

Azim Premji University Name | Spring 2022

UGRD 19526-1

# Research Methods in Philosophy

M 9:50–12:00; R 8:30–9:30 | Classroom

## INSTRUCTOR:

**Juliana Lima**

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<https://julianaflima.github.io/>

My Office: B2-AB 2<sup>nd</sup> floor, cabin 6 | Office Hours: M 12:00–1:00; R 9:30–10:30

## COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

The ability to pursue rigorous creativity, and other capabilities associated with research is best taught through doing, rather than through outlining abstract theories of research.

The central feature of the course is that students will have an unusual level of control on what they are studying and how. This is essential to ensure that students cultivate the capability of independent thought and research. The students together will choose one philosophical topic which they will jointly work on as a research project. They will be guided through research in this topic, with increasingly light interference as the course goes on.

The first readings will be provided, but after some weeks the students will have an increasing role in choosing what they read and study until they are finally in complete control. The same pattern will be followed in other aspects of the course, such as whether to divide the group up into smaller groups, and which of the smaller questions to pursue.

The course will culminate with each student producing their own research paper on the topic, and presenting it at a mini-conference, at which all will be welcome.

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of the course, students should:

- have the capability of pursuing their original ideas to make them rigorous, including by working closely alongside others.
- have the capability to express very complex ideas to non-experts with exceptional clarity.
- have the capability of writing very complex ideas for non-experts with exceptional clarity.
- be able to pursue research topics on their own, including a knowledge of where to find research



#### *Weekly Journals (30%)*

Each week until week 12, students will produce a journal of up to 300 words, based on their reading and research from that week. They will be submitted weekly to the instructor. Each journal is worth **4%**. Only the **8 highest scoring** journals will be considered.

\*No extensions will be granted, except for medical emergencies.\*

#### *Research Paper (30%)*

Each student will be expected to write a research paper on their research over the course. They may not pair up to do so, only because it is too hard to assess who has done the work in such cases; in other respects, co-operation will be encouraged. The paper may be of **no more than 3000 words**. Deadline: **April 15th, 23:59PM**.

Note: Students are required to meet with the instructor to discuss paper topics by **Feb 11th, Week 5** and every week or two after the initial chat.

\*No extensions will be granted, except for medical emergencies.\*

#### *Conference Presentation (20%)*

During **weeks 14 and 15**, we will hold a mini-conference, with all students presenting their research for 20 minutes, and answering questions for a further 10 minutes. Students will also fill in anonymous feedback about others' presentations, though these will be vetted for suitability before being passed on to the students.

### *Conference Feedback Essay (20%)*

Students have to write a short philosophical essay (**max. 500 words**) on at least **2** presentations. Each essay is worth **10%** of the final grade. Students may write essays on any and as many presentations they like (one essay per presentation). If a student submit more than 2 essays, the lowest scoring essays will be ignored.

\*No extensions will be granted, except for medical emergencies.\*

**NOTE:** Things change – the Fates are fickle. Information found on this syllabus is subject to revision as we progress through the semester: Readings and content may be added (or cut) depending on our rate of progress, and it may be necessary to amend the due date of the assignments. Revisions will be announced in lecture and posted online. It is each student's responsibility to keep informed of any changes.



If you are facing a major medical or another major difficulty that is keeping you from doing well in the class, contact me as soon as you can. I am happy to work with you to find the best course of action and, if possible, to help you complete the course successfully. But I can't help if you don't let me know about your circumstances as soon as they arise.



Don't wait until after the last week of classes to let me know about your circumstances. At that point there is virtually nothing I can do to accommodate you.



### **MATERIALS**

- All course materials, information, assignments, etc. will be available on Moodle.
- All communications will be made through your school email address and Moodle. Please make sure you have turned on notification alert on Account Notification Settings to get an email when you receive messages on Moodle.

### **GRADING**

The usual grading scale will apply: 0-29% U, 30-39% E, 40-49% D, 50-59% C, 60-69% B, 70-79% A-, 80-89% A, 90-100% O

## ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

You are expected to uphold the highest standards of academic integrity. Your work must be your own. Submitting work which you have not composed yourself, or using another person's ideas without due credit, or failing to mark another person's words with appropriate quotation marks all constitute plagiarism. The instructor reserves the right to assess penalties for violations of academic integrity, which may include giving a failing grade for an assignment, for the entire course, or referral to a University disciplinary committee.

## POSSIBLE TOPICS & INITIAL READINGS

Here are five topics to choose from as the topic of this course, together with initial readings. Students will also be allowed to pursue any other topic in philosophy, if there is agreement on it between the instructor and all students.

For the topic they choose, they will be presented with the readings below, with one reading for each of the first two weeks. For the third week, students will choose which reading from a list of suggested readings.

For the fourth and fifth weeks, students will choose a range of readings themselves, with assistance from the instructor.

For the seventh week onwards, students will together choose their own readings.

Because of the nature of the course, no complete syllabus can be provided. Indeed, it is part of the point of the course for students to learn to choose the topic and craft the syllabus themselves.

- Topic 1* Philosophy of Language – Vagueness: A term is vague if there are borderline cases, that is, if there are instances where it is unclear whether the term applies. Vagueness generates what is known as 'The Sorities Paradox', a puzzle that can be expressed as an argument most simply using *modus ponens*:
- P<sub>1</sub>* 1 grain of wheat does not make a heap.  
*P<sub>2</sub>* If 1 grain doesn't make a heap, then 2 grains don't.  
*P<sub>3</sub>* If 2 grains don't make a heap, then 3 grains don't.  
 ...  
*PN* If 999,999 grains don't make a heap, then 1 million grains don't.  
 ∴ 1 million grains don't make a heap.  
 The conclusion of the argument is clearly false. But each premise, when taken individually, seems to be true. So... what's up?
- Reading 1: Keefe, R. "The phenomena of vagueness."  
 Reading 2: Endicott, T. "Law is Necessarily Vague"  
 Reading 3: Choose one:  
 a) Sainsbury, R.M. "Degrees of Belief and Degrees of Truth."  
 b) Graff, Delia "Shifting sands: an interest-relative theory of vagueness."  
 c) Williamson, T. "Vagueness as ignorance."

*Topic 2* Philosophy of Language – Proper Names: Proper names are familiar expressions of natural language. Some examples are 'Juliana', 'Nishok', 'Lakshmi', 'Ganges', etc. But do names have meanings, such as "the only Brazilian professor at APU", "the most famous Indian river"? Or do they simply refer to particular things (people, gods and goddesses, rivers, etc) without that reference being mediated by a meaning? (SEP, *Names*)

Reading 1 Frege, G. "Sense and Reference"

Reading 2 Mill, J.S. "Of Names", in: *System of Logic*.

Reading 3 Choose one:

a) Kripke, S. *Naming and Necessity*.

b) Fara, D.G. "Names are Predicates."

c) Braun, D. "Empty Names, Fictional Names, Mythical Names."

*Topic 3* Action Theory – Group Action: we often perform intentional group actions, like when you and your friend coordinate to carry a heavy couch together. In this case, you and your friend intend to act together. What is the nature of this collective intention? Can it be reduced to individual intentions you and your friend have or is it some mental state over and above them? Are there other types of group action?

Reading 1 Davidson, D. *Essays on Actions and Events*, Essay 5, "Intending."

Reading 2 Bratman, M. "Shared Cooperative Activity."

Reading 3 Choose one:

a) Chant, S.R. "Unintentional Collective Action"

b) Gilbert, M. "Shared Intention And Personal Intentions"

c) Salje, L. "The Essential Non-Indexical"

*Topic 4* Philosophy of Language – *De nunc & De se* beliefs: Saying 'I am hungry' and 'Juliana is hungry' is to say different things for at least two reasons. First, only Juliana can use 'I' to talk about Juliana – no matter how much you try, whenever you use 'I' it always refers to you and never to anyone else! – whereas everyone can use 'Juliana' to talk about her. Second, Juliana can use 'I' to talk about herself even if she has amnesia and doesn't remember her name! Similar conclusions can be arrived at with 'here', 'now', 'this', and 'that'. Most philosophers have thought that there's something special about 'I', 'here', 'now', etc., specially connected with intentional actions (i.e. actions performed for reasons). Are they right? What's so special about 'I' thoughts?

Reading 1 Perry, J. "The Problem of the Essential Indexical."

Reading 2 Millikan, R.G. "The Myth of the Essential Indexical."

Reading 3 Choose one:

a) Cappelen, H. & Dever, J. *The Inessential Indexical*.

b) Ninan, D. "De Se Attitudes and Action."

c) Ferrero, L. "Can I only intend my own actions? Intentions and the own action condition."

d) Morgan, D. "Temporal indexicals are essential."

- Topic 5* Philosophy of Language – Epithets & Slurs: Epithets and slurs are pejorative words. Unfortunately, we are all too familiar with them. It's not hard to find people who claim that they are using a slur without conveying its pejorative content. It's also not hard to find people who argue that this isn't possible. Who's right, if anyone?
- Reading 1 Hom, C. "The Semantics of Racial Epithets".
- Reading 2 Jeshion, R. "Slurs and Stereotypes"
- Reading 3 Choose one:
- a) Camp, E. "Slurring Perspectives"
  - b) Whiting, D. "It's not what you said, it's the way you said it"

## STRUCTURE OF THE COURSE

Lectures in this course are tentatively organized in the following way:

- **Introductory Seminar:** This will be the first lecture of the week. In this seminar, the task is to understand the topic of the reading, situate it within a literature and logical space, and to identify the main argument of the paper, identify underlying principles, etc. Note that at this point we won't be raising objections. Each week a different participant lead the seminar by bringing giving a 5 minute overview of the reading.
- **Tutorial:** This will typically be the second lecture of the week. Tutorials may be in person/synchronous, pre-recorded videos, or texts. The purpose of tutorials is to be a how-to guides. Depending on the week, they might also be lectures about topics students identify as necessary to comprehend the current reading.
- **Advanced Seminar:** This will be the last lecture of the week. In this seminar, the task is to isolate one or two arguments from the reading and philosophically engage with it by raising objections, replies on behalf of the author(s), identify underlying principles, come up with counterexamples, etc. Each week a different participant will lead the seminar by choosing which argument(s) to discuss.

**Note:** this course is a group activity. As such, it requires active engagement and participation from everyone. There won't be traditional lectures (except in some tutorials). It's only with active engagement coming from philosophical interest from students that the course will be enjoyable and interesting for everyone. The course won't be good unless everyone takes it seriously and do all the readings and requirement assignments.

## TENTATIVE SCHEDULE OF ACTIVITIES

*Unit 1 – Establishing a Research Question*

- Week 1* Jan 10 Overview of the course  
 Reading: “AITA, that if Jurassic Park were real, I would tell my husband that he cannot go” ([https://www.reddit.com/r/AmItheAsshole/comments/chzjl5/aita\\_that\\_if\\_jurassic\\_park\\_were\\_real\\_i\\_would\\_tell/](https://www.reddit.com/r/AmItheAsshole/comments/chzjl5/aita_that_if_jurassic_park_were_real_i_would_tell/)).  
 Shoemaker,D. “Thought experiments in philosophy.” (<https://blog.oup.com/2015/04/thought-experiments-philosophy/>)
- Jan 13 Advanced Seminar  
 Reading: Thought Experiments (SEP)

*Unit 2 – Knowing the Literature*

- Week 2* Jan 17 Introductory Seminar  
 Reading: Davidson,D. “Intending”  
 Video: Walkthrough Davidson’s “Intending”  
 Tutorial: How to read a philosophy paper (<https://youtu.be/kUdzvCBjO1g>)  
 Video: 3 tips on how to read a philosophy paper ([https://youtu.be/2dmlB5g\\_yJo](https://youtu.be/2dmlB5g_yJo))
- Jan 20 Advanced Seminar

- Week 3* Jan 24 Introductory Seminar  
 Reading: Bratman,M. “Two Faces Of Intention”  
 Tutorial: How to find more readings on a topic? SEP, IEP, Google Scholar, paper references, etc.  
 Videos: 5 ways of finding papers for your research (<https://youtu.be/xD3CZuu5ikY>)
- Jan 27 Advanced Seminar

- Week 4* Jan 31 Introductory Seminar  
 Reading: Bratman,M. “Shared Cooperative Activity”  
 Tutorial: Finding a research question  
 Video: How to find a paper/research topic (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TkeWSuPxhs8&feature=youtu.be>)
- Feb 3 Advanced Seminar

*Week 5* Feb 7 Seminar CANCELED  
Tutorial CANCELED  
Feb 10 Introductory Seminar  
*Reading:* Chant,S.R. “Unintentional collective action”  
Feb 11 Last day to schedule office hours to decide on the paper topic of your research paper.

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*Week 6* Feb 14 Advanced Seminar  
Tutorial: How to write a paper  
*Video:* How to write a good philosophy paper (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nI2KkSVRON0>)  
Feb 17 Introductory Seminar  
*Reading:* Tuomela,R. “Joint Intention, we-mode and I-mode”

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*Week 7* Feb 21 Advanced Seminar  
Feb 24 Advanced Seminar

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*Week 8* Feb 28 Advanced Seminar  
*Reading:* Schweikard,D.P. & Schmid,H.B. “Collective Intentionality” (<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/collective-intentionality/>)  
Mar 3 Introductory Seminar  
*Reading:* Gilbert,M. “Shared Intention And Personal Intentions”

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*Week 9* Mar 7 Seminar CANCELED  
Mar 10 Advanced Seminar



*Week 10* Mar 21 Advanced Seminar  
Tutorial: Talking about research  
*Video:* How to talk about research? ([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2NnFqX8\\_4QY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2NnFqX8_4QY))  
Mar 24 Introductory Seminar



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*Week 11* Mar 28      Introductory Seminar  
 Tutorial: How to give feedback to a colleague's paper  
 Mar 31              Advanced Seminar

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*Week 12* April 4      Introductory Seminar  
 Tutorial: how to prepare a presentation  
 April 7              Advanced Seminar

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*Week 13* April 11     Introductory Seminar  
 Tutorial: TBA  
 April 14             Visiting Speaker  
 April 15             Paper due

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*Unit 3 – Presentation and Reflection*

*Week 14* April 18     Presentations  
 April 21  
 April 22             Conference Feedback Essays due

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*Week 15* April 25     Presentations  
 April 28  
 April 29             Conference Feedback Essays due

*Week 16*             *May 2, 5: Reading Week*

*The End!*