

Syllabus for Philosophy 830: Idealism

Thomas Hofweber and Bill Lycan
Spring 2013
UNC Chapel Hill

This course is a graduate seminar on contemporary versions of idealism. It will cover topics in metaphysics, the philosophy of language and the philosophy of mind. Contemporary idealism is a somewhat scattered field, with idealist themes coming up here and there, and defenses and criticisms of idealisms being offered in a number of places, with no clearly defined standard literature. We will explore this topic in a variety of ways, hoping to distinguish different version of idealism, different strategies for its establishment and rejection, and different ways in which it might be important. We plan to adjust the reading list outlined below as the course moves along, and we have a clearer sense of what is of greatest interest to the seminar as a whole.

Course Outline

We will read a number of papers and selections from books by authors who have defended or attacked idealism. All readings are posted on the course Sakai site. If you don't have access to that site, email one of us, and we will add you.

Our weekly plan is as follows:

- 1/16: Gideon Rosen "Objectivity and modern idealism: what is the question?"
- 1/23: John Foster "The succinct case for idealism"
- 1/30: Anton Friedrich Koch "Persons as mirroring the world" as well as Jay Rosenberg "On a certain antinomy"
- 2/6: Robert Adams "Idealism vindicated"
- 2/ 13: Selections from David Armstrong's *Perception and the Physical World*
- 2/20: GE Moore: "The refutation of idealism"

After these first six weeks we will pick further readings from a good number of authors who have defended views relevant for this class. We will pick a detailed list as we approach that date, and our pool to pick from includes the following:

- Selections from F. H. Bradley's *Appearance and Reality*
- Elizabeth Anscombe "The question of linguistic idealism"
- Thomas Nagel, chapter on idealism in *The View from Nowhere*

- Donald Davidson “The very idea of a conceptual scheme”
- Selections from McDowell’s *Mind and World*
- Selections from Robert Brandom
- TH “Are there completely ineffable aspects of reality?”
- Hilary Putnam, selections from *Reason, Truth, and History*
- And others!

Requirements:

All students who take this class for credit are required to write one substantial paper related to a topic of their choice, and due at the end of the semester. Successful papers should make a novel contribution to the debates we discuss, and are expected to be based on substantial and extended reflection on the chosen topic. We are happy to discuss paper ideas at any point during the semester, and ideally you should have an idea long before the semester is over.

Besides a final paper, every enrolled student has to give a presentation on one of the readings. You can start picking your presentation topic during our 1/16 class meeting.

Office hours and contact info

Thomas Hofweber: Caldwell 102B, Monday 3-5, and by app.
Email: hofweber@unc.edu
Home page: www.unc.edu/~hofweber

Bill Lycan: Caldwell 215B, Tuesday 2-4, and by app.
E-mail: ujanel@email.unc.edu
Home page: www.unc.edu/~ujanel