

Here are my classes for the 2017-2018 academic year.

UNDERGRADUATE CLASSES: PHL233 AND PHL451

IF YOU HAVE A QUESTION ABOUT ENROLMENT IN EITHER OF THESE CLASSES, PLEASE CONTACT THE DEPARTMENT'S UNDERGRADUATE ADMINISTRATOR:

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PHILOSOPHY 233 – PHILOSOPHY FOR SCIENTISTS (FALL)

This course is an introduction to metaphysics (the study of the fundamental constituents of reality) and epistemology (the study of the conditions for knowledge) designed for students with backgrounds in mathematics and/or the sciences.

Corequisite: 1.0 FCE in Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Engineering, or Computer Science.

Recommended Preparation: Background in science and/or mathematics will be presupposed.

The course will be divided into four blocks:

Block 1 – Metaphysics: Causation. What does it really mean to say that one event ‘causes’ another? Do scientific theories uncover causal relations?

Block 2 – Epistemology. What kind of justification is required if it is to be rational to accept a scientific explanation of something? Does justification for our ordinary beliefs (like your belief that you are reading these words right now) work the same way as justification for beliefs in the elements of scientific theories?

Block 3 – Mathematics as a case study. Is mathematics ‘about’ some part of reality (the ‘mathematical realm’)? If it is, are numbers ‘objects’ in anything like the sense that tables and trees are? What is the role of mathematics in scientific theories?

Block 4 – Scientific progress and philosophical questions. What is the impact of scientific progress on ‘big’ traditional philosophical questions, for example the question of whether we have free will, and the question of whether there can be thought without consciousness?

Readings provided in class.

Assessment – three or four short papers; mid term test; final exam.

PHILOSOPHY 451 – SEMINAR IN PHILOSOPHY OF LANGUAGE (WINTER)

This seminar will introduce upper level philosophy majors and specialists to advanced study of a range of central questions about how we manage to represent particulars in thought and speech. Representative questions include:

- How does perceptual contact with a thing put you in a position to think and speak about it?
- What does it take for a proper name as used by members of a community to be a name 'of' a particular person, place, event, or object?
- How do we manage to use language to communicate with one another about things in the world?
- What is the relation between our understanding of statements about particulars (like 'Jack has fleas') and our understanding of general statements (like 'All dogs have fleas')?
- What if anything, does a proper name in a work of fiction (like 'Sherlock Holmes' or 'Gormenghast') stand for?

Readings provided in class.

Assessment – Participation grade; two or three short papers; 3500 word term paper.

GRADUATE CLASS – Communication

I'll be co-teaching this class with my colleague Nate Charlow:

<http://www.natecharlow.com/>