

BROAD CURRICULUM – MODULE DESCRIPTION 2015/16

BCPHLO

Title: Central Problems in Philosophy

Lecturer(s): Professor Paul O’Grady and Dr. James Miller

Contact Hours: Lectures: 22 lecture hours

Tutorials: 5 tutorials

Credits: 5 ECTS

Module Content/Outline: This is a problem-based course, comprising the following components:

1st Semester/Michaelmas Term

Component 1- Philosophy of Religion (Prof. O’Grady)

This course offers an introduction to some of the main topics in philosophy of religion. It analyses how philosophical approaches to religion differ from other kinds of approach. Then two traditional arguments for God’s existence are explored in some detail. The cosmological argument is one which seeks to argue from certain phenomena in the world to the existence of a non-spatio-temporal cause of these. The general features of such arguments are explored as well as standard objections to them. Then a classical and a modern version of this argument are examined. The argument to design is another traditional argument for God’s existence. A famous version of this from William Paley is examined along with important objections to it from evolutionary theory and from the great Scottish philosopher, David Hume. Then a modern version of this argument developed by Richard Swinburne is assessed. Finally the problem of evil is examined. This is the supposed incompatibility of the existence of an all good and all powerful God with the existence of evil. Different versions of the argument are explored and the free will defence in the version devised by Alvin Plantinga is assessed.

Component 2 – Philosophy of Mind (Dr. Miller)

This component will consider some central concepts and debates in the philosophy of mind. We will focus on the mind-body problem. This problem concerns the relationship between the mental (beliefs, thoughts, desires) and the physical (neural patterns), and how the two might interact in order to cause our behaviour. Are our minds separate from our brains, or are our thoughts only particular patterns of neurons firing? We will consider various theories that seek to solve the mind-body problem including dualism, behaviourism, identity theory, and functionalism. Each of these theories differs on whether they accept the existence and role of mental states. An understanding of the problem will allow us to consider related topics such as consciousness, whether we could survive our minds being uploaded to a computer, and intentionality.

BROAD CURRICULUM – COURSE REQUIREMENT 2015/16

Students are required to submit one essay at the end of Michaelmas Term from either of the above module components. Submission date is Monday 18th January’16. Students are required to attend tutorials which begin in Week 3 of teaching term – details to be advised at the start of Michaelmas Term. Students are not required to sit an examination

Students are welcome to contact the Philosophy Dept. (ucmpbell@tcd.ie) if they have any further queries.