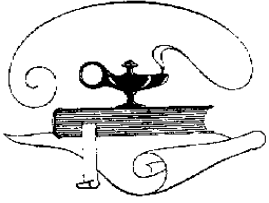


The Lantern



Philosophy Newsletter for Students

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Money: Modern Rationalism or Act of Faith?

Money, credit, the economy. These things have warranted a lot of ink in the last year due to the economic downturn, the jobless rates, and the credit crisis. It's hard to think of philosophers and money in the same sentence, since philosophers

The trust and promise of the money we use is based largely on a kind of circular logic.

traditionally do not have a lot of money. Perhaps this is precisely what leads philosophers to think about

money and what it really means to us.

Philosopher Georg Simmel (1858–1918) argues that money is subject to precise division and manipulation and permits exact measurement of equivalents which is why it is used for economic exchange. It thus helps promote rational calculation in human affairs and furthers the rationalization that is characteristic of modern society. When money becomes the prevalent link between people, it replaces personal ties anchored in diffuse feelings by impersonal relations that are limited to a specific purpose. Wherever the cash nexus penetrates, it dissolves bonds based on the ties of blood or kinship or loyalty. Money in the modern world is more than a standard of value and a means of exchange. It symbolizes and embodies the modern spirit of rationality, of calculability, of impersonality. Money levels qualitative differences between things as well

as between people; under its aegis, the modern spirit of calculation and abstraction has prevailed over an older world view that accorded primacy to feelings and imagination.

A more recent philosopher and New York Times blogger, Simon Critchley, suggests that “the core of money is trust and promise, “I promise to pay the bearer on demand the sum of...” on the British pound; the “In God We Trust” of the U.S. dollar; the BCE-ECB-EZB-EKT-EKP of the European Central Bank that runs like a Franco-Anglo-Germano-Greco-Finnish cipher across the top of every Euro note.” The trust and promise of the money we use is based largely on a kind of circular logic, however. We accept the promise that the money is good, that it is worth something more than a simple piece of paper. Critchley reminds us that the promise of money was originally supported by the sovereign and that promise has

In This Issue:

Philosophers' Deaths

**Spring 2010
Course Descriptions**

**Professor Tietjen
Wins Grant**

Philosopher's Wisdom

**Upcoming Undergraduate
Conference**

**Journal Reviewer
Opportunity**

(continued from page 1)

continued to this day in spite of the demise of sovereign power in the United States. Instead, the power of the sovereign has been replaced by the Fed and we trust that the Fed will back up our green bills. This trust is, for Critchley, nothing more than an act of faith.

For Critchley, “money is the one, true God in which we all believe.” We usually think that money is not of itself valuable, but is only valuable in that it allows us to buy things. But what money allows us to buy reveals a lot about the way in which we value the money itself. We buy things that display the money we have. We wear brand names for the sake of exhibiting that money. Again, Critchley argues that “we love the money that enables us to buy those things for it reaffirms our faith and restores the only

theological basis we have for our trust in the world. Money is our metaphysics. And when trust breaks down, as it has done so dramatically in the last year, then people experience something close to a crisis of faith.”

A crisis of faith often causes people to turn to philosophy for questioning and analysis. Does this mean that in these times of economic downturn, the philosophy program can hope to gain tremendous numbers of majors? Or will our faith in the metaphysics of high finance be restored too soon for that?

Information for this article taken from media.pfeiffer.edu/lridener and happydays.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/08/30/

Philosophers' Deaths

October 22, 1965. Paul Tillich. German-American theologian. Defines religion as the most ultimate of all human concerns, identifies god with the ground of all being, and treats religious language and ritual as symbolic.

October 23, 1990. Louis Althusser. Algerian-French social philosopher. Offered a structuralist re-interpretation of the later work of Marx. Argues that social organization is determined wholly by ideological consequences expressed in economic and political power, enforced in home and family as well as in the workplace.

November 8, 1308. John Duns Scotus. British Franciscan philosopher. Developed the notion of a formal distinction (more than nominal but less than real) as the key to resolving problems of individuation. On this basis, he distinguished intellect from volition and defended freedom of the will against the determinism of the radical Aristoteleans.

November 14, 1831. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. German Philosopher. In *Phenomenology of Spirit*, he criticized the traditional epistemological distinction of objective from subjective and offered his own dialectical account of the development of consciousness from individual sensation through social concern with ethics and politics to the pure consciousness of the World-Spirit in art, religion, and philosophy.

November 24, 2002. John Rawls. American Philosopher. Considered by many to be the most important political philosopher of the second half of the 20th century and a powerful advocate of the liberal perspective. In *A Theory of Justice*, he argues that each person has an inviolability founded on justice that cannot be usurped and cannot be subjected to a calculus of social interests.

(information gathered from Epistemelinks.com)

Spring 2010 Course Descriptions

- Phil 2100 01 Introduction to Philosophy Dr. Janet Donohoe**
MWF 10:00-10:50 a.m. Paff 102
Required for Philosophy Majors. Required for the Minor in Religion. May count for credit in Core Area C.
This course takes an historical look at major philosophical questions through the primary texts of such important philosophers as Plato, Aristotle, Boethius, Descartes, Kant, Nietzsche and Camus. Students are exposed to questions of what it means to be a human being, how to live the good life, what we can know, why we are here, whether there is a God, why there is evil in the world, and whether anything at all has meaning. Through the texts we learn not only the way that philosophers attempt to address these questions, but we also learn what it means to engage in philosophical thought and how the process of thinking philosophically can change our understanding of our own existence.
- Phil 2100-02 Introduction to Philosophy Dr. Janet Donohoe**
MWF 11:00-11:50 a.m. Paff 102
Required for Philosophy Majors. Required for the Minor in Religion. May count for credit in Core Area C.
Same as above.
- Phil 2100-03 Introduction to Philosophy Dr. Thomas Brommage**
TR 11:00 a.m.-12:15 p.m. Paff 102
Required for Philosophy Majors. Required for the Minor in Religion. May count for credit in Core Area C.
This course will survey some of the most important figures in Western philosophy, from the ancient Greeks all the way through the 20th century. Emphasis will be placed on understanding each thinker within historical context. The student will develop an understanding of the historical tradition of Western philosophy, as well as a grasp of the basics of each figured covered. The course will trace the dialogue concerning epistemological and metaphysical problems through the ancient, medieval and modern periods, theories of ethics (including virtue ethics, deontology and utilitarianism), and end by surveying recent trends such as pragmatism, continental philosophy and analytic thought.
- Phil 2100-04 Introduction to Philosophy Dr. Thomas Brommage**
TR 2:00-3:15 p.m. Paff 102
Required for Philosophy Majors. Required for the Minor in Religion. May count for credit in Core Area C.
Same as above.
- Phil 2100-05 Introduction to Philosophy Dr. Thomas Brommage**
TR 3:30-4:45 p.m. Paff 102
Required for Philosophy Majors. Required for the Minor in Religion. May count for credit in Core Area C.
Same as above.
- Phil 2110-01 Critical Thinking Dr. Walter Riker**
MWF 10:00-10:50 a.m. Paff 306
Required for Philosophy Majors. Required for the Minor in Religion. May count for credit in Core Area B.
In this course students learn to recognize and evaluate several different kinds of arguments. Students will practice their developing skills by critically evaluating several influential contemporary arguments for and against different uses of animals (e.g., for food, research, entertainment, and companionship). This course satisfies the Oral Communication component of the Core Curriculum, so students will discuss these issues in both formal and informal settings.
- Phil 2110-02 Critical Thinking Dr. Walter Riker**
MWF 1:00-1:50 p.m. Paff 306
Required for Philosophy Majors. Required for the Minor in Religion. May count for credit in Core Area B.
Same as above.
- Phil 2110-03 Critical Thinking Dr. Thomas Brommage**
MW 2:00-3:15 p.m. Paff 105
Required for Philosophy Majors. Required for the Minor in Religion. May count for credit in Core Area B.
This course is designed to strengthen students' skills in reasoning about problems and issues of everyday life by helping them to distinguish between good and bad arguments. Students work to achieve these goals through reading and discussion of course materials. Some of the topics to be considered include the structure of inductive arguments, rhetorical fallacies, and the connection between logic and belief. The second half of this course will stress information literacy, developing critical thinking skills necessary for each. Topics will include television and print media reports, advertising, maps and the internet. Throughout the course, the student will develop the skills necessary to become a better consumer of information.
- Phil 2110-04 Critical Thinking Dr. Mark Tietjen**
TR 9:30-10:45 a.m. Paff 105

Required for Philosophy Majors. Required for the Minor in Religion. May count for credit in Core Area B.

This course addresses the basics of how to think critically and how to evaluate arguments. Students will learn to identify both well known argument forms and well known fallacies in reasoning. They will explore the importance of clear definitions, the role of emotion in argumentation, and how critical thinking skills might be useful in analyzing contemporary issues in politics, science, and religion. Students will apply skills they learn to philosophical texts and also to their particular major fields of study.

Phil 2120-25H Introduction to Ethics
MWF 10:00-10:50 a.m. TLC 1204

Dr. Robert Lane

Required for Philosophy Majors. Required for the Minor in Religion. May count for credit in Core Area C.

Everyone has beliefs about morality, and to some extent we all agree about what actions are right and wrong; for example, we all agree that murder is wrong and that helping those less fortunate than us is right. But there are many moral questions about which people disagree: is abortion immoral? what about physician-assisted suicide? is it wrong to spend money on expensive cars and homes when people in other parts of the world are dying from malnutrition? do non-human animals have rights? This course will enable you critically to evaluate your own beliefs about concrete ethical issues like these. We'll also be dealing with more theoretical questions, such as: where does morality come from? (God? society? or somewhere else?); what makes an ethical argument good or bad?; and what general rules or principles ought we to live by? No prior experience in philosophy is necessary, so if you want to start thinking critically about morality, this course is a great place to begin.

Phil 2120-02 Introduction to Ethics
MWF 11:00-11:50 a.m. Paff 305

Dr. Robert Lane

Required for Philosophy Majors. Required for the Minor in Religion. May count for credit in Core Area C.

Same as above.

Phil 2130-01 Introduction to World Religions
TR 11:00 a.m.-12:15 p.m. TLC 1200

Dr. Mark Tietjen

This course is a comparative study of the beliefs and practices of several world religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Students will explore not only the history of these faiths and their early doctrinal and communal development but their place in today's world. Toward that end, practitioners of several of these religions will make guest presentations to the class.

Phil 3110-01 Modern Philosophy
TR 11:00-11:50 a.m. Paff 306

Dr. Walter Riker

This course in the history of philosophy examines the metaphysical and epistemological theories of important 17th and 18th century philosophers, including Descartes, Leibniz, Spinoza, Locke, Berkeley, Hume and Kant.

Phil 3160-01W Philosophy in Literature and Film
MWF 1:00-1:50 p.m. Paff 105

Dr. Janet Donohoe

Literature and film are often the most fruitful genres for thinking about philosophical themes. Through analysis of these media we can begin to address philosophical questions outside of straightforward philosophical treatises. This semester this course will address the themes of knowledge and tradition in philosophical and literary texts as well as in film. We will attempt to grasp how authors understand the relation of tradition to what we know and how we know it. We ask these questions in an effort to come to a deeper understanding of ourselves as human beings and our own relationship to our traditions

Phil 4115-01 Political Philosophy
MW 3:30-4:45 p.m. Paff 306

Dr. Walter Riker

This course examines the development of central themes in political philosophy, such as the nature of the state, political authority, justice, and political liberalism. We will read works by Plato, Hobbes, Locke, Rawls, and others.

Phil 4160-01 Symbolic Logic
MWF 2:00-2:50 p.m. Paff 306

Dr. Robert Lane

An introduction to the application of symbolic methods to reasoning, covering sentential logic and predicate logic. Students will learn how to translate ordinary language sentences and arguments into the notation of symbolic logic, determine the truth value of compound sentences, distinguish among various valid and invalid argument forms, and demonstrate the validity or invalidity of arguments in symbolic form. [Because Symbolic Logic enhances one's abilities in skills necessary for the LSAT, students in the Pre-Law track are strongly encouraged to take this course.]

Phil 4230-01 Philosophy of Religion
TR 2:00-3:15 p.m. Paff 109

Dr. Mark Tietjen

This course will examine central religious problems from a perspective that does not assume the truth of particular religious worldviews. Approximately one third of the semester will be focused on the problem of faith and reason, and this will involve attending to the views of historical figures like Aquinas, Kant, and Kierkegaard, as well as contemporary thinkers such as Alvin Plantinga. Other topics to be addressed include: the problem of evil, the relation of ethics to religion, and the problem of many religions (religious pluralism).

Professor Tietjen Wins Grant

Our very own Dr. Mark Tiejten and anthropology's Dr. Marjorie Snipes have been selected to attend the Science for Ministry Institute at Princeton Theological Seminary through a grant awarded by the John Templeton Foundation. The mission of the Institute is to provide instruction and resources for participating pairs to advance the dialogue between science and theology at the local level. The Institute offers a three-year program with a variety of courses four times each year in one-, three- and five-day intensive formats. Topics covered include creation of the universe, human evolution, human morality and ethics, and neuroscience and cognitive science. Drs. Tietjen and Snipes will focus their studies on expanding a dialogue between undergraduate students at UWG and the community through local churches.

Philosopher's Wisdom
*"When he
 to whom one speaks
 does not understand, and
 he who speaks himself does not
 understand, that is metaphysics."
 ~Voltaire (1694-1778)*

Philosophy Honors Society

The Georgia Iota chapter of Phi Sigma Tau is West Georgia's philosophical link to the world of honor societies. The chapter consists of students who have demonstrated outstanding academic achievement and a sincere interest in philosophy. Founded to recognize and reward philosophical scholarship, the chapter provides both an academic and a social environment for its members. The criteria for membership are: a 3.0 overall GPA, the completion of at least two philosophy courses, a GPA higher than 3.0 in all philosophy courses taken, and the completion of 45 hours of coursework. For more information, go to <http://www.westga.edu/~pst>, or contact Dr. Lane (rlane@westga.edu) if you are interested in applying for membership.

INTERESTED IN PHILOSOPHY?

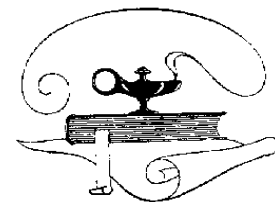
Join the West Georgia Philosophical Society

Interested in philosophy? Enjoy open discussions on every imaginable topic? Then you should join the Philosophical Society.

The Society is a registered student organization that meets every other week for lively discussions of philosophical topics. So far this year the discussion topics have ranged from the role of technology in our lives, to the apparent incompatibility between determinism and the belief in human free will, to the question whether man is naturally good or bad. Members of the society have also been involved in canned food drives, bake sales, and trivia nights at local restaurants.

All students, regardless of their background or experience, are invited to join. In fall 2009 meetings will be held every other Tuesday at 3:45 p.m. in Pafford room 309.

For more information, check out the Philosophy Society's website at <http://www.westga.edu/~philsoc>, or contact Dr. Tietjen (mtietjen@westga.edu).



Upcoming Undergraduate Conference

Third Annual Southeast Philosophy Congress
Clayton State College
Conference dates: February 12-13, 2010
Submission deadline: January 31, 2010

Journal Reviewer Opportunity

Talented undergraduate students are invited to submit an application to serve as an external reviewer for *Stance*: an international undergraduate philosophy journal <http://stance.iweb.bsu.edu>

The application process involves a Reviewer Application Form and a Letter of Recommendation form (to be completed by a philosophy professor familiar with the student). The DEADLINE for both is NOVEMBER 6, 2009. As a journal entirely produced and edited by undergraduates, only students who are enrolled undergraduates in January 2010 are eligible. Reviewers may submit a manuscript for publication as well.

For more information and an application form, consult your Philosophy Advisor.

Name that Philosopher

Can you identify the philosophers in the following pictures?



Answers: St. Augustine, Hilary Putnam, Quine, Kierkegaard.

Please direct any questions or comments about this newsletter to Dr. Janet Donohoe, 678-839-4743.