

Senior Honors Seminar
Fall 2005
Tuesday 6:30-8:30pm
Philosophy Seminar Room
5th Floor, Silver Center

Overview:

This course is a workshop. Most meetings will be divided into two hour-long discussion sessions. In preparation for a session, a student will distribute a ten-page paper to the group, along with background readings consisting of one or two philosophy articles (or material of roughly equivalent length). The student will also distribute a list of *not more than four questions* to focus the course discussion on what is most important to the student; these questions may be about the student's paper itself or about the philosophical issues. All members of the course will do the reading and think about the discussion questions before class. Each student will have two papers discussed during the semester.

There will be two meetings devoted to discussion of thesis proposals. The first will be October 18, after everyone has presented once; the second will be December 6. Each student will distribute a three-page thesis proposal to the class before the meeting, and each student will read all the thesis proposals before the meeting.

Qualifications:

Entry to the honors program requires a 3.0 average overall and a 3.5 average in at least five philosophy courses (at least one in each of the three Groups, plus one Topics course).

Course Requirements:

- Two ten-page papers, drafts in progress toward the senior thesis, each discussed in class
- One three-page thesis proposal
- One revision of the three-page thesis proposal
- Attendance at all course meetings
- Participation in course discussion
- Getting an advisor signed on to the project

Failure to complete any of these requirements will result in an "F" in the course.

Course Grade:

- 40% Attendance, participation in discussion, and getting an advisor
- 15% Thesis Proposal – combined grade from the two drafts
- 20% First ten-page paper and discussion of it in class
- 25% Second ten-page paper and discussion of it in class

Papers will be graded as works in progress, not as polished pieces

Contact info:

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office hours: Tuesdays 4-5pm and by appointment

Schedule:

- Tuesday, September 6: *Discussion of the course and organization*
Sign-up for the first half of the semester's sessions
Discuss what a thesis should be; Brainstorm thesis topics
- Tuesday, September 13: First Hour:
Second Hour:
- Tuesday, September 20: First Hour:
Second Hour:
- Tuesday, September 27: First Hour:
Second Hour:
- Tuesday, October 4: First Hour:
Second Hour: How to Write a Thesis Proposal
- Tuesday, October 11: First Hour:
Second Hour:
- Tuesday, October 18: *Discussion of Thesis Proposals*
- Tuesday, October 25: First Hour:
Second Hour:
Deadline to show thesis proposal to a potential advisor
- Tuesday, November 1: First Hour:
Second Hour:
- Tuesday, November 8: No course meeting
- Tuesday, November 15: First Hour:
Second Hour:
Deadline to have signed up a thesis advisor
- Tuesday, November 22: First Hour:
Second Hour:
- Tuesday, November 29: First Hour:
Second Hour:
- Tuesday, December 6: *Discussion of Revisions of Thesis Proposals*
- Tuesday, December 13: *Possible extra session*
This Tuesday officially runs on an NYU Thursday schedule

How to Write a Thesis Proposal

Your thesis proposal will say a lot of specific things about what your thesis will look like. You don't yet **know** what your thesis will be like in many of the ways you need to articulate in your thesis proposal. So your thesis proposal will represent your best guess, or *a* guess, as to what your thesis will look like. Nevertheless, you should write it as though you are sure what your thesis will be like. By forcing yourself to be specific, you will do some valuable thinking. You're always free later to change your mind.

Your thesis proposal will answer these questions:

1. What question will your thesis address?

Remember that your thesis will be a twenty-five- or thirty-page thorough and careful answer to this question. So this should be a narrow, focused question.

Are these questions narrow and focused enough?

Does the Jim and the Indians case pose a serious objection to Utilitarianism?

Is Utilitarianism true?

Which is better, Kantianism or Utilitarianism?

Is there a version of the Jim and the Indians case that Utilitarianism cannot handle?

Does Utilitarianism dictate a cold attitude towards loved ones?

2. What texts by other people will you refer to?

You should mention the central texts that you will refer to and summarize the relevant points that you will be discussing (and criticizing).

3. What claim will you argue for?

This answer in particular should be very specific.

4. How will you argue for your central claim?

Your proposal should be easy to read and it should explain enough that someone unfamiliar with the question you will address will understand the proposal.