

Senior Honors Seminar: V83.0201

Fall 2011

New York University
Department of Philosophy

Tuesday, 4 - 6 pm

Instructor: Laura Franklin-Hall, lrf217@nyu.edu

Class Location: 5 Washington Place, 3rd floor seminar room

Office: 5 Washington Place, Room 407

Office Hours: Thursday 2 - 4 and by appointment

The Honors Program

Honors in philosophy will be awarded to majors who (1) have an overall grade point average of 3.65 and an average in philosophy courses of 3.65, and (2) successfully complete the honors program. This program consists of the following three courses. (Note: Of these courses, only the first two may be counted toward the 10 courses required for the major.)

1. The Junior Honors Proseminar, to be taken in spring semester of junior year. This course will play the dual roles of introducing students to core readings in some of the main areas of current philosophy, and of giving them an intensive training in writing philosophy. Admission to this course usually requires a GPA, both overall and in philosophy courses, of at least 3.65, as well as the permission of the director of undergraduate studies. The department will try to make alternative arrangements for students who wish to participate in the Honors Program but who will be studying abroad in this semester of their junior year.

2. The Senior Honors Seminar, to be taken in fall semester of senior year. Here students begin to develop their thesis projects, meeting weekly as a group under the direction of a faculty member, and presenting and discussing their thesis arguments. Students will also select, and begin to meet separately with, their individual thesis advisors—faculty who work in the areas of their thesis projects. Entry to this seminar depends on satisfactory completion of the Junior Honors Proseminar—or on the special approval of the director of undergraduate studies. It also usually requires a GPA of at least 3.65.

3. Senior Honors Research, to be taken in spring semester of senior year. The seminar no longer meets, but each student continues to meet separately with his/her individual thesis advisor, producing and discussing a series of rough drafts of the thesis. The final version must be submitted by a deadline to be determined, in April. It must be approved by the thesis advisor, as well as by a second faculty reader, for honors to be awarded. The student must also finish with a GPA of at least 3.65—and here no exceptions will be made. In addition, the thesis advisors will meet after the decisions by readers have been made, and award some students highest or high honors, based on thesis quality and other factors (including GPA in philosophy courses).

Seminar Goals

- To help you settle on a promising thesis topic of the right scope
- To ensure that you have some portion of your thesis completed by the end of the semester
- To help you select an advisor and get you meeting with him or her as early as possible in the semester
- To provide a forum in which you can receive regular, constructive feedback on your work
- To create a community of people going through the thesis writing process together who will be a source of mutual support, help and feedback

Seminar Design

The seminar is organized around student presentations. Each student will give two presentations to the seminar. Following each presentation, students will discuss the material and ask questions of the presenter.

REQUIREMENTS FOR PRESENTERS

Presentation 1

Present a piece of scholarly work (e.g., an article or book chapter of no more than 20 pages) relevant to your anticipated thesis project.

(Distribute this piece 48 hours in advance of your presentation.)

Presentation 2 (pick one)

a. Present an additional piece of scholarly work **and** a piece of your own work discussing it (6 - 8 pages).

(Distribute this material 48 hours in advance of your presentation.)

b. Present a piece of your own writing, but no piece of scholarly work. This should tentatively be a section of your thesis (8 - 10 pages). (Distribute this material 48 hours in advance of your presentation.)

REQUIREMENTS FOR NON-PRESENTERS

- For both first and second-round presentations:
 - By 48 hours after class, send the presenter (and cc nyuseniorhonorsseminar@gmail.com):
 - two critical yet constructive comments on the presentation. These may concern either form or content (preferably one of each). For instance, you could characterize, 1) what you didn't understand and why, 2) an objection or concern you had, 3) a connection you think might be developed, 4) a suggestion for how to present more effectively.

Tips for Presentations

- Although the format is open, you might consider creating a handout for each presentation. I recommend a handout which is just one to two pages in length, and includes only the main points and relevant quotes. Very wordy handouts are hard to process alongside a verbal presentation.
- Because everyone will read the piece in advance of the first presentation, your initial presentation should *not be a simple summary of the reading*, in which all parts of the reading get equal time. Instead, you should pick a few points you think are most interesting / controversial / important, etc., and subject them to more analysis.
- Keep your audience in mind. Even if you are new to the material, you will likely know more about the work you are presenting than others in the class. Don't go over difficult and technical material quickly, but pause to explain, providing examples where helpful. It sometimes happens that half the class is lost in the first five minutes. Such presentations serve no one's interests.
- You should consider meeting with your thesis advisor in advance of each of your presentations to discuss your plans.

Deadlines

- make contact with an advisor: September 22nd
- thesis sketch describing your tentative research questions (one page): due November 3rd
- piece of your own work: due with your second presentation
- thesis section, possibly an expansion of above (~ 10 pages). This can be a revision of the material you distributed in advance of your second presentation: due on December 15th

Other Information

- The final due date of the thesis will be in early April. The exact deadline will be announced later.
- Work fulfilling the formal requirements for this course represents the *bare minimum* needed to make it possible to complete a thesis by April. You should aim to do more work -- reading, writing, revising -- on your thesis than needed to prepare for your two presentations. By dedicating substantial time to your thesis this semester, you will (most likely) be able to avoid panic, stress, sleeplessness, and other horrors next semester.
- You should consider applying for Undergraduate Research Grants, and presenting your work at the Undergraduate Research Conference in April. Deadlines for these opportunities are in October and November. I will email the relevant announcements to you when they become available.
- After turning in the final version of the thesis, each student will have an oral defense, conducted by the student's advisor and the second reader of the thesis.
- Latin honors (*summa, magna*, etc.) are awarded by NYU solely on the basis of overall GPA; the philosophy department has nothing to do with this.
- The philosophy department is in charge of awarding departmental honor (honor, high honors, and highest honors). As mentioned in the honors program description, if the student does not have a 3.65 GPA or higher in philosophy and overall, the departmental honors cannot be awarded; there are no exceptions to this.
- Grading for the senior honors seminar will be based on the quality of class presentations, the quality of written work presented, and the quality of class participation.
- There will be an end-of-the-year party after all the theses have been turned in and honors have been awarded.

Schedule

September 6 Organizational meeting

first set of presentations

SECOND SET OF PRESENTATIONS

September 13	Nick, Christian	
September 20	Nora, Scott	DEADLINE FOR CONTACT WITH ADVISOR September 22
September 27	Thomas, Lisa	
October 4	Allen, Ryan	
October 11	NO CLASS, FALL BREAK	
October 18	Aaron, Jake	
October 25	David, Guy	

second set of presentations

THESIS QUESTIONS DUE November 3

November 1	Albert	
November 8	TBD	WRITTEN WORK DUE WITH PRESENTATION (draft)
November 15	"	
November 22	"	
November 29	"	
December 6	"	
December 13	"	

THESIS SECTION DUE December 20