Proseminar

Fall 2014   Thursdays 12:00-3:00
Cian Dorr and Hartry Field

DESCRIPTION

The proseminar is restricted to first-year Ph.D. students in philosophy at NYU. The goal, beyond becoming familiar with some important work, is to develop the ability to *do* philosophy, in writing and in public.

REQUIREMENTS

1. Participation in classroom discussion---we expect this of everyone!

2. Showing up to each meeting having read and thought about the assigned readings.

3. Serving twice as "discussion leader", once in one of the seven weeks Sept. 11-Oct. 23 and again in one of the six weeks Oct. 30-Dec. 11. (There will be two discussion leaders on Oct. 30.) More on what this involves below.

4. Four writing assignments, 5-7 pages each.   Due dates are in the schedule below, and you are free to choose any topic centrally related to any of the readings in the previous three weeks.

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No late papers.

We mean it!

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GRADING

The course will be graded pass/fail. Everyone who attends, participates and turns in all papers on time will pass. There will be no Incompletes.

READINGS

Readings will be made available electronically, except for the two books still under copyright that we are reading large portions of: Lewis's *Convention* and Kripke's *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language*.   Please arrange to have access to these books.

A week beforehand, we will usually distribute some questions that it would be good to think about while doing the readings. We may also single out certain parts of the readings as skippable, or designate certain papers as optional.

THE ROLE OF THE DISCUSSION LEADER

Being a discussion leader is in some ways like giving a presentation, and in some ways different. It is similar in that it requires spending more time than usual thinking about the readings, and telling the rest of the group where you got to in your thinking.   But you should not plan to talk uninterruptedly for very long.   Instead, find a way to break things up into short chunks, each of which can serve as the starting point of a discussion with the rest of the group.   You don't have to settle on any particular views —it is perfectly acceptable if most of your contributions take the form of 'I felt like I must be missing something here, because …', or 'I couldn't see how this

was supposed to follow from that, because …'.   The aim is to present the issues as clearly as you can, so as to provide the structure for a more fruitful discussion.

A visual aid such as a handout is recommended.

It would be a bad idea to try to cover everything in the readings: while you might want to begin by giving a very brief overview of the readings and saying something about how they relate, you will probably find you want to focus on a few topics, which might be more relevant to some of the readings than to others.   Indeed, when there are several readings, or a single reading with several major subdivisions, it is perfectly acceptable if you decide you want to focus entirely on just one of them.   If we have distributed a list of questions, you shouldn't slavishly follow them. There may be many more on our list than can be usefully discussed, and you may want to add some of your own.   Typically, the discussion leader will be playing a special role only in the first half of the seminar; the discussion in the second half may build on this, but may also go into other issues or other readings.

Feel free to talk to one of us beforehand about your plans for the session.

SCHEDULE

Sept 4   Organizational meeting

Sept 11   Gottlob Frege, 'On Sense and Reference'.
              Frege, 'The Thought'.
              Optional: Willard van Orman Quine, *Word and Object*, sections 9 and 11.

Sept 18   Saul Kripke, 'A Puzzle about Belief'

Sept 25   Hans Reichenbach, *Experience and Prediction*, Chapters 1 and 2 and section 42.

First paper due Sunday Sept 28

Oct 2   Nelson Goodman, *Fact Fiction and Forecast,* Chapter 3
              R.D. Rosencrantz, 'Does the Philosophy of Induction Rest on a Mistake?'

Oct 9   Frege, *Foundations of Arithmetic*, sections 1-54

Oct 16   Frege, *Foundations of Arithmetic*, sections 55-83
              George Boolos, 'Gottlob Frege and the Foundations of Arithmetic'
              Boolos, 'Is Hume's Principle Analytic?

Second paper due Sunday Oct 19

Oct 23   Rudolf Carnap, 'Empiricism, Semantics and Ontology'
              Quine, 'On What There Is'
              Quine, 'Carnap on Ontology'

Oct 30   Quine, 'Truth by Convention'
              A.N. Prior, 'The Runabout Inference-Ticket'
              Nuel Belnap, 'Tonk, Plonk and Plink'
              J. T. Stevenson, 'Roundabout the Runabout Inference-Ticket'

Nov 6   David Lewis, *Convention*, Chs 1-3

Third paper due Sunday Nov 9

Nov 13   Lewis, *Convention*, Chs 4-5

Nov 20   Kripke, *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language*, chapter 2, plus pp. 70–78
              and 86–93 of Ch 3
              Tomoji Shogenji, 'Modest Skepticism about Rule Following'

[No class Nov 27: Thanksgiving]

Dec 4   Ruth Millikan, 'Truth Rules, Hoverflies, and the Kripke-Wittgenstein Paradox'
Optional: Millikan, 'Biosemantics'

Fourth paper due Sunday Dec 7

Dec 11   Bertrand Russell, 'On the Notion of Cause'

Nancy Cartwright, 'Causal Laws and Effective Strategies'