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PHL 405.01: 20th Century Analytic Philosophy

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Philosophy 405
Syllabus Fall 2011

Professor: David K. Clark **Office:** LA 154 **Hours:** TWR at times TBA
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Course Theme

The thematic focus of the course features the contemporary version of the central and classic philosophical enigma—the realism/antirealism debate. Among other matters then, this course provides an extended discussion of attempts by analytic philosophers to bring this intractable and fundamental problem to a decisive resolution. Accordingly, the first class will concentrate on the historical underpinnings (Descartes—Kant) of analytic philosophy. The next 3 weeks will focus on Rorty’s assessment of the contributions contemporary analytic thinkers. This will consolidate our background grasp of thematic issues as we prepare to work through the keynote representations of each such philosopher.

Note: While the readings for the class are typically fairly short, they are also exceptionally challenging. Class preparation and satisfactory progress in the course will require your firm and continuing commitment. While this class is primarily a lecture course, ongoing student engagement is critical if comprehension is to be achieved.

Course Goals:

- To identify, and obtain some proficiency in, *methods* of inquiry distinctive of contemporary analytic philosophy;
- To become conversant *both* with the *basic problem* which analytic thinkers sought to address *and* with the main features outlining their *collective* contributions;
- To achieve a basic mastery of selected *key arguments* pertaining to central theses promulgated by certain analytic philosophers.

Requirements:

1. **30%** Attendance and informed class participation. Attendance is a *necessary* condition for doing well in the course. Accordingly, students will be expected to show that they have prepared for each class by making contributions which enhance the quality of the session. Hence, every student is both welcome and encouraged to participate in each class with helpful questions, observations, objections, etc.
2. As part of your class participation, each student will make one (1) presentation on an assigned reading. *No outside research is expected* for this presentation. Rather, the presentation should (a) provide a structural overview of the assigned reading; (b) isolate its’ key theses and supporting argument(s); (c) raise critical questions for focusing discussion.

An advance outline should be made available to the class one day in advance. Students should speak from notes; do *not* read from the script. Try to keep the class engaged as you proceed.
3. There will be two essay exams—each of which will count 15% of the grade (**30% total**). The first will be over Rorty’s lengthy “Introduction to the Linguistic Turn,” and is scheduled for week 4. The second exam will follow our discussion of G.E. Moore and will probably occur in week 8. The tests will be designed to gauge your ability to define and appropriately use key terms, as well as present prominent lines of philosophical argumentation.

4. Final Exam/Paper—40%. The final exam will consist of **either** a comprehensive in-class examination; **or** it will be a final take-home examination (12 pp) where each student will provide a synopsis of how the contributions of each of the various figures studied in the course impacts—the realism/antirealism problem. In either case, this project should be steadily kept in view throughout the duration of the course as you continually probe and adjust your understanding of the issues. The final exam/paper should also exhibit development of your analytic skills.

Graduate Students are welcome. Term papers for the graduate student will be 15 pp, and must exhibit a substantial research component.

Texts and Reading Materials:

1. **Main Text:** *Contemporary Analytic Philosophy* (CAP), 2nd Edition, James Baillie

2. **Articles on Electronic Reserve**—here listed in order of use.

1. *The Linguistic Turn*: “Introduction: Metaphysical Difficulties of Linguistic Philosophy,” Richard Rorty.

2. “On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme,” Donald Davidson.

3. *Mind and World*, “Introduction,” and “Lecture I,” John McDowell.

4. “Brains in a Vat,” Hilary Putnam.

5. *Objectivity, Relativity and Truth* (ORT), “Introduction: Antirepresentationalism, Ethnocentrism, and Liberalism,” Richard Rorty.

6. (ORT), “Pragmatism, Davidson, and Truth,” Richard Rorty.

7. (ORT), “Solidarity or Objectivity?” Richard Rorty.

Course Layout:

Week 1:	Overview; seeds of contemporary analytic philosophy; historical underpinnings of the realism/antirealism problem.		
Week 2:	“Introduction” to the <i>Linguistic Turn</i> ;	(ER)	
Week 3:	“Introduction” to the <i>Linguistic Turn</i> ;	(ER)	
Week 4:	Review and Test #1		
	Frege, “On Sense and Reference,”	(CAP)	Presentation
Week 5:	Bertrand Russell:		
	“Descriptions,”	(CAP)	Presentation*
	“Introduction to Logical Atomism,”	(CAP)	
Week 6:	Ordinary Language Philosophy:		
	Moore, “Proof of an External World,”	(CAP)	Presentation*
Week 7:	Logical Positivism (Read “Introduction”):		
	Carnap: “The Elimination of Metaphysics”	(CAP)	Presentation*
	Schlick: “The Foundations of Knowledge,”	(CAP)	Presentation*
Week 8:	Review and Test#2		
	Quine: “Two Dogmas of Empiricism,”	(CAP)	Presentation*
Week 9:	Davidson: “On the Very Idea of ...”	(ER)	Presentation*
Week 10:	McDowell: “Introduction and Lecture I”	(ER)	Presentation
Week 11:	Rorty: “Introduction” to <i>ORT</i>	(ER)	Presentation*
Week 12:	Rorty: “Solidarity or Objectivity?”	(ER)	Presentation*
Holiday			
Week 12/13	Putnam: Brains in a Vat	(ER)	Presentation
Week 14	“Meaning and Reference,”	(CA)	Presentation*?
	Rorty: “Pragmatism, Davidson, and Truth,”	(ER)	
Week 15:	Final exam, or final paper due. If papers are due, each student will make a 10 minute presentation to the class on his/her paper.		