

- Faculté des lettres et sciences humaines
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Seminary II : Social Essences (2PH2169)

Filières concernées	Nombre d'heures	Validation	Crédits ECTS
Pilier principal M A - philosophie	Séminaire: 2 ph	Voir ci-dessous	6
Pilier secondaire M A - philosophie	Séminaire: 2 ph	Voir ci-dessous	6

ph=période hebdomadaire, pg=période globale, j=jour, dj=demi-jour, h=heure, min=minute

Période d'enseignement:

- Semestre Printemps

Equipe enseignante

Kathrin Koslicki and Olivier Massin.

Contenu

What is an election? What is a city? What is money? On the face of it, such questions bear on the real definition, nature or essence of the social phenomena in question (viz., election, city, money). Getting clear on the nature of social phenomena is crucial for our understanding of social reality. Yet in spite of the recent surge in research in both social ontology and metaphysics, essentialist approaches to social phenomena remain quite rare. The goal of this seminar is to examine essentialist approaches to social phenomena. In particular, we will discuss different types of objections that have been raised against social essentialism and we will present positive considerations to motivate an essentialist approach to social phenomena. At the end of this seminar, we hope to have arrived at a more nuanced understanding of how an essentialist framework can contribute to the study of social phenomena.

Forme de l'évaluation

Internal methods of assessment:

- (1) A paper (50% of internal evaluation grade)
- (2) Short weekly comments (30% of internal evaluation grade)
- (3) In-class presentations (10% of internal evaluation grade)
- (4) Attendance and participation (10% of internal evaluation grade)

(1) The paper should be approximately 12 pages long (~3000 words). Guidelines and a detailed grading rubric with criteria of evaluation will be made available. Students will receive assistance in finding a suitable topic as well as feedback on a draft before handing in the final version of their papers. (2) The short weekly comments (max. 1 page) for each meeting should raise questions or objections concerning the readings discussed in the seminar during that week. Students are encouraged to bring up these questions or objections during class discussion. (3) Students will be asked to give an in-class presentation of approximately 15-20 minutes at least once, and possibly more than once, during the semester. The in-class presentation should ideally help students find a paper topic, although it is not required that the topic of the presentation will also become the topic of the paper. (4) Attendance and participation are expected and required. Students will receive high marks for participation, if they are successful at demonstrating their engagement with the material discussed in this seminar, e.g., by contributing to class discussions regularly and in a constructive way; by attending office hours or scheduling appointments; by communicating via email; etc. Work that is not submitted by the required deadline, without good cause, will not be accepted and will automatically result in a failing grade for that assessment.

External methods of assessment: MA students in Philosophy are required to take a 30-minute oral examination on the material covered in this seminar. The internal and external evaluation grade each count for 50% of the final grade for this seminar.

Due Dates: Papers are due on July 15, 2021 and will be returned to students with comments and a grade. If the grade is not satisfactory (below 4), students will have the opportunity to hand in a revised version of their paper by August 15, 2021.

Assessment criteria: level of preparedness; clarity of oral and written expression; specification of technical terms used; structure (e.g., plan, logical organization of ideas); ability to highlight key points; persuasiveness of arguments; originality and creativity of positions defended; speed of reflection during oral presentations.

Language of instruction: The language of instruction for this seminar will be French and English.

Documentation

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- Fine, Kit (2020): "The Identity of Social Groups", *Metaphysics*, Vol. 3, No. 1, pp. 81–91, URL=<https://doi.org/10.5334/met.45>
- Guala, F., and Hindriks, F. (2015): "A Unified Social Ontology", *The Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. 65, No. 259, pp. 177-201
- Epstein, Brian (2016): "A Framework for Social Ontology", *Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, Vol. 46, No. 2, pp. 147-167
- Koslicki, Kathrin (2018): *Form, Matter, Substance*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, UK
- Mason, Rebecca (2020): "Against Social Kind Anti-Realism", *Metaphysics*, Vol. 3, No. 1, pp. 55–67, URL=<https://doi.org/10.5334/met.30>
- Massin, Olivier (2017): "The Metaphysics of Ownership: A Reinachian Account", *Axiomathes*, Vol. 27, No. 5, pp. 577-600
- Massin, Olivier, and Tieffenbach, Emma (2017): "The Metaphysics of Economic Exchanges", *Journal of Social Ontology*, Vol. 3, No. 2, pp. 167-205
- Passinsky, Asya (2020): "Social Objects, Response-Dependence, and Realism", *Journal of the American Philosophical Association*, Volume 6, Issue 4, Winter 2020, pp. 431-443, URL=<https://doi.org/10.1017/apa.2019.51>
- Reinach, A. (2004): *Les fondements a priori du droit civil*, trad. fr. R. de Calan, Vrin, Paris
- Ritchie, Katherine (2015): "The Metaphysics of Social Groups", *Philosophy Compass*, Vol. 10, No. 5, pp. 310–321, URL=<https://doi.org/10.1111/phc3.12213>
- Ritchie, Katherine (2020): "Social Structures and the Ontology of Social Groups", *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, Vol. 100, No. 2, pp. 402–424, URL=<https://doi.org/10.1111/phpr.12555>
- Searle, John (1995): *The Construction of Social Reality*, The Free Press, New York, NY
- Searle, John (2010): *Making the Social World: The Structure of Human Civilization*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, UK
- Smith, Barry (1990): "Aristotle, Menger, Mises: An Essay in the Metaphysics of Economics", *History of Political Economy*, Annual Supplement, Vo. 22, pp. 263-288

The readings for this course will be made available online.

Pré-requis

None.

Forme de l'enseignement

Seminar, 2 hours per week, Monday, 14:00-16:00, Spring semester.

Objectifs d'apprentissage

Au terme de la formation l'étudiant-e doit être capable de :

- Examine how philosophers apply key concepts and principles to central problems in debates surrounding social essentialism.
- Formulate well-reasoned arguments orally and in writing for the acceptance or rejection of arguments and theories regarding social essentialism.
- Define key concepts and principles used in metaphysics in general and the literature on essentialism and anti-essentialism, such as essence, definition, accident, necessity, possibility, contingency, etc.
- Describe the main influences and connections between the literature on social essentialism and other areas of philosophy as well as connected disciplines, such as the natural and social sciences, etc.
- Analyse the principal historical and contemporary theories of social essentialism
- Discuss central texts concerning social essentialism.
- Recognise how prominent figures in the literature on social essentialism are influenced by, and have influenced, their predecessors or successors.
- Identify the principal positions associated with prominent figures in the literature on social essentialism.
- Work with other students to contribute to group projects.
- Write well-organized and well-reasoned argumentative papers on a particular text, problem, or position advanced in the literature on social essentialism.

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