

1-2012

PHL 499.01: Senior Seminar

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SENIOR SEMINAR
Phil 499

Professor: Christopher J. Preston
Classroom: LA 146
Class time: Tuesday and Thursday, 2.10-3.30 p.m.
Office: LA 157
Office hours: T. 3.30-5 p.m., W. 1.30-3.30 p.m., and by appt.
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1. Course Introduction:

Philosophy in the Flesh seeks to challenge the way philosophy has been done in the western tradition. We will spend the semester doing a careful reading of this wide-ranging text and place it alongside the historical figures and patterns of thought they discuss (including Aristotle, Descartes, Hume, and Kant). We will also read a range of more contemporary articles that pick up on some of the themes we encounter. For example, we will read articles about the embodied mind, situated knowledge, environmental ethics, and feminism. Be prepared for a whirlwind voyage through several different areas of philosophy including philosophy of mind, epistemology, metaphysics, and ethics.

This class is designed to approximate the experience of a graduate seminar. I will tend not to lecture but to rely upon student presentations, questions, and discussion. The assignments are designed to maximize student involvement and to enable you to explore (and enjoy!) the philosophical skills you have learned at UM.

2. Reading Material (all required reading):

George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh* (Basic Books, 1999).

Articles available on Moodle.

*Please note that the articles on Moodle are required reading as much as the text book. Be sure you know how to use Moodle.

3. General Expectations:

I request that you come to class having carefully read the material assigned for that week prior to your arrival. As we talk about the reading, I will seek opinions on various topics and will call upon individuals to answer questions relevant to the reading and lecture.

Please be prepared to discuss the positions articulated in the text and to bring your own questions and concerns to everyone's attention. Please also treat everybody in the class with decency and respect at all times.

4. Reading Assignments (provisional):

Week 1 (Jan 23-27): INTRODUCTION: Introductions, Chaps 1-3.

Week 2 (Jan 30-Feb 3): THE BASIC THESIS: Chaps 3-6.

*****Philosophical autobiography due (Feb 2nd)*****

Week 3 (Feb 6-10): WHAT PLANET ARE JOHNSON AND LAKOFF FROM? Chap 6 (ctd.) Melchert on Kant (**M**), Preston (**M**).

Week 4 (Feb 13-17): WHITHER TRUTH? Chaps 7-8, Rorty (**M**).

Week 5 (Feb 20-24): CAUSE: Chap 11 (170-194), Aristotle (**M**), Chap 11 (212-218), Chap 18 (377-379).

Week 6 (Feb 27-Mar 2): CAUSE: Chap 11 (218-221), Hume (**M**), Chap 11 (223-234).

Week 7 (Mar 5-9): MIND AND KNOWLEDGE: Chap 12 (235-256), Locke (**M**), Chap 19 (391-409).

Week 8 (Mar 12-16): THE CHINESE ROOM: Descartes (**M**), Searle (**M**), Chap 12 (260-266).

*****Mid-term study questions available*****

Week 9 (Mar 19-23): PERSONHOOD: Chap 13 (267-274) Chap 19 (409-414), Nagel (**M**), Aaltola (**M**).

Week 10 (Mar 26-30): EMBODIED AND EMBEDDED MINDS: Hayles (**M**), Rowlands (**M**).

*****Take-home mid-term due in class (March 29th)*****

-----SPRING BREAK (Apr 2nd – 6th)-----

Week 11 (April 9-13): TERM PAPER OUTLINES

*****Presentation of term-paper outlines*****

Week 12 (April 16-20): POST-MODERN, SITUATED KNOWLEDGE: Haraway (**M**), Chap 25.

Week 13 (April 23-27): POLITICS AND MORALITY: Chap 14 (290-326), Lakoff (**M**).

Week 14 (April 30-May 4): POLITICS AND MORALITY: Chap 20, Tong (**M**).

*****Term Paper Due. Monday, May 7th at 5pm by Email*****

5. Course Requirements:

Please note that these assignments will be graded on a points system, not a grade. Your goal is to accumulate as many points as you can throughout the semester. Some points (e.g. the autobiography) are easier to get than others (e.g. the mid-term). Don't be mislead into thinking that 5/5 on the autobiography, for example, means that you are heading for an A in the class. Your grade will depend on how many points you have scored when the last assignment is in. The instructor will use his judgment to distribute grades based on point totals at the end of the semester.

a) Attendance, participation, and scholarly attitude (10 points). I will be taking attendance at the start of every class and I shall be keeping track of your participation during the class. If you need to miss a class at some point in the semester, please let me know by e-mail ahead of time if possible. If you cannot let me know before class, please e-mail me as soon as you can afterwards.

b) Philosophical autobiography (5 points). On Tuesday, Feb 2nd everyone should turn in a 3-page (minimum) philosophical autobiography. The autobiography should be a reflection on the philosophies (and philosophers) that have become central to your thinking over the last few years. This paper should develop the introduction to yourself that you present in class during the first week.

c) Class question (10 points). You need to come to each class with one question prepared on the assigned reading which we can use to prompt class discussion. If there are multiple readings in a week, divide them in two and prepare one question for Tuesday on the first half of the reading and one for Thursday on the second half.

d) Office visit (5 points). Everyone should make at least one office visit **before spring break**. You can use this visit for help with the reading test, to seek guidance on the mid-term or term paper, or for any other reason. I need to check in with you at least once before the break to see how things are going.

e) Student selected reading (10 points). Each student will have a Thursday class assigned in which they are required to distribute a short reading which questions/embraces/contrasts with anything we have read from Johnson and Lakoff. Students tend to have strong reactions (both positive and negative) to this book. I want you to bring in a short reading for group discussion (3-10 pages) that brings your reactions to the reading to our attention.

f) Mid-term (25 points). There will be an open book, take-home midterm, due in-class on March 29th. The mid-term will test your understanding of the reading and lecture. Questions will be handed out at least a week in advance of the due date.

g) Final Assignment (35 points). You must submit a 12-15 page, double-spaced, term paper discussing any topic raised during the semester. 5 of the 30 points will be awarded for the quality of the outline and presentation of your paper topic submitted during week 10. This final paper will be due by 5pm on Monday, May 7th as an attachment to an e-mail. (Please submit in MS Word or Wordperfect format).

6. Additional remarks:

If you have any physical or learning disability that may make it hard for you to complete the requirements of this class as specified, let me know right away and I will be happy to make appropriate accommodating arrangements.

I expect complete academic integrity at every point of the course. Any academic dishonesty will lead to an automatic F for your semester grade and a meeting with the appropriate academic authorities. There will be no exceptions to this zero tolerance policy on academic dishonesty.

I encourage you to use my office hours. I am paid to help you with this class! Five or ten minutes of discussion can sometimes really help to clarify things. Use e-mail to stay in touch.

Finally, I ask you to contribute to the best learning environment possible as we share time together this semester. Classes really become rewarding when a constructive momentum accumulates. This only happens when everybody contributes their best intellectual effort, good humor, and generosity of spirit. Please contribute your part and I'll be sure to contribute mine.