PHIL 6903 Graduate Seminar in Philosophy

Fall 2019, Fridays, 2–4:00pm, Ellis Hall 226

Instructor
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Course Description
This seminar is part of what I'm designing as a two-semester course. The course description of the other part—offered last year—went as follows:

> What makes a good philosophy paper? What do we need to do to write a paper for a professional philosophy journal? In this course, we will discuss the process of philosophical research and writing and how you can improve clarity and coherence of your paper. Along the way, you will write a lot, respond to feedback, and give feedback to others.

Our goal in the present seminar remains the same: to learn a variety of techniques and attributes that make up a clear and coherent philosophy paper. What is new in this seminar is that we will pay more attention to philosophical methodology (or metaphilosophy) as well as general research methods.

Required Books
In addition to the readings to be posted on Blackboard, I would like you to have access to the following books:

> Baggini, Julian, and Peter S. Fosl. 2010. *The Philosopher's Toolkit: A Compendium of Philosophical Concepts and Methods*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.
> Booth, Wayne C., Gregory G. Colomb, Joseph M. Williams, Joseph Bizup, and William T. Fitzgerald. 2016. *The Craft of Research*. 4th ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. (The 3rd edition [2008] is also fine.)
> Williamson, Timothy. 2018. *Doing Philosophy: From Common Curiosity to Logical Reasoning*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Baggini and Fosl (2010) and Williamson (2018) will be available on reserve at the library. The third edition of Booth et al. (2008) is accessible online through the library. Please talk to me if you have trouble getting any of these books.

Required Work
This is a "pass or fail" course. To pass, I ask that you do the following:
1. Give seminar presentations on the assigned readings (see below).
2. Do all of the short writing assignments (see below).
3. Share your short writing assignments with the class and give constructive feedback to others. Note that this work involves regular attendance, participation, and collegiality on your part.

4. Submit 5–10 pages of your (individual) writing (part of a paper for class or part of your thesis) for feedback at least once during the semester but no later than the end of Week 14. You can submit by email.

Seminar Presentations

With your writing partner, you will give a 15-min seminar presentation at least twice during the semester. Each presentation should be your joint work. There will be a sign-up sheet; there will be at most one presentation per week.

Your presentation will be on the week's readings on philosophical methodology; sometimes there are choices, so you must talk to or email me in advance to determine the readings you will be responsible for.

At least one day before your presentation, you must email me a *written abstract* of 100 to 150 words. Your in-class presentation should do at least two things:

1. Summarize the main methodological points of the reading; and
2. Suggest how you might translate the main points into pieces of concrete advice to your fellow graduate students in our philosophy program.

In addition, you may of course raise new points or questions.

Short Writing Assignments

With your writing partner, you will summarize in your own words an entry from Baggini and Fosl's *The Philosopher's Toolkit* and share your summary with the class. See below for a list of approved entries. You will do summaries at least twice during the semester, and we will try not to have different teams summarizing the same entry. There will be a sign-up sheet.

Your summary must be 150–250 words in length. Please respect this word limit so that we can effectively use your summary as a basis for in-class discussion. Your summary needs to be posted on Blackboard, as an editable file (e.g., Word document), before the seminar in which your summary is due. In class, we will read your summary together and try to make it shorter and clearer.

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity and honesty are basic values of Ohio University. Students are expected to follow standards of academic integrity and honesty. Academic misconduct is a violation of the Ohio University Student Code of Conduct subject to a maximum sanction of disciplinary suspension or expulsion as well as a grade penalty in the course. You are expected to be familiar with the information on academic integrity provided at http://www.ohio.edu/communitystandards/academic/students.cfm.

Student Accessibility Services

Any student who may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact me privately to discuss your specific needs and provide written documentation from Student Accessibility Services. If you are not yet registered as a student with a disability, please contact Student Accessibility Services at 740-593-2620 or visit the office in 348 Baker University Center.

Useful Books on Writing

You should own a good dictionary, and remember you can use the *Oxford English Dictionary* through the library website. I recommend Zinsser's *On Writing Well* and Williams' *Style* to any academic or nonfiction writer.

Writing Process and Motivation

Elbow, Peter. 1998. *Writing Without Teachers*. 2nd ed. New York: Oxford University Press.
King, Stephen. 2000. *On Writing: A Memoir of the Craft*. New York: Scribner.
Lamott, Anne. 1994. *Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life*. New York: Anchor Books.
Silvia, Paul J. 2007. *How to Write a Lot*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
Zinsser, William. 2006. *On Writing Well*. New York: Harper Perennial.

Academic Research and Writing

Boise, Robert. 1990. *Professors as Writers: A Self-Help Guide to Productive Writing*. Stillwater, OK: New Forums.
Bolker, Joan. 1998. *Writing Your Dissertation in Fifteen Minutes a Day: A Guide to Starting, Revising, and Finishing Your Doctoral Thesis*. New York: Henry Holt and Company.
Harvey, Michael. 2013. *The Nuts and Bolts of College Writing*. 2nd ed. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company. (This is elementary but good.)
Turabian, Kate L. 2018. *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations: Chicago Style for Students and Researchers*. 9th ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
Weston, Anthony. 2017. *A Rulebook for Arguments*. 5th ed. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company.

Style

Cook, Claire Kehrwald. 1985. *Line by Line: How to Edit Your Own Writing*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
Cutts, Martin. 2013. *Oxford Guide to Plain English*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Pinker, Steven. 2014. *The Sense of Style: The Thinking Person's Guide to Writing in the 21st Century*. New York: Viking.
Strunk Jr., William, and E. B. White. 2000. *The Elements of Style*. 4th ed. New York: Longman.
Sword, Helen. 2012. *Stylish Academic Writing*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
Williams, Joseph M. 2010. *Style: Lessons in Clarity and Grace*. 10th ed. Boston: Longman.

Reference Works

Garner, Bryan A. 2016. *Garner's Modern English Usage*. 4th ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
The Chicago Manual of Style. 2017. 17th ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. (You can access the online version through the library.)

Approved Entries from *The Philosopher's Toolkit*

The numbers correspond to those in the book.

2.8 Reduction
2.10 Useful fictions
4.1 A priori/a posteriori
4.2 Absolute/relative
4.3 Analytic/synthetic
4.6 De re/de dicto
4.7 Defeasible/indefeasible
4.9 Essence/accident
4.10 Internalism/externalism
4.11 Knowledge by acquaintance/description
4.12 Necessary/contingent
4.13 Necessary/sufficient
4.14 Objective/subjective
4.15 Realist/non-realist
4.16 Sense/reference
4.17 Syntax/semantics
4.18 Thick/thin concepts
4.19 Types/tokens
5.4 Hume's fork
5.6 Leibniz's law of identity
5.7 Ockham's razor
5.10 Transcendental argument
6.3 Empiricist critique of metaphysics
6.8 Critiques of naturalism
6.10 Pragmatist critique
7.6 Possibility and impossibility
7.7 Primitives
7.9 Scepticism
7.10 Underdetermination

Tentative Schedule

Wk	Date	Topic	Reading (* = available on Blackboard)
1	Aug 30	Introduction; What is philosophical methodology?	**The syllabus**; **Dever***, "What is philosophical methodology?"; **Rescher***, "Philosophy as rational systematization."
2	Sept 6	What is research? Where to start?	**Booth et al.,** Prologue (pp. 3–8), Ch. 1–4 (skim Ch. 2).
3	Sept 13	Finding philosophical questions; intuition pumps	**Williamson**, Ch. 1–2; **Dennett***, *Intuition Pumps*, pp. 1–15.
4	Sept 20	What to read? How to read? Rapoport's rules; Sturgeon's law; the 10% that's good	**Booth et al.,** Ch. 6; **Dennett***, pp. 33–37, 425–427.
5	Sept 27	What to argue for? How to argue?	**Williamson**, Ch. 3–5; **Booth et al.,** Ch. 7–8.
6	Oct 4	*Fall Break (no class)*	
7	Oct 11	Writing your argument; Pitfalls to watch out for: the "surely" operator, rhetorical questions, deepity, and complete bullshit	**Booth et al.,** Ch. 12–13 (12–14 in the 3rd ed.); **Dennett***, pp. 53–58; **Cohen***, "Complete bullshit" (esp. pp. 104–108).
8	Oct 18	Uses and methods of history of philosophy; making mistakes; higher-order truths of chmess	**Williamson**, Ch. 8; **Dennett***, pp. 19–28, 418–424; **Goldenbaum***, "Understanding the argument through then-current public debates . . ."
9	Oct 25	Reflective equilibrium; Methods in metaphysics	**Cath***, "Reflective equilibrium"; **Thomasson***, "What can we do, when we do metaphysics?"
10	Nov 1	Feminism	**Maitra***, "Feminism"; **O'Neilll***, "Disappearing ink"
11	Nov 8	Naturalistic methodology; model-building	**Kornblith***, "A naturalistic methodology"; **Williamson**, Ch. 10
12	Nov 15	Revising your paper	**Booth et al.,** Ch. 16–17.
13	Nov 22	TBD	TBD
14	Nov 29	*Thanksgiving (no class)*	
15	Dec 6	Conclusion	**Williamson**, Ch. 11

2019–2020

September	October	November	December	January	February

March	April	May	June	July	August

2020–2021

September	October	November	December	January	February

March	April