

Seminar Questions: Philosophical Issues in Behavioural Science

How to Prepare for a Seminar

Minimally, come to the seminar with a question or request for clarification.

Consider the question or questions assigned in advance. Think about which bits of the lecture material is relevant to them. Try to identify problems or objections.

Read the text set for the seminar if you can. Make some notes on it. In making notes, focus on how the text provides evidence or argument that is relevant to the question or questions assigned for the seminar.

Make some notes on anything that is unclear to you. If you can, sketch out an answer to the questions assigned for the seminar.

Seminars and Assessment

Each seminar topic is linked to one of the essay questions on which you will be assessed.

Your work in preparing and participating in the seminar should help you in selecting which questions to write your essays on, and in writing the essays.

Please Check for Changes

At the end of each seminar, ask your seminar tutor to confirm the questions and any reading for the next seminar.

Seminar tutors may change the questions and any readings up to the week before each seminar.

Seminar 1

Question

According to Dickinson (2016, p. 177),

‘instrumental behavior is controlled by two dissociable processes: a goal-directed and an habitual process’

What does this mean?

Lecture Notes

https://philosophical-behavioral-science-docs.butterfill.com/docs/lecture_01/instrumental_habitual_goaldirected/

Reading

Dickinson, A. (2016). Instrumental conditioning revisited: Updating dual-process theory. In J. B. Trobalon & V. D. Chamizo (Eds.), *Associative learning and cognition* (Vol. 51, pp. 177–195). Edicions Universitat Barcelona.

Where to Find the Reading?

In some cases the reference section of the lecture notes already includes a link to help you find the reading.

If there is no link in the lecture notes, start by searching for the title (and, if that fails, by title and authors) on google scholar. If this fails, the library has resources. If those fail, please check first with others on the course. If you still have problems, you may email your seminar tutor.

Seminar 2

Question

How, if at all, should discoveries about habitual processes inform attempts to solve The Problem of Action*?

*The Problem of Action is the question, What distinguishes your actions from things that merely happen to you?

Lecture Notes

https://philosophical-behavioral-science-docs.butterfill.com/docs/lecture_02/the_problem_of_action_and_habitual/

Reading

This seminar's question also requires the previous seminars's reading.

Davidson, D. (1971). Agency. In Binkley, R., Bronaugh, R., and Marras, A., editors, *Agent, Action, and Reason*, pages 3–25. University of Toronto Press, Toronto. Reprinted in Davidson, D. (1980) *Essays on Actions and Events*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

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Seminar 3

Question

How, if at all, should discoveries about motor representations inform attempts to solve The Problem of Action*?

*The Problem of Action is the question, What distinguishes your actions from things that merely happen to you?

Lecture Notes

https://philosophical-behavioral-science-docs.butterfill.com/docs/lecture_03/motor_and_problem_of_action/

Reading

This seminar's question also requires the previous seminars's reading.

Butterfill, S. A. and Sinigaglia, C. (2014). Intention and motor representation in purposive action. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 88(1):119–145.

Where to Find the Reading?

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If there is no link in the lecture notes, start by searching for the title (and, if that fails, by title and authors) on google scholar. If this fails, the library has resources. If those fail, please check first with others on the course. If you still have problems, you may email your seminar tutor.

Seminar 4

Questions

What is the central claim of Bratman's account of shared intention?

What does this account aim to achieve?

Does the account succeed?

Lecture Notes

https://philosophical-behavioral-science-docs.butterfill.com/docs/lecture_04/bratman_shared_intention/

Reading

Bratman, M. E. (2014). *Shared agency: A planning theory of acting together*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Retrieved from <http://0-dx.doi.org.pugwash.lib.warwick.ac.uk/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199897933.001.0001>

Where to Find the Reading?

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Seminar 5

Seminar 6

Question

What, if any, objection to decision theory would arise from the truth of Dickinson's dual process theory of action?

In this question, 'decision theory' refers to the theory elaborated by Jeffrey (1983). It is variously called 'expected utility theory' (Hargreaves-Heap & Varoufakis, 2004) and 'the theory of rational choice' (Sugden, 1991). The term can be used for any of the standard approaches based on Ramsey (1931) and Savage (1972).

Lecture Notes

https://philosophical-behavioral-science-docs.butterfill.com/docs/lecture_06/dual_process_theory_contra_decision_theory/

What to Read

There is no new reading for this seminar.

References

You are not expected to read these; they're included only because mentioned in explaining the question.

Jeffrey, R. C. (1983). *The logic of decision, second edition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Neumann, J. von, Morgenstern, O., Rubinstein, A., & Kuhn, H. W. (1953). *Theory of Games and Economic Behavior*. Princeton, N.J. ; Woodstock: Princeton University Press.

Ramsey, F. (1931). Truth and probability. In R. Braithwaite (Ed.), *The foundations of mathematics and other logical essays*. London: Routledge.

Savage, L. J. (1972). *The foundations of statistics* (2nd rev. ed). New York: Dover Publications.

Seminar 7

Seminar 8

This seminar is a bit different. Instead of discussing a question, we will discuss the essay plans of anyone who prepares on in advance and brings it to the seminar.

Aim

Identify a question for your long essay, do some background reading and produce an outline for the essay plus a list of readings.

The questions for your long essay are here: https://philosophical-issues-in-behavioural-science.butterfill.com/pdf/essay_questions.pdf

Questions

You can take one of the suggested questions from the list provided. Or, if you prefer, you can propose your own question (which will need to be approved before you can submit the essay).

Hint

Ensure that your plan specifies ideas and arguments in detail. A wishlist is not a plan.