

Pell Honors Seminar Fall 2016

Professor Lisa Tessman

Office: Library Tower 1215

Office hours: Wed 12:30-1:30 and Thur 8:45-9:45 or by appointment.

ltessman@binghamton.edu

Course Description:

The Pell Honors Program is an intense, challenging experience that offers exceptional Philosophy and PPL students an opportunity to work at a level not normally available to undergraduate students. You will develop an original thesis paper through independent research, support it through extensive engagement with the relevant literature, and refine, modify and defend it through questions and criticisms from your peers and Philosophy / PPL faculty members.

There are two major components to the program: your work with your expert advisor, and your work in the seminar itself.

You will rely on your expert advisor's knowledge of the subfield in which you are working, and more specifically her/his knowledge of the literature that is relevant to your thesis topic. It is ideal to meet with your advisor weekly. You are required to meet with your advisor a bare minimum of five times during the semester, and to submit some kind of written work (outlines, drafts, etc.) to your advisor in advance of each meeting; your advisor will either give you written comments on your work, or give you feedback verbally when you meet (or both). Find out how far in advance of each meeting your advisor would like to receive your work. It is your responsibility to arrange meetings with your advisor.

In the seminar itself, we will work on research, thinking, writing, and presentation skills, and all of the members of the seminar will engage critically with each other's thesis. Your thesis paper should be aimed at a non-specialist audience; this means that you should not assume that your readers are familiar with the same literature that you are. Your paper should supply all necessary background information, and should contain clear explanations not only of your own ideas, but also of the ideas or the texts with which you are engaging. I and the other members of the seminar will serve as your non-specialist audience, and will offer you constructive feedback on your topic and on your paper (but for the most part, we will not be in a position to correct or challenge your interpretations of the literature you have read—that is part of your advisor's job).

At the end of the semester (Friday, Dec. 9th), there will be a public conference—the Pell Honors Conference—at which participants will present their work to a faculty jury (who will have also read the theses in advance). Family and friends are welcome to attend this conference. The best thesis or theses in Philosophy may be recognized with the Dillon Award, and the best thesis or theses in PPL may be recognized with the Pell Prize. The jury will also determine whether the participants' work qualifies for a level of Honors, and if so, what level is to be awarded (Honors / High Honors / Highest Honors).

Course Objectives:

- To pursue a chosen topic through independent research.
- To learn and practice the skills involved in writing a publication-length paper.
- To become familiar with the literature on one's topic, to engage with the literature, and to make an original contribution to the literature.
- Learning Outcome: This course satisfies the Humanities General Education Requirement; thus in this course, "students... will demonstrate an understanding of human experience through the study of literature or philosophy."

Course Requirements:

Students are expected to attend and participate actively in *all* seminar meetings except in the case of illness or emergency (in which case please notify me by email as soon as possible). Students in this course will work closely together and depend on each other; please take this as a serious commitment. See schedule below for requirements and deadlines.

Grading:

Normally, the course grade will be the same as the grade on the thesis, and any student receiving Honors, High Honors, or Highest Honors (to be decided by the faculty jury who serves at the Pell Honors Conference) will receive an A in the course. However, in the rare event that a student does not meet expectations in other areas, that student may have a lower course grade than the grade on the thesis; for instance, the grade could be adjusted downward for inadequate class participation, insufficient knowledge of works on the reading list, poor quality of drafts or class presentations, failure to meet deadlines, etc. Students are responsible for being familiar with, and abiding by, the Student Academic Honesty Code. Any student who engages in academic dishonesty such as plagiarism will receive an F for the course, and further action may also be taken.

Schedule

Wed. Aug. 31st:

Introduction and research skills.

Fri. Sept. 2nd:

Deadline to set up a meeting schedule with your advisor, and to find out from your advisor how far in advance of a meeting you should send her/him written work.

Wed. Sept. 7th:

Different kinds of (philosophy) papers, and identifying a model to emulate.

Read before seminar:

Anja Karnein, "Putting Fairness in its Place: Why There is a Duty to Take Up the Slack." *Journal of Philosophy* CXI (11) Nov 2014: pgs 593-607.

Judith Butler, "Can One Lead a Good Life in a Bad Life?"

Tamar Gendler, "On the Epistemic Costs of Implicit Bias." *Philosophical Studies* (2011) 156: pgs 33-63.

Optional reading:

Stephanie Sheintul (winner of the 2015 Pell Prize), "Enabling Dignity and Flourishing: A Reformulation of Nussbaum's Capabilities Approach."

Chundzom Lopez (winner of the 2016 Pell Prize), "The Other War on Terror: Balancing the Need for Security and the Rights of Western Muslims in an Age of Radical Terrorism."

Tues. Sept. 13th:

Deadline for first meeting with advisor.

Due by email to me: a pdf of a published article that will serve as your model, and a brief explanation of its features that you wish to emulate.

Wed. Sept. 14th:

Final version of reading list due via email to me by class time.

Advisors please verify (via email to me) that you have approved the final version of the reading list.

Presentations: report on thesis topic, writing plan, and the article you wish to emulate (speak for 10 minutes).

Workshop: originality.

Tues. Sept. 20th:

Deadline for second meeting with advisor.

Wed. Sept. 21st:

Presentations: compare and contrast readings (15 minute time slot each; speak for 10-12 minutes).

Workshop: topic vs. thesis; developing a thesis (statement).

Wed. Sept. 28th:

Presentations: distinguishing your position from that of others (15 minute time slot each; speak for 10-12 minutes).

Wed. Oct. 5th:

Writing workshop.

Fri. Oct. 7th:

Deadline for third meeting with advisor.

Deadline for having studied all works on your reading list.

Advisors please verify (via email to me) that your advisee has studied all works on her/his reading list and has adequate knowledge of the literature.

Wed. Oct. 12th: no classes

Fri. Oct. 14th:

Draft of thesis due to me via email (cc your advisor).

Wed. Oct. 19th:

Thesis presentations I (30 minute time slot each; speak for 20 minutes).

Thur. Oct. 20th:

Individual meetings with me for students who presented on Oct 19.

Wed. Oct. 26th:

Thesis presentations I (30 minute time slot each; speak for 20 minutes).

Thur. Oct. 27th:

Individual meetings with me for students who presented on Oct 26.

Fri. Oct. 28th:

Deadline for fourth meeting with advisor.

After your meeting with me, and before your thesis presentation II: visit the Public Speaking Lab (<https://www.binghamton.edu/public-speaking/index.html>) to deliver your presentation, receive feedback, and then watch the digital recording of your presentation. Make an appointment for this in advance.

Wed. Nov. 2nd:

Thesis presentations II (40 minute time slot each; speak for 20 minutes).

Workshop: abstracts.

Wed. Nov. 9th:

Thesis presentations II (40 minute time slot each; speak for 20 minutes).

Workshop: handouts and/or powerpoints.

Wed. Nov. 16th:

Thesis presentations II (40 minute time slot each; speak for 20 minutes).

Workshop: citations, notes.

Fri. Nov. 18th:

Draft of thesis due to me via email (cc your advisor).

Tues. Nov. 22nd:

Deadline for fifth meeting with advisor.

Wed. Nov. 23rd: no class.

Tues. Nov. 29th:

Thesis due to me and to your advisor via email by 5:00 PM, to be distributed to faculty jury.

Optional: before your thesis presentation III, visit the Public Speaking Lab again.

Wed. Nov. 30th:

Advisors please verify (via email to me) that you approve the thesis in final form.

Thesis presentations III: dress rehearsal (but no need to dress up); speak for 20-30 minutes.
Class will meet in U UW 324.

Wed. Dec. 7th:

Thesis presentations III: dress rehearsal (but no need to dress up); speak for 20-30 minutes.
Class will meet in U UW 324.

Friday Dec. 9th: Pell Honors Conference (all day).