

PHL 489: Socrates Project Seminar

2017–18 AY

Updated December 24, 2017

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Course Meetings: Fridays: 12–3 p.m.; 401 JHB

1 Course Description

Welcome to the Socrates Project!

This year's Socrates Project seminar runs in conjunction with Professor James John's PHL 101Y1Y *Introduction to Philosophical Problems*. In your role as a Teaching Assistant for PHL 101, you will be working as a tutorial leader and grader. The Socrates Project seminar is designed to supplement your work in this role, and in addition to assist you in carrying out a major philosophical research project under the supervision of a faculty member in the St. George Department of Philosophy.

Please note: this syllabus is a fluid document, which will be regularly updated over the course of the academic year. Please ensure that you have the most recent version at all times.

Broadly speaking, the seminar will have three, interrelated, components.

1. A Course-Based Philosophical Component.

- The first component of the course is intended to complement your role as a tutorial leader for PHL 101.
- Each week, we will engage in reading and discussion related to the material you will be covering with students in your tutorials. In addition to the regular course readings, as outlined in Prof. John's syllabus, supplementary readings will be often be selected in advance by a member of the seminar (schedule TBD during our first meeting). With respect to this first component of the course, your role for a given week will then involve either preparing a short presentation exploring the supplementary reading you have selected, or coming prepared with questions and comments for discussion, having read the supplementary readings selected by another student.

- Readings will be made available by me online, approximately one week before the scheduled meeting.
- We will also have regular visits and presentations by faculty members and graduate students from our department whose areas of research expertise coincide with the material you will be covering in tutorials. A partial schedule of these visits for the fall term follows below.

2. *A Research Component.*

- Over the course of the year, you will write a substantial research paper under the supervision of a faculty member, who will be responsible for assigning the paper a grade. You may also present a **conference version** of this paper at the Socrates Project/Undergraduate Research Conference to be held towards the end of the year. (Tentative dates April 6–7, 2018).
- Early in the fall term, I will facilitate the pairing of faculty members and students in the seminar, depending on each individual student's research interests. Once you have been put in contact with a faculty member, it will be your responsibility to ensure that you meet with your supervisor regularly in order to receive sufficient feedback on your work.

3. *A Professional Development Component.*

- The final component of the course involves professional development. In addition to receiving teaching assistant and gradership training early in the fall term, we will regularly set aside time during our meetings to discuss common problems and pitfalls encountered by teaching assistants, to work on strategies for handling such problems and pitfalls effectively, and to calibrate your grading of student work in PHL 101.
- We will also be discussing:
 - Applying to graduate degree programs, either in philosophy or related fields.
 - Conference submissions and presenting at conferences.
 - Research-related technology.
 - Effective reading and writing techniques for researchers.

2 Course Evaluation

Your final grade for the course will be calculated as follows:

1. Attendance and Participation: 15%
2. Presentation 15%
3. Research-related Assignments: 20%
4. Major Research Project: 50%

2.1 Detailed Breakdown

1. Attendance and Participation (15%)

- Your attendance at all sessions is required, so please plan to attend regularly. You are also expected to contribute to class discussions, and to come to our meetings having read all of the relevant material for the week.
- Often, we will also set aside time for professional development-related exercises. Completing this work will also count towards your participation grade in the course.

2. Presentations and Discussion (15%)

- At some point in either the fall or winter term, you will give a presentation on material relevant to the upcoming week in your PHL 101 tutorials. This presentation will count towards 15% of your final grade.
- For your presentation, you will conduct a survey of the philosophical literature for a scholarly article (or book chapter, etc.) that bears directly on the upcoming week's topic(s) in PHL 101. Your task will then be to prepare a presentation on the article in question, and to lead the seminar in discussion.
 - In general, we will set aside approximately one hour for each presentation. You should plan to present for 30 minutes or so, and to lead the seminar in discussion for another 30 minutes.
 - Your presentation should be both *expository*—it should clearly explain the central theses being defended in the article (chapter) you have selected—and also *exploratory*: you should raise questions or critical points of your own concerning the material you have summarized.

3. Research Assignments (20%)

- In conjunction with your major research project, there will be two research assignments over the course of the year.
- First, a **research proposal** (corresponding to 10% of your final grade). In the fall term, you will prepare a proposal outlining a plan for your major project. You will then present the proposal to the class for feedback during our last meeting of the fall term (Dec. 1st).
 - Note that your initial research proposal does not commit you to that particular project.
 - However, your proposal **must be approved by your faculty supervisor**, and such approval must be communicated to me.
- Second, a **conference version of your project**, corresponding to 10% of your final grade. In the winter term, you will write up a conference version of your major research project. This should be somewhat shorter than your final research paper, and should be suitable for an oral presentation of about 20 minutes.
 - It is this version of your research paper that you may, if you choose, present at the Undergraduate Research Conference in the spring.
 - The conference version of your paper is due our first meeting back following reading week (March 2nd).

4. Major Research Project (50%)

- Your major research project for the year will consist of a substantial research paper, which you will write under the supervision of a faculty member. This faculty member will be responsible for assigning your paper a final grade.

3 Course Schedule

The primary readings for the seminar are those outlined on the PHL 101 syllabus.

- There will also be additional readings (expect to read up to two scholarly articles or the equivalent for meetings in which a student presentation is scheduled).
- Notice that our reading schedule for the seminar is “staggered” one week ahead of PHL101: this is intended to allow you ample time to read, prepare, and think through the course material before you run your weekly tutorials.

3.1 Fall Term

Sept. 8: *Course introduction.*

Overview of the seminar’s structure; scheduling of presentations for the fall term; discussion of your role as tutorial leader and grader for PHL 101.

Faculty Visitors: Prof. James John; Jeremy Davis (Lead graduate-student TA for PHL 101).

Sept. 15: *God’s Existence I.*

Course Reading: Paley, ‘The Argument from Design’; Anselm, ‘The Ontological Argument’; Gaunilo, ‘In Behalf of the Fool’.

Professional Development Activity: Preparing for your first tutorials.

Faculty Visitor: Prof. Peter King.

Sept. 22: *God’s Existence II*

Course Reading: Leibniz, *Theodicy* (Selections); Hick, ‘The Problem of Evil’.

Professional Development Activity: First tutorials: follow-up discussion.

Sept. 29: *Free Will*

Course Reading: Ayer, ‘Freedom and Necessity’; Chisholm, ‘Human Freedom and the Self’.

Professional Development Activity: Academic research-technology workshop (\LaTeX , \TeX , etc.)

Oct. 6: *Freedom, Emotion, and the Brain*

Course Reading: Strawson, ‘Freedom and Resentment’; Roskies, ‘Neuroscientific Challenges to Free Will and Responsibility’.

Professional Development Activity: Postgraduate applications (MA/PHD/Law, etc.)

Seminar visitors: Thomas Feore (Law); Chris Yuen (Philosophy, MA); Zoe Sebastien (Philosophy MA).

Oct. 13: *Personal Identity I*

Course Reading: Parfit, 'Personal Identity'.

Professional Development Activity: Academic research-technology workshop: reference management systems.

Oct. 20: *Personal Identity II*

Course Reading: Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature* (Selections) ; *Milindapanha* (Selections); Xuanzang, *The Treatise on the Establishment of the Doctrine of Consciousness-only* (selections); Strawson, 'I am not a Story'.

Professional Development Activity: Benchmarking Session for first PHL101 paper.

Faculty Visitor: Prof. Vincent Shen.

Oct. 27: *Knowledge*

Course Reading: Plato, 'What is Knowledge?'; Gettier, 'Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?'; Nagel, 'The Analysis of Knowledge'.

Professional Development Activity: TBD

Faculty Visitor: Prof. Donald Ainslie (discussion on Hume).

Nov. 3: *Scepticism I*

Course Reading: Descartes, *Meditations 1 & 2*; Nagarjuna, *Averting the Arguments* (Selections); Zhuangzi (Selections).

Professional Development Activity: TBD

Faculty Visitor: Prof. Jennifer Nagel.

No meeting Nov. 10 (Fall Reading Break)

Nov. 17: *Scepticism II*

Moore, 'Proof of an External World'; 'Certainty'; Nagel, 'Scepticism'; Vogel, 'Cartesian Scepticism and Inference to the Best Explanation'.

Professional Development Activity: TBD

Faculty Visitor: Prof. David Barnett.

Nov. 24: *Appearance and Reality*

Course Reading: Chalmers, 'The Matrix as Metaphysics'; Nozick, 'Fiction'; Borges, *Tlon, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius* (Selections).

Professional Development Activity: Benchmarking Session for second PHL101 paper.

Dec. 1: *Final Meeting for Fall Term*

Research Proposal Presentations.

Winter Break

Jan. 5: *The Mind-Body Problem I.*

Course Reading: Descartes, *Meditation 6*; Princess Elizabeth, *Letters to Descartes* (selections); Gertler, 'In Defense of Mind–Body Dualism.'

Faculty Visitor: Prof. Marleen Rosemond.

Jan. 12: *The Mind-Body Problem II.*

Course Reading: Ryle, 'Descartes's Myth'; Wiredu, *The Concept of Mind* (selections); Smart, 'Sensations and Brain Processes'.

Jan. 19: *Mind and Science.*

Course Reading: Block, 'Comparing the Major Theories of Consciousness'; Nagel, 'What is it Like to be a Bat?'

Professional Development Activity: Re-drafting and revising a research paper.

Presentation: Sam Clark

Jan. 26: *The Nature of Morality.*

Course Reading: Plato, *Euthyphro*; Rachels, 'The Challenge of Cultural Relativism'.

Presentation: Joe Yule

Feb. 2: *Moral Theory I.*

Course Reading: Mill, *Utilitarianism* (selections); Le Guin, 'The Ones Who Walk Away From Omelas.'

Presentation: Lucas Bennett

Feb 9: *Moral Theory II.*

Course Reading: Kant, *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals* (selections); O'Neill, 'A Simplified Account of Kant's Ethics.'

Professional Development Activity: Benchmarking session for PHL101 paper 3.

Presentation: Sarah Ratzlaff

Feb. 16: *The Value of Morality.*

Course Reading: Plato *Glaucon's Challenge*; Rachels, 'Egoism and Moral Scepticism'; Wolf, 'Moral Saints'.

Faculty Visitor: Professor Nick Stang (discussion on Kant).

No meeting Feb. 23 (Winter Reading Break)

March. 2: *Politics I.*

Course Reading: Hobbes, *Leviathan* (selections).

Professional Development Activity: Preliminary draft materials due (research project); coordinating upcoming peer-review sessions.

Student visitors: Chris Yuen and Amogha Sahu (undergraduate conference: what to expect; how to prepare; why it is really fun).

March. 9: *Politics II.*

Course Reading: Rawls, 'Justice as Fairness'; Mills, 'Lost in Rawlsland'.

Presentation: Dana Ennis

Faculty Visitor: Prof. Peter King (discussion on Hobbes)

March. 16: *Politics III.*

Course Reading: Nozick, 'Distributive Justice'; Cohen, 'Robert Nozick and Wilt Chamberlain: How Patterns Preserve Liberty'.

Professional Development Activity: Peer-review sessions on materials submitted March 2.

March. 23: *The Meaning of Life*

Course Reading: Nagel, 'The Absurd'; Tolstoy, *My Confession* (selections).

Professional Development Activity: Benchmarking session for PHL101 paper 4.

Presentation: Bella Soblirova

March. 30: *Belief and Evidence.*

Course Reading: Clifford, 'The Ethics of Belief'; James, 'The Will to Believe'.

Professional Development Activity: End-of-term windup/lunch.

4 Course Business

1. *Course Contact.* In addition to our regular meeting time on Fridays, I will hold a weekly office hour from 10–11 a.m. at JHB 503. Please feel free to come by should you need to speak with me on matters pertaining to the course. Outside of class and office hours, the absolute best way to reach me is by email at adam.murray@utoronto.ca.
2. *Style and formatting of written work.* Your submitted work should conform to a standard formatting and citation style, such as MLA, APA, or Chicago.

5 Additional Details and Resources

1. A helpful primer on how to write a good philosophy paper can be found [here](#). The students in your tutorials may find this document helpful.
2. *Academic honesty.* As you are undoubtedly aware, using someone else's ideas without explicit acknowledgement is stealing, and constitutes plagiarism. Be sure that the students in your tutorials understand the nature of plagiarism, and what to do to avoid it in their writing.
For more information on academic infractions at the University of Toronto, see [here](#).
3. *Disability accommodation.* Should you require any accommodations in this course due to a disability, please do not hesitate to communicate this fact to me.