In this age of post-Moorean modesty, many of us are inclined to doubt that philosophy is in possession of arguments that might genuinely serve to undermine what we ordinarily believe...In so far, then, as the pretensions of philosophy to provide a world view rest upon its claim to be in possession of the epistemological high ground, those pretensions had better be given up.

--Kit Fine, “The Question of Realism” (2001)

At an early stage in his Meditations, Descartes claims that, having suspended his commitment to views that he uncritically inherited in his youth, all of the potential objects of belief have for him been placed on equal footing: in a very strong sense, everything is ‘up for grabs’. This Cartesian ideal of strict neutrality is repudiated, with varying degrees of explicitness and in diverse ways, by a number of influential movements within contemporary philosophy. The plan for this seminar is to critically examine some of these trends and grapple with issues that emerge in the ensuing dialectic. Topics include the following: Attempts to resist revisionary conclusions in metaphysics, epistemology and ethics by appeal to common sense and ordinary practice--to what extent could philosophy compel us to change what we ordinarily think about what the world is like, what we know, or what we are morally obligated to do? Moorean responses to radical skepticism; the Problem of the Criterion and Chisholm-style ‘particularism’; the method of reflective equilibrium as employed in moral philosophy and elsewhere; ‘conservative’ accounts of belief revision (Quine, Harman, Sklar) and their critics. Select historical episodes from the common sense tradition, e.g., the rise and fall of the paradigm case argument within ordinary language philosophy. The role of prior probabilities within Bayesian epistemology and concerns about the arbitrariness of one’s starting point; varieties of dogmatism and the Kripke-Harman dogmatism paradox; the epistemic significance of alternatives to our present ways of thinking that no one has yet been sufficiently imaginative to think of.
1. 1/31. **Overview.**

2. 2/7. **Kripke’s Dogmatism Paradox.**

   Saul Kripke, “Two Paradoxes of Knowledge”, unpublished lecture (pp.12-18 only).

   Gilbert Harman, selection from *Thought* (pp.148-149 only)


3. 2/14. **Moore’s Defense of Common Sense**


4. 2/21 **Paradigm Cases and Moorean Facts**

   (i) **The Paradigm Case Argument.**


(ii) Moorean Facts

Thomas Kelly, “Moorean Facts and Belief Revision” manuscript.

5. 2/28. Challenges to Dogmatism

Roger White, “Problems for Dogmatism”, forthcoming in Philosophical Studies. Available from his website at

http://www.nyu.edu/gsas/dept/philo/faculty/white/papers/dogmatism.pdf

[Relevant Background: James Pryor, “The Skeptic and the Dogmatist”, Nous 34: 517-549, Available via EBSCO or Synergy.]

Crispin Wright, “Wittgensteinian Certainties”. Available from his website at:

http://www.nyu.edu/gsas/dept/philo/faculty/wright/papers/Wittgensteinian_Certainties.pdf

[For an alternative view on ‘transmission failure’ see Pryor, “What’s Wrong With Moore’s Argument?” Available from his website at


6. 3/7. The Problem of the Criterion and Reflective Equilibrium (I):

(i) The Problem of the Criterion.


(ii) Reflective Equilibrium.


Monday, 3/14. No Class (Spring Break)
7. **3/21. The Method of Reflective Equilibrium in Moral Philosophy: Rawls, etc.**


Objections from Brandt, Lyons, Hare.

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(i) Sklar.


(ii) Harman. (The list of Harman readings will be trimmed at some point.)


Gilbert Harman, *Change in View*, chapters 4 and 5.
9. How (if at all) should one’s past views influence one’s present views?


10. The challenge to our present views from unconsidered possibilities


Thomas Kelly, “Evidence, Dogmatism, and Belief Polarization”, manuscript.


[Also: Peter Lipton, “Is the Best Good Enough?”, *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, XCIII, pp.89-104.]

11. A Case Study (I): Could it be that all of us are constantly acting immorally?


David Lewis, “Illusory Innocence?” reprinted in his *Papers in Ethics and Social Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp.152-158. (This is Lewis’ review of Peter Unger’s *Living High and Letting Die: Our Illusion of Innocence*.)

