Undergraduate Certificate in Philosophy: History of Philosophy, Philosophy of Mind and Political Philosophy

2019-2020

Course code: 1920CCR208

COURSE GUIDE
Welcome to the Undergraduate Certificate in Philosophy: History of Philosophy, Philosophy of Mind and Political Philosophy, a University of Cambridge award offered by the Institute of Continuing Education (ICE). The Certificate is taught and awarded at FHEQ level 4 (i.e. first-year undergraduate level) and attracts 60 credits. The award is completed in one academic year. For further information about academic credit please see our website: www.ice.cam.ac.uk/studying-with-us/information-for-students/qualifications-that-we-offer

The course offers three termly units and a syllabus and reading and resource list for each of these units are included in this course specification.

The course aims to:

- introduce students to some central philosophical issues;
- familiarise students with some important arguments and discussions concerning these issues;
- demonstrate to students how to read philosophy and how to approach philosophical questions productively;
- enable students to begin developing their own ideas.

### Transferable skills for further study and employability

- The capacity for independent thought and judgement
- The development of independent learning, study and time management skills
- The deployment of skills in critical reasoning
- The development of competence in using IT to support one’s work
- The ability to work with others, productively and equitably
- The qualities necessary for employment requiring the exercise of some personal responsibility and the demonstration of high levels of motivation and personal commitment through part-time study

### Study hours

The award of academic credit is a means of quantifying and recognising learning and within the UK, one credit notionally represents 10 hours of learning\(^1\). Each of the units in this course attracts 20 credits so students should expect to need to study for approximately 200 hours in total to complete each unit successfully. However, it is recognised that students study at different paces and use a variety of approaches, so this is a recommendation, rather than a hard-and-fast calculation.


### Teaching staff

**Academic Director and Tutor**

**Alexander Carter** is Teaching Officer and Academic Director for Philosophy at ICE. Alex was awarded his PhD in Philosophy by the University of Essex in 2015. Before this, Alex studied Philosophy & Ancient History at the University of Wales, Swansea and Philosophy at the University of Bristol. Alex has over five years of teaching experience in Ethics, History of Philosophy and Philosophy of Religion. He has worked at the Institute of Continuing Education since 2015 as Academic Director for Philosophy and as a Panel Tutor. Alex's teaching method was developed at the University of Essex where the principle aim is to get students to feel the "pain of the problem", i.e. to make plain the very real ways in which philosophical problems affect our lives. Accordingly, Alex is most keen to offer his support to philosophical projects that, not only to inform contemporary debates, but actively affect change. Alex's ongoing research interests include the theology of Simone Weil and Ludwig Wittgenstein’s ethical philosophy.
Contact Details: Dr Alexander Carter, Institute of Continuing Education, University of Cambridge, Madingley Hall, Madingley, Cambridge, CB23 8AQ. alexander.carter@tutor.ice.cam.ac.uk

Administrative staff

Heads of Academic Centre Administration
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Venue

Madingley Hall is the University of Cambridge’s campus dedicated to continuing education for adults. The magnificent Hall was built in the sixteenth century and acquired by the University in 1948. The Hall has been used by the Institute of Continuing Education as a venue since 1975.

You will be taught in one of 14 classrooms at Madingley Hall and, occasionally, at other venues. Classrooms are arranged and equipped to encourage effective small group learning and peer interaction. Technology-enhanced learning, including lecture capture where appropriate, is used in many classes and wi-fi is available throughout the site. We also provide a range of social learning spaces which you can make use of before, or after, your class. Seven acres of superb gardens and grounds designed by Capability Brown provide space to think, reflect and relax. We offer a range of catering including formal dining, sandwiches and snacks, and a full-service bar. If you are travelling a long distance you may wish to book accommodation in one of the Hall’s 62 en-suite bedrooms. The student B&B rate is £60/night.

The Hall is situated three miles west of Cambridge with easy access from the M11 and the A14. There is ample free on-site car parking. Central London and Stansted Airport can be reached in under an hour by train from Cambridge railway station. Taxis from the railway station to Madingley Hall typically take around 20-25 minutes. Full directions are given on our website at: http://www.ice.cam.ac.uk/about-us/how-find-us

Contact details of ICE

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Please also refer to the ‘information for students’ section on ICE’s website www.ice.cam.ac.uk/studying-with-us/information-for-students and the 2019/20 Student Handbook for award-bearing courses for further information and guidance relating to all aspects of the course including study skills, assignments, assessment and moderation. The Course Information and Help and Guidance section of the ICE VLE will also contain valuable information specific to your course.

Information correct as at 28 January 2019
Syllabus for first unit
Michaelmas term 2019

Selected writings from the history of philosophy

Start date 22 September 2019  End date 24 November 2019
Day Sundays  Time 10am – 6pm
Venue Madingley Hall, Madingley, Cambridge, CB23 8AQ
Tutor Dr Alexander Carter  No. of meetings 4 Sunday day-schools

Aims
- To introduce students to some texts from the history of philosophy.
- To enable students to form interpretations of these philosophical texts and their arguments.
- To enable students to use secondary literature helpfully and productively when considering these texts.

Content
In this unit we will read and study selections from two important philosophical texts: René Descartes’ Meditations on First Philosophy and David Hume’s Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding. We will examine some of the topics and questions discussed in the texts, uncover the arguments which the authors present, and compare Hume’s approach with Descartes’ to identify some of the most significant differences in the philosophical approaches they take.

In the course of this unit, you will develop interpretative skills which will help you to uncover the views of the authors. We will consider and evaluate those views in two ways: both by exploring the internal connections between an author’s treatments of different topics, and by comparing these with alternative treatments of the same topics, whether from the author’s time or our own. We will make use of secondary literature to help us reconstruct what our authors’ arguments could be, and to inform our evaluations of those arguments. We will also consider some of the different viewpoints from which the texts can be approached, comparing approaches which prioritise the historical context of the text with approaches which are more ahistorical.

Presentation of the unit
Day-schools within the unit will be interactive, mixing lecture material with questions and discussion. You will be encouraged to participate, to ask questions, and to share your ideas. Sometimes the class will be split into smaller groups for in-depth discussion of a question, and small groups asked to feed back to the group as a whole.

You will often be asked to read specific portions of the texts carefully and thoroughly in preparation for a class, and to begin preparing answers to some set questions. It is important to do this so that you can contribute to and gain from the discussion which takes place in the class.
## Course Structure

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### Sunday Day-school 1: Interpreting Descartes' Meditations on First Philosophy

In line with our reading of Descartes' *Meditations on First Philosophy*, we will begin by exploring Descartes' methodological (or hyperbolic) doubt as it is laid out in Meditations I. Our analysis of Meditation II will focus principally on the famous Cogito Argument. Turning to Meditations III, we will consider Descartes’ first two arguments for the existence of God, as well as his response in Meditations IV and V to the apparent contradiction between God's perfection and the world’s imperfection. In our final session will return to Descartes' original question, of what things are beyond doubt.

**Key readings**

R. Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*

### Sunday Day-school 2: The Mind-Body Problem and Other Cartesian Quandaries

Descartes' *Meditations on First Philosophy* is one of the most widely read and exhaustively discussed philosophical texts. To breathe new life into Descartes' text we will begin by situating it within its wider, historical context. In later sessions, we will consider objections to Descartes’ Cogito Argument from Søren Kierkegaard, Friedrich Nietzsche, and others. In our final session, we will explore objections, from Gilbert Ryle et. al., to dualism generally and to the so-called ‘myth of the mental’.

**Key readings**

F. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good & Evil*, 16
G. Ryle *The Concept of Mind*, Introduction & Chapter 1

### Sunday Day-school 3: Interpreting David Hume's Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding

For this Day-school, we will focus on the first five sections of Hume's *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*. Hume's methodology is no less extreme than Descartes’. As we shall see in our first session, rather than rely upon the faculty of reason, and upon introspection, Hume appeals to a radical empiricism, based on a scientific naturalism. In subsequent sessions, we will explore Hume's pivotal distinction between 'impressions' and 'ideas'; his doubts concerning the reliability of the senses in providing certainty; and his response to those doubts that is rooted, not in thought, but in action, custom and habit.

**Key readings**

D. Hume, *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, Sections I - V.

### Sunday Day-school 4: Natural Religion, Miracles and Causation

Having examined Hume's empiricism, we will turn to three related questions: 1) Does God exist and has He a plan for us? 2) Can God bring about events in the world? 3) What is it for anything to bring about something else? Hume’s answers to these three questions are as surprising as they are inventive, and we must be equally inventive in interpreting them.

The Day-school will include a short Philosophy Writing Workshop with advice on how to plan the assignments and strengthen arguments.

**Key readings**

D. Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion.*
Learning outcomes
As a result of the unit, within the constraints of the time available, students should be able to:
   a) demonstrate an understanding of philosophical issues falling within the unit;
   b) understand, and begin to construct, philosophical arguments;
   c) interpret portions of the primary texts covered, and use secondary literature productively.

Student assessment
As this is a Certificate course (equivalent at least to first year undergraduate standard) it will require a commitment to reading and pre-class preparation.

This might involve reading texts and/or beginning to think through answers to some set questions. Active participation in class is a good way to make progress with philosophy, so you will be encouraged to ask questions and contribute to discussions. You will also benefit from participating in discussion forums in the Virtual Learning Environment.

You will be expected to have read through the Meditations in full before the unit begins, and to have read Sections I-V of the Enquiry before 19 November and the Dialogues before 10 December. This does not need to be a detailed study, as we will be looking at specific chapters and extracts as we move through the sessions, but should be enough to familiarise you with the text as a whole, so that you can relate the discussions in lectures to the overall themes of the books.

Your assignments for Unit 1 will be two assignments, each of 1800-2000 words. You should take care to avoid close overlap between your assignments, and not to duplicate material from one assignment to the other. You can ask your tutor for advice on assignment choices at any time. You are required to submit your assignments online and feedback is delivered online.

Assignment titles
Choose your two questions from two different sections (of sections A, B and C).

Section A: Descartes
1. Making use of secondary literature where appropriate, explain and evaluate Descartes’ picture of one of the following in the Meditations on First Philosophy:
   a) The mind
   b) Change
   c) God
   d) The existence of material objects

OR

2. What role does the notion of doubt play in Descartes’ Meditations?

Section B: Hume
1. Making use of secondary literature where appropriate, explain and evaluate Hume’s picture of one of the following in the Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding:
   a) Causation
   b) Freedom
   c) Chance and probability
   d) Miracles

OR

2. How does the Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding demonstrate the importance of the notion of custom or habit to Hume’s philosophy?

Section C: Comparisons
1. What do you think are the most important differences between Hume’s and Descartes’ views of what ideas are?

OR
2. In what ways could we use a reading of Hume to criticise Descartes’ arguments, or a reading of Descartes to criticise Hume’s?

If students wish to create their own assignment questions, this must be agreed in writing with the Tutor first and the question must meet the learning outcomes of the unit.

Equal weightage will be given to both assignments for the award of credit for this unit.

Students are encouraged to seek advice regarding the assignment topics and outlines from the tutor by 24 November 2019.

Closing date for submission of assignments 1 and 2: Monday, 16 December 2019 by 12.00 (noon) GMT (Greenwich Mean Time).
Syllabus for second unit  
Lent term 2020

Epistemology and Philosophy of Mind

Start date 2 February 2020  
End date 5 April 2020
Day Sundays  
Time 10am – 6pm
Venue Madingley Hall, Madingley, Cambridge, CB23 8AQ
Tutor Dr Alexander Carter  
No. of meetings 4 Sunday day-schools

Aims
- To introduce students to some central issues in epistemology and the philosophy of mind
- To familiarise students with some important arguments and discussions concerning these issues
- To enable students to begin thinking for themselves about some topics in epistemology and philosophy of mind, in an informed and productive way.

Content
This unit introduces some key questions and disputes concerning what knowledge is and how it can be acquired. What more is needed for me to know $x$ is true, than for me to believe $x$ to be true and for $x$ to, in fact, be true? We will also consider contemporary issues in the philosophy of mind, such as whether mental states can be identified with physical states. We will introduce various approaches to understanding the mind, including theories known as ‘dualist’, ‘epiphenomenalist’, ‘behaviourist’ and ‘functionalist’.

Presentation of the unit
Day-schools within the unit will be interactive, mixing lecture material with questions and discussion. You will be encouraged to participate, to ask questions, and to share your ideas. Sometimes the class will be split into smaller groups for in-depth discussion of a question, and small groups asked to feed back to the group as a whole.

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<td>05.04.20</td>
<td>Day-school four</td>
<td>Minds, Computers and Artificial Intelligence</td>
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Sunday Day-school 1: Theories of Knowledge
As might be expected, this Unit is full of questions. Here are but a few... On what basis do we claim to know anything? If we can know things with certainty, then why do the things we claim to know differ from person to person and over time? Can we know everything there is to know? And are some things unknowable? Is knowing how to ride a bike the same thing as knowing that in order to ride a bike one must do x, y, and z? Our job as philosophers is to seek answers to these questions, even if the answers are unknowable.

Key readings

Sunday Day-school 2: Epistemology: Some Problems
Initially, we shall consider Hume’s famous Problem of Induction; the problem being that we make all sorts of predictions about the future based solely on what has gone before. As we shall see, this is not just a problem for scientists. In subsequent sessions, we will consider the theory that knowledge amounts to justified, true, belief; to know anything is to have a justification for believing something that, by luck or good judgement, is also true. Famously, Edmund Gettier challenges this theory by positing cases that meet all of these requirements and yet seemingly fail to constitute knowledge.

Key readings
E. Gettier, "Is Justified, True Belief Knowledge?", *Analysis*, Vol. 23, No. 6 (Jun., 1963), pp. 121-123
D. Hume, *Treatise of Human Nature*, Book 1, Part III, section vi

Sunday Day-school 3 : Physicalism, Behaviourism & Functionalism
We shall begin with an examination of various attempts to accounts for mental phenomena in purely physical terms. We will then consider the general objections that i) Physicalism fails to specify anything and ii) there is something that it is like to be, say, a human being that cannot be captured by Physiclist theories.

Key readings

Sunday Day-school 4 : Minds, Computers and Artificial Intelligence
Of increasing importance is the question “Can we fashion a computer that thinks like a human being?” What are the reasons for thinking that we can? And why might it be an impossibility? More importantly, is artificial intelligence a suitable goal for creating free-thinking machines? In later sessions, we shall explore more deeply what alternative intelligences could exist, or exist already.

Key readings

Learning outcomes
As a result of the unit, within the constraints of the time available, students should be able to:

a) demonstrate an understanding of philosophical issues falling within the unit;
b) understand, and begin to construct, philosophical arguments;
c) show an awareness of some of the literature concerning some of the topics covered.

Student assessment
As this is a Certificate course (equivalent at least to first year undergraduate standard) it will require a commitment to reading and pre-class preparation.
This might involve reading texts and/or beginning to think through answers to some set questions. Active participation in class is a good way to make progress with philosophy, so you will be encouraged to ask questions and contribute to discussions. You will also benefit from participating in discussion forums in the Virtual Learning Environment.

Your assignments for Unit 2 will be two assignments, each of 1800-2000 words. You should take care to avoid close overlap between your assignments, and not to duplicate material from one assignment to the other. You can ask your tutor for advice on assignment choices at any time. You are required to submit your assignments online and feedback is delivered online.

**Assignment titles**

Choose your two Lent term assignment questions to answer from the list below:

- Create your own example of a Gettier case. What does it show about knowledge?
- What is infallibilism? Does it solve any problems in the theory of knowledge?
- What is the epistemic closure principle, and is it defensible?
- Is reasoning by induction an irrational habit?
- 'Whether a belief is justified depends on whether it leads me to get things right, not on how the belief was formed.' Discuss.
- What is it to see an apple?
- What are Hilary Putnam’s ‘super-spartans’? Do they show that behaviourism is incorrect?
- What makes pain pain?
- Are thoughts and experiences in the brain?
- Can physicalism survive Frank Jackson’s example of Mary’s release from the black and white room?
- Could a robot think? If so, why? If not, why not?

If students wish to create their own assignment questions, this must be agreed in writing with the Tutor first and the question must meet the learning outcomes of the unit.

Equal weightage will be given to both assignments for the award of credit for this unit.

Students are encouraged to seek advice regarding the assignment topics and outlines from the tutor by 5 April 2020.

**Closing date for submission of assignments 1 and 2:** Monday, 27 April 2020 by 12.00 (noon) BST (British Summer Time).
Syllabus for third unit

Easter term 2020

Social and political philosophy

Start date 26 April 2020
End date 7 June 2020
Day Sundays
Time 10am – 6pm
Venue Madingley Hall, Madingley, Cambridge, CB23 8AQ
Tutor Dr Alexander Carter
No. of meetings 4 Sunday day-schools
26 April
3 May
24 May
7 June

Aims
- To introduce students to some central issues in social and political philosophy
- To familiarise students with some important arguments and discussions concerning these issues
- To enable students to begin thinking for themselves about some topics in social and political philosophy, in an informed and productive way

Content
This unit introduces key notions such as equality, rights and justice by asking how goods (such as property, power, and opportunities) should be distributed in society. We will also consider philosophical questions raised by particular social institutions, and by particular types of interaction between persons (or between persons and non-persons). For example: What constitutes a good reason for punishing somebody? What obligations do we have to animals and to the environment? What decisions can we make about our children's futures on their behalf?

Presentation of the unit
Day-schools within the unit will be interactive, mixing lecture material with questions and discussion. You will be encouraged to participate, to ask questions, and to share your ideas. Sometimes the class will be split into smaller groups for in-depth discussion of a question, and small groups asked to feed back to the group as a whole.

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<td>Crime and Punishment</td>
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Sunday Day-school 1: Political Authority & the ‘State of Nature’

Is there any justification for the existence of the political establishment? Historical approaches to this question appeal to what life might have been like before the political state ever existed, a ‘state of nature’ in which, according to Hobbes, life will be ‘nasty, brutish and short’. How can an appeal to a largely fictional ‘state of nature’ lend political authority to actual governments? And can we justify certain sorts of political systems, but not others?

Key readings

Sunday Day-school 2: Equality, Fairness & Distributive Justice

Presuming that a political system *is* justified (even if only tacitly), how should we ensure the fair distribution of goods? John Rawls argues convincingly that a fair distribution of goods need not imply that everyone gets the same. However, this does not mean that we are not entitled to be treated equally. Or are we? After all, there are limits to our rights as free agents/human beings, and to the obligations we are under towards others.

Key readings

Sunday Day-school 3: Animals, Children & the Environment

Human beings accept, or appear to accept, a certain ascendancy over other (i.e. non-human) animals. That is, human rights take precedence over the rights of non-humans. Initially, we will explore the difficulties inherent in the distinction between human and animal rights. In subsequent sessions, we will consider the evocative claims of Joel Feinberg regarding ‘The Child’s Right to an Open Future’. We will finish on a topic closely related to both of these, namely our responsibility for (and our attitudes towards) the environment.

Key readings
J. Bentham, *Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* (1781), Chapter 17
P. Singer, *Animal Liberation*, Chapter 1 “All Animals are Equal…”

Sunday Day-school 4: Crime & Punishment

We punish people for a variety of reasons with more or less satisfaction. It has been argued that we punish people to make us feel better, e.g. for retribution. Others insist that punishments are justified only insofar as they prevent future wrongdoing. We will begin by asking which (if any) of these two reasons serves to justify punishment. In later sessions, we will explore specific crimes (e.g. terrorism) and specific punishments (e.g. the death penalty).

Key readings

Learning outcomes
As a result of the unit, within the constraints of the time available, students should be able to:

a) demonstrate an understanding of philosophical issues falling within the unit;
b) understand, and begin to construct, philosophical arguments;
c) show an awareness of some of the literature concerning some of the topics covered.

Student assessment
As this is a Certificate course (equivalent at least to first year undergraduate standard) it will require a commitment to reading and pre-class preparation.
This might involve reading texts and/or beginning to think through answers to some set questions. Active participation in class is a good way to make progress with philosophy, so you will be encouraged to ask questions and contribute to discussions. You will also benefit from participating in discussion forums in the Virtual Learning Environment.

Your assignments for Unit 3 will be two assignments, each of 1800-2000 words. You should take care to avoid close overlap between your assignments, and not to duplicate material from one assignment to the other. You can ask your tutor for advice on assignment choices at any time. You are required to submit your assignments online and feedback is delivered online.

**Assignment titles**

Choose your two Easter term assignment questions to answer from the list below:

- Can the idea of the state of nature illuminate the idea of the state?
- Is political authority legitimate only if it is consented to?
- What gives me the rights I have?
- When should we seek to eliminate an inequality between one person and another? How should we do it?
- What is negative liberty, and what are its consequences for the proper relationship between the citizen and the state?
- Could an act of terrorism ever be justifiable?
- Would it ever be appropriate for one person to receive the punishment for a different person’s actions?
- How much freedom should the state have to intervene in how we parent our children?
- ‘[T]he question is not, Can they reason? nor, Can they talk? but, Can they suffer?’ (Jeremy Bentham). Do you agree with this basis for the treatment of animals? Explain your answer.
- Does the environment have interests? How does this impact on whether and how we should take care of it?

If students wish to create their own assignment questions, this must be agreed in writing with the Tutor first and the question must meet the learning outcomes of the unit.

Equal weightage will be given to both assignments for the award of credit for this unit.

Students are encouraged to seek advice regarding the assignment topics and outlines from the tutor by 7 June 2020.

**Closing date for submission of assignments 1 and 2: Monday, 29 June 2020 by 12.00 (noon) BST (British Summer Time).**
## TIMETABLE

### Michaelmas 2019

**Selected writings from the history of philosophy**

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### Lent 2020

**Epistemology and Philosophy of Mind**

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### Easter 2020

**Social and political philosophy**

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*Whilst every effort is made to avoid changes to this programme, published details may be altered without notice at any time. The Institute reserves the right to withdraw or amend any part of this programme without prior notice.*