



Introduction to Philosophical Research | PIP77011

Year	MPhil
ECTS Credits	10
Contact Hours	22 (11 x 2-hour seminars)
Pre-requisite	None
Semester	Michaelmas Term
Module Leader & Lecturer	Dr. Julian Bacharach
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Module Outline:

David Hume famously held that all knowledge is either analytic ‘relations of ideas’, or contingent ‘matters of fact’. If so, then it can be difficult to see what there is left for philosophy to contribute to human knowledge, and in particular whether anything like the traditional enterprise of metaphysics is possible.

Much 20th century Anglophone philosophy can be seen as operating against the background of this Humean dilemma, either accepting it or seeking to overcome it in one way or another. The content of the module will look at some key moments in 20th century philosophy with this narrative in mind. Figures studied will include the early analytic sense-datum theorists (such as Bertrand Russell and G. E. Moore); logical positivists like Rudolf Carnap; W. V. O. Quine and Donald Davidson; P. F. Strawson’s programme of ‘descriptive metaphysics’; the new essentialism emerging from the work of Saul Kripke, Hilary Putnam and David Wiggins; and the recent programme of ‘ameliorative metaphysics’ (Sally Haslanger).

Learning Outcomes:

The module will aim to give students an overview of some of the most important debates and moments in 20th century Anglophone (‘analytic’) philosophy, principally through engagement with a series of classic articles.

The module will develop skills of critical engagement with often difficult texts, alongside knowledge of central debates and issues in 20th century philosophy.

Assessment:

This module is assessed by one 3000-word coursework essay. The word-count is inclusive of footnotes but not of the bibliography.



Recommended Reading List:

A full reading list will be made available near the beginning of term. In the first week we will likely look at Susan Stebbing's 1932 article, 'The Method of Analysis in Metaphysics'.

The following are some brief, opinionated overviews of the history of analytic philosophy. They are not essential course material but provide some interesting and contrasting perspectives on the material to be studied:

- Timothy Williamson, 'The Linguistic Turn and the Conceptual Turn', in *The Philosophy of Philosophy* (Blackwell, 2007)
- Bernard Williams, 'Philosophy as a Humanistic Discipline' *Royal Institute of Philosophy Annual Lecture*, 2000
- Christoph Schuringa, 'The never-ending death of analytic philosophy', *Medium* magazine, <https://christophschuringa.medium.com/the-never-ending-death-of-analytic-philosophy-1507c4207f93>