

## Pell Honors Seminar Fall 2024

Meets Wednesdays 1:40-4:40 in CW106

### Professor Lisa Tessman

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Office: LT 1215.

Office hours: Tues 12:00-1:00 PM and Thur 2:50-3:50 PM or by appointment.

Please come to office hours in person unless you are ill, in which case please request a zoom appointment. Zoom link for appointments: <https://binghamton.zoom.us/j/99619382395>

### 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 their 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 (notes, 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. Please keep a log of your meetings with your advisor (there is a place for this under "assignments" on Brightspace).

In the seminar itself, we will work on research, thinking, writing, and presentation skills, and each 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 presentations 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. 6<sup>th</sup>**), 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). Please plan in advance to set the entire day aside for this conference, which family and friends are also welcome to attend. 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 the topic, to engage with the literature, and to make an original contribution to the literature.
- Learning Outcomes: This course satisfies the Joint Composition and Oral Communication General Education Requirements with their [associated Learning Outcomes](#).

**Participation:**

Students are expected to attend and participate actively in all seminar meetings except in the case of illness or emergency. Please do *not* come to class if you are ill. You do not need medical documentation for missing class, but you do need to email me before class time to let me know. 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. If I, or your classmates, are pronouncing your name wrong, using the wrong pronouns for you, etc., please correct us! Also please let me know if there is anything I can do to facilitate your learning or accommodate your particular learning style.

Please bring to class an electronic device with online access and on which you can complete writing exercises. If you do not have such a device, speak to me in advance about getting a loaner.

**Office hours** offer an opportunity for students to meet individually with me. Please make use of this time to ask questions or engage in further discussion. You don't need a specific reason to come to office hours – feel free to come to chat!

**Email** is a good way to communicate with me about practical things (telling me you will be out sick, scheduling an appointment, etc.) but I will not engage in substantive discussion over email. If you would like to ask a philosophical question or have a substantive discussion of any kind, come to office hours instead of emailing me.

**Disability-related equal access accommodations:**

I am happy to make accommodations for any student with a documented need for it. Students needing accommodations to ensure their equitable access and participation in this course should register with the [Services for Students with Disabilities \(SSD\) office](#) as soon as they are aware of their need for such arrangements. Students who are registered with SSD and who wish to make use of their accommodations should discuss with me the details of how the

accommodations can best be implemented in this class. Accommodations are not in effect until the student has initiated a discussion with me about them.

**Academic Honesty:**

Students are responsible for being familiar with, and abiding by, the [Academic Honesty Code](#). If I suspect a violation of the academic honesty code, I will discuss my concerns with the student, and if I continue to suspect that a violation has occurred, I will either offer the student the opportunity to sign an admission of dishonesty form or will initiate a hearing before the Harpur College Academic Honesty Committee. If the student either signs the admission of dishonesty form or is found by the Academic Honesty Committee to have violated the academic honesty code, the typical consequence will include an “F” in the course, and further consequences may be imposed by the Academic Honesty Committee.

We will do all our work in this course without the use of generative AI (such as ChatGPT)—I will be happy to explain why I think this is best. Any student who uses generative AI for their work in this course will be charged with a violation of the Academic Honesty Code. We will discuss how to properly make use of (other) sources to avoid (other) violations of the Academic Honesty Code.

**Grading:**

To be awarded (any level of) Honors (which is determined by the faculty jury who serves at the Pell Honors Conference), a student must write a thesis that is of *higher quality* than what is expected of an “A” paper in any other 400-level Philosophy / PPL course. Any student who is awarded Honors will automatically earn an “A” on their thesis. Students who are not awarded Honors will have their thesis graded by standards similar to those in any other 400-level Philosophy / PPL course (and thus might still earn an “A”). Normally, the course grade will be the same as the grade on the thesis, so any student who is awarded Honors will also earn 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.

## Schedule

### Week 1: read

#### Wed. Aug. 21<sup>st</sup>:

Introduction / research skills / academic honesty.

Please bring to class a few of the most important works that are on your reading list.

#### Fri. Aug. 23<sup>rd</sup>:

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 them written work.

### Week 2: read

#### Wed. Aug. 28<sup>th</sup>:

Different kinds of (philosophy/interdisciplinary) papers; identifying a model to emulate.

Read before class (all available on Brightspace under “Content”):

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.

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

Raymond Geuss, “Nietzsche and Genealogy.” *European Journal of Philosophy* 2 (3): 274-292.

Please bring to class any recent Philosophy/PPL paper you have written.

#### Fri. Aug. 30<sup>th</sup>:

Deadline for first meeting with advisor.

Submit on Brightspace (under “Assignments”) by 11:59 PM:

- 1) Your personal writing plan (weekly time/place for writing; personal deadlines for notes, outlines, drafts, etc; basic schedule for meeting with your advisor; “rewards”; what you’ll do if you’re stuck; etc).
- 2) A PDF of a published article that will serve as your model, and a brief explanation of its features that you wish to emulate.
- 3) The final version of your reading list.

Please also send your advisor a copy of your reading list.

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

### Week 3: read

#### Wed. Sept. 4<sup>th</sup>:

Presentations: introduction to thesis topic, and explanation of why it is interesting (at least to you) (speak for 5 minutes).

Workshop: originality.  
Please bring to class a few works from your reading list.

#### **Week 4: read / form your thesis**

##### **Wed. Sept. 11<sup>th</sup>:**

Presentations: compare and contrast the positions of two authors on your reading list (or two lines of thought on the topic, etc.) (10 minute time slot each, no Q&A).

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

##### **Fri. Sept. 13<sup>th</sup>:**

Deadline for second meeting with advisor.

#### **Week 5: read / clarify what your thesis is**

##### **Wed. Sept. 18<sup>th</sup>:**

Presentations: state your thesis and compare and contrast your position with another author's position (18 minute time slot each; speak for 10 minutes, 8 minute Q&A).

##### **Fri. Sept. 20<sup>th</sup>:**

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 the reading list and has adequate knowledge of the literature.

#### **Week 6: write**

##### **Wed. Sept 25<sup>th</sup>:**

Writing workshop. Please bring to class whichever texts you may need.

#### **Week 7: write (and/or observe the holiday)**

**Wed. Oct 2<sup>nd</sup>: no class**

#### **Week 8: write**

##### **Tues. Oct. 8<sup>th</sup> (note that this Tues is on a Fri class schedule):**

Submit on Brightspace by 11:59 PM:

Draft of thesis as a word doc. Please also send your draft to your advisor.

##### **Wed. Oct 9<sup>th</sup>:**

Thesis presentations I (half of the students present: 35 minute time slot each; speak for 15-20 minutes, 15-20 minute Q&A).

**Thur. Oct. 10<sup>th</sup>:**

Individual meetings with me for students who presented on Oct 9<sup>th</sup>.

**Week 9: write / revise**

**Wed. Oct. 16<sup>th</sup>:**

Thesis presentations I (half of the students present: 35 minute time slot each; speak for 15-20 minutes, 15-20 minute Q&A).

**Thur. Oct. 17<sup>th</sup>:**

Individual meetings with me for students who presented on Oct 16<sup>th</sup>.

**Fri. Oct. 18<sup>th</sup>:**

Deadline for fourth meeting with advisor.

**Week 10: revise**

**Wed. Oct. 23<sup>rd</sup>:**

Thesis presentations II (3 students present: 40 minute time slot each; speak for 20-30 minutes, 10-20 minute Q&A).

Writing workshop.

**Week 11: revise**

**Wed. Oct. 30<sup>th</sup>:**

Thesis presentations II (3 students present: 40 minute time slot each; speak for 20-30 minutes, 10-20 minute Q&A).

Writing workshop.

**Week 12: revise**

**Wed. Nov. 6<sup>th</sup>:**

Thesis presentations II (3 students present: 40 minute time slot each; speak for 20-30 minutes, 10-20 minute Q&A).

Writing workshop.

**Week 13: revise**

**Wed. Nov. 13<sup>th</sup>:**

Workshop: abstracts; handouts and/or slides; citations, notes.

**Thur. Nov. 14<sup>th</sup>:**

Submit on Brightspace by 11:59 PM:

Draft of thesis as a word doc. Please also send your draft to your advisor.

**Week 14: revise**

**Mon. Nov. 18<sup>th</sup>:**

Deadline for fifth meeting with advisor.

**Wed. Nov. 20<sup>th</sup>:**

Individual consultations with me.

Peer feedback on full drafts.

**Week 15: polish / proofread / hit send / take a break!**

**Mon. Nov. 25<sup>th</sup>:**

Submit on Brightspace by 5:00 PM: THESIS, to be distributed to faculty jury.

Please also send your thesis to your advisor.

**Week 16: dress rehearsal / the big day! / celebrate!!**

**Wed. Dec. 4<sup>th</sup>:**

Dress rehearsal (no need to dress up); everyone will give the first 5-10 minutes of their presentation.

Class will meet in UU-215.

**Friday Dec. 6<sup>th</sup>:**

**Pell Honors Conference** (all day—plan on 7:30 AM to about 8:00 PM—in UU-215).