

Philosophy 6593: Seminar on Philosophical Naturalism
Course Description and Reading List (Tentative and Incomplete)
Fall 2005, Wednesday, 7:00–10:00P.M.

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This seminar will focus on classical American philosophical naturalism, with our primary concern being the applicability of work in this tradition to contemporary problems (in philosophy and in other areas and aspects of life). This is a rich and valuable tradition, unfortunately eclipsed by pragmatism, much analytic philosophy, and weaker views like positivism, that still has much to teach us. It aimed for a non-reductionist, vision of the world that saw science as important, without being at all scientific. It saw humans as part of nature, but made room for values, morality, art, and religion. Naturalists and anti-naturalists are equally welcome. Advanced undergraduates and students from disciplines outside philosophy are also welcome.

Like all *isms*, it is somewhat vague and amorphous, but the leading motifs are that there is nothing transcendent, supernatural, no “metaphysics of presence” (except perhaps just the natural world itself). Intellectual ancestors include Aristotle, Spinoza, Hume, and Nietzsche. Although we will focus on implications for today and not be purists about what we count as naturalism, we will spend some time on the cultural and social context in which this work arose, and students may write either a historical or a systematic paper for the course.

Don’t panic over the reading list. Many of the brief selections are only two or three pages long, and it is two lists in one. We will divide items into *must reading* and *I-hope-you can-get-to-it-but-I-don’t-expect-miracles reading* at the first class meeting. The latest information about the class can always be found on the course home page:

<http://www.ou.edu/ouphil/faculty/chris/naturalism.pdf>.

Texts

Required

1. John Ryder, ed., *American Philosophic Naturalism in the Twentieth Century*. Prometheus Books, 1994; ISBN: 0879758945. A very good anthology. Not cheap, but there are used copies at Abebooks, Amazon, and other places that are very reasonably priced.
2. **George Santayana** (1863-1952), *The Life of Reason*, 1905/06. Prometheus Books, ISBN: 1573922102. Historically important. We won’t spend a lot of time on it, but you can buy it for under \$9.00.
3. **John Dewey** (1859-1952), *Experience and Nature*, 1925; 2nd ed. 1929. Dover Publications, ISBN: 0486204715. One of the great works of the twentieth-century. One should read and cite Dewey in the collected edition from the **Dewey Center**, but their version of this is not cheap.

On Reserve

1. **Roy Wood Sellars** (1883-1973), *Principles of Emergent Realism: Philosophical Essays by Roy Wood Sellars*, St. Louis: Warren H. Green, 1970. One of the most underrated philosophers of the century; nearly the equal, I think, of his son (**Wilfrid**, one of the greatest American philosophers) and certainly easier to read. He'll be a central figure in this course.
2. Roy Wood Sellars, *The Principles, Perspectives, and Problems of Philosophy*, Pageant Press, 1970.
3. Yervant Krikorian, ed., *Naturalism and the Human Spirit*. New York, 1944, contains a number of now classic essays.
4. Peter A. French, Theodore Edward Uehling, Howard K. Wettstein, eds. *Philosophical Naturalism (Midwest Studies in Philosophy)*. University of Notre Dame Press, 1994, ISBN: 0268014108. Contains some useful recent essays.
5. David Papineau, *Philosophical Naturalism*, Blackwell 1993, ISBN: 0631189033. A revised version is available on the web at:
<http://www.kcl.ac.uk/ip/davidpapineau/Staff/Papineau/PhilNat2nded/PhNatIndexrevised.htm>.

1 Reduction, Emergence, and Supervenience (The Heterogeneity of Practically Everything)

Almost no versions of reductionism work for anything. We will briefly see why (in most cases the problem of multiply realizability is a key culprit). Most of the naturalists thought reduction hopeless, and we will proceed in a non-reductionist spirit. We will also spend some time on concepts of *emergence* that are distinct from (hopeless) pictures of reduction, on the one hand, and (often plausible, but also often rather uninformative) pictures of supervenience and realization, on the other.

1. David Papineau, from his **Philosophical Naturalism**.
2. Jaegwon Kim, *Philosophy of Mind (Dimensions of Philosophy)*, Westview Press, 1996; chapter 9 & selections.
3. Brian P. McLaughlin, "Emergence and Supervenience," *Intellectia*, 25, (1997), 25-43; selections.

2 Historical Background and the Nature of Nature

1. Philip P. Wiener, *Evolution and the Founders of Pragmatism*, Peter Smith, 1969; selections.
2. Selections from George Santayana, **F. J. E. Woodbridge**, **John Herman Randall**, and **Justus Buchler** from Part I of *Ryder*.

3 Classic Statements

1. Some of Santayana's book, a good deal of Dewey's, and additional papers in Part I of *Ryder*.
2. Abraham Edel, "Is Naturalism Arbitrary?" *JP*, 43 (1946); 141–152.

3. Ernest Nagel, "Naturalism Reconsidered," his 1954 APA Presidential Address; reprinted in his *Logic without Metaphysics*, Free Press, 1956, ch 1.
4. ...

4 Naturalistic Metphysics and Ontology

1. John Dewey, *Experience and Nature*, selections.
2. **Morris R. Cohen**, "The Metaphysics of Reason and Scientific Method," in Ryder, II.3.2.
3. **Sydney Hook**, *The Quest for Being*, 1961; selections.
4. John Dewey, Sidney Hook, and Ernest Nagel, "Are Naturalists Materialists?" in Ryder, I.2.2.
5. Roy Wood Sellars, "Does Naturalism Need an Ontology?," *JP*, 41 (1944), 686-694
6. Roy Wood Sellars, "Reformed Materialism and Intrinsic Endurance," in Ryder, II.1.
7. Roy Wood Sellars, "Is Naturalism Enough?" in *Principles of Emergent Realism*, 140–149.
8. Sterling P. Lamprecht, *The Metaphysics of Naturalism*, Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1967; selections
9. ...
10. Chris Swoyer, "**Properties**" in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*; selections on explanationism in metaphysics (ontology without first principles).

5 Persons: Cognition, Intentionality, Consciousness, Personality

At least some naturalists were concerned to do justice to intentionality, consciousness, and human practices within a naturalistic framework. Like many philosophers of their time, some naturalists flirted (or worse) with behaviorism. We'll take this as a fact of life and ask how their insights about mind might translate into information-processing terms.

1. Roy Wood Sellars *Principles of Emergent Realism*, Part III, 174–229.
2. ...
3. ...
4. ...
5. **Wilfrid Sellars**, "**Philosophy and the Scientific Image of Man**," in *Frontiers of Science and Philosophy*, Robert Colodny, ed., Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1962, 35-78. Reprinted in Sellars *Science, Perception and Reality*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963; republished by Ridgeview Publishing Company, Atascadero, California, 1991.
6. *The Cognitive Animal: Empirical and Theoretical Perspectives on Animal Cognition*, Marc Bekoff, Colin Allen, & Gordon Burghardt, eds. The MIT Press, 2002, ISBN: 0262523221; brief selections. Humans aren't the only cognitive creatures in the natural order.

7. Gary Marcus, *The Birth of the Mind: How a Tiny Number of Genes Creates the Complexities of Human Thought*, Basic Books, 2004, ISBN: 0465044050; selections. An extremely well-informed and lucid discussion of the genetic mechanisms involved in cognition.
8. Roger D. Masters, Michael T. McGuire, eds., *The Neurotransmitter Revolution: Serotonin, Social Behavior, and the Law*, Southern Illinois U. Press, 1994; selections. We are organisms in the natural order, and some drugs (e.g., Prozac, Paxil) affect neurotransmitters (e.g., serotonin, dopamine) and via them personality; what implications might they have for culture and politics?

6 Norms and Values

6.1 Epistemic Norms

Can reason be “naturalized”?

1. ...
2. John Dewey, ...
3. ...
4. W. V. O. Quine, “Epistemology Naturalized,” in Ryder, II.4.3 Quine downplays the normative aspects of epistemology, which we won’t, but this is a classic and you should read it.
5. Hilary Putnam, “Why Reason Can’t Be Naturalized,” *Synthese* 52, (1982), 3–23.
6. by Hilary Kornblith, *Knowledge And Its Place In Nature*, Oxford University Press; 2005, ISBN: 0199246327; selections.
7. Ronald Giere, “Naturalized Philosophy of Science,” *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.
8. Paul E. Meehl, Cliometric Metatheory: The Actuarial Approach to Empirical, History-based Philosophy of Science, *Psychological Reports*, 71 (1992), 339-467; selections.

6.1.1 Logic

1. John Dewey, *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry*, 1938; selections.
2. Ernest Nagel, “Logic without Ontology,” reprinted in his *Logic without Metaphysics*, Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1956. Also in Ryder II.4.2
3. ...
4. Thomas Nagel, *The Last Word*, Oxford U. Press, 2001; chapter 4.
5. Burton Dreben and Juliet Floyd, “Tautology: How Not to Use A Word,” *Synthese*, 87, (1991); 23-50.
6. ...

6.2 Ethics and Morality

Once we abandon the fruitless search for reductions, Moore’s naturalistic fallacy is irrelevant and the way is open to ask what a naturalistic approach to ethics and morality might look like and how viable it could

be.

1. Abraham Edel, “Naturalism and Ethical Theory,” in Ryder, III.5.1 and Krikorian, ch 4.
2. Abraham Edel, *Ethical Judgment: The Use of Science in Ethics*, 1955; selections.
3. ...
4. ...
5. Ernest Nagel, On Three Arguments for Natural Law *How Many Questions?: Essays in Honor of Sidney Morgenbesser*, Hackett, 1983, 384–395.
6. Stephen Darwall, *Philosophical Ethics (Dimensions of Philosophy)*, Westview Press, 1998, chapter 3.
7. Alexander Miller, *An Introduction to Contemporary Metaethics*, Polity, 2003, chapter 8 (“Naturalism I: Cornell Realism”) and 9 (“Naturalism II: Reductionism”).
8. Julia Annas, “[Virtue Ethics: what kind of naturalism?](#)”

6.3 Facts and Values

1. David Hume, *Treatise of Human Nature*; brief selection on ‘is’ and ‘ought’.
2. Max Weber, “Science as a Vocation,” 1919; selections. Classic statement of the fact-value dichotomy.
3. John Dewey, ...
4. ...
5. Morton White, *A Philosophy of Culture : The Scope of Holistic Pragmatism*, Princeton University Press, 2002, ISBN: 0691096562; chapter 10.
6. Hilary Putnam, *The Collapse of the Fact/Value Dichotomy and Other Essays*, Harvard University Press, 2004, ISBN: 0674013808; chapters 1, 2, and 6.

7 The Human Sciences

1. [John Stuart Mill](#), *A System of Logic*, 1843; brief selections.
2. John Dewey, *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry*, 1938; selections.
3. ...
4. ...
5. Dan Sperber, *Explaining Culture: A Naturalistic Approach*, Blackwell, 1996; extensive selections.
6. Michael Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge*, Routledge, 1958; very brief selections.

8 Society and Politics

Many of the classical American naturalists were extremely concerned with social, cultural, and political issues and wrote about them incisively. Their social milieu was somewhat different from ours, however, and among other things we will be ask what insights they can offer us about a world with an increasingly global

economy, an ever-growing disparity between rich and poor, terrorism, the information superhighway, and the like.

1. ...
2. ...
3. Sydney Hook, "Naturalism and Democracy," in Krikorian, 40–64.
4. Sydney Hook, "Nature and the Human Spirit," in Ryder, III.6.1.
5. ...
6. ...

9 Art

1. John Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 1934; selections.
2. ...
3. ...

10 Religion

1. John Dewey, *A Common Faith (The Terry Lectures Series)*, Yale University Press, 1960; selections.
2. *Humanist Manifesto*. Drafted by Roy Wood Sellars. Signed by Dewey, Randall, and about thirty others.
3. Sterling P. Lamprecht, "Naturalism and Religion," in Krikorian, 17–40.
4. William P. Alston, "What Is Naturalism, that We Should Be Mindful of It?"; selections. One of many able contemporary philosophers who remind us that the cliché "we are all naturalists now" isn't true.
5. Robert Solomon, *Spirituality for the Skeptic*, Oxford University Press, 2002, ISBN: 0195134672; selections.

11 Naturalism Contrasted

All *isms* are somewhat vague and diffuse, but can we say anything useful about differences between naturalism and pragmatism (Dewey and Hook were both, but Sellars and various other naturalists rejected pragmatism, sometimes emphatically)? More importantly nowadays, perhaps, is there any difference between naturalism and contemporary non-reductive materialism? Here the issue is probably less one of discovering differences and more that of recovering lost insights of the naturalists' that might make contemporary materialism more nuanced and capable of doing justice to a wide range of human values and concerns.

1. Philip Kitcher, "The Return of the Naturalist," *Philosophical Review*, 1992, 53-114.

2. Antonella Corradini, Sergio Galvan, & E. J. Lowe, eds.
3. John McDowell, *Mind and World*, Harvard University Press, 1996, ISBN: 0674576101; selections.
4. *Naturalism in Question*, ed., Mario De Caro & David Macarthur, Harvard University Press, 2004, ISBN: 067401295X; chapters by selected authors. *Analytic Philosophy Without Naturalism* forthcoming, Routledge, 2005, ISBN: 0415349451; we'll look at selections if it's available in time.
5. ...