

PHL384F - First Year Seminar

Instructor Information:

Sinan Dogramaci <sinan.dogramaci@gmail.com>, off. hrs. Tuesday, 3:30-5:30

Adam Pautz <apautz@austin.utexas.edu>, off. hrs. Friday, 10-noon

Class Meets 6:30-9:30pm, WAG 316

Course Description:

In this course we'll study articles and book chapters that are now widely agreed to have been among the 20th century's "greatest hits", focusing on philosophy of language and mind, metaphysics and epistemology. One main sequence of weekly topics will take us from Frege through Kripke, another sequence will concern perception and consciousness, and a third sequence will concern contemporary discussions of skepticism about knowledge.

Assignments and Grading:

Mid-semester paper 40%, due October 18th.

Final paper 40% , due TBA (mid-December; a few days before fall term grades due to registrar).

2 Presentations, 10% each.

Class participation can shift a borderline grade (based on the participation's quality, not quantity).

We want everyone to contribute to a lively critical discussion of the views and arguments we'll be examining each week. To (slightly artificially) facilitate this, we are asking you to write out, and bring with you to class, 3 questions or comments you've come up with regarding the assigned readings, *and email these to both Sinan and Adam in advance of each seminar meeting*. These emailed questions/comments may be short (one sentence or two for each will suffice), they do not need to be brilliant, and you're not even required to bring them up in class. While actual class participation can shift a borderline grade, we won't be grading what's emailed to us.

The papers should each be about 10 - 12 pages, double-spaced. You choose the topic, but the mid-semester paper must relate to some material taken from weeks 1-6, and the final paper must relate to some material taken from weeks 7 - 14. We **strongly urge** you to schedule a meeting with one of us before writing a paper and verbally present to us your paper's **clear thesis** and its **argument(s)**.

A student presentation will take place the last 30-45 minutes of each seminar meeting. The schedule below gives the readings and a brief assignment for each week's presentation. Your main goals (and the bases of our evaluation) are (a) to present some arguments or objections **clearly and fairly**, and (b) to raise some of your own critical questions about the presented material. Assume your audience is not familiar with the material being presented, though the rest of class will in fact be expected, as usual, to sustain a lively critical discussion. The speaker should be prepared to talk for 20 minutes, with the remaining time left for discussion. A handout or powerpoint is recommended.

Schedule

All readings will be available electronically. Unless labeled “optional”, all readings are required for everyone, including the presentation material.

Part I: Analytic Philosophy through the Kripkean Revolution

Week 1 (Aug 30th)

Quine, “On What There Is”

Student Presentation: Lewis and Lewis, “Holes” -- Presenter should extract from the dialogue clear statements of the arguments for/against believing in holes, and summarize the resulting “cost/benefit” ledger.

Week 2 (Sept 6th)

Quine, “Two Dogmas of Empiricism”

Optional: Boghossian, “Analyticity”

Student Presentation: Grice and Strawson, “In Defense of a Dogma” -- Presenter should explain G&S’s main counter-objections to Quine.

Week 3 (Sept 13th)

Frege, “On Sense and Reference”

Russell, “Descriptions”

Student Presentation: Lewis, “How to Define Theoretical Terms” -- Presenter should explain Lewis’s technique for defining scientific terms.

Week 4 (Sept 20th)

Kripke, *Naming & Necessity*, Lecture 1

Student Presentation: Fine, “Essence and Modality” -- Presenter should explain in what sense and why Fine thinks essence is prior to necessity.

Week 5 (Sept 27th)

Kripke, *Naming & Necessity*, Lecture 2

Student Presentation: Jackson, “Reference and Description Revisited” -- Presenter should explain some of Jackson’s main or best counter-objections to Kripke.

Week 6 (Oct 4th)

Kripke, *Naming & Necessity*, Lecture 3

Student Presentation: Jackson, “The Role of Conceptual Analysis” (ch. 2 of *From Ethics to Metaphysics*) – Presenter should explain Jackson’s arguments for the need for conceptual analysis, his conception of it, and his treatment of objections (arising from the work of Kripke, Quine, etc.)

Part II: Recent Philosophy of Mind

Week 7 (Oct 11th) Smart, “Sensations and Brain Processes”

Presentation: Papineau, “The Case for Materialism”. Presenter should explain Papineau’s argument for materialism, as well as problems for that argument.

Week 8 (Oct 18th) Jackson, “The Existence of Mental Objects”
Presentation: Brewer, “Indirect Realism”. Presenter should briefly explain indirect realism and the motivation behind it, and then in more detail explain Brewer’s objection to it, as well as identify potential problems with that objection.

NOTE: MID-SEMESTER PAPER DUE THIS WEEK

Week 9 (Oct 25th) Dretske, “Experience as Representation”
Presentation: Campbell, “The Relational View of Experience”. Presenter should explain the relational view of experience and how it differs from the intentionalism (representationalism defended by Dretske and others), Campbell’s argument for it, and potential problems for that argument.

Week 10 (Nov 1st) Dretske, “A Recipe for Thought” and selection from “Naturalizing the Mind”
Presentation: Loewer, “A Guide to Naturalizing Semantics”. Presenter should summarize the main views discussed and the main problems with them, identifying general themes.

Part III: Recent Approaches to Knowledge & Skepticism

Week 11 (Nov 8th)
Dretske, “Epistemic Operators”
Nozick, selections from “Knowledge and Skepticism” (ch. 3 of *Philosophical Explanations*)
Student Presentation: Hawthorne, selections from ch.1 of *Knowledge and Lotteries* -- Presenter should explain Hawthorne’s views on, and partial defense of, closure for knowledge.

Week 12 (Nov 15th)
Pryor, “The Skeptic and the Dogmatist”
White, “Problems for Dogmatism” (First Objection)
Student Presentation: White, “Problems for Dogmatism” -- Presenter should give White’s Second and Third Objections to Dogmatism.

Week 13 (Nov 22nd)
Williamson, “Scepticism” (ch.8 of *Knowledge and its Limits*)
Optional: Schiffer, “Evidence = Knowledge: Williamson’s Solution to Skepticism”
Optional: Williamson, “Reply to Schiffer”
Student Presentation: Williamson, “Evidence” (ch.9 of *Knowledge and its Limits*) -- Presenter should explain Williamson’s E = K view, and explain his argument for the view.

Week 14 (Nov 29th)
John MacFarlane, “The Assessment Sensitivity of Knowledge Attributions”
Student Presentation: Lewis, “Elusive Knowledge” (presentation begins the class) -- Presenter should summarize Lewis’s view so as to to prepare us for our discussion of MacFarlane.