Philosophy HONOURS FACT SHEET at a glance

2016

An honours degree can be undertaken upon completion of the Pass degree. Taking one to two years (depending on whether you go full-time or part-time), the honours degree allows you to study a subject, such as Philosophy, to a more advanced level. Advantages include (1) acquiring the necessary prerequisite to do postgraduate studies in the field (2) improving your employment prospects (honours looks better on the CV than just a Pass degree) and (3) attaining intrinsic satisfaction from in-depth study in the field – you really start to get a feel for the subject.

Entry Requirements for Philosophy Honours (Faculty and/or Discipline)

- At least half of the Pass degree points (usually 72 out of 144) have to be 70% or above
- The normal prerequisite for entry to Philosophy Honours is completion of a major sequence in Philosophy: 12 points (2 units) first year philosophy, 36 points of second/third year philosophy. (If you have begun your degree in the new course structure, then the major sequence will be two level 1 units, two level 2 units and four level 3 units).
- The relevant Pass degree must be fully completed before a student will be admitted to Honours.
- If you wish to take a break, the Faculty allows you to enrol in Honours for up to 7 years after the completion of your Pass degree.

The Honours Course Structure (full-time)

- Four 6-point seminars, two per semester, to be chosen from those made available by Department each year (total: 24 points, i.e. 50%). Each seminar meets weekly for 2 hrs.
- Dissertation component (total: 24 points, i.e. 50%) consisting of research proposal, oral presentation, and written thesis component.

More on the Seminars:

- Each of the four 6-point seminars normally requires a 4000 word essay (submitted on last day of semester or a week before), worth 60% and an unseen 1.5 hour examination worth 40%. (Logic seminars may have different requirements).
- Attendance for all seminars and at least one presentation for each seminar is mandatory for each unit. If a student attends fewer than eight out of ten seminars for any unit, OR if a student fails to give a scheduled presentation, their overall mark for the unit will be reduced by 10%.
- Unless a student is enrolled in joint honours, the student’s single worst essay or examination paper will, at discretion of the examiners, be ignored in his or her assessment.
More on the Dissertation Component:

- A 900-1100 word research proposal of dissertation topic, worth 5% of dissertation component, is due to Supervisor one month after commencement of honours. This will include a brief statement of the methodology used for undertaking the dissertation. It will include (not part of word count) a preliminary bibliography of reading material that is likely to be drawn upon. This component will be marked according to how well it meets requirements.
- An oral presentation, worth 5% of dissertation component, is to be given in the second semester of honours program. Some portion of the thesis is presented for 45 minutes and there is a 45 minute discussion (this usually occurs Wednesday afternoon). Regular attendance of these presentation seminars is compulsory (included in the 5%) as learning to give feedback to one’s peers is an important part of philosophical development. While the presentation is not directly marked on content, the mark you receive will be dependent upon putting in a serious effort.
- A research dissertation, between approximately 12,000 – 15,000 words (including footnotes but not bibliography), worth 90% of dissertation component, is to be submitted by 5pm on last day of teaching semester immediately preceding the candidate’s last examination. While a formal literature review is not expected, part of the dissertation is marked according to how well you have engaged with the relevant literature.

The research dissertation

- The topic for research dissertation and an appropriate supervisor should be agreed upon by the end of the first week into the semester in which the dissertation commences.
- Depending on individual need, the supervisor will agree to meet regularly with their student to discuss the student’s work.
- Before commencing Honours, it pays to start thinking about your dissertation topic (over the summer break). It is also a good idea to approach a faculty member as soon as you have a general idea for a topic, so that a supervisor can be sounded out. (You should establish the viability of a supervisor for your general topic before going into too much detail).

Options & Time-limits for completing End-on Honours Degree in Philosophy

- One full-time Honours year (2 semesters) after the completion of a Pass degree
- Part-time Honours (no more than 2 years = 4 semesters)
- Joint Honours (Philosophy and another discipline: approximately 50% in each)
- Cognate studies (up to 18 points credit in another discipline or minor studies in philosophy with other discipline as major)
- NB: Dissertation cannot take longer than a year (2 consecutive semesters) whether a student is full-time or part-time.

General Information & How to apply

Current UWA Arts Students

1. Talk to the Honours Coordinator of the discipline you are interested in. You should approach the Honours coordinator of your discipline shortly before you expect to complete your degree. Approval of both the Discipline Group and the Faculty is required for Honours entry. The Honours Coordinator for Philosophy is Miri Albahari (miri.albahari@uwa.edu.au).
2. Applications are submitted online through your studentConnect account, and are due Monday 1 February 2016.
3. Website for Faculty policy on honours is http://www.arts.uwa.edu.au/for/students/policies/honours; student administration (honours info) is http://www.student.uwa.edu.au/course/enrolments/honours

4. For details on policy and regulations specific to Philosophy, see http://www.humanities.uwa.edu.au/courses/undergraduate/honours/philosophy (if info on this site is at odds with this handout, then go by this handout).

The Woomara Leadership Scholarship

This new merit-based scholarship of $5000 will be awarded to a promising student commencing an honours degree in philosophy. The link to it can be found under http://www.scholarships.uwa.edu.au/

Typical Units taught (not necessarily in 2016)

Semester 1

These will vary from year to year – there are four taught each year from a selection of six. For a description of the six different honours units, see the Level 4 Units at http://units.handbooks.uwa.edu.au/units?section=unitcode&faccode=10&deptcode=00130

Seminar 1- PHIL4104: Advanced Metaphysics  
Sam Baron

Metaphysics is the study of the fundamental nature of reality. This unit covers a range of topics in metaphysics, including but not limited to: (1) issues surrounding the fine metaphysical structure of reality, focusing on concerns involving ontological dependence and determination; (2) issues in meta-metaphysics and meta-ontology concerning the role and nature of metaphysical investigation in rational inquiry more generally; (3) the relationship between truth and being; (4) the nature of essences and dispositions; (5) the nature of information and its relationship to reality; (6) the nature of metaphysical explanation; and (7) free will and personal identity. Students investigate these issues through the work of Fine, Lewis, Putnam, Russell, Schaffer, Sider and Quine (among others).

Seminar 2 - PHIL4105: Topics in the History of Philosophy  
Michael Levine

There are diverse seminal figures and movements in the history of philosophy. Many of these figures and movements continue to exert great influence on modern metaphysics, ethics, religion and aesthetics. This unit explores the thought of one or more of these influential philosophers and movements. Those discussed may include, but are not limited to, the pre-Socratics, Plato, Aristotle, Medieval Philosophy, Aquinas, Descartes, Locke, Leibniz, Hume, Kant, Hegel, Rationalism, Empiricism and Phenomenology. While the focus of the unit is on historical figures and movements in philosophy, it may use historical material to shed light upon current philosophical debates in such areas as metaphysics, religion, epistemology, and ethics. It focuses both on primary texts and secondary readings.
**Semester 2**

Seminar 3- PHIL4101: Metaethics

*Michael Rubin*

Normative (or “first-order”) ethics is concerned with questions such as: Which acts are morally wrong? Which states of affairs are morally good? What character traits are virtues? By contrast, metaethics studies and evaluates the semantic, epistemological, and metaphysical commitments of first-order ethical discourse. Do moral sentences such as “eating animals is wrong” express propositions that are capable of being true or false? If so, are any such propositions actually true? Does their truth depend upon subjective factors, such as our attitudes or conventions, or are these truths “stance-independent”? If the latter, how can we come to know these truths? Can moral truths be discovered using empirical methods such as direct observation and inference to the best explanation? Do we know them by way of a priori intuition, instead? Suppose we find that there are no moral truths at all. In that case, how can we make sense of our first-order moral discourse? Is it a mere fiction that some acts are wrong? If so, should we keep the fiction? Or should we just discard our moral vocabulary altogether? These are the central questions that we will address in this course.

Seminar 4- PHIL4103: Consciousness

*Miri Albahari*

Part I: We start by thinking about what consciousness is. Is it essentially subjective and private? Is there a distinction between how consciousness appears and how it really is? Is there anything more to conscious experiences than how they represent the world? Does consciousness have a function?

Part II: Perhaps the biggest mystery about consciousness is not what it is, but how it is related to the physical, natural world. In this part of the unit we shall explore the question as to whether or not consciousness is a physical phenomenon. This will require thinking deeply about the doctrine of physicalism in general, as well as reductive explanations. We will also explore some influential thought experiments used to attack physicalism, including black-and-white Mary the colour scientist, and zombies (though not of the brain eating kind). We look at panpsychism.