PH9GE-20 Genealogy, Epistemology and Critique

21/22

Department
Philosophy
Level
Taught Postgraduate Level
Module leader
Credit value
20
Module duration
10 weeks
Assessment
100% coursework
Study location
University of Warwick main campus, Coventry

Description

Introductory description

PH9GE Genealogy, Epistemology and Critique

Module aims

The module aims
(a) to familiarise students with the different forms that genealogy has taken in the history of Western philosophy, from ancient Greece to the present;
(b) to provide them with a detailed understanding of the current debates on genealogy both in the analytic and continental traditions;
(c) to get them to think critically about the role of genealogy and its use in developing original philosophical arguments so they can formulate their own research projects.

Outline syllabus

This is an indicative module outline only to give an indication of the sort of topics that may be covered. Actual sessions held may differ.

Why do philosophers make use of (fictional, semi-fictional or real) genealogies to develop their

arguments? What are the philosophical consequences of an inquiry into the 'origins' of our concepts and beliefs? If we are able to show that a concept or belief has a contingent, historical origin, aren't we forced to abandon it, or at least to cast doubt on its legitimacy?

This module will examine seminal texts by Nietzsche and Foucault that make use of genealogy, and will put them in conversation with the most recent debates on genealogy in both the analytic and continental traditions. It will thus explore and problematise an ambiguity intrinsic to the genealogical method: genealogy can be, and has been, used either for vindicatory aims (to show, e.g., that certain features of a concept originate with it and are therefore essentially and universally attached to it) or for debunking aims (to show, e.g., that if a belief in a moral value emerged as a consequence of ignoble historical events, then we should consider abandoning it). What does this ambiguity tell us about the ways in which genealogy is employed in philosophy? Can genealogy constitute a solid basis for either legitimising or criticising our most cherished concepts and beliefs?

Learning outcomes

By the end of the module, students should be able to:

- Subject knowledge and understanding: (a) … understand and carefully characterise the central philosophical questions connected to the use of the genealogical method in philosophy (especially in the fields of epistemology and critical theory). (b) … identify complex and conflicting views in the primary materials, as well as to produce and evaluate arguments for and against them. (c) … critically engage with a reasonable range of secondary materials, including the most recent research on this topic.
- Key skills: (a) … communicate clearly and substantively at an advanced level both in speech and in writing on the main issues addressed in the module. (b) … put classical texts in the history of Western philosophy in conversation with contemporary debates in epistemology and critical theory.
- Cognitive skills: (a) … provide a clear analysis of complex arguments. (b) … consistently compare the substance of different philosophical views. (c) … properly evaluate conflicting interpretations and critically engage with them.
- Subject-specific skills: (a) … understand the distinctive features and aims of the genealogical method employed in a philosophical text. (b) … recognise the different forms taken by genealogy in the history of Western philosophy. (c) … pursue independent philosophical research at an advanced level.

Indicative reading list

Friedrich Nietzsche, On the Genealogy of Morality (1887); Michel Foucault, Discipline and Punish (1975); Michel Foucault, The History of Sexuality, Volumes 1-4 (1976-2018); Michel Foucault, Wrong-Doing, Truth-Telling: The Function of Avowal in Justice (1981); Michel Foucault, Discourse and Truth (1983); Jürgen Habermas, The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity (1985); Edward Craig, Knowledge and the State of Nature (1990); Bernard Williams, Truth and Truthfulness: An Essay in Genealogy (2002); Miranda Fricker, Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing (2007)

Subject specific skills

(a) … understand the distinctive features and aims of the genealogical method employed in a philosophical text.
(b) … recognise the different forms taken by genealogy in the history of Western philosophy.
(c) … pursue independent philosophical research at an advanced level.

Transferable skills

(a) … communicate clearly and substantively at an advanced level both in speech and in writing on the main issues addressed in the module.
(b) … put classical texts in the history of Western philosophy in conversation with contemporary debates in epistemology and critical theory.
(a) … provide a clear analysis of complex arguments.
(b) … consistently compare the substance of different philosophical views.
(c) … properly evaluate conflicting interpretations and critically engage with them.

Study

Study time

Type	Required
Seminars	9 sessions of 2 hours (9%)
Private study	182 hours (91%)
Total	200 hours

Private study description

No private study requirements defined for this module.

Costs

No further costs have been identified for this module.

Assessment

You must pass all assessment components to pass the module.

Students can register for this module without taking any assessment.

Assessment group A3

	Weighting	Study time	Eligible for self-certification
Assessment component			
5000 word essay	100%		Yes (extension)
Reassessment component is the same			

Feedback on assessment

Feedback on essays will be provided on the coversheet for the essay, addressing standard areas of evaluation and individual content.

Availability

Courses

This module is Core option list A for:

- Year 2 of TPHA-V7P2 Postgraduate Taught Continental Philosophy

This module is Option list B for:

- TPHA-V7PM Postgraduate Taught Philosophy
  - Year 1 of V7PM Philosophy
  - Year 2 of V7PM Philosophy