



English-Language Philosophy Courses, Fall Term 2019

(last updated 23rd August 2019; changes are in red font)

The following seminars will be held in English and we especially welcome incoming international students to enroll in these courses. All courses are suitable for students who have little or no prior experience in philosophy.

Incoming international students who speak German are also welcome to attend other Philosophy courses that are held in German. Please see our course offerings in Portal² (<https://portal2.uni-mannheim.de>).

Please note that all incoming students at the School of Humanities need to register for their courses via the Registration Form which will be emailed to them before the start of the semester. For further information please contact incoming@phil.uni-mannheim.de.

Please note: In the fall term 2019 all weekly Philosophy courses will begin in the second week of the lecture period (i. e., in the week starting on 9 September).

Undergraduate Seminars (Bachelor programme)

Introductory seminars (Proseminare):

WENDELBORN: Shelly Kagan: Normative Ethics (Monday, 10:15–11:45, EO 159) – course description on page 2.

YOLCU: Analytic Philosophy: seminal papers (Thursday, 13:45–15:15, EO 157) – course description on page 3.

Advanced undergraduate seminar (Hauptseminar):

VISAK: Welfare, Happiness and Ethics (Friday, 10:15–11:45, EO 154) – course description on page 4.

Master Seminars

BRÄUER: The Social Dimension of Knowledge (Monday, 12:00–13:30, EO 256) – course description on page 4.

Tutorial: Learning how to read and write philosophy in English

Participation is recommended for attendants of the above seminars.

Group I Tutor: Carola Hesch
Wednesday, 15:30–17:00
seminar room EW 167

Group II Tutor: Carola Hesch
Friday, 12:00–13:30
seminar room EW 167

Shelly Kagan: *Normative Ethics* [undergraduate seminar]

Dr. Christian Wendelborn

Monday 10:15–11:45 EO 159 first session: 9 Sep 2019

“Whether a given action is required, permitted, or forbidden is typically a function of several different morally relevant factors. Much of the work of normative ethics is a matter of articulating these various *normative factors*, and discovering how they interact so as to determine the moral status of an act.

An example should help to make this idea of normative factors clearer. Suppose that someone is drowning in the lake, and the only way she can be saved is if I row out to her in a boat and pull her in. Should I do it? Presumably, the fact that my act would have a good result – it would save a life! – is one morally relevant factor in determining the rightness or wrongness of the act. [...] The goodness or badness of results is thus a morally relevant normative factor – a factor that can help determine the moral status of an act.

It certainly doesn’t seem to be the only such factor. Suppose that the only boat at hand is not mine, but rather belongs to someone else. If I am to rescue the drowning woman, I must steal it [...]. Here we have a second relevant normative factor: the fact that performing the act requires violating the property rights of the boat’s owner. Whether I should still take the boat out or not depends on which of these two factors is more important, morally speaking [...] and the moral status of the act depends on which factor outweighs the other.

There are other factors that might come into play as well.” (Kagan 1998, 17)

In his book *Normative Ethics*, Shelly Kagan presents a survey and explanation of the basic normative factors. He also raises fundamental questions about these factors. In the first part of this course we are going to discuss the content, significance, and scope of normative factors such as consequences, harm, consent, or rights. In the second part of the course we will turn to Kagan’s analysis of competing theories regarding the foundations of normative ethics. These theories attempt to explain why the basic normative factors (we looked at in the first part of the course) have the moral significance they do. The main goal is to understand the division between moral factors and their theoretical foundations that Kagan offers.

Literature: Shelly Kagan (1998). *Normative Ethics*, Westview Press.

Analytic Philosophy: seminal papers [undergraduate seminar]

Nadja-Mira Yolcu, B. Phil. (Oxon.)

Thursday 13:45–15:15 EO 157 first session: 12 Sep 2019

Originating at the beginning of the last century, analytic philosophy is now the dominant philosophical tradition in the English-speaking world and has become increasingly popular over the last few decades in the non-English-speaking world as well.

It is difficult to define “analytic philosophy” which has become a collective term for different philosophical approaches spanning wide areas of philosophy. In general, analytic philosophers strive for explicit and clear argumentation, often with the help of formal logic. At least early analytic philosophy can be characterised as the turn towards philosophy of language and (dis-)solving philosophical problems via language analysis (linguistic turn). Analytic philosophy today spans wide, from logic and philosophy of language over epistemology and philosophy of mind to metaphysics, analytical ethics and aesthetics, and becomes more and more interdisciplinary.

In this seminar we will not follow its historic development, but study analytic philosophy by example - we will read selected seminal papers in the analytic tradition. In the first half of the semester we will focus on classical papers from philosophy of language (e.g. by G. Frege, B. Russell, L. Wittgenstein). In the second half we will progress to papers in epistemology (e.g. by E. Gettier, H. Putnam) and philosophy of mind (e.g. by J. Searle).

The seminar will loosely accompany the lecture “Einführung in die Analytische Philosophie” (Introduction to Analytic Philosophy). Students are encouraged to attend both seminar and lecture but this is not required for participation in the seminar.

Readings will be made available on ILIAS at the beginning of term.

Welfare, Happiness and Ethics [advanced undergrad. seminar]

Dr. Tatjana Višak

Friday 10:15–11:45 EO 154 first session: 13 Sep 2019

What makes my life good (or bad) for me? How important is happiness for a good life? And what is the nature of happiness? To what extent do welfare and happiness provide normative reasons for action? Do we have normative reason to make ourselves, or others, well off or happy? If so, how important are these reasons?

In this seminar we will address these questions from the fields of value theory, metaphysics and normative ethics. We will explore some prominent answers on the basis of recent literature.

The grade for this seminar will be based on a written essay. The literature will be made available online (via ILIAS). Please make sure that you read the weekly texts before the meetings.

The Social Dimension of Knowledge [Master seminar]

Felix Bräuer, M. A.

Monday 12:00–13:30 **EO 256** first session: 9 Sep 2019

The aim of this seminar is to provide an overview over a field of philosophical inquiry that is often called “Social Epistemology”. In doing so, we are going to address questions such as: Under which conditions can we acquire justified beliefs and knowledge from someone else’s say-so? How do social problems harm the acquisition and distribution of knowledge? How should we react if we realize that an epistemic peer disagrees with us? In what sense can we speak of “group knowledge”? Can a social perspective shed new light on old philosophical problems, such as scepticism? In order to address these questions, we are mainly going to read and discuss texts by contemporary epistemologists.

The seminar will be held in English. The reading list will be provided at the beginning of the semester.