PHIL 570
Autumn 2013
Time and Location: Tuesdays 11:35-13:25, Leacock 927
Instructor: Andrew Reisner

Seminar in Analytic Philosophy: Current Debates in Rationality

Description:
　　During the last 15 years, there has been a flourishing in research on the nature of rationality. This course focuses on philosophical questions about the nature and structure of the requirements of rationality and their relationship to other normative categories (e.g. reasons, oughts). We will be looking both at theoretical rationality (the rationality of belief) and practical rationality (the rationality of actions/mental states associated with actions). The material covered in this course provides an excellent foundation for the philosophical study of rationality. At least some familiarity with this material is now largely presupposed amongst philosophers working in metaethics and normative epistemology. Thus this seminar will be valuable to philosophy students who wish to engage with contemporary literature in ethics and epistemology.
　　The first part of the course goes over efforts to systematise rationality using formal systems. We will first look at *standard deontic logic* (SDL) and its problems. We will make a brief foray into alternative deontic logics. Special emphasis will be placed on understanding why having a logic of requirement or obligation might or might not be desirable, and in understanding on substantive philosophical grounds why SDL fails. From there, we will move into the central contemporary literature on rationality, focusing first on debates about the scope of rational requirements and whether rationality provides reasons. We will then look at debates about grounding/explaining rational requirements. The course will conclude with some consideration about conflicts between formal and substantive requirements of rationality.

Logic:
　　Although the formalisms in this field are easy, they cannot be learned without a firm grasp of propositional logic. Students taking this class should have 210 or the equivalent, and they should re-familiarise themselves with the basic and derived inference rules. Facility with predicate logic is not required.