PHIL 235a (Section 1): Graduate Seminar in Epistemology: Reasons

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Office Hours: Wednesdays, 10-12pm, and by appointment.

Course Description
The course will be concerned with the nature of reasons and, in particular, with the relationship between practical and theoretical reasons. We will start with two versions of the “wrong kind of reasons” problem: one for accounts of value in terms of reasons, and one concerning practical reasons for belief and intention. We will then consider several views about the relationship between practical and theoretical rationality. Finally, we will examine the rationality of trust and consider, in particular, whether it is practical or theoretical.

Readings
All readings will be available on LATTE.

Requirements
• Three short response papers (2-3 pages)  
• Presentation of Term Paper at Mini-Conference  
• Term paper (15-20 pages)  
The short papers are due on Friday before the seminar meeting and should be about the coming week’s seminar. You can choose when to submit your short papers.

Note: If you are a student with a documented disability on record at Brandeis and need to have special accommodations for this class, please see me immediately.

Academic Dishonesty will be reported to the Department of Student Development and Conduct. Students are responsible to inform themselves about what constitutes dishonesty. If in doubt, please ask me, and see “Rights and Responsibilities” at: http://www.brandeis.edu/studentaffairs/srsc/rr/index.html

Four-Credit Course (with three hours of class-time per week)
Success in this 4 credit hour course is based on the expectation that students will spend a minimum of 9 hours of study time per week in preparation for class (readings, papers, discussion sections, preparation for exams, etc.).
Schedule of Readings

Part I: The Wrong Kind of Reasons Problem for Value
1/20  Thomas Scanlon, *What We Owe to Each Other*, ch. 1: Reasons

1/25*  **Class to be rescheduled.**

2/1  Thomas Scanlon, *What We Owe to Each Other*, ch. 2: Values
2/8  Jonas Olson, “Buck-Passing and the Wrong Kind of Reasons.”
     Wlodek Rabinowicz and Toni Rønnow-Rasmussen, “The Strike of the Demon: On Fitting Pro-Attitudes and Value”

Part II: The Wrong Kind of Reasons Problem for Belief and Intention
     Gregory Kavka, “The Toxin Puzzle”
     Thomas Kelly, “The Rationality of Belief And Some Other Propositional Attitudes”

2/29  Pamela Hieronymi, “The Wrong Kind of Reason”
     Pamela Hieronymi, “Controlling Attitudes”

3/7  Mark Schroeder, “The Ubiquity of State-Given Reasons.”
     Pamela Hieronymi “The Use of Reasons in Thought”
     Mark Schroeder, “State-Given Reasons: Prevalent if not Ubiquitous”

Part III: Practical Reasons for Belief?
3/14  Berislav Marušić, *Evidence and Agency*, ch. 1.1, 5.3, 6.1, 6.2

3/21  Susanna Rinard, “No Exception for Belief”

     Jeremy Fantl and Matthew McGrath, “Evidence, Pragmatics and Justification.”

* (Rescheduled class)
     Selim Berker, “Epistemic Teleology and the Separateness of Propositions”

Part IV: The Reasons of Trust
     Pamela Hieronymi, “The Reasons of Trust.”


5/2  Mini-Conference (students present term papers)

*Term Paper due 5/9*