

UNIVERSITY OF YORK PHILOSOPHY SUMMER SCHOOL

Summer 2024



About Us

The city of York

Halfway between London and Edinburgh, in the North of England, York is a contemporary city of contrast. Renowned for its rich history and heritage, York is full of culture. You can still walk around the city on the city walls, and enjoy the spectacular views of York Minster, the majestic cathedral which dominates the city.

York is regularly named one of the best places to live and visit in the UK, and with a population of 200,000, it's big enough to feel lively but small enough to feel like home. Join us to experience it in person.

The University of York

The University of York is a leading, research-led university, one of the success stories in UK higher education.

Since our foundation in 1963, we have powered our way to a consistently high ranking in the UK and are one of just six post-war universities to have appeared in the world top 100.

We are a proud member of the Russell Group.

10th in the UK

for our research,
the Times Higher
Education's REF ranking,
2021

17th in the UK

in the Times Good
University Guide 2023,
with 13 subjects ranked
in the top 10

19th overall

Complete University
Guide 2023, with nine
subjects ranked
in the top 10

21st in the UK

Guardian Good
University Guide 2023,
with 6 subjects ranked
in the top 10

existing relationships with key University partners across the globe and support University strategy.

The Philosophy Department

The Philosophy Department is 2nd in the UK for philosophy research and its staff have a wide range of interests with the main research strengths falling in five areas:

- History of Philosophy
- Practical Philosophy
- Mind and Reason
- Art and Literature
- Philosophy of Religion

The department brings together stimulating teaching and original research in an informal, friendly setting.

We are a friendly, supportive and inclusive centre.

We get to know our participants, accommodate their needs, and help them develop.

Programme Overview

Objectives

The overall objectives of the proposed programme are:

- To provide an opportunity to experience philosophical debate in English
- To enhance students' international outlook
- To enhance students' academic communication skills in English with an emphasis on seminar participation

Components Summary

Introduction to British Philosophy

- Key note lectures
- Post-lecture discussions
- Trips

Culture

- Discussion and exploration of current affairs and global issues

Project

- Reflections on ideas and outcomes of discussions
- Poster presentation

Academic communication skills

- Seminar skills
- Critical thinking

Programme Details

Introduction to British Philosophy

Forming the backbone of the programme, keynote lectures will be given by established and leading academics from the philosophy department at York. The general theme of these lectures will be 'British Philosophy', with weekly sub-themes devoted to Empiricism, Political Philosophy and Freedom of Belief. The following constitutes a summary of the each week's focus:

Week 1: The Social Contract

- The State of Nature
 - Human nature and the need for a social order
- Problems with natural law theory
 - Cultural relativity
 - Epistemological issues
- Contractarianism
 - What would we all agree to?
 - The problem of free-riders

Week 2: The Problem of Perception

- Arguments from illusion
 - Their logical structure and presuppositions
- The primary-secondary quality distinction
 - Perceptual relativity
 - Physicalism
- Naïve Realism
 - Rejecting the argument from illusion
 - The inseparability of primary and secondary qualities

Week 3: State, Faith and Toleration

- Locke on toleration
 - The political value of toleration
 - The limits of toleration
- Passive obedience
 - The source of sovereignty
 - Obedience to the powers that be
- Mill's Harm Principle
 - The limits of state power
 - Freedom of thought and freedom of speech

Lectures will be followed by Q and As with the speaker. Follow up discussion sessions with Global Opportunities tutors will allow the participants to explore the topics in further depth.

Culture

This component provides students with the opportunity to broaden their cultural horizons and raise their international awareness and sensitivity to UK culture. The students will learn about various aspects of British culture and will be asked to reflect and discuss the potential reasons behind cultural similarities and differences. Concurrently, sessions would also focus on language skills including vocabulary learning and pronunciation skills. Students will also take part in field trips to locations related to the Philosophy themes including Edinburgh, Bolsover Castle, York and the Castle Museum and the Abbeys of the North of England.

Project

In this component, the students will reflect upon, synthesise and apply new learning gained. Given that the programme would be only three weeks in length, and not formally assessed, we would recommend that the final week culminates in a brief student presentation. One possible means of organising this would be to ask the students to submit a series of reflections throughout the programme, describing how their thoughts are evolving. Following feedback from tutors, each student could then select the most significant aspects of their intellectual journey, and present these in the form of a poster. The subsequent poster presentation could then be attended by members of the teaching staff, who could circulate, ask questions, and gain a sense of how the programme has been influencing the intellectual life of the students.

Academic communication skills

The aim of these sessions is to help students fully participate in post-lecture small group discussions. Students will be able to produce the appropriate functional language items to give and politely challenge opinions, interrupt, build on previous speakers ideas, summarise, etc.

In order to achieve these aims, there will be an emphasis early on in the programme on functional language for seminars, as well as tools for critically evaluating arguments.

Certificate

On successful completion of the programme, participants will receive a University of York certificate of attendance.

Keynote Lectures 2023 (note: to be confirmed for 2024)

The Social Contract

Keynote Lecture 1: Dr Martin O'Neill on the State of Nature and the Social Contract

The idea of a 'state of nature' has played a central part in the development of European political philosophy, with a number of political philosophers exploring the nature and limits of political authority through a contrasting examination of the nature of the lives that human beings might live in a 'pre-political' world existing before the realm of politics and state authority. The centrality of this tradition in political philosophy has continued right up to recent decades, with a strong influence on the arguments of twentieth century political philosophers such as Nozick and Rawls. In this lecture, we will examine two of the most important 17th century arguments from the State of Nature, looking at the role of this idea in *Leviathan* (1651) by Thomas Hobbes and in *The Second Treatise of Government* by John Locke (1689). We shall see how Hobbes and Locke give differing accounts of the State of Nature, and explore how these differences connect to their differing views about the authority of the state.

Keynote Lecture 2: Dr Martin O'Neill and Dr Jamie Buckland on the State of Nature, the Social Contract, and Hobbes's Contractarianism

This lecture divides into two parts. In the first part, Dr O'Neill will continue his presentation of Hobbes and Locke's differing ideas of the State of Nature, and how this led them into different accounts of the social contract. In the second part of the lecture, Dr Buckland will focus critically on the development of Thomas Hobbes's social contract theory into what is now known as contractarianism.

Keynote Lecture 3: Dr Jamie Buckland on Contractarianism and Contractualism

This lecture will focus critically on distinguishing the contractarian position from the closely related contractualist view. The contractarian position stems from Hobbes's social contract theory to the extent that it regards human beings as rationally self-interested creatures with a view to pursuing social cooperation and consent to governmental authority only insofar as it is in their interests to do so. The contractualist position, on the other hand, stems from the Kantian thought that human beings are rational agents motivated by a commitment to universal moral principles that are universally applicable to all rational agents. The contractualist does not presume that humans are self-interested maximisers. Rather, the contractualist understands humans as rational agents, whereby rationality demands respect for others, and a commitment to publicly justifiable standards of morality. The aim of the follow up discussion session will be for students to determine which of the positions is most plausible. Week 2: The Problem of Perception

The Problem of Perception

Keynote lecture 1: Professor Greg Currie on Illusions and Pictures

Philosophical thinking about perception in early modern and modern Europe has been dominated by the need to explain perceptual illusions. The illusions which most concerned thinkers through this time were those that seemed to misrepresent how things are—a straight stick looks bent when partly submerged in water. But what should we say about pictures—the sorts of "realistic" portraits of people we see in many art galleries, or ordinary photographs of our family members? Pictures like this have been called "illusions" (see *Art and Illusion* by British-Austrian art historian Ernst Gombrich, one of the most influential books on culture of the twentieth century). But are portraits of our friends really illusions? Do they create the illusion that we

are really looking at our friends when we look at their pictures? Surely we know that we are looking at a picture and not at a person. On the other hand, pictures can seem to be very like the people they are of. How can a flat bit of paper with marks on look like a person? Serious answers to these questions are quite recent; we will look at ideas from some recent philosophers of art to try to understand what, if anything, is illusory about pictures. In the course of this we will look at portraits of some of the people you will be discussing in other lectures, such as Thomas Hobbes and David Hume.

Keynote lecture 2: Dr Keith Allen on Primary and Secondary Qualities

This lecture will emphasise the historical connections between philosophy and the scientific revolution that was taking place in the 17th century, led by Newton, Boyle and others. Central to the new science was a belief in the ultimate explanatory power of atoms, thought of then as indivisible particles. One effect of this view was to emphasise the distinction between the way things appear and the way they really are—a contrast that has affected the whole of subsequent philosophy. The distinction between primary and secondary qualities, as expounded by Boyle and Locke, is central to this contrast and we will examine the idea that secondary qualities are “nothing in the objects themselves but powers to produce various sensations in us by their primary qualities” (Locke). We will see what the implications of this are for understanding the nature of colours. We will look briefly at the related modern notion of “response dependent qualities”. There will also be some discussion of the nature of the scientific revolution in Britain and the founding of the Royal Society.

Keynote lecture 3: Keith Allen on Dreams and Illusions

This lecture will consider the nature of dreams and hallucinations and their role in philosophical discussions of perception. It is often thought that dreams are perceptual experiences that happen when we are asleep, and hallucinations are perceptual experiences that happen when there is no object of the appropriate kind in the perceiver’s immediate environment (for example, when someone ‘sees’ pink rats or Shakespeare’s Macbeth ‘sees’ a dagger before him). This way of thinking of dreams and hallucinations presents a challenge to the common sense view that we can directly perceive physical objects, like tables, chairs or cats. If exactly the same kind of experience occurs when we dream, hallucinate, and perceive, and when we dream and hallucinate we are not directly aware of physical objects, then it might seem to follow that we are not directly aware of physical objects when we perceive either. But is this the right way to think about dreams and hallucinations? As well as considering J.L. Austin’s famous *Sense and Sensibilia*, we will be looking at the contemporary debate in the philosophy of perception between proponents of intentionalist (or representationalist) and naive realist theories of perception

State, Faith and Toleration

Keynote Lecture 1: Dr Hannah Carnegy-Arbuthnott on Toleration

Toleration is a political virtue that seems absolutely central to the operation of a civilised society, but which is nevertheless philosophically puzzling, or even paradoxical. In tolerating some practice or belief, we seem at one and the same time both to be condemning it and endorsing it, thereby occupying a position that may seem unstable or even incoherent. In this lecture we will examine the treatment of toleration by two of the leading Anglophone philosophers of the past century – Bernard Williams (in his essay “Toleration: an Impossible Virtue?”) and T. M. Scanlon (in his essay “The Difficulty of Tolerance”) – and try to come to a view both about whether toleration really is as puzzling as it might first appear to be, and about its role and significance as a political virtue.

Keynote Lecture 2: Professor Tom Stoneham on Passive Obedience

The 17th Century was a time of great political upheaval. The English Civil War (1642–51), which temporarily suspended the English monarchy, and the so-called Glorious Revolution (1688), in which King James II was more or less peacefully replaced by William of Orange and his wife Mary, put questions of political legitimacy sharply into focus. Some argued that the lesson of the Civil War was that the collapse of political order is so disastrous that we are morally required to uphold the laws and obey those in power always, to avoid such collapse at all costs. (This was more or less the view of Thomas Hobbes.) Others (such as John Locke) defended the right of individuals to resist the monarchy and/or government at least in some circumstances. According to another view, it is always wrong actively to resist those in power; but that means just that it is wrong to resist or rebel against legal punishments or sanctions imposed for failure to do what the law requires – though it is not necessarily wrong to refuse to do what the law requires. This doctrine of ‘passive obedience’ was the Church of England’s favourite view about political authority (partly because it seems to make space for ‘conscientious objection’ on religious grounds), and George Berkeley published a pamphlet titled *Passive Obedience* in 1712. In this lecture we will consider the various moral arguments which Berkeley suggests.

Keynote Lecture 3: Dr Hannah Carngey-Arbuthnott on Mill’s Harm Principle

John Stuart Mill’s Harm Principle is introduced in the first chapter of *On Liberty* (1859). Mill writes, “The object of this Essay is to assert one very simple principle... [t]hat the sole end for which mankind are warranted, individually or collectively, in interfering with the liberty of action of any of their number, is self-protection. That the only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilized community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others.” It is far from clear that this ‘very simple principle’ is as simple as Mill initially presents it to be. Not only does it undergo later modification (fourth chapter), what counts as harm is left ambiguous. With reference to a variety of contemporaneous issues, this lecture will explore what such harm might amount to, and when (and why) society may, on Mill’s view, justifiably interfere with an individual’s liberty of action.