



# PHIL 5850: M.A. PROSEMINAR PHILOSOPHICAL NATURALISM

Fall 2020  
Tuesdays 2:35-5:25 p.m.

Dr. David Matheson  
Department of Philosophy  
3A49 Paterson Hall  
613-520-2600 ext. 1928  
david.matheson@carleton.ca

## *Description & objective*

As a philosophical movement, naturalism eschews the nonphysical and emphasizes scientifically respectable methods of inquiry. The objective of this seminar is to familiarize you with the roots and guises of contemporary philosophical naturalism and with its presence in three particular areas of philosophy—the philosophy of mind, ethics, and epistemology.

Particular topics to be discussed include the American origins of contemporary naturalism, its ontological and methodological commitments, the causal closure of the physical domain, varieties of physicalism about the mental, naturalist challenges to metaethical realism, the autonomy of normative philosophy, and whether a naturalized epistemology vitiates traditional epistemology's reliance on intuition and the *a priori*.

## *Video presentations & chatroom dialogues*

In lieu of in-person meetings, the seminar will involve video presentations and chatroom-style dialogues. The video presentations will be posted to the seminar's cuLearn page, and their main purpose will be to introduce the reading(s) of the coming week. The chatroom dialogues will take place in the "Forum" section of the cuLearn page, during the first one and a half hours of the scheduled meeting time. (In the remaining one and half hours of the scheduled meeting time, I will be available on email to answer any presentation- or dialogue-related questions you might have.) The central purpose of these dialogues is to involve all of you in discussion of the presentations and associated readings.

## *Evaluation*

*Dialogue participation.* In order to get a passing grade in the seminar, you must make a substantial contribution to all but two of the weekly chatroom dialogues. You are expected to contribute questions and comments to all of these dialogues, and the questions and comments you do contribute should give me reason to believe that you

have done the readings and paid attention to the associated presentations. If you contribute no questions or comments at all to one of the dialogues, or if you only contribute questions or comments that give me no such reason, you will not count as having made a substantial contribution to that dialogue. And if you fail to make a substantial contribution to more than two of the dialogues, you will receive a failing grade in the seminar. If I judge that you have failed to make a substantial contribution to the dialogue, I will let you know by the end of the next day. Otherwise you can rest assured that I regard your contribution as substantial.

*Video presentation (or alternative).* In the first half of the term, I will be doing all of the video presentations. In the second half of the term, each of you will be expected to do one. (If you prefer not to make a video, you will be permitted to prepare a document instead.) The videos need not be long, just long enough for you to introduce what you take to be the most important aspects of the associated readings, and to make whatever key points about them that you wish; 10 to 15 minutes should be more than sufficient. (If you choose the document alternative, you should plan on something in the 1,000—1,500 word range.) Your video presentation (or alternative) is worth 40% of your passing grade.

*Final paper.* Ideally (but not necessarily) based on your video presentation, your final paper for the seminar should be approximately 15 double-spaced pages (4,500 words) in length. It is due on the final day of the fall term's examination period, December 23. Your final paper will be worth 60% of your passing grade.

### *Readings*

There is no central text that you need to buy for this seminar. The seminar readings will consist of the articles listed below. You will get those not marked by an asterisk on your own; they are available from the library's current online holdings. I will make those marked by an asterisk available to you via cuLearn.

- Armstrong, D. (1978). Naturalism, materialism, and first philosophy. *Philosophia: Philosophical Quarterly of Israel*, 8, 261—76.
- Bealer, G. (1992). The incoherence of empiricism. *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Supplementary Volumes*, 66, 99—143.
- \*Boyd, R. (1988). How to be a moral realist. In G. Sayre-McCord (Ed.), *Essays on moral realism*, pp. 181—228. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Churchland, P. (1981). Eliminative materialism and the propositional attitudes. *The Journal of Philosophy*, 78, 67—90.
- \*Davidson, D. (1970). Mental events. In L. Forester & J. Swanson (Eds.), *Experience and theory*, pp. 79—110. Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press. (Reprinted in Davison (1980), *Essays on actions and events*, pp. 207—27. Oxford: Clarendon Press.)
- \*Foley, R. (1994). Quine and naturalized epistemology. *Midwest Studies in Philosophy*, 19, 243—60.
- \*Hampton, J. (1998). Naturalism and moral reasons [Chapter 1]. In Hampton, *The authority of reason*, pp. 19—43. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- \*Harman, G. (1977). Ethics and observation [Chapter 1]. In Harman, *The nature of morality*, pp. 3—10. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- \*Kim, J. (2003). The American origins of philosophical naturalism. *The Journal of Philosophical Research*, 28 (Issue supplement: *Philosophy in America at the turn of the century*), 83—98.
- \*Kim, J. (2001). Lonely souls: Causality and substance dualism. In K. Corcoran (Ed.), *Soul, body, and survival*, pp. 30—43. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Lewis, D. (1966). An argument for the identity theory. *The Journal of Philosophy*, 63, 17—25.
- \*Mackie, J.L. (1977). The subjectivity of values [Chapter 1]. In Mackie, *Ethics: Inventing right and wrong*, pp. 15—49. London: Penguin Books.
- \*Nagel, J. (2007). Epistemic intuitions. *Philosophy Compass*, 2, 792—819.
- Nagel, T. (1974). What is it like to be a bat? *The Philosophical Review*, 83, 435—50.
- Ney, A. (2008). Physicalism as an attitude. *Philosophical Studies*, 138, 1—15.
- \*Papineau, D. (2001). The rise of physicalism. In C. Gillett & B. Loewer (Eds.), *Physicalism and its discontents*, pp. 1—36. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- \*Quine, W.V.O. (1969). Epistemology naturalized. In Quine, *Ontological relativity and other essays*, pp. 69—90. New York: Columbia University Press.
- \*Weinberg, J., S. Nichols, & S. Stich. (2001). Normativity and epistemic intuitions. *Philosophical Topics*, 29, 429—60.

### *Schedule*

Sept. 15	<i>The roots &amp; guises of contemporary naturalism</i>	Armstrong (1978) Kim (2003)
Sept. 22		Ney (2008)
Sept. 29		Papineau (2001)
Oct. 6	<i>Naturalism in the philosophy of mind</i>	Lewis (1966) Kim (2001)
Oct. 13		Davidson (1970)
Oct. 20		Nagel (1974)
Oct. 23		Churchland (1981)
Oct. 27	Fall break	

Nov. 3	<i>Ethical naturalism</i>	Mackie (1977) Harman (1977) Hampton (1998)
Nov. 10		Boyd (1988)
Nov. 17	<i>Epistemological naturalism</i>	Quine (1969) Foley (1994)
Nov. 24		Bealer (1992)
Dec. 1		Weinberg, Nichols & Stich (2001) Nagel (2007)
Dec. 8	Review	

## Department of Philosophy and Carleton University Policies (Fall/Winter 2020-21)

### **Assignments:**

Please follow your professor's instructions on how assignments will be handled electronically. There will be NO hard copies placed in the essay box this coming year.

### **Evaluation:**

Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor subject to the approval of the Faculty Dean. This means that grades submitted by the instructor may be subject to revision. No grades are final until they have been approved by the Dean.

### **Deferrals for Term Work:**

If students are unable to complete term work because of illness or other circumstances beyond their control, they should contact their course instructor no later than *three working days* of the due date. Normally, any deferred term work will be completed by the last day of the term. Term work cannot be deferred by the Registrar.

### **Deferrals for Final Exams:**

Students are expected to be available for the duration of a course including the examination period. Occasionally, students encounter circumstances beyond their control where they may not be able to write a final examination or submit a take-home examination. Examples of this would be a serious illness or the death of a family member. If you miss a final examination and/or fail to submit a take-home examination by the due date, you may apply for a deferral no later than *three working days* after the original due date (as per the University Regulations in [Section 4.3 of the Undergraduate Calendar](#)). Visit the [Registrar's Office](#) for further information.

### **Plagiarism:**

It is the responsibility of each student to understand the meaning of 'plagiarism' as defined in the Undergraduate or Graduate Calendars, and to avoid both committing plagiarism and aiding or abetting plagiarism by other students. ([Section 10.1 of the Undergraduate Calendar Academic Regulations](#))

### **Academic Accommodation:**

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term:

- *Pregnancy or religious obligation:* write to your professor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details visit the [EDC](#) website.
- *Academic accommodations for students with disabilities:* The [Paul Menton Centre](#) for Students with Disabilities (PMC) provides services to students with Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/mental health disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), chronic medical conditions, and impairments in mobility, hearing, and vision. If you have a disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact PMC at 613-520-6608 or [pmc@carleton.ca](mailto:pmc@carleton.ca) for a formal evaluation. If you are already registered with the PMC, contact your PMC coordinator to send your Letter of Accommodation at the beginning of the term, and no later than two weeks before the first in-class test or exam requiring accommodation. After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with your professor to ensure accommodation arrangements are made.
- *Survivors of Sexual Violence:* As a community, Carleton University is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working and living environment where sexual violence will not be tolerated, and where survivors are supported through academic accommodations as per [Carleton's Sexual Violence Policy](#).
- *Accommodation for Student Activities:* Carleton University recognizes the substantial benefits, both to the individual student and for the university, that result from a student participating in activities beyond the classroom experience. Reasonable accommodation must be provided to students who compete or perform at the national or international level. Please contact your instructor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist.