



# DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

## POSTGRADUATE STUDENT HANDBOOK

2022–2023

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## Members of Staff

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## Practical Information

### *Co-ordinators*

Postgraduate Co-ordinator: Prof. Michael Dunne

International Students Co-ordinator: Prof. Michael Dunne

Mature Students/ Access Advisor: Dr Cyril McDonnell 1<sup>st</sup> semester/Dr Amos Edelheit  
2<sup>nd</sup> semester

### *Notice Boards, Moodle, and Website*

The Department's notice boards, Moodle, and the website are important methods of communicating with students. Important information (such as changes in the timetable or in lecture times) will be posted there from time to time. Please consult these notice boards, Moodle, and the website regularly.

### *Student Emails*

Likewise, please check your university email account regularly, as this is an important means of communication with the university. You will have received your personal student email account at registration.

### *Staff-Student Committee*

Students from each year elect two representatives for this committee, whose purpose is to allow students to provide feedback to the Department about their educational experience. Concerns about a module that could not be resolved by speaking to the individual lecturer can be brought to this committee as well. The Department is represented by Dr Mette Lebech, by Dr Cyril McDonnell, and by Dr Keith Begley.

**Lectures commence on Monday, September 19<sup>th</sup>.**

## Programmes

(One year full-time, two years part-time)

### GENERAL COURSE INFORMATION AND COURSE STRUCTURE

The M.A. degrees (Mode I) in Philosophy comprise 6 taught modules and a minor thesis. The 90 credits for each individual M.A. will be made up of 60 ECTS credits awarded for taught modules and 30 credits for the dissertation. The dissertation comprises a maximum of 15,000 words, and is assessed by the supervisor and the external examiner.

#### M.A. IN PHILOSOPHY

This M.A. relates to discourses and developments in the history of Western philosophy up to the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It thus aims at carrying out a philosophical analysis of some of the underlying cultural themes and philosophical presuppositions of Western self-understanding and contemporary society. Building upon the strengths of critical thinking, systematic reflection, and historical awareness developed at undergraduate level, the programme allows the student to explore thematic concerns of philosophers in the Western tradition from medieval times to the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Students may choose additional modules (where suitable) after consultation with the Head of Department and/or the Postgraduate Coordinator. The topic of the dissertation and the chosen modules must be approved by the Head of Department.

#### M.A. IN PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

Similar to the M.A. in Philosophy, this M.A. relates to discourses and developments in the history in Western philosophy up to the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It aims at carrying out a philosophical analysis of some of the underlying cultural themes and philosophical presuppositions of Western self-understanding and contemporary society in relation to the phenomenon of religion. Building upon the strengths of critical thinking, systematic reflection, and historical awareness developed at undergraduate level, the programme allows the student to explore thematic concerns of philosophers in the Western tradition from medieval times to the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The **topic of the dissertation must be in the subject area of Philosophy of Religion**. Students may choose additional modules (where suitable) after consultation with the Head of Department and/or the Postgraduate Coordinator, including modules offered by St. Patrick's College. The topic of the dissertation and the chosen modules must be approved by the Head of Department.

#### M.A. IN ANCIENT, MEDIEVAL, AND RENAISSANCE THOUGHT

The M.A. offers the student the opportunity to explore early Western intellectual history through philosophical, literary and cultural approaches. It should appeal to students who want an overview of the foundations of modern European thought, and those who want to go on to further studies in Classics, Medieval and Renaissance studies, European studies, philosophy,

or the history of ideas. The objective of this course is to provide students with a specialized knowledge in Ancient, Medieval and Renaissance thought, focusing on philosophical writers, literary and historical themes, and the history of thought. Building upon the strengths of critical thinking, systematic reflection and historical awareness developed by the student in their undergraduate studies, the M.A. in Ancient, Medieval, and Renaissance Thought will allow the student to explore thematic concerns of writers in the Western tradition from Ancient Greece and Rome to the 16th century and the various revivals in scholastic thought into the seventeenth century. It will also prepare those students for research degrees in either one of these areas, allowing them to pursue further studies in Classics, Philosophy or related fields.

**For the Optional Modules from the Classics Department please consult Course Finder. Optional Modules from the Philosophy Department are listed below.**

Students are required to choose at least one taught module from each Department in addition to the core module. Please consult the programme directors/coordinators for details. The **topic of the dissertation must be in the subject areas Ancient, Medieval, or Renaissance Thought**. The topic of the dissertation and the chosen modules must be approved by the programme coordinator and the respective Head of Department.

## POSTGRADUATE DIPLOMA

The Postgraduate Diploma comprises six taught modules (including the compulsory Philosophical Seminar but with no credit for attending), but not the M.A. dissertation. This may be an option for students who have initially registered for one of the M.A. programmes but, for various reasons, choose not to complete the module PH699 (Dissertation). If you wish to consider this option, please consult the Head of Department and/or the Postgraduate Coordinator.

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## Entry Requirements

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Candidates applying for M.A. Programmes/ Postgraduate Diploma in Philosophy should normally have a B.A. Honours degree with at least Second Class Honours Grade 2 in Philosophy or its equivalent.

## Credit Requirements

Students will be expected to take 60 ECTS credits in Taught Modules, which is compulsory for all M.A.s except the M.A. in Ancient, Medieval and Renaissance Thought and the M.A in Philosophy, Politics and Economics. Each M.A. module is equal to 10 ECTS credits and the thesis is equal to 30 ECTS credits.

## Taught Modules

### FIRST SEMESTER

**PH651: CUSTOMS, LAW, AND JUSTICE IN ANCIENT, MEDIEVAL AND RENAISSANCE THOUGHT —AMRT CORE (10 ECTS CREDITS)** (Prof. Michael Dunne, Dr William Desmond Jr)

This module, team-taught by members of the two departments, provides an overview of approaches to customs, laws, and justice from Classical Greek thought to the Renaissance. It confronts theories of the relationships between customs, laws and justice, with particular attention to important concepts such as justice as a virtue, arithmetical and geometrical equality, distributive and corrective justice, the variability of customs, the emergence of ideas of natural law and even of subjective natural rights. Texts will range from the Greek Sophists, Plato, Aristotle, the Stoics, Roman legal codes, St Thomas Aquinas' *Summa Theologiae*, FitzRalph, de Vitoria, las Casas, and Hobbes. One particular theme that will be explored across the centuries is the relation of justice and slavery, with regard to relevant issues of the *ius gentium*, natural rights, individual freedom, and property.

#### *Learning Outcomes*

On successful completion of the module, students should be able to:

- Describe and evaluate the different concepts discussed in the module.
- Analyse critically the intellectual continuities and discontinuities in approaches to customs, laws, and justice across two millennia, from classical Greece to the Renaissance.
- Outline the main ideas of key thinkers studied in the module, and their influence.
- Identify the relationship between customs, laws, rights, and justice, and the political and historical realities.
- Demonstrate the ability to communicate original ideas in both written and oral form.

#### *Assessment*

Continuous Assessment 100%

10% reaction papers, 20% presentation, 70% Final Essay

**PH646: METHODS IN 20<sup>TH</sup>-CENTURY PHENOMENOLOGY (10 ECTS credits)** (Dr Cyril McDonnell)

This module examines the origins and development of the twentieth-century phenomenological movement in philosophy. It focuses on the various different methods (both 'scientific' and 'hermeneutic') that were devised and advocated by some of the key thinkers who spearheaded

this movement, such as: Franz Brentano (1838–1917); Edmund Husserl (1859–1938); Wilhelm Dilthey (1833–1911); Martin Heidegger (1889–1976); Emmanuel Levinas (1906–1995). Selected seminal texts from these authors will be identified as sources to read and analyse. The connection between the different phenomenological methods deployed by each of these respective thinkers in their philosophising and the ensuing different definitions of phenomenology that unfurled in the twentieth century will be addressed in addition to the controversial issue between Husserl and Heidegger regarding whether phenomenology is a scientific or hermeneutic discipline.

### *Learning Outcomes*

On successful completion of the module, students should be able to:

- discriminate between various phenomenological methods deployed in twentieth-century phenomenology: descriptive psychology (Brentano); descriptive [hermeneutic] psychology (Dilthey); descriptive-eidetic psychology (Husserl); existential-hermeneutic phenomenology (Heidegger); dialogic ethical-transcendental phenomenology (Levinas).
- account for the development of Husserl's thought, with particular focus on central tenets and concepts of his phenomenology (e.g., the intentionality of consciousness, eidetic ideation, the natural attitude, transcendental reduction, the transcendental-phenomenological epoche).
- assess the accuracy of one philosopher's direct evaluation of another philosopher's position and its pertinence for explaining different evolutions of phenomenology in the twentieth century.

### *Assessment*

100% continuous assessment, broken down as follows: (1) attendance at seminars: 10% (2) seminar presentation: 20% (c. 1,500 words) (3) essay: 70% (c. 3,000 words).

### **PH647: PHENOMENOLOGY AND SCHOLASTICISM: STEIN'S PHILOSOPHY (10 ECTS credits) (Dr Mette Lebech)**

This module aims to introduce the phenomenology and Christian philosophy of Edith Stein by reading texts from her early, middle and late periods. A close reading and discussion of the basic concepts opens onto a discussion of her contribution to phenomenology and the *philosophia perennis*, by placing particular emphasis on the way in which she channels the two traditions 'into one riverbed'. Typical topics such as empathy, person, community, state, essence, finite and eternal being are discussed with a view to understanding the direction of her philosophy from phenomenology over ontology to Christian metaphysics.



### *Learning Outcomes*

On successful completion of the module, students should be able to:

- discuss Stein's contribution to phenomenology and the 'philosophia perennis';
- critically assess the texts studied and discuss the topics treated in them in the light of Stein's understanding of them;
- explain the central concepts of the texts studied, and situate these in the contexts of the phenomenological movement and the 'philosophia perennis';
- account for the structure of the texts and the works from which they are taken;
- critically address the question of the interpretation of the work studied;
- critically assess Stein's understanding and use of phenomenology;
- discuss the relation between phenomenology and scholasticism.

### *Assessment*

100% continuous assessment, broken down as follows: (1) 10% = attendance at seminars; (2) 20% = seminar presentation (15 minutes oral & written presentation [c. 1,500 words] of an analysis of a central topic of Stein's phenomenology to fellow students and moderator of seminar and 10 minutes questions-response). [20% = 10% for content of presentation & 10% for delivery and grasp of subject-matter as evidenced in seminar discussion]; (3) 70% = essay (c. 4,000 words from choice of 3–4 essay topics).

## SECOND SEMESTER

### **PH641: READING RENAISSANCE PHILOSOPHICAL TEXTS: FICINO'S PLATONIC THEOLOGY (10 ECTS credits) (Dr Amos Edelheit)**

Focusing on a close reading of Marsilio Ficino's (1433–1499) Platonic Theology, this module examines its unique style and structure, its sources and debts to previous philosophical traditions, with particular emphasis on its originality and place in 15th-century philosophy. Central concepts such as substance, soul, nature and matter will be discussed in relation to their advancement over or departure from their kindred treatment in the wider existing philosophical traditions.

### *Learning Outcomes*

On successful completion of the module, students should be able to:

- describe and assess the revival of Platonism in the Renaissance and its limits;
- distinguish rhetorical statements from philosophical arguments;
- identify the unique methods and practices developed by Ficino in this text in comparison to previous scholastic and humanist approaches

- point out the main concepts and theories presented by Ficino in this text and evaluate their originality in relation to contemporary thought
- note and elaborate on the significant philosophical contributions Ficino makes to the metaphysical underpinnings of the philosophical psychology of the 15th century

#### *Assessment*

Continuous Assessment: 100%

Participation, presentation, final essay (4,000 words)

#### **PH650: FOUCAULT, *HISTORY OF SEXUALITY*** (Prof. Philipp Rosemann)

In the nineteenth century, in Hegel's system, history entered into the structure of reality. Metaphysics became, in Heidegger's words, the 'history of Being'. Foucault's *History of Sexuality* applies this temporalization to the human body: sexuality is not simply given, by 'nature', but is historically and culturally constituted. This notion, which Foucault formulated in 1976, has now seeped into everyday life. But what exactly did Foucault mean? What follows once we discover the contingency of sexual desires? Did Foucault aim at a liberation of our diverse sexualities? How do Foucault's views compare with those who have developed his ideas further, such as Judith Butler? We will discover that the four volumes of the *History of Sexuality* form a complex picture. In the final volume, which became available only in 2018 (in English translation, in 2021), Foucault talks mostly about marriage and virginity. What's up with that?

#### Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of the module, students should be able to:

- Outline and evaluate Foucault's main theses in his *History of Sexuality*, especially volumes 1 and 4;
- explain the place and significance of the *History of Sexuality* in the development of philosophy post-Hegel;
- assess the validity of Foucault's approach to the 'invention' of contemporary sexualities;
- compare and contrast Foucault's approach to sexuality with that of subsequent theoreticians (such as Judith Butler);
- prepare and deliver a 30- to 40-minute presentation on an aspect of the module topic;
- research and compose a 5,000-word essay on a topic closely related to the History of Sexuality.

#### Assessment

Continuous Assessment 100%

Class presentation: 30%; Major essay of c. 5,000 words: 70%

PH652: **HEGEL, *PHENOMENOLOGY OF SPIRIT*** (Prof. W. Desmond Sr)

The major purpose of this seminar is to read Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* to get a sense of the work as a whole and the underlying dynamic and logic that inform it. It is a large and important work, considered by some to be one of the greatest works in the history of western philosophy. While we may not have time to discuss all of it in class, students are asked to make an effort to read as much as possible of the text as a whole. In class we will look at some of the most important parts, with the following emphases: First, simply trying to make sense of what Hegel is saying and what he intends. This means letting Hegel speak on his own terms. Second, formulating some sense of the development in specific parts, as well as of the movement of the work as a whole. Third, formulating some of the main questions that arise in relation to Hegel's thinking in this work. This may mean raising questions in terms other than Hegel's own.

Assessment

Continuous Assessment 100%

(1) Attendance at Seminars (10%); (2) Seminar Presentation (20%); (3) Essay (70%, c. 3,000 words).

PH699: **DISSERTATION (Compulsory module running over two semesters for all M.A. students except students in the Ancient, Medieval and Renaissance Philosophy programme) (30 ECTS credits)**

The aim of this module is to develop students' independent research methods in philosophy and to deepen their critical awareness and writing ability on a significant topic in philosophy. The module requires students to select: (a) a significant topic of research for a Minor M.A. thesis in philosophy; (b) think this topic through; and (c) present it (c. 12,000-15,000 words) adhering to normal academic-scholarly written conventions. Appointment of supervisors for each student's thesis-topic proposal will follow upon a consideration and review of the theses' proposals that have been submitted to the Department of Philosophy and as approved by the Head of the Department. Revision and refinement of theses' proposals are necessary, and such will be conducted, in due course over the first semester, between appointed supervisor and student. It is the responsibility of both supervisor and supervisee to arrange and fix appointment times during both the First and Second Semesters, and to discuss the progress, or lack of progress made in the researching and in the writing of the thesis. The format of the dissertation must conform to the guidelines set out in the Departmental Handbook for Students and the University's Submission Procedures.

**Learning Outcomes:** On successful completion of the module, students should be able to:

- Identify and choose a topic for masters research in philosophy.
- Think this topic through in a consistent manner, identifying primary and secondary sources.

- Express accurately and evaluate properly, in written format, the viewpoints, opinions and beliefs of others and of oneself relevant to the topic selected, in a reasonable, fair, consistent and critical fashion.
  - Develop skills of independent learning and self-evaluation.
  - Demonstrate control, through argumentation and line of argument, over the material researched.
  - Present, in written format, a scholarly academic thesis in philosophy following academic standards of referencing (as laid out by the MHRA Style Book).
  - Write clearly for the reader, displaying critical written communication skills and argument style in philosophy.
  - Follow University submission guidelines for MA theses at MU.
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## Examinations Marking System

Letter Grade	Descriptive Heading	%	Class
A++	answer that could not be bettered	100	I
A+	exceptional answer displaying unexpected insight	90	I
A	undoubtedly first class, flawless answer, demonstrating originality	80	I
A-	almost flawless answer demonstrating some originality	70	I
B+	extremely high competence, perhaps displaying limited originality or technical flaws or minor errors	68	II-1
B	fundamentally correct and demonstrating overall competence	65	II-1
B-	competent performance, substantially correct answer but possibly containing minor flaws or omissions	60	II-1
C+	awarded on the basis of the answer being somewhat better than a C but below a B-	58	II-2
C	basically correct answer with minor errors or one major error/omission	55	II-2
C-	awarded on the basis of the answer being somewhat below a C but better than a D+	50	II-2
D+	no more than adequate answer	48	III
D	adequate answer with serious errors or omissions	45	P
D-	lowest passing grade, barely deserving to pass	40	P
E+	The answer is inadequate and does not deserve to pass.	38	F
E	The answer fails to address the question properly but displays some knowledge of the material.	35	F
E-	Answer fails to address the question.	30	F
F+	little relevant or correct material but some evidence of engagement with question	20	F
F	very little relevant or correct material	10	F
F-	totally irrelevant answer	0	F

## Essay Submission Procedures

The Department no longer accepts essays submitted in hard copy. Please submit all tutorial and final essays through Moodle. You need to observe the published deadline. Late submission must be cleared *before the deadline* with the lecturer in question.

For the final essay of each module, late submissions will not be accepted at all, unless you have obtained an extension from the module lecturer. Provide if possible supporting documentation, such as a medical certificate. The lecturer will let you know their decision. Please note that extensions cannot be granted beyond the end of the relevant examination period.

### *A Note on Plagiarism*

Plagiarism is a serious academic offence. Many universities, including Maynooth, use Turnitin for submission of written work. Turnitin is a software tool which you can use yourself to check that you have referenced your work correctly. It shows similarity indexes and used sources by ‘reading’ for example a submitted essay against millions of sources (including other student essays) in the database.

Cases of suspected plagiarism are automatically referred to the Head of Department, who will proceed according to the University’s published policy, which is available at this link:

[https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/sites/default/files/assets/document/MU%20Policy%20on%20Plagiarism%20Updated%20July%202019\\_0.pdf](https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/sites/default/files/assets/document/MU%20Policy%20on%20Plagiarism%20Updated%20July%202019_0.pdf)

Sometimes it is tricky to determine what is plagiarism and what is not. In the course of your studies in Maynooth, you will learn how to cite sources correctly, so that it is always clear on whose words or ideas you are relying in developing your own thought. Likewise, you will learn how to format an essay according to proper academic standards.

## Guidelines on Referencing and Bibliography

Referencing your sources in academic essay-writing is essential. There are several referencing styles in existence, such as for instance: the APA (American Psychological Association), MLA (Modern Language Association), Chicago/ Turabian, MHRA (Modern Humanities Research Association) style and the Author-Date system (often referred to as the ‘Harvard’ system of referencing). The Author/ Date system of referencing, however, is not very suitable for essays in philosophy [e.g., Plato (2006:45)].

The Philosophy Department recommends students to follow the guidelines on referencing provided in the *Modern Humanities Research Association: Style Book*, [*MHRA Style Guide*] which is available on line at <http://www.mhra.org.uk/style.>, and to use footnotes (rather than endnotes). Please consult this very useful *Style Guide* — it contains helpful information on

many points, in addition to referencing, such as, for instance, on punctuation, the use of abbreviations and exclamation marks, spelling etc.

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## Maynooth Writing Centre

<https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/centre-teaching-and-learning/student-learning-and-advice/writing-centre>

The Maynooth University Writing Centre has been established by the Centre for Teaching and Learning to support student academic writing.

**The Writing Centre is located in Room 001 (Ground Floor) School of Education Building, on the North Campus.**

The **Maynooth University Writing Centre** offers free, friendly, non-judgemental writing help to any student, undergraduate or postgraduate, regardless of course, degree or level. The support we offer is primarily through one-to-one appointments, where students can discuss their writing with peer/expert tutors. In addition, Writing Centre staff offer writing workshops, support writing groups, engage in discipline specific work and research in academic writing and related fields.

Further information regarding the Centre's opening hours and specific services will be posted on the Centre's Moodle space. This can be accessed through the Maynooth University Moodle homepage.

### **Contact**

If you have any questions about the Writing Centre or if you wish to make an appointment, please email us on: [writingcentre@mu.ie](mailto:writingcentre@mu.ie).

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