PHIL 235: Graduate Seminar in Epistemology

Mondays, 6:30-9:20pm, Rabb 338.
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Office Hours: Wednesdays, 10-12pm, and by appointment.

Course Description
The course will be concerned with the nature of reasons and, in particular, with the relationship between practical and theoretical reasons. We will start with two versions of the “wrong kind of reasons” problem: one for accounts of value in terms of reasons, and one concerning practical reasons for belief and intention. We will then consider several views about the relationship between practical and theoretical rationality. Finally, we will examine the rationality of trust and consider, in particular, whether it is practical or theoretical.

Readings
All readings will be available on LATTE.

Requirements
- Three short response papers (2-3 pages)
- Presentation of Term Paper at Mini-Conference
- Term paper (15-20 pages)

The short papers are due on Friday before the seminar meeting and should be about the coming week’s seminar. You can choose when to submit your short papers.

Note: If you are a student with a documented disability on record at Brandeis and need to have special accommodations for this class, please see me immediately.

Academic Dishonesty will be reported to the Department of Student Development and Conduct. Students are responsible to inform themselves about what constitutes dishonesty. If in doubt, please ask me, and see “Rights and Responsibilities” at:
http://www.brandeis.edu/studentaffairs/srcs/rr/index.html

Four-Credit Course (with three hours of class-time per week)
Success in this 4 credit hour course is based on the expectation that students will spend a minimum of 9 hours of study time per week in preparation for class (readings, papers, discussion sections, preparation for exams, etc.).

Learning Goals
General goals are to learn how to carefully read important contemporary texts, to extract and evaluate philosophical arguments from them, and to critically engage with, and build upon these arguments. The particular goals are to get an understanding of the relationship between theoretical and practical reason. Students will also consider to what extent ethical questions and questions about social justice are, at bottom, questions of fact.

For more information, see the Philosophy Department’s learning goals at:
http://www.brandeis.edu/departments/philosophy/undergrad/learninggoals.html
Schedule of Readings

Part I: The Wrong Kind of Reasons Problem for Value
1/20 Thomas Scanlon, *What We Owe to Each Other*, ch. 1: Reasons

1/25 **Class rescheduled to 3/30**

2/1 Thomas Scanlon, *What We Owe to Each Other*, ch. 2: Values
Jonas Olson, “Buck-Passing and the Wrong Kind of Reasons.”

2/10 *(Rescheduled from 2/8)*
Wlodek Rabinowicz and Toni Rønnow-Rasmussen, “The Strike of the Demon: On Fitting Pro-Attitudes and Value”
Justin D’Arms and Daniel Jacobson, “The Moralistic Fallacy”

Part II: The Wrong Kind of Reasons Problem for Belief and Intention
Gregory Kavka, “The Toxin Puzzle”
Thomas Kelly, “The Rationality of Belief And Some Other Propositional Attitudes”

2/29 Pamela Hieronymi, “The Wrong Kind of Reason”
Pamela Hieronymi, “Controlling Attitudes”

3/7 Mark Schroeder, “The Ubiquity of State-Given Reasons.”
Pamela Hieronymi “The Use of Reasons in Thought”
Mark Schroeder, “State-Given Reasons: Prevalent if not Ubiquitous”

Part III: Practical Reasons for Belief?
3/14 Berislav Marušić, *Evidence and Agency*, ch. 1.1, 5.3, 6.1, 6.2

3/21 Susanna Rinard, “No Exception for Belief”

Jeremy Fantl and Matthew McGrath, “Evidence, Pragmatics and Justification.”

4/4 Miriam McCormick. *Believing against the Evidence: Agency and the Ethics of Belief*, part II.

Part IV: The Reasons of Trust
Pamela Hieronymi, “The Reasons of Trust.”


5/2 Mini-Conference (students present term papers)

*Term Paper due 5/9*