PHI 600 Ancient Philosophy

Tuesday 6:00-9:00

A. Kim

**Topic: Towards a Socratic Ethics**

**Description:**
This seminar will focus on Plato’s early, so-called Socratic dialogues. Our interest will be twofold. On the one hand, we will analyze and interpret the content of each dialogue in its own right. On the other hand, we will examine the interplay of that content with the dialogical form in which it is developed. In connection with my current book project, I will be working out a theory of dialectical ethics, i.e., an ethics that develops through the activity of dialogue.

Topics may include: the relation of virtue and moral autonomy; dialogue and authenticity; dialectic and finitude; irony and refutation; the political and religious dimensions of Socratic ethics. Primary readings may include: *Euthyphro, Apology, Crito, Meno, Euthydemus, Lysis*; selections from *Phaedo, Republic*; and perhaps *Sophist*. Secondary readings may include Geach, Cohen, Burnyeat, Nehamas, Vlastos, Gonzalez, Ober, Benson, and other contemporary scholars. Requirements will include at least one class presentation (depending on enrollment) and one 20-30 page term paper. I am happy to read selections in Greek with interested students.

Required book:


Optional, useful books:

*Please note: I don’t allow electronic devices, including laptops, in class. You should therefore buy the print version of the required text.*
Description:
The challenge of disability, especially cognitive disability, to philosophy requires no less than an expansion and reconception of what it is to be a human being with full moral standing. The challenge is first of all to conceptions of a good life and of who deserves to be in the world. Beyond this, it forces us to expand our notions of what moral interactions require of us and makes the case for an ethics of care more urgent. The concepts of dignity and moral standing that have prevailed in philosophy, as well as what it is to be a subject in a theory of justice need redefinitions and readjustments if they are to be inclusive enough to include human beings with cognitive disabilities.

The central text will be a manuscript I am completing, Disabled Minds and Things that Matter: Lessons for a Humbler Philosophy. Writings that underpin or contest the views presented in the manuscript chapters will supplement the central text. Among these will be mostly philosophical writings, but also ones from disability studies scholars and bioethics on the following topics: the personal narrative as a form of philosophical inquiry, the question of normalcy; the good life; bioethical issues such as prenatal testing and selective abortion, questions of dependence, interdependence and care, and theories of justice, dignity and personhood. Although the course will presuppose knowledge of both the history of and contemporary problems in philosophy, students of disability studies will be welcome.

Please Contact eva.kittay@gmail.com for questions.
students or what kinds of assignments are most effective in promoting student learning, as well as theoretical questions about the aims and purposes of education or its role in public life.

PHI 631 Seminar in Analytic Philosophy  
P. Grim
Monday 2:30-5:30
Topic: Mind & Brain: Philosophy of Mind and the Brain Sciences
Description:
There may be contemporary developments from the brain sciences that force us to rethink and re-evaluate traditional work in the philosophy of mind. But it may also be that a firm philosophical grounding is required in order to appropriately evaluate contemporary research and theory in the brain sciences. We will work as a collaborative and participatory seminar, following the intuition that a better understanding of mind, brain, embodiment and environment will demand an approach that is both philosophically rich and scientifically informed. Consciousness, emotion, memory, addiction, distributed cognition, representation, self-identity, plasticity, free will, temporality, and lessons from anesthesiology will all be part of the mix. Students will be responsible for guiding discussion on core topics, for presentations on background research, and for one independent project.

PHI 639 Social and Political Philosophy  
L. Simpson
Wednesday 6:00-8:50
Topic: The Linguistic Turn In Hermeneutics and Critical Theory
Description:
An examination of the nature and consequences of the “linguistic turn” in hermeneutical philosophy, a reorientation characterized by a shift away from a preoccupation with perception and knowledge to a concern with issues of language, textuality, discourse, and communication. This turn—inaugurated by Herder, Humboldt and Hamann—was continued by Heidegger in his hermeneutical alternative to Husserlian phenomenology, and has been further developed in our time by Gadamer, Ricoeur and Habermas, the latter of whom can be said to have developed a critical hermeneutics that in important ways calls into question the tradition of philosophical hermeneutics that was developed by Heidegger and Gadamer. The central theses of this linguistic turn are 1) the claim that, in the manner suggested by Frege, meaning determines reference and 2) the claim of meaning holism, that is, the claim that meaning is exhaustively determined by context. These two closely related theses comprise what can be called the constitutive view of language, the view that the world is linguistically constituted. Many have argued that such a view entails an objectionable relativism, both cognitive and moral, one that subverts the possibilities of cross-contextual understanding and critique and of providing plausible accounts of scientific progress. Such critics of hermeneutics have encouraged instead a turn to the so-called theories of direct reference—developed by Putnam, Kripke, Ruth Marcus and others—to repair this deficiency. Among the aims of the seminar will be an exploration of the possibility that the hermeneutic turn itself
has the resources necessary to meet this objection, thus obviating the need to appeal to such theories which are problematic in their own right. Our central readings will be drawn from Heidegger, Gadamer’s *Truth and Method*, and Habermas’ writings on communicative rationality.