

**Philosophical Perspectives 1: Writing and Doing Philosophy**  
**Syllabus with literature list**

**(Please note that this document may be subject to minor changes. Venues will be added later)**

Fall 2023, 7.5 hp

What does it take to write a good philosophical paper? What can we do to become better philosophical writers? And how does writing philosophy relate to actually doing philosophy? The purpose of the course is to address these and related issues about philosophical writing, presentation, and thinking. The course will have both practical elements, such as writing exercises and paper workshops, and theoretical ones, concerning e.g. the understanding of concepts that tend to be central in philosophical argumentation.

**Teachers:** Olle Risberg ([olle.risberg@filosofi.uu.se](mailto:olle.risberg@filosofi.uu.se)) and Folke Tersman ([folke.tersman@filosofi.uu.se](mailto:folke.tersman@filosofi.uu.se)), Anna Nyman ([anna.nyman@filosofi.uu.se](mailto:anna.nyman@filosofi.uu.se))

**Course literature:** See below. The literature can be accessed through the university library's e-resources. If you have trouble finding something, you can contact the teachers.

**Examination:** For each of the first four weeks there is a "weekly writing task" (see below). To pass the course, each of these writing tasks must be finished. In connection to one of the weekly writing tasks, you will also be asked to choose a philosophy paper that you think is particularly good. The final assignment will then consist in (i) a writing task that relates to your chosen paper (1000–1300 words) and (ii) some further questions about philosophical argumentation (600–800 words). The formal deadline for the final writing assignment is Sunday 2 October, though we will accept late submissions up until Friday 7 October.

**Plagiarism:** It is your responsibility to know what constitutes plagiarism and academic dishonesty, and what the possible consequences of these things are. Further information about cheating and plagiarism is available on the Uppsala philosophy department's web page.

**Students with disabilities:** If you need special accommodation because of a disability, let us know so that your needs may be addressed.

**Religious observance dates:** We will do our best to accommodate those students who have conflicts between religious observance dates and course attendance, examinations or assignments. We are happy to let students affected by this make up for what they missed some

other way. Do let us know well in advance if there is a potential problem—that makes it easier to work out an acceptable solution.

**Schedule and readings:** See below. Papers marked with an asterisk (\*) are recommended but not required reading. They are useful and relevant, but they may be less central to the discussion during the meeting.

### **WEEK 1.**

*Weekly writing task:* What has gone well in the past when you were writing philosophy papers? Was there anything that you struggled with or found difficult? (E.g., choosing a topic, writing the introduction, presenting the argument, structuring the discussion...) Answer these questions in roughly 1-2 pages and submit your text through Studium. The deadline is Sunday 4 September.

#### **Meeting 1: Introduction**

[No readings.]

#### **Meeting 2: Presenting an argument**

- Robert Nozick, “The Experience Machine”, excerpt from *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* (1974), New York: Basic Books, and from *The Examined Life* (1989), New York: Simon & Schuster. [Will be available on Studium.]
- Sharon Street (2006) “A Darwinian dilemma for realist theories of value”, *Philosophical Studies* 127 (1):109-166. **Read: Section 1, pp. 121–122, pp. 125–130, pp. 134–135.**
- Erik Carlson (1998), “Mere Addition and Two Trilemmas of Population Ethics”, *Economics and Philosophy* 14 (2):283. **Read: pp. 283-286, Theorem 1 in the appendix.**

#### **Meeting 3: Examples and thought experiments**

- Edmund Gettier (1963), “Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?”, *Analysis* 23, 121-123.
- Linda Zagzebski (1994), “The Inescapability of Gettier Problems”, *Philosophical Quarterly* 44.
- Theron Pummer (2013), “Intuitions about large number cases”, *Analysis* 73, 37–46. \*
- Jakob Elster (2011), “How Outlandish Can Imaginary Cases Be?”, *Journal of Applied Philosophy* 28, 241–258. \*

### **WEEK 2.**

*Weekly writing task:* Of the papers you have read in this course, is there one that you think is especially well-written? Why? (One question that might arise is what it means for a paper to be

well-written in the first place.) Answer these questions in roughly 1-2 pages and submit it through Studium.

#### **Meeting 4: Explaining intuitions**

- Carrie Jenkins (2008), “Romeo, René and The Reasons Why: What Explanation Is”, *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 108.
- Folke Tersman (2008), “The reliability of moral intuitions: A challenge from neuroscience”, *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 86, 389–405.
- Peter Singer (2005), “Ethics and Intuitions”, *The Journal of Ethics* 9, 331–352. \*

#### **Meeting 5: Debunking arguments and explanations**

- Folke Tersman (2008), “The reliability of moral intuitions: A challenge from neuroscience”, *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, 86, 389–405.
- Katia Vavova (2015), “Evolutionary Debunking of Moral Realism”, *Philosophy Compass* 10, 104-116.
- Folke Tersman and Olle Risberg (forthcoming), “Hope for the Evolutionary Debunker: How Evolutionary Debunking Arguments and Arguments from Moral Disagreement Can Join Forces”, *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice*.
- Roger White (2010), “You Just Believe that Because...”, *Philosophical Perspectives* 24: 573-615. \*

#### **WEEK 3.**

*Weekly writing task:* In connection to this task, you will be divided into small groups. The task has two parts:

- (i) Choose 1-3 pages from a philosophy paper that you think is excellent (preferably from a paper that we have *not* read for this course). Send the paper to the teachers and your group members via e-mail and let them know your page selection. The deadline for this part is Wednesday 14 September.
- (ii) Why do you think the paper you have chosen is good? Answer this question in 1-2 pages and send your text to the teachers and to your group members via e-mail. The deadline for this part is Sunday 18 September.

#### **Meeting 6: Circularity, Skepticism and Begging the Question**

- Walter Sinnott-Armstrong (1999), “Begging the Question”, *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 77.
- Jonathan Weisberg (2012), “The Bootstrapping Problem”, *Philosophy Compass*, 7(9): 597–610. \*

- Tomoji Shogenji (2000), “Self-Dependent Justification Without Circularity”, *British Journal for the Philosophy of Science* 51, 287-298. \*

### **Meeting 7: Disagreement**

- Richard Feldman (2006), “Epistemological puzzles about disagreement”. In Stephen Hetherington (ed.), *Epistemology Futures*.
- G. A. Cohen (2000), “Paradoxes of Conviction”, in his *If You’re an Egalitarian, How Come You’re So Rich?* [Will be available on Studium.]
- Peter van Inwagen (2010) “We’re Right. They’re Wrong”, in Richard Feldman & Ted A. Warfield (eds.), *Disagreement*. \*

### **WEEK 4.**

*Weekly writing task:* As we will have a paper workshop next week, this week you will have time to prepare your drafts (for the final assignment) to be discussed at the workshop. More details about this task will be given at a later stage.

### **Meeting 8: Standings on the Shoulders of Giants (Discussion of your selected philosophy papers)**

Readings:

- Angela Mendelovici, “A Sample Philosophy Paper”, available at [https://prezi.com/z4h1\\_fwilbxj/a-sample-philosophy-paper/](https://prezi.com/z4h1_fwilbxj/a-sample-philosophy-paper/)
- Jim Pryor, “Guidelines on Writing a Philosophy Paper”, available at <http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html>
- If you are interested, more guides of this kind can be found here (in the main article and the comments): <http://dailynous.com/2019/01/15/write-philosophy-paper-online-guides/> \*

Please make sure that you have also read the pages in the papers that your group members have chosen in advance of this meeting.

### **Meeting 9: Prose**

Readings:

- Jonathan Bennett and Samuel Gorovitz (1997), “Improving Academic Writing”, *Teaching Philosophy* 20.

- “Moral Disagreements, Objectivity, and the Subjective Point of View” (work in progress). [Will be available on Studium.]

### **WEEK 5.**

There is no weekly writing task for this week. After the paper workshop we recommend that you start working on your final writing assignment as soon as possible.

### **Meeting 10: Paper workshop**

Readings:

- David Chalmers, “Guidelines for Respectful, Constructive, and Inclusive Philosophical Discussion”, available at <http://consc.net/guidelines/>