



NATURAL RATIONALITY

– PHIL 474/673 –

WINTER 2007

Syllabus, v1.1 (updated January 8, 2007)

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Course ID: 010434

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Course page: <http://phi673uw.wordpress.com>

Class hours: 9:30 – 11:30

Course location: HH-357

1. DESCRIPTION

This seminar is about the nature and naturalization of practical rationality. From Adam Smith to decision neuroscience, we will explore how philosophy and sciences study and describe decision-making, mainly from a naturalistic perspective. Economical models of rationality (traditional and non-traditional) will be presented and discussed from a psychological, biological and philosophical perspective. This course aims at discussing theoretical issues related to philosophy of mind, philosophy of science, cognitive science, economics and neuroscience.

2. ORGANIZATION

Before every meeting, students are required to read an article or book chapter (available on the website) and write a one-page essay related to it. Each meeting will be divided in two parts: the first one is a brief lecture, in which the main ideas of the paper, auxiliary literature and relevant concepts are presented. The second part is a workshop session: students will debate issues related to the readings. Because this is a seminar, it is mandatory that students be prepared and motivated to discuss the assigned readings.

3. COURSE OBJECTIVES

1. To analyze, discuss and criticize different approaches of rationality.
2. To introduce students to key literature on naturalistic approach of rationality.
3. To help students develop argumentative abilities in interdisciplinary problems.
4. To give students the opportunity to develop academic skills such as managing a research project, submitting an abstract and making a presentation in a conference.

4. COURSE WEBSITE

The syllabus, readings, lecture notes, references, links, PowerPoint slides, and information about the course will be available on the course website [<http://phi673uw.wordpress.com>]. Students can syndicate the RSS feed [<http://phi673uw.wordpress.com/feed>] for an update on the site's content. All the readings will be gathered in a downloadable course package.

5. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

(Detailed instructions will be posted on the website)

- 10%: A 1-page essay discussing the reading (week 2 to 12). No penalty for missing 1.
- 20%: A research project (10 pages) about your final essay, due on week 8.
- 10%: An abstract (500 words) submitted for the conference held in the final class, due on week 10.
- 20%: An oral presentation of your essay (duration will be function of the group size), week 12.
- 40%: A 20-pages essay based on your research project, no later than April 10.

6. COURSE OUTLINE

1- Organizational meeting – January 4

- January 4, 10:00am, HH-357. Time and location of future meetings will be decided.

2- Historical and philosophical roots of natural rationality, I – January 11

- Adam Smith (1759) *The Theory of the Moral Sentiments*, Part I, Section I, “Of the Sense of Propriety”

→ *1-page essay*

3- Historical and philosophical roots of natural rationality, II – January 18

- Bentham, J. (1781). *An introduction to the principles of morals and legislation*, Chapters I-IV

→ *1-page essay*

4- The formalization of rationality – January 25

- Hollis, M., & Sugden, R. (1993). Rationality in action. *Mind*, 102, 1-35.

→ 1-page essay

5- Rationality and behavioral economics – February 1

- Kahneman, D. (2003). A perspective on judgment and choice: Mapping bounded rationality. *American Psychologist*, 58(9), 697-720.

→ 1-page essay

6- Ecological rationality – February 8

- Todd, P. M., & Gigerenzer, G. (2003). Bounding rationality to the world. *Journal of Economic Psychology*, 24(2), 143-165.

→ 1-page essay

7- Evolution and rationality – February 15

- Cosmides, L., & Tooby, J. (1994). Better than rational: Evolutionary psychology and the invisible hand. *The American Economic Review*, 84(2), 327-332.
- Richard Samuels & Stephen Stich, Rationality & Psychology, in Alfred Mele & Piers Rawling, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Rationality*. Oxford Reference Library. (Oxford: Oxford University Press) 2004. Pp. 279-300

→ 1-page essay

(Reading week)

8- Embodiment and economic rationality – March 1

- Clark, Andy (1996) Economic Reason: The Interplay of Individual Learning and External Structure, in J. Drobak and J. Nye (eds) *The Frontiers Of The New Institutional Economics* (Academic Press: San Diego, CA 1996) p. 269-290

→ 1-page essay

→ Research project

9- Neuroeconomics and rationality – March 8

- Sanfey, A. G., Loewenstein, G., McClure, S. M., & Cohen, J. D. (2006). Neuroeconomics: Cross-currents in research on decision-making. *Trends in Cognitive Science*, 10(3), 108-116.

- Payzan, E., Bourgeois-Gironde, S. (2005) *Epistemological Foundations for Neuroeconomics*. Preprint.

→ 1-page essay

10- Neuroeconomics and irrationality – March 15

- Berridge, K. C. (2003). Irrational pursuits: Hyper-incentives from a visceral brain. In I. Brocas & J. Carrillo (Eds.), *The psychology of economic decisions* (pp. 17-40). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Paul, M. C. (2006). Into the brain: Where philosophy should go from here. *Topoi*, V25(1), 29-32.

→ 1-page essay

→ Conference abstract

11- Neuroeconomics, emotions, and rationality – March 22

- Naqvi, N., Shiv, B., & Bechara, A. (2006). The role of emotion in decision-making: A cognitive neuroscience perspective. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 15(5), 260-264.
- Elster, J. (1994). Rationality, emotions, and social norms. *Synthese*, 98(1), 21-49.

→ 1-page essay

12- Student conference: Natural Rationality – March 29

→ Oral presentation

→ Final essay (April 10)

7. NOTE FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

The Office for Persons with Disabilities (OPD), located in Needles Hall, Room 1132, collaborates with all academic departments to arrange appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities without compromising the academic integrity of the curriculum. If you require academic accommodations to lessen the impact of your disability, please register with the OPD at the beginning of each academic term.

8. NOTE ON AVOIDANCE OF ACADEMIC OFFENCES

All students registered in the courses of the Faculty of Arts are expected to know what constitutes academic integrity, to avoid committing academic offences, and to take responsibility for their actions. When the commission of an offence is established, disciplinary penalties will be imposed in accord with Policy #71 (Student Academic

Discipline). For information on categories of offences and types of penalties, students are directed to consult the summary of Policy #71 which is supplied in the Undergraduate Calendar (section 1; on the Web at www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy71.htm). If you need help in learning what constitutes an academic offence; how to avoid offences such as plagiarism, cheating, and double submission; how to follow appropriate rules with respect to “group work” and collaboration; or if you need clarification of aspects of the discipline policy, ask your TA and/or your course instructor for guidance. Other resources regarding the discipline policy are your academic advisor and the Undergraduate Associate Dean.