmental Ethics**

Module Code: 38929

Credit Value: 20

Semester: 2

Pre-requisites: None

**Module Description**

Climate change, plastic pollution, biodiversity loss, disturbance of the geochemical cycles, freshwater depletion and other global environmental challenges are highly complicated challenges which face humankind in the 21st century. They raise fundamental questions about how we should live and what kinds of societies we want, what our relationship is with nature, and how we transition from our current way of life with an unsustainable impact on the environment to a society with minimal environmental impacts (including net-zero-carbon dioxide emissions).

This module is an interdisciplinary module, starting from up-to-date scientific knowledge and including insights from economics, political theory, moral psychology to inform ethical and moral analysis of global environmental problems. We will address the political and ethical questions raised by climate change and other global environmental problems, including:

- Who should pay the burdens involved in tackling climate change and other global environmental problems?

- To what extent can we rely on technological innovations to humanity’s environmental impact? Do we need measures to reduce population (growth)? Do we have to reduce our (material) wellbeing to achieve sustainable lifestyles?

- How can the (human and non-human) victims of global environmental problems be compensated?

- What should we, as individuals, do to reduce our impact on the global environment?

- What are the relationships between various duty-bearers (individuals, corporations, political institutions) in addressing global environmental problems (as paradigmatic examples of collective action problems)?

- What motivates duty-bearers and society at large to reduce humanity’s environmental impact?

- How do we value non-human animals and the natural environment?

- How should we conceptualise our relationship with the natural environment?

Assessment

1 x Canvas quiz with open-answer and multiple choice questions (50%) and 1 x 1750 word essay (50%)

## **LI The Ethics of Killing**

Module Code: 26826

Credit Value: 20

Semester: 2

Pre-requisites: None

**Module 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, almost 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).

Assessment

1 x 1500 word essay (50%) AND 1 x 90 minute exam (50%)