

PHIL 990: Current Research Reading Group

UNC Chapel Hill, Fall 2019

Syllabus

Instructor: Alex Worsnip (aworsnip@unc.edu)

Class Meetings: Wed, 1-3:30pm, Caldwell Hall 213

Office Hours: Wed 10:30-11:30am and Thurs 2-3pm, or by appointment, Caldwell Hall 202A

Course Description

This class is a “research reading group” on my draft book manuscript, *Fitting Things Together*. The book is about structural rationality: that is, the kind of rationality that distinctively has to do with how one’s mental states *cohere* or *fit together*. It bridges topics in (meta)ethics, epistemology, and related parts of philosophy of language and philosophy of mind. As well as introducing you to some of the newest work in lively and current debates about reasons and rationality, the course is also an opportunity to see a book-length project unfolding in real time, as I undertake the process of revising and improving an imperfect draft – and to play a direct role in helping to shape those revisions.

Enrollment

This is a class for graduate students only. Undergraduate enrollment will not be allowed. Graduate student and faculty auditors are welcome, but are asked to keep up with the reading so that conversations are productive.

Requirements/Assessment

- As per the department’s regulations, there are no officially graded assignments for Phil 990. (In the past, first and second year students were required to write a paper, but this requirement has now been abolished, starting this semester.)
- However, I’ll assign each member of the class who is enrolled for credit a week where they will be responsible for presenting the week’s material and leading the subsequent discussion. The thinking behind this is that since I’m already the author of the material we’re reading, I generally won’t have much to add by way of setup and explanation, so it will be less repetitive (and might get the conversation going more easily) to have someone else present the material, at least some weeks.
- By department convention, all students enrolled for credit will get a P+ for the course, contingent on satisfactory attendance, preparation (i.e., doing the reading), and completing the presentation.
- If anyone wants to do a piece of writing related to the topics of the class, I will happily read it and provide comments, but it won’t be for an official grade.

Commitments & Accessibility

- I am very happy to meet with you at any time to talk more about the topics of the class, or to help you prepare an upcoming in-class presentation. Please come to my office hours, or if those times don’t work, email me to set up an appointment.

- I am committed to making class fully accessible, and to providing accommodations for those who need them. If I can do anything to help make class more accessible to you, please let me know, or have UNC Accessibility Resources & Service (ARS) contact me on your behalf.
- I am also committed to making the class a safe learning environment for everyone irrespective of gender, ethnicity, race, sexuality, religion, or other individual or group identity. As should go without saying, personal attacks or discriminatory treatment of others on any of these bases will not be tolerated under any circumstances.

Course Readings/Schedule

The plan is to work through the manuscript, chapter by chapter. We have more weeks than chapters, so we can take it as slowly (or quickly) as we want, depending on how the conversation is flowing. So as to be flexible on the pacing, I haven't made a week-by-week plan below. We'll start with the preface and first chapter and go from there. I'll keep this syllabus updated week by week as we figure it out.

Depending on time, I may well also assign some supplementary readings from other contemporary philosophers writing on the topics covered in the book. If I do this, I will try to restrict myself to readings that are very current, that I am directly responding to in the book, and that express perspectives that differ from my own. I'm not going to assign "classic" literature on these debates as background. The book is written to be accessible without that background, and sets the relevant issues and debates up within the conceptual framework that I find most congenial (which, in various places, contrasts with some of the more traditional ways of setting them up). So I think it will be more efficient to avoid starting within a different conceptual framework and then having to translate.

Date	Reading	Presenter
8/21	Preface and ch. 1	
8/28	Review §1.3-1.6; read §2.1-2.2	Nevin (§2.1-2.2)
9/4	Review §2.2; read remainder of ch. 2	Conner (§2.3-2.4)
9/11	Review §2.4; read ch. 3	Simon (§3.1-3.2.2)
9/18	<i>No class – I am away giving a talk</i>	
9/25	Review §3.3.2-3.7	
10/2	Review §3.4-3.7; read §4.1-4.2	Z (§4.1-4.2)
10/9	Review §4.2; read §4.3	
10/16	Read ch. 5	Zach
10/23	Review §5.6-5.7; read Lasonen-Aarnio, "Coherence as Competence"	
10/30	Read ch. 6	Yifan
11/6	Review §6.4.3-6.7; read Lee, "The Real Myth of Coherence"	
11/13	Review §6.7 + Lee; read ch. 7	
11/20	Review §7.3-7.7; read ch. 8	Aaron (ch. 8)
11/27	<i>No class – Thanksgiving break</i>	
12/4	Review §8.3-8.8	