Analytical Philosophy 4335A Spring 2018

Course content and schedule: I offer you this schedule as a help to your planning. It does not constitute a formal undertaking on my part.

Wed Jan 24 Philosophy in the core curriculum at this university. Faith and reason. Analytic and traditional philosophy. Analytical philosophy and the overthrow of the modern project. The later Wittgenstein as seen as the solver of the modern philosophical predicament. The dangers inherent in the context of the growth of analytical philosophy in an environment of empiricism. Relativity and defeasibility as key but neglected notions.

Wed Jan 31 Reference: Frege and Russell, Kripke and Geach
Wed Feb 7 The real differences between names and descriptions: the relations of referring to and the relation of being said of an individual.
Wed Feb 21 Identity. Relativity of identity: to some criterion and / or some kind. Identity as contrasted with (epistemic) re-identification. Substance
Wed Feb 28 Modality (necessity and possibility). Rediscovery of the notion of essence in analytical philosophy, and attempts to escape from it.
Wed Mar 7 Review
Wed Mar 14 Spring Break: no classes. Take-home mid-term test
Wed Mar 21 Methodology and philosophy of science: realism and anti-realism. The possibility of defeasible arguments, e.g. in practical or causal reasoning.
Wed Mar 28 Philosophy of mind: mind as a power. Mind and body: various implausible accounts of the relation. A truly analytical idea: refuse to refer to either on their own.
Wed Apr 4 7 Epistemology: does it have any importance? Knowledge and justified belief: is there a connection?
Wed Apr 11 Ethics: Hume and the is/ought gap. Arguments for the fact / value distinction. Counter-arguments to the fact / value distinction
Wed Apr 18 Consequentialism: its seemingly inescapable rationality. The emptiness of the notions of “goodness” and “possible consequences” used by consequentialism
Wed Apr 25 Review
Wed May 2 Last class. Review

No date has yet been announced by the Registrar for the final exam.

Textbooks:  
*Philosophy 1*, edited by A. C. Grayling;  
*Analytic Philosophy: an anthology*, Edd. A.P. Martinich and David Sosa

Office hours: 
Monday, Wednesday, 8.00 a.m. – 12 noon
My e-mail is martincl@stthom.edu and my phone number is 713 831 7292

Determination of final grades: 
In principle 50% of the final grades will be determined by the final test. There will also be a term paper set.
Learning objectives:
Originally, “learning objectives” were ways in which the behavior of “students” was to be modified after taking the course. I will not think in this way or use this jargon. For what I intend to explain, see the provisional syllabus. The skills I expect you to show, and to improve in, include: reading contemporary philosophical texts, identifying unfamiliar concepts and relating them to familiar ones; distinguishing between different attitudes shown in reply to closely-related questions; judging the values of different arguments independently of the truth of their conclusions, and vice-versa. You will be expected to read, consult and evaluate different views, being ready to give reasons for your views. I expect you to show (at least) competence in all these skills in the tests and written work. This, I hope, will show that you have asked yourselves fundamental questions about what is of value or otherwise in the English-speaking philosophy of the present day and of the immediate past.

Written work:
Not yet fixed: probably a mid-semester test, and at least one papers, of about 2,000 words, to be due about the end of twelfth week. I may set other short assignments or tests as seems opportune. There will be a final test (not take-home). The date for this has not yet been appointed by the registrar.

Attendance policy:
I do not care personally very much whether you come to class or not. However, the university has a much stronger attendance policy, and I will be passing lists of attendance in class. Moreover, you are unlikely to be able to get a full understanding of the subject from the reading alone – I should not be giving these classes if you could learn the same from books. Non-attendance at class will not be regarded as an excuse for failing to be aware of matters I may from time to time announce in class. Nor will it be regarded as an excuse for poor performance in the exam or in class papers, but rather as an added irritant. For this reason I shall check attendance every class.