The aim of philosophy, abstractly formulated, is to understand how things in the broadest possible sense of the term hang together in the broadest possible sense of the term.

-Sellars, “Philosophy and the Scientific Image of Man”

Course Description

Galaxies attract one another; waves erode shores; leaves rest on grass; bees pollinate flowers; dogs chase squirrels; humans dance to music. Things affect each other. But we humans aren’t simply affected by things. We think and talk about things. The page in front of you, for instance, isn’t merely affecting you, as a leaf affects the grass on which it rests. You can think and talk about it. Moreover, you can have better or worse support for what you think and say about it. What you think and say about it is answerable to facts about the page. For instance, if you said that the page was made of cheese, your claim would be false, since the page is not made of cheese. Of course, sometimes we think rightly; in those cases we are justified in what we think. What is it to be answerable to the facts? What does it take to have knowledge? Does language have an essential role here? Those questions are the focus of the Pittsburgh School, a group of philosophers consisting centrally of Wilfrid Sellars, Robert Brandom and John McDowell. This seminar is an introduction to their views on those issues.

Goals

- improve skills in reading philosophy by summarizing difficult philosophical texts
- improve skills in writing philosophy by reconstructing and assessing arguments
- learn proper use of critical literature in philosophy
- learn the claims and arguments of a few influential, contemporary philosophers

Texts

-deVries and Tripplet, Knowledge, Mind and the Given: Reading Wilfrid Sellars’s ‘Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind’
-McDowell, Mind and World
-Photocopies available on Moodle
Evaluation

Weekly Writing Assignments

This course is a seminar. That means you have some responsibility for the success of each meeting. Most importantly, you must be prepared to discuss the relevant texts and issues in each meeting. To ensure that you are prepared, each week, you will write a brief summary of each text for that week. (Typically, we will read two things each week. So, you will typically write two summaries. However, in some weeks, there will be more or less than two readings. On those occasions, I will tell you what you should do.) There is a further reason for you to write these summaries: they will help you prepare to write essays for the course.

These summaries will be worth 20% of your final grade.

They will be due by email at 10pm the Sunday before we meet on Monday.

For each text, (1) identify the main claim for which the author is arguing, (2) clarify what that claim means, and (3) state the author’s reasons for that claim. Each summary must not be longer than 300 words.

Grading Scale:

2 = adequate
1 = inadequate
0 = not submitted

Participation

Your participation is essential to the success of this seminar. You should make regular, substantive, and clear contributions to our discussions. For details, please see the rubric on our Moodle course page. Your participation is worth 20% of your final grade.

Essays

1. On Unit 1 5p 25% Due March 2
2. On Unit 2 or 3 7p 35% Due May 11
# Tentative Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Recommended Reading</th>
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<td><strong>Unit 1: Does Knowledge have a Foundation?</strong></td>
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| **1. Jan 23** | Skepticism and Foundationalism | *Williams,* “Skepticism,” §§1-6  
*Ayer,* “The Argument from Illusion”  
| **2. Jan 30** | The Given | *Sellars,* “Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind,” §§1-38  
*deVries* and *Tripplet,* “Introduction to EPM” | *“Rationalism vs. Empiricism,” Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*  
*Hume,* *Enquiry*, I-III  
*Locke,* *Essay*, III, 1-3 |
| **3. Feb 6** | The mind without the Given | *Sellars,* “Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind,” §§39-63  
*Sellars,* “Philosophy and the Scientific Image of Man” | *Kukla,* “Myth, Memory and Misrecognition”  
*Dennett,* “Intentional Systems” |
| **4. Feb 13** | Do non-human animals and very young children have knowledge? | *Williams,* “Are there Two Grades of Knowledge? Part I”  
*Sosa,* “Are there Two Grades of Knowledge? Part II” | *Sosa,* “The Mythology of the Given”  
*Williams,* “The Tortoise and the Serpent: Sellars on the Structure of Empirical Knowledge” |
| **Unit 2: How are we accountable to the world?** | | | |
| **6. Feb 27** | Experience as openness to the world | *McDowell,* *Mind and World*, Lectures 2-3, 6, Postscript to Lecture 3 | *Evans,* On Information  
*Heck,* “Non-Conceptual Content and the ‘Space of Reasons’” |
| **Mar 2** | 1st Essay Due | 1st Essay Due | 1st Essay Due |
| **7. Mar 5** | Does constraint by the world require social relationships? | *Brandom,* “Perception and Rational Constraint”  
*McDowell,* “Knowledge and the Internal”  
*Brandom,* “Knowledge and the Social Articulation of the Space of Reasons” | *McDowell,* “Reply to Brandom [on PRC]”  
*McDowell,* “Knowledge and the Internal, Revisited”  
*Goldman,* “Discrimination and Perceptual Knowledge” |
| **8. Mar 12** | BREAK | BREAK | BREAK |
| **9. Mar 19** | Does perception have two layers? | *Brandom,* “The Centrality of Sellars’s Two-Ply Conception of Observation”  
*McDowell,* “Brandom on Observation” | *Brandom,* “Reply to McDowell”  
*Jackson,* “Epiphenomenal Qualia”  
*Dennett,* “Quining Qualia” |
| **10. Mar** | Accountability as authentic | *Haugeland,* “Objective” | *Haugeland,* “Authentic” |
The Pittsburgh School

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>13. Apr 16</td>
<td>How do humans become aware of rules as such?</td>
<td>Sellars, “Some Reflections on Language Games” [focus on §§1-12]</td>
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May 11   | 2nd Essay Due 2p.m.                                                   | 2nd Essay Due 2p.m.                                                   | 2nd Essay Due 2p.m. |

Academic Honesty

Any case of suspected academic dishonesty must be reported. Note: “To plagiarize is to use without proper citation or acknowledgment the words, ideas, or work of another. Plagiarism is a form of cheating that refers to several types of unacknowledged borrowing.” When in doubt, cite it. For more information, please see the handbook on Community Standards here:
http://www.dickinson.edu/student/files/commstand0809.pdf

Disabilities

I will make reasonable academic accommodations for students with documented disabilities. If you think you are eligible for such accommodation, please first register with Disability Services in Biddle House (245-1080, disabilityservices@dickinson.edu). If you are eligible, Marni Jones will provide you with a letter attesting to that. Once you have that letter, we can meet to discuss what we need to do. All of that must happen in the first three weeks of the semester.