Recent years have seen the resurgence of a view in the scientific realism debate that has its roots in the early twentieth century. Structural realism, as its name suggests, is a realist view that qualifies its realism on structural terms. It comes in two main flavours, epistemic and ontic structural realism, each with its own variations. According to a broad conception of the epistemic flavour, our best scientific theories can only inform us about structural features of the unobservable world. This amounts to the idea that objects and properties can only be specified through the relations they instantiate. In more precise terms, they can only be specified up to isomorphism. According to a broad conception of the ontic flavour, the reason why our best scientific theories can only inform us about structural features of the unobservable world is that only such features exist. That is, objects are either deflated to mere nodes or they are eliminated altogether – depending on the version of ontic structural realism advocated. This seminar aims to throw light on the discussions surrounding this very influential family of views. Among other things we will examine the various forms structural realism takes, the arguments put forth in their support and the central objections against them.

Surveys:

Coursework:
- One presentation (about 20 minutes) on one of the main readings. [3 credits]
- One essay (about 2,500 words), **deadline 14/07/11**. [3 credits]

NB: Presentations will be assigned on the second week. Suggested essay topics will be distributed in May.

**WEEK 1: Introduction**

**WEEK 2: Epistemic Structural Realism**

Further Reading:

WEEK 3: The Historical Argument Elaborated

Further Reading:

WEEK 4: The Standard Realist Challenge

Further Reading:

WEEK 5: The Empiricist Challenge

Further Reading:

WEEK 6: The Ramsey Sentence Approach and the Newman Problem

Further Reading:

**WEEK 7: Worrall to the Rescue**


*Further Reading:*


**WEEK 8: The Forgotten Epistemic Structural Realism**


*Further Reading:*


**WEEK 9: A Third Way?**


*Further Reading:*


**WEEK 10: Ontic Structural Realism**


*Further Reading:*


**WEEK 11: Conceptual Problems I**


*Further Reading:*

**WEEK 12: Conceptual Problems II**


*Further Reading:*

**WEEK 13: Ontic Structural Realism and Physics**


*Further Reading:*

**WEEK 14: Identity and Mathematical Structuralism**


*Further Reading:*

**WEEK 15: Revisiting Ontic Structural Realism**


*Further Reading:*

