



Debate Chamber
8a Woodstock Road
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Philosophy Summer School 2010

28th – 30th July

DAY 1: Metaphysics and Mind

10.00 – 10.30 Registration

10.30 – 10.45 Introduction

10.45 – 12.00 Personal Identity

What makes me me? Am I the same person I used to be? The idea of personal identity appears to underpin the idea of moral responsibility, not to mention our sense of what it is to live a human life. We consider the theories of John Locke, and possible objections to them.

12.00 – 13.00 Mind-Body Dualism

Is the mind really the same thing as the brain? If not, what kind of thing is it, and how do mental phenomena relate to the physical world? We examine Descartes' famous arguments, before considering a range of alternative ideas, from Leibniz to Strawson.

13.00 – 14.00 Lunch

14.00 – 16.30 Free will, causation and necessary connexion

Starting from David Hume's argument that cause and effect are fictions, we explore the questions of causation and free will, and the moral dilemmas that flow from them.

DAY 2: Knowledge and Language

10.30 – 13.00 Philosophy of language and the concept of truth

Students will be introduced to two central problems: the nature of meaning, and the relationship between language and thought. We will take a closer look at the English language in particular, drawing some important distinctions among the things English speakers say. The session will conclude by asking which of the things we say can be true or false.

13.00 – 14.00 Lunch

14.00 – 16.30 The nature of knowledge and the problem of scepticism.

What does it mean to know something, and what kind of things can I know? This turns out to be a surprisingly difficult question to answer. In this session we evaluate a range of competing accounts of the nature of knowledge. We evaluate the 'method of doubt', and sceptical arguments that contend that we can never have certain knowledge of other minds, of the outside worlds or even, according to some, of ourselves. We will examine the very different responses to this problem of thinkers including Berkley, Kant and Nietzsche as well as modern academic philosophers.



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DAY 3: Moral Philosophy

10.30 – 10.45 Introduction to moral philosophy

10.45 – 12.00 Moral realism and anti-realism

What is our basis for claims about right and wrong? Is there an 'objective' foundation for moral claims, and if so what is it? Why should I act morally anyway? Unless we want to live as nihilists, shrugging our shoulders and saying that it is all a matter of personal opinion does not get us very far. This debate raises metaphysical questions (about the nature of moral obligations) as well as epistemological (about the sources of moral claims) and semantic ones (about the meaning of moral statements).

12.00 – 12.45 Lunch

12.45 - 14.30 Consequentialism and deontology

During this session students will evaluate a series of approaches to systematising morality, including Kantian universalisation and various forms of consequentialism, and consider the challenges facing any philosopher who attempts this task. We will then examine, and question, the supposed distinction between 'consequentialism' and 'deontology'.

14.30 – 16.15 Virtue Ethics

'Virtue ethics' is the branch of ethical thought which asks not "What is to be done?", but rather "How can I be a good person?". Students will look at Aristotle, Anscombe, Macintyre, Hume and Nietzsche to answer questions such as: "Is it possible to have morality after God?", "What is the virtuous life?" and "Does virtue ethics provide us with a better theory of moral action than either deontology or utilitarianism?"

16.15 - 16.30 Round up and Certificates