

## Tutorials: Philosophy

*THE STUDY OF ANCIENT AND MODERN PHILOSOPHY is well established at Oxford. The faculty is the largest in the country and is home to over 150 professional philosophers as well as a specialist library. In addition there are several specialist research centres which explore such themes as practical ethics for the future of humanity.*

With the exception of a handful of courses, the descriptions below are copyright University of Oxford and cover tutorial courses offered by the University to matriculated undergraduates. SCIO students follow such courses as closely as is practicable, though there may be scope for minor variation to take into account students' previous experience. Students will not necessarily cover all the material cited in the description (especially when they take the course as a secondary tutorial). All tutorials involve in-depth study: where the title might suggest a survey course, the content of the tutorial will involve focused study on part of the syllabus.

There are various editions of the set texts listed below. Students are welcome to use subsequent editions (including online editions) but should stick with the specified editor and/or translator.

Introductory readings are intended as helpful starting points, but are generally neither necessary nor sufficient background reading for the courses.

### Tutorial list

20th Century Women Philosophers .....	1
Aesthetics.....	2
Applied Ethics.....	2
Aristotle: Nicomachean Ethics (in translation).....	3
Augustine, Early Christianity, and Late Antique Philosophy.....	3
Early Modern Philosophy .....	3
Ethics .....	3
Intermediate Philosophy of Physics .....	3
Introduction to Logic .....	3
Knowledge and Reality.....	4
The Later Philosophy of Wittgenstein .....	4
Medieval Philosophy: Aquinas.....	4
Medieval Philosophy: Duns Scotus, Ockham .....	5
Philosophical Logic .....	5
Philosophical Theology .....	5
Philosophy of Cognitive Science.....	6
The Philosophy of Kant .....	6
The Philosophy of Logic and Language .....	7
Philosophy of Mathematics.....	7
Philosophy of Mind .....	7
Philosophy of Religion.....	7
Philosophy of Science.....	8
Philosophy of Science and Social Science .....	8
Plato: Republic (in translation) .....	8
Post-Kantian Philosophy .....	9
Practical Ethics .....	9
Theory of Politics.....	9

### 20th Century Women Philosophers

A hundred years ago, British philosophy was dominated by a group of male scholars who would be later referred to as 'analytic philosophers'; more specifically, they were associated with 'ordinary language philosophy', because of their focus on logic and ordinary language. Bertrand Russell and

Ludwig Wittgenstein in Cambridge, and Gilbert Ryle, J.L. Austin and A.J. Ayer in Oxford, defined the remit and methods of philosophy, for the better part of the 20th century. One would have to dig deep into the footnotes of an elaborate history of British philosophy, to find any reference to female intellectuals, like GEM Anscombe, Iris Murdoch, or Philippa Foot. And yet, it was these women who

## Tutorials: Philosophy

redefined moral philosophy, when it mattered most – in the post-war period. For them, defending the objectivity of morality was more than a matter of language, or argumentation. It was a matter of life and death.

On the continent, women philosophers were equally, if not more active in the public domain. Simone Weil was a political activist who had taken up work in a factory, in order to better understand the life of working class. Simone de Beauvoir is a well-known feminist, who also wrote on aging, war, and doctor-patient relationships. Hannah Arendt (born in a German-Jewish family) spent many years worked with refugee organisations in Paris, and would go on to become one of the world's leading political theorists.

In this course, you will explore both the arguments behind these women's moral theories, and their practical implications. You will find out how they solved the problem of good and evil; how they defended the rational roots of morality; and what their relationship with God was. You will learn that, although they had different religious commitments (or none), they all took the notion of metaphysical goodness seriously. For Anscombe, the anchor was always her Roman Catholic faith; for Murdoch – it was a belief in metaphysical values; similarly, for Foot – it was a conviction that one ought to be able to make ethical pronouncements, because there were such things as fundamentally good, bad, right, or wrong behaviour. Weil was a mystic, whilst the tragedies that de Beauvoir witnessed made her abandon her Catholic faith. In addition, they all engaged with applied ethics, whether helping refugees (Murdoch and Arendt), supporting Oxfam (Foot), taking a stand on University policy (Anscombe), assisting in the trade union movement (Weil) or advocating on women rights (de Beauvoir).

### Aesthetics

The purpose of this course is to enable you to study a number of questions about the nature and value of beauty and of the arts. For example, do we enjoy sights and sounds because they are beautiful, or are they beautiful because we enjoy them? Does the enjoyment of beauty involve a particular sort of experience, and if so, how should we define it and what psychological capacities does it presuppose? Is a work of art a physical object, an abstract object, or what? Does the value of a work of art depend only upon its long- or short-term effects on our minds or characters? If not, what sorts of reasons can we give for admiring a work of art? Do reasons for admiring paintings, pieces of music, and poems have enough in common with one another, and little enough in common with reasons for admiring other kinds of things, to support the idea that there is a distinctive sort of value which

good art of every sort, and only art, possesses? As well as general questions such as these ones, the course also addresses questions raised by particular art forms. For example, what is the difference between a picture and a description in words? Can fiction embody truths about its subject-matter? How does music express emotions? All of these questions, and others, are addressed directly, and also by examining classic texts, including Plato's *Republic*, Aristotle's *Poetics*, Hume's *Essay on the standard of taste*, and Kant's *Critique of aesthetic judgement*.

### Introductory reading

M. Budd, *Values of art* (1995)

### Applied Ethics

The purpose of this course is to help you understand how to approach ethical dilemmas, using normative theories and a considered line of argumentation. You will explore both the benefits and the limitations of different theoretical frameworks – from virtue ethics, to utilitarianism and deontology; and you will reflect on the significance of the fact that these are all representatives of Western philosophy. You will then consider what is distinctive in other ethical traditions – such as the Indian, the Buddhist, the Islamic, or the Chinese; and what they share with contemporary Western ethics.

Second, you will test different ethical theories on practical issues currently at the centre of civic debate. These range from human to animal rights, war, immigration, and euthanasia. You will reflect on how these are often related to the broader socio-economic, regulatory, and cultural context; and how commercial interests on the one hand, and socio-cultural commitments, public discourse and prejudice, on the other, impact on the way these practical issues pan out in the public domain.

Third – and upon request – you may focus on business ethics and corporate social responsibility issues, exploring the relationship between corporate power and responsibility, and how this relates to government activity and the wider society. In this context, you may investigate criminal cases that combine moral and legal issues, such as bribery, fraud, money laundering or insider dealing, using major scandals to illustrate, e.g. Enron, Rana Plaza, or the fall of Lehman Brothers. You may also consider cases of complicity between major corporations and corrupt regimes, and reflect on the efforts made by international agencies like the UN, to tackle such challenges more efficiently.

## Tutorials: Philosophy

### Aristotle: Nicomachean Ethics (in translation)

The purpose of this course is to give you the opportunity to make a critical study of one of the most important works in the history of philosophy. Like Plato in the *Republic*, Aristotle is concerned with the question: what is the best possible sort of life? Whereas this leads Plato to pose grand questions in metaphysics and political theory, it leads Aristotle to offer close analyses of the structure of human action, responsibility, the virtues, the nature of moral knowledge, weakness of will, pleasure, friendship, and other related issues. Much of what Aristotle has to say on these is groundbreaking, highly perceptive, and still of importance in contemporary debate in ethics and moral psychology.

#### Text

*Nicomachean ethics*, trans. and with notes by T.H. Irwin (1999)

#### Introductory reading

J.L. Ackrill, *Aristotle the philosopher* (1981), chap. 10

### Augustine, Early Christianity, and Late Antique Philosophy

The period from Philo of Alexandria in the first century to Boethius in the sixth was critical to both the development of philosophy in its own right and the Christian intellectual tradition. One of the most important and influential of these thinkers was Augustine, but he did not stand alone. Giving particular attention to Augustine, this course will look at a variety of philosophers and ideas (including Jewish and pagan) in their contexts, including Philo, Origen, Plotinus, Augustine, and Boethius.

#### Introductory reading

J. Rist, *Augustine: ancient thought baptized* (1994)  
C. Stead, *Philosophy in Christian Antiquity* (1994)

### Early Modern Philosophy

The purpose of this course is to enable you to gain a critical understanding of some of the metaphysical and epistemological ideas of some of the most important philosophers of the early modern period, between the 1630s and the 1780s.

This period saw a great flowering of philosophy in Europe. Descartes, Spinoza, and Leibniz, often collectively referred to as ‘the rationalists’, placed the new ‘corpuscularian’ science within grand metaphysical systems which certified our God-given capacity to reason our way to the laws of nature (as well as to many other, often astonishing conclusions about the world). Locke wrote in a

different, empiricist tradition. He argued that, since our concepts all ultimately derive from experience, our knowledge is necessarily limited. Berkeley and Hume developed this empiricism in the direction of a kind of idealism, according to which the world studied by science is in some sense mind-dependent and mind-constructed.

#### Introductory reading

R.S. Woolhouse, *The empiricists* (1988)  
J. Cottingham, *The rationalists* (1988)

### Ethics

The purpose of this course is to enable you to come to grips with some questions which exercise many people, philosophers and non-philosophers alike. How should we decide what is best to do, and how best to lead our lives? Are our value judgements on these and other matters objective or do they merely reflect our subjective preferences and viewpoints? Are we in fact free to make these choices, or have our decisions already been determined by antecedent features of our environment and genetic endowment? In considering these issues you will examine a variety of ethical concepts, such as those of justice, rights, equality, virtue, and happiness, which are widely used in moral and political argument. There is also opportunity to discuss some applied ethical issues. Study of major historical thinkers, e.g. Aristotle and Hume and Kant, will be encouraged.

#### Introductory reading

J. Mackie, *Ethics* (1977), chaps. 1–2

### Intermediate Philosophy of Physics

The purpose of this course is to enable you to come to grips with conceptual problems in special relativity and quantum mechanics. The standard course is suitable only for those with a substantial knowledge of physics, but it may be possible to adapt the course for physicists with less experience.

### Introduction to Logic

This course introduces students to formal work in propositional and predicate logic, through study of a dedicated text: The logic manual, by Volker Halbach (2010), whose cover shows Oxford’s Logic Lane.

Students investigate the patterns of valid inference by means of the formal system set out in the text, and learn about the relationship between elements of the system and the types of argument and inference used in ordinary language. The course is intended both for those with an interest in logic who plan to undertake further work in it, and for those who will not study it further but who will find the ability to understand formal expressions useful in their study

# Tutorials: Philosophy

of philosophy.

## Text

V. Halbach, *The logic manual* (2010)

## Knowledge and Reality

The purpose of this course is to enable you to examine some central questions about the nature of the world and the extent to which we can have knowledge of it.

In considering knowledge you will examine whether it is possible to attain knowledge of what the world is really like. Is our knowledge of the world necessarily limited to what we can observe to be the case? Indeed, are even our observational beliefs about the world around us justified? Can we have knowledge of what will happen based on what has happened? Is our understanding of the world necessarily limited to what we can prove to be the case? Or can we understand claims about the remote past or distant future which we cannot in principle prove to be true?

In considering reality you will focus on questions such as the following. Does the world really contain the three-dimensional objects and their properties — such as red buses or black horses — which we appear to encounter in everyday life? Or is it made up rather of the somewhat different entities studied by science, such as colourless atoms or four-dimensional space-time worms? What is the relation between the common-sense picture of the world and that provided by contemporary science? Is it correct to think of the objects and their properties that make up the world as being what they are independently of our preferred ways of dividing up reality? These issues are discussed with reference to a variety of specific questions such as ‘What is time?’, ‘What is the nature of causation?’, and ‘What are substances?’ There may also be an opportunity to study such topics as reference, truth, and definition.

## Introductory reading

J. Dancy, *Introduction to contemporary epistemology* (1985), chaps. 1–3

M.J. Loux, *Metaphysics* (1997)

## The Later Philosophy of Wittgenstein

The purpose of this course is to enable you to study some of the most influential ideas of the twentieth century. The main texts are Wittgenstein’s posthumously-published *Philosophical investigations* and *The blue and brown books*. These writings are famous not just for their content but also for their distinctive style and conception of philosophy. There is much critical discussion about the relation between

those aspects of Wittgenstein’s work.

Wittgenstein covers a great range of issues, principally in philosophy of language and philosophy of mind. In philosophy of language, one key topic is the nature of rules and rule-following. What is involved in grasping a rule; and how can I tell, in a new case, what I have to do to apply the rule correctly? Indeed, what makes it the case that a particular move at this stage is the correct way of applying the rule; is there any standard of correctness other than the agreement of our fellows? Other topics include: whether language is systematic; the relation between linguistic meaning and non-linguistic activities; whether concepts can be illuminatingly analysed. In the philosophy of mind, Wittgenstein is especially famous for the so-called ‘private language argument’, which tries to show that words for sensations cannot get their meanings by being attached to purely internal, introspective, ‘private objects’. Other, equally important, topics include the nature of the self, of introspection, and of visual experience, and the intentionality (the representative quality) of mental states. Most generally, can we (as Wittgenstein thought) avoid Cartesianism without lapsing into behaviourism?

## Texts

*Philosophical investigations*, paras. 1–80

*Blue book*, pp. 1–17

## Introductory reading

S. Kripke, *Wittgenstein on rules and private language* (1976)

M. McGinn, *Wittgenstein and the Philosophical investigations* (1997)

## Medieval Philosophy: Aquinas

The purpose of this course is to introduce you to many of Aquinas’s central ideas and arguments on a wide variety of theological and philosophical topics. These include the proofs of the existence of God (the famous ‘five ways’), the concept of the simplicity of God (including the controversial issue of the identity of being and essence in God), the concept of the soul in general and of the human soul in particular, the proof of the immortality of the human soul, the nature of perception and of intellectual knowledge, the notion of free will and of happiness, the theory of human actions. These are studied in translation rather than in the Latin original, though for those students with knowledge of the language, a glance at Aquinas’s remarkably readable Latin can often be useful. Students are encouraged to carefully read and analyse Aquinas’s texts and to focus on the philosophical questions they raise. Some knowledge of the works of Aristotle would provide useful background for this course, but this is not essential.



## Tutorials: Philosophy

### Texts

Students generally study only one of these texts, but both may be studied if appropriate.

*Summa theologiae*, Ia, 2–11, 75–89; Ia IIae, 1–21 (The Fathers of the English Dominican Province edn, 1911, rev. 1920)

### Introductory reading

A. Kenny, *Aquinas* (1980)

F.C. Copleston, *Aquinas* (1956)

B. Davies, *The thought of Thomas Aquinas* (1992)

### Medieval Philosophy: Duns Scotus, Ockham

Duns Scotus and Ockham are, together with Aquinas, the most significant and influential thinkers of the Middle Ages. The purpose of this course is to make you familiar with some fundamental aspects of their theological and philosophical thought. As to Scotus, these include the proof of the existence and of the unicity of God (the most sophisticated one in the Middle Ages) and the issues about causality that it raises, the theory of the existence of concepts common to God and creatures (the univocity theory of religious language), the discussion about the immateriality and the immortality of the human soul, and the reply to scepticism. As to Ockham, they include nominalism about universals and the refutation of realism (including the realism of Duns Scotus), some issues in logic and especially the theory of ‘suppositio’ and its application in the debate about universals, the theory of intellectual knowledge of singulars and the question of whether we can have evidence about contingent properties of singulars, the nature of efficient causality, and the problem of whether we can prove the existence of a first efficient cause.

These are studied in translation rather than in the Latin original, though for those students with knowledge of the language, a glance at the Latin can often be useful. Students are encouraged to carefully read and analyse Scotus’s and Ockham’s texts and to focus on the philosophical questions they raise.

Some knowledge of Aristotle’s *Physics* would provide useful background for this course, but this is not essential.

### Texts

Duns Scotus, *Philosophical writings*, trans. A. Wolter (1987)

Ockham, *Philosophical writings*, trans. P. Boehner (1956)

### Introductory reading

R. Cross, *Duns Scotus* (1999)

M. McCord Adams, *William Ockham*, vol. 1 (1987)

### Philosophical Logic

Students choosing this course should already have a working knowledge of philosophical logic.

This course exposes you to logical systems that extend and enrich — or challenge and deviate from — classical logic, the standard propositional and predicate logic. Why depart from classical logic? Here’s one example: classical logic has exactly two truth-values, true and false. How, then, are we to deal with sentences like ‘Hamlet has blood type O’ which appear to defy classification with either? One systematic answer is provided by three-valued logics which deviate from classical logic by permitting their sentences to be neither truth nor false. Another example: classical logic only has truth-functional connectives. How, then, are we to deal with connectives like ‘It must be the case that a...’ whose semantics cannot be captured with a truth-table? One systematic answer is provided by modal logic, which extends classical logic by allowing its connectives to be non-truth-functional.

The course has two principal aims. The first is to give you the technical competence to work with, and prove things about, a number of logical systems which have come to play a central role across philosophy. These include non-classical propositional logics, such as three-valued and intuitionistic systems, and extensions of classical logic, such as propositional and predicate modal logic, as well as systems for counterfactual conditionals and ‘two-dimensional’ logic. The second principal aim is for you to come to appreciate the diverse philosophical applications of these systems. The logic studied in this course has important connections to the metaphysics of time and existence, a priori knowledge, obligation, vagueness, and conditionals, among many other issues, and is often presupposed in the contemporary literature on these topics.

Competence with the logic covered in this course unlocks a wide range of fascinating work across philosophy.

### Set textbook

T. Sider, *Logic for philosophy* (2010)

### Philosophical Theology

Students will consider the philosophical assumptions and implications of Christian doctrines, including the Trinity, the Incarnation, and the Atonement, and may also explore the nature

## Tutorials: Philosophy

of the qualities traditionally attributed to God (for example, omnipotence, omniscience, eternity, and necessity). Other topics covered may include the question of whether faith can be rational, whether we can talk meaningfully about God, the nature of revelation, the power of prayer, whether belief in miracles can be justified, the relationship between religion and morality, and the possibility of life after death. Students may address questions such as: does it make sense to say that the life and death of Jesus atoned for the sins of the world? How can one know that a purportedly divine revelation is indeed genuine? In what sense is God both three and one? Is God's knowledge of the future compatible with human free will? Can we change God's mind by petitioning God through prayer?

### Introductory reading

T.V. Morris, *Our idea of God* (1991)

M. Peterson and others, *Reason and religious belief* (1991)

### Philosophy of Cognitive Science

This course covers some of key questions about the nature of the mind dealt with by a variety of cognitive scientific disciplines: experimental psychology, cognitive neuroscience, linguistics, and computational modelling of the mind. Studying this course will provide insight into the ways that contemporary scientific advances have improved our understanding of aspects of the mind that have long been the focus of philosophical reflection. It will also introduce you to a range of theoretical issues generated by current research in the behavioural and brain sciences.

The core topics are:

- Levels of description and explanation (e.g. personal vs sub-personal, functional vs mechanistic, mind vs brain)
- Cognitive architecture, modularity, homuncular functionalism
- Conceptual foundations of information processing: rules and algorithms, tacit knowledge (e.g. of grammar), competence vs performance
- Nature and format of representations: representationalism vs behaviourism, the computational theory of mind and language of thought, connectionist alternatives
- The scientific study of consciousness, including the role of subjects' reports, non-verbal and direct measures; neural and computational correlates of consciousness; and the problem of distinguishing phenomenal and access consciousness empirically

For those studying psychology, neuroscience, linguistics, or computation, the course is a crucial bridge to philosophy. But you do not need to be studying a scientific subject to take this course, as long as you enjoy reading about scientific discoveries about the mind and brain. The course will be of great interest to philosophers without a scientific background who want to understand the benefits and limitations of bringing scientific data to bear on deep issues in the philosophy of mind.

### Introductory reading

J.L. Bermúdez, *Cognitive science* (2010)

M. Davies, 'An approach to philosophy of cognitive science', in *The Oxford handbook of contemporary philosophy*, ed. F. Jackson and M. Smith (2005)

A. Clark, *Mindware: an introduction to the philosophy of cognitive science* (2001)

### The Philosophy of Kant

The purpose of this course is to enable you to make a critical study of some of the ideas of one of the greatest of all philosophers.

Immanuel Kant lived from 1724 to 1804. He published *Critique of pure reason* in 1781, and *Groundwork of the metaphysic of morals* in 1785. The *Critique* is his greatest work and a towering work of modern philosophy. It is a difficult but enormously rewarding work. This is largely because Kant, perhaps uniquely, combines in the highest measure the cautious qualities of care, rigour, and tenacity with the bolder quality of philosophical imagination. Its concern is to give an account of human knowledge that will steer a path between the dogmatism of traditional metaphysics and the scepticism that, Kant believes, is the inevitable result of the empiricist criticism of metaphysics. Kant's approach, he claims in a famous metaphor, amounts to a 'Copernican revolution' in philosophy. Instead of looking at human knowledge by starting from what is known, we should start from ourselves as knowing subjects and ask how the world must be for us to have the kind of knowledge and experience that we have. Kant thinks that his Copernican revolution also enables him to reconcile traditional Christian morality and modern science, in the face of their apparently irreconcilable demands (in the one case, that we should be free agents, and in the other case, that the world should be governed by inexorable mechanical laws). In the *Groundwork* Kant develops his very distinctive and highly influential moral philosophy. He argues that morality is grounded in reason. What we ought to do is what we would do if we acted in a way that was purely rational. To act in a way that is purely rational is to act in accordance with the famous 'categorical imperative', which Kant expresses as follows: 'Act

## Tutorials: Philosophy

only on that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law.’

### Texts

*Critique of pure reason*, trans. N. Kemp Smith (1963)

*Groundwork of the metaphysic of morals*, trans. H.J. Paton (1966)

### Introductory reading

R. Scruton, *Kant* (1982)

### The Philosophy of Logic and Language

The purpose of this course is to enable you to examine some fundamental questions relating to reasoning and language. The philosophy of logic is not itself a symbolic or mathematical subject, but examines concepts of interest to the logician. If you want to know the answer to the question ‘What is truth?’, this is a course for you. Central also are questions about the status of basic logical laws and the nature of logical necessity. What, if anything, makes it true that nothing can be at the same time both green and not green all over? Is that necessity the result of our conventions or stipulations, or the reflection of how things have to be independently of us? Philosophy of language is closely related. It covers the very general question how language can describe reality at all: what makes our sentences meaningful and, on occasion, true? How do parts of our language refer to objects in the world? What is involved in understanding speech (or the written word)? You may also investigate more specific issues concerning the correct analysis of particular linguistic expressions such as names, descriptions, pronouns, or adverbs, and aspects of linguistics and grammatical theory. Students taking this course would benefit from having done some preliminary study of logic.

### Introductory reading

M. Sainsbury, ‘Philosophical logic’, in *Philosophy: a guide through the subject*, ed. A.C. Grayling (1998)

### Philosophy of Mathematics

What is the relation of mathematical knowledge to other kinds of knowledge? Is it of a special kind, concerning objects of a special kind? If so, what is the nature of those objects and how do we come to know anything about them? If not, how do we explain the seeming difference between proving a theorem in mathematics and establishing something about the physical world? The purpose of this course is to enable you to examine questions such as these. Understanding the nature of mathematics has been important to many

philosophers, including Plato, Aristotle, and Kant, as a test or as an exemplar of their overall position, and has also played a role in the development of mathematics at certain points. While no specific knowledge of mathematics is required for study of this course, it will be helpful to have studied some mathematics at university level, and to have a grounding in philosophical logic.

### Introductory reading

S.F. Barker, *Philosophy of mathematics* (1964)

### Philosophy of Mind

The purpose of this course is to enable you to examine a variety of questions about the nature of persons and their psychological states, including such general questions as: what is the relation between persons and their minds? Could robots or automata be persons? What is the relation between our minds and our brains? If we understood everything about the brain, would we understand everything about consciousness and rational thought? If not, why not? Several of these issues focus on the relation between our common-sense understanding of ourselves and others, and the view of the mind developed in scientific psychology and neuroscience. Are the two accounts compatible? Should one be regarded as better than the other? Should our common-sense understanding of the mind be jettisoned in favour of the scientific picture? Or does the latter leave out something essential to a proper understanding of ourselves and others? Other more specific questions concern memory, thought, belief, emotion, perception, and action.

### Introductory reading

P. Churchland, *Matter and consciousness* (1984), chaps. 1–3

### Philosophy of Religion

The purpose of this course is to enable you to examine claims about the existence of God and God’s relationship to the world. What, if anything, is meant by them? Could they be true? What justification, if any, can or needs to be provided for them? The course is concerned primarily with the claims of Western religions (Christianity, Judaism, and Islam), and with the central claim of those religions, that there is a God. God is said to be omnipresent, omnipotent, omniscient, perfectly good, a source of moral obligation, and so on. But what does it mean to say that God has these properties, and are they consistent with each other? Could God change the past, or choose to do evil? Does it make sense to say that God is outside time? You will have the opportunity to study arguments for the existence of God — for example, the teleological argument from the fact that the universe is governed by scientific laws, and the argument

## Tutorials: Philosophy

from people's religious experiences. Other issues are whether the fact of pain and suffering counts strongly, or even conclusively, against the existence of God, whether there could be evidence for miracles, whether it could be shown that prayer 'works', whether there could be life after death, and what philosophical problems are raised by the existence of different religions. There may also be the opportunity to look at some specifically Christian doctrines — does it make sense to say that the life and death of Jesus atoned for the sins of the world, and could one know this? There is abundant scope for deploying all the knowledge and techniques acquired in other areas of philosophy. Among the major philosophers whose contributions to the philosophy of religion you will need to study are Aquinas, Hume, and Kant.

### Introductory reading

M. Peterson and others, *Reason and religious belief: an introduction to the philosophy of religion* (1991)

### Philosophy of Science

Philosophy of science is applied epistemology and applied metaphysics. It is theory of scientific knowledge and scientific method, including elements in philosophy of language, philosophy of mathematics, and metaphysics. It deals with metaphysical questions — about space, time, causation, ontology, necessity, truth — as they arise across the board in the special sciences, not just in physics. Questions of method include questions of the theory-observation distinction, testability, induction, theory confirmation, and scientific explanation. They also include theory-change, whether inter-theoretic reduction, unification, or revolutionary change. They are at once questions about scientific rationality, and connect in turn with decision theory and the foundations of probability. They connect also with metaphysics, particularly realism: theory-change, scepticism, fictionalism, naturalism, the under-determination of theory by data, functionalism, and structuralism are all critiques of realism. The course also includes the study of major historical schools in philosophy of science. The most important of these is logical positivism (later logical empiricism), which dominated the second and third quarters of the last century. In fact, some of the most important current schools in philosophy of science are broadly continuous with it, notably constructive empiricism and structural realism.

### Introductory reading

D. Gillies, *Philosophy of science in the twentieth century* (1993)

J. Ladyman, *Understanding philosophy of science* (2002)

### Philosophy of Science and Social Science

The purpose of this course is to enable you to study topics in the philosophy of science in general, and topics in the philosophy of social science in particular. In the broadest sense the philosophy of science is concerned with the theory of knowledge and with associated questions in metaphysics. What is distinctive about the field is the focus on 'scientific' knowledge, and metaphysical questions — concerning space, time, causation, probability, possibility, necessity, realism, and idealism — that follow in their train. As such it is concerned with distinctive traits of science: testability, objectivity, scientific explanation, and the nature of scientific theories. Whether economics, sociology, and political science are 'really' sciences is a question that lay people as well as philosophers have often asked. The technology spawned by the physical sciences is more impressive than that based on the social sciences: bridges do not collapse and aeroplanes do not fall from the sky, but no government can reliably control crime, divorce, or unemployment, or make its citizens happy at will. Human behaviour often seems less predictable and less explicable than that of inanimate nature and non-human animals, even though most of us believe that we know what we are doing and why. So philosophers of social science have asked whether human action is to be explained causally or non-causally, whether predictions are self-refuting, whether we can explain only behaviour that is in some sense rational — and if so, what that sense is. Other central issues include social relativism, the role of ideology, value-neutrality, and the relationship between the particular social sciences, in particular whether economics provides a model for other social science. Finally, some critics have asked whether a technological view of 'social control' does not threaten democratic politics as usually understood.

### Introductory reading

M. Hollis, *The philosophy of social science* (1994)

A. Rosenberg, *Philosophy of social science* (1980)

### Plato: Republic (in translation)

Plato's influence on the history of philosophy is enormous. The purpose of this course is to enable you to make a critical study of *The Republic*, which is perhaps his most important and most influential work. Written as a dialogue between Socrates and others including the outspoken immoralist Thrasymachus, it is primarily concerned with questions of the nature of justice and of what is the best kind of life to lead. These questions prompt discussions of the ideal city (which Karl Popper criticized as totalitarian), of education and art, of the nature of knowledge, of the Theory of Forms, and of the immortality of the soul. In studying it



## Tutorials: Philosophy

you will encounter a work of philosophy of unusual literary merit, one in which philosophy is presented through debates, through analogies and images, including the famous simile of the Cave, as well as rigorous argument, and you will encounter some of Plato's important contributions to ethics, political theory, metaphysics, philosophy of mind, and aesthetics.

### Text

*Republic*, trans. G.M.A. Grube, rev. C.D.C. Reeve (1992)

### Post-Kantian Philosophy

Many of the questions raised by German and French philosophers of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were thought to arise directly out of Kant's metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics: Hence the title of this course, the purpose of which is to enable you to explore some of the developments of (and departures from) Kantian themes in the work of Hegel, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Husserl, Heidegger, Sartre, and Merleau-Ponty. Students typically focus their study on only two chosen authors.

Hegel and Schopenhauer delineate global, metaphysical systems out of which each develops his own distinctive vision of ethical and (especially in the case of Hegel) political life. Nietzsche's writings less obviously constitute a 'system', but they too develop certain ethical and existential implications of our epistemological and metaphysical commitments. Husserl will interest those students attracted to problems in ontology and epistemology such as feature in the Cartesian tradition; his work also serves to introduce one to phenomenology, the philosophical method later developed and refined by Heidegger, Sartre, and Merleau-Ponty.

In Heidegger and Sartre, that method is brought to bear on such fundamental aspects of human existence as authenticity, social understanding, bad faith, art and freedom. Merleau-Ponty (who trained as a psychologist) presents a novel and important account of the genesis of perception, cognition, and feeling, and relates these to themes in aesthetics and political philosophy. While this is very much a text-based course, many of the questions addressed are directly relevant to contemporary treatments of problems in epistemology and metaphysics, and in aesthetics, political theory, and the philosophy of mind.

### Introductory reading

R.C. Solomon, *Continental philosophy since 1750* (1988)

### Practical Ethics

This course will better enable you to reason independently, critically, and rigorously about practical moral issues such as war, the treatment of animals, obligations to future generations, punishment, abortion, euthanasia, charitable giving, commodification of bodies and bodily organs, disability, racial and gender equality, and so on. You will be encouraged to consider the ways in which views about these issues can depend on questions in other areas of philosophy. Relevant questions in normative ethics include whether there is a moral asymmetry between doing harm and allowing harm to occur, whether an agent's intention is relevant to the permissibility of her action, and whether, and if so in what ways, the badness of death is relevant to the wrongness of killing. Relevant issues in metaphysics include when we begin to exist and how the misfortune of death might vary at different ages. Some issues in practical ethics depend on the analysis of concepts, such as species, race, and sex or gender, that are elucidated in the philosophy of biology. You will also be encouraged to find links among the practical issues themselves — for example, the way that war, self-defence, and punishment raise related questions about responsibility, desert, and liability, while other issues are connected through their raising similar questions about moral status, the limits of obligation, and the morality of causing individuals to exist.

### Introductory reading

P. Singer, *Practical ethics* (1979)

### Theory of Politics

In order to understand the world of politics, we also need to know which views of politics and society people have when they make political decisions, and why we recommend certain courses of action rather than others. This purpose of this course is to enable you to look at the main ideas we use when we think about politics: why do we have competing views of social justice and what makes a particular view persuasive, possibly even right? What happens when a concept such as freedom has different meanings, so that those who argue that we must maximize freedom of choice are confronted with those who claim that some choices will actually restrict your freedom? Is power desirable or harmful? Would feminists or nationalists give a different answer to that question? Political theory is concerned with developing good responses to problems such as: when should we obey, and when should we disobey, the state? But it is also concerned with mapping the ways in which we approach questions such as: how does one argue in favour of human rights? In addition, you will explore the main ideologies, such as liberalism, conservatism, and socialism, in order to understand their main arguments and why each

## *Tutorials: Philosophy*

---

of them will direct us to different political solutions and arrangements. Students choosing this course would benefit from having done some preliminary study of ethics.

### **Introductory reading**

W. Kymlicka, *Contemporary political philosophy* (1990)