

PH 375: ON THE NATURE OF EXPLANATION

Spring 2010

Meetings: W/F 12:20-2:10, Library 213

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Office Hours: Tue: 11-12:00 p.m.; Thur.: 12-1:00 p.m., Fri. 11:20-12:20 p.m.; and by appointment

Texts: Plato, *Five Dialogues*, tr. G.M.A. Grube
Rene Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, tr. Donald Cress
David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*
Alexander Rosenberg, *Philosophy of Social Science*
Ned Block (ed.), *Readings in Philosophy of Psychology*
Peter Morton (ed.), *A Historical Introduction to the Philosophy of Mind*
W. V. Quine, *Pursuit of Truth*
Packet of Readings

Aims of the Course:

What is the nature of an explanation? There is perhaps no more fundamental philosophical question. In this class, we will explore this question from a number of different angles. We will examine various models of explanation in the physical sciences, in the social sciences, and in philosophy itself. Our concern will be with both historical and 20th Century writings. In the course of our discussion, we will touch on many of the key classical and contemporary philosophical debates.

Requirements:

Attendance is mandatory. Unless there is a genuine issue, you will lose one grade increment for each absence (e.g., with one absence a final grade of "A" will become an "A-", with two it will become a B+, and so forth). In addition, there will be three papers of moderate length and a philosophical journal.

This course is implementing the new Skidmore requirements for writing in the major. Thus you will be expected to:

- 1) write an essay that is clear, well-organized, and driven by a specific thesis relevant to the paper's topic.
- 2) effectively utilize primary and secondary sources to develop the paper's

argument.

3) define and properly use technical terms and concepts.

4) make distinctions between the presentation of relevant data and/or arguments made by others and the critical analysis of these materials.

5) accurately apply theoretical models and/or disciplinary methods to specialized content.

SCHEDULE

January	27	Introduction, Plato's <i>Phaedo</i> 57a-72e; pp. 93-110
	29	<i>Phaedo</i> 73a-100a; pp. 110-138
February	3	<i>Phaedo</i> 100a-118; pp. 138-155
	5	Descartes' <i>Meditations</i> , First and Second Meditations
	10	Descartes, Third-Sixth Meditations
	12	Hume's <i>Enquiry</i> , Sec. I-IV; pp. 1-25
	17	Hume, Sec. V-VII; pp. 25-53
	19	Hume, Sec. VIII; pp. 53-69
	24	Rosenberg's <i>Philosophy of Social Science</i> , pp. 31-47
March	26	Rosenberg, pp. 47-61; Fay (Packet)
	3	Hempel, in Block's <i>Readings</i> , pp. 11-23
	5	Putnam, in Block's <i>Readings</i> , pp. 24-36
	10	Rosenberg, pp. 65-80; Davidson, pp. 107-12
	12	Davidson, in Block's <i>Readings</i> , pp. 112-119; Paper I due
		SPRING BREAK
	24	Smart, in Morton's <i>Historical Introduction</i> , pp. 233-42
	26	Putnam, in Block's <i>Readings</i> , pp. 223-231; Searle, in Morton's <i>Historical Introduction</i> , pp. 282-96
April	31	No Class
	2	No Class
	7	No Class
	9	Nagel, in Block's <i>Readings</i> , pp. 159-168
	14	Jackson, in Morton's <i>Historical Introduction</i> , pp. 355-366
	16	Dennett, in Morton's <i>Historical Introduction</i> , pp. 409-32
	21	Carnap, <i>Philosophy and Logical Syntax</i> , pp. 7-38 (Packet)
	28	Carnap, <i>Philosophy and Logical Syntax</i> , pp. 39-99 (Packet)
May	30	Quine, "Two Dogmas of Empiricism" (Packet)
	5	(Extra meeting) Quine, "Two Dogmas"

Final Paper due May 10