

Course Syllabus
Philosophy 532: *Philosophical Problems: Left & Right Wing Sellarsianism*
UW Milwaukee, Spring 2009
T 3:30-6:10pm, CRT 607

Course Description: There are two principle lines of influence coming out of the work of 20th century philosopher Wilfrid Sellars: a right wing Sellarsianism which emphasizes the role of science in our understanding of the world and ourselves, and a left wing Sellarsianism emphasizing the place of the exchange of reasons in our thinking about meaning and all that traffics in it (including mind and language). In contemporary philosophy, these two lines of influence can perhaps be seen most clearly in the thought of Paul Churchland and John McDowell, respectively. In this course, we will undertake, first, a close reading of two of Sellars most influential works, his “Philosophy and the Scientific Image of Man” and his “Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind.” We’ll then consider how the left and right wing themes of these works are developed, in extreme forms, in Churchland’s “Scientific Realism and the Plasticity of Mind” (in the form of “eliminative materialism”) and in McDowell’s “Mind and World” (in his emphasis on “the space of reasons” and “second nature”). We’ll do this in an attempt to answer the question at the heart of Sellars’s philosophy: Can our developing scientific understanding of the world and our place within it be reconciled with our lived self-conception as thinking, experiencing, free persons?

Required Texts:

- (1) [SPR] *Science, Perception and Reality*, Wilfrid Sellars (Ridgeview, 1963/1981).
- (2) [SRPM] *Scientific Realism and the Plasticity of Mind*, Paul Churchland (Cambridge, 1986).
- (3) [MW] *Mind and World*, John McDowell (Harvard 1994/1996).

All of these books are available at Panther Bookstore (located just East of campus at 3132 N Downer Ave). Other readings will be made available on the course’s D2L site.

Instructor: Aaron Schiller, schillea@uwm.edu; OH: MW 5-6 and by appointment, CRT 613.

Grading: There are two different grading schemes, one for undergraduate students and one for graduate students.

Undergraduate:

Final grades will be determined on the basis of performance on **three 3-5-page Response Papers** and **one 7-10-page Final Paper**. The final grade will be an average of the assignment grades, though extra weight will be given to the final paper and consideration will be given for improvement over the course of the semester.

Graduate:

Final grades will be determined on the basis of performance on **two 5-7 page Response Papers**, **one Presentation**, and **one 12-15 page Final Paper**. The final grade will be an average of the assignment grades, though extra weight will be given to the final paper and consideration will be given for improvement over the course of the semester.

About Response Papers: Response Papers are written in response to a particular issue or question that has risen in class discussion. I will provide you with a list of possible topics to write on and then papers will be due the following week.

About Presentations: Each graduate student will be required to present on some issue or question that has arisen in discussion. Presentations should run between 15 and 20 minutes, and should be more than just a summary of the reading.

About the Final Paper: Final papers are the culmination of your work in this class. You will choose your own topic, but the topic should concern some central issue of the course and provide a unique treatment of it. You are strongly encouraged to set up a meeting with me in the final weeks of the semester to discuss your topic.

Reading and Participation: This is difficult material. But it's for that reason it's imperative that you keep up with the class. It is *expected* that you will have read the material each week as well as contribute to class discussion. And, above all, do not let the difficulty of the material, and the resulting sense that you don't know what's going on, keep you from speaking up in discussion. If you are confused, so is someone else!

Course Schedule:

Meeting	Reading and Topic	
1/27	Intro to Course / Course Mechanics	
2/3	SPR, "Philosophy and the Scientific Image of Man"	
2/10	SPR, "Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind," §§1-23	
2/17	SPR, "Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind," §§24-44	
2/24	SPR, "Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind," §§45-63	<i>[1st Response Paper Topics Handed Out]</i>
3/3	SRPM, Chs. 1 & 2	<i>[1st Response Paper Topics Due]</i>
3/10	SRPM, Ch. 3	
3/17	SPRING BREAK	
3/24	SRPM, Ch. 4	<i>[2nd Response Paper Topics Handed Out]</i>
3/31	SRPM, Ch. 5	<i>[2nd Response Papers Due]</i>
4/7	MW, Lectures I & II	
4/14	MW, Lecture III, Afterword Part II	
4/21	MW, Lecture IV	<i>[3rd Response Paper Topics Handed Out]</i>
4/28	MW, Lecture V, Afterword Part III	<i>[3rd Response Paper Due]</i>
5/4	MW, Lecture VI, Afterword Part IV	
5/15	FINAL PAPERS DUE	

Note that this is subject to change at the instructor's discretion, but that every attempt will be made to stay on schedule.