TOPICS IN PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE (PHIL20019)

TIME AND PLACE: Wednesdays 10:00-11:00, Lecture Theatre 1.

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Office hours (Room B37): Wednesdays 11:00-12:00
Thursdays 17:00-18:00

This course is divided into three major themes: 1) Laws and Entities, 2) Explanation and Inference to the Best Explanation, and 3) Scientific Revolutions. The aim of the course is to provide a probing look into some of the central debates in the philosophy of science.

Here are some of the main questions we will be looking at: What is the relation between observation and theory? Is the distinction between observables and unobservables warranted? What is a natural kind? Are there any natural kinds? Do we have epistemic access to them? What is a law of nature? How does it differ from other laws? Do natural laws tell us how things must behave? What is a scientific explanation? Is it necessary for a scientific explanation to appeal to laws of nature? What is the role of explanation in scientific inferences? Does anything survive scientific revolutions? What is the import of history in the philosophy of science?

Main Textbooks

Coursework:
One essay to be handed in to the department by 09/12/05. Suggested essay topics will be distributed nearer the deadline.

WEEK 1: Observation and Theory

Essential Reading:

Further Reading:
WEEK 2: Natural Kinds

Essential Reading:

Further Reading:

WEEKS 3-4: Laws

Essential Reading:

Further Reading:

WEEKS 5 & 7: Scientific Explanation

Essential Reading:

Further Reading:

WEEK 6: No Lecture
WEEK 8: Inference to the Best Explanation

Essential Reading:

Further Reading:

WEEKS 9-10: Scientific Revolutions

Essential Reading:

Further Reading:

WEEK 11: The Import of History of Science for Philosophy of Science

Essential Reading:
Votsis, I. (preprint) ‘What the History of Science Cannot Teach Us’

Further Reading:

WEEK 12: No Lecture