

Name faculty FSE – University College Maastricht

Name minor Fundamentals of Liberal Arts

Name coordinator – email address coordinator

Wolfgang Giernalczyk – wolfgang.giernalczyk@maastrichtuniversity.nl

Full period of this minor: yearly in period 1 and 2

ECTS credits in total of this minor: 25

Language of instruction:

Since English is the working language at UCM, non-native speakers are required to speak English well. Please include a brief statement with your application, demonstrating your English proficiency. Proficiency can be demonstrated in several ways. Students who have followed an English bachelor's program at Maastricht University for the period of at least one year are deemed proficient. Students with an IB or European Baccalaureate diploma are also deemed proficient, as are Dutch VWO students who, for English language, have a grade of 7 or higher on their VWO gradelist. Students who cannot present a VWO diploma with a 7 for the English language on their gradelist should present an equivalent diploma with an equivalent result. All other prospective students must present a TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) or an IELTS (International English Testing System) test, before they can be registered. The score of the TOEFL has to be at least 575 points (paper based version) or 232 points (computer based version) or 90 points (internet based version). The score of the IELTS test has to be at least 6.5.

Admissions criteria:

UCM is a selective program and minor students should, in principle, fulfil the criteria that UCM uses to select its regular students. Thus, acceptance by UCM depends on students' motivation, grades and progress rate. The UCM Examination Committee will review all minor requests based on a recent transcript, a motivation letter, and a statement of English proficiency (see below). Please include these with your application. Documents that cannot be attached to the online application form can be sent directly to the UCM Board of Examiners (ucm-boe@maastrichtuniversity.nl).

Full course description:

The UCM Minor "Fundamentals of Liberal Arts" offers interested students the opportunity to expand their intellectual horizons by doing the four core courses of the UCM curriculum and the Argumentation skills courses. The four core courses (Philosophy of Science, Political Philosophy, Contemporary World History, and Science, Reason and Human Progress) provide the context and methodological underpinnings required for understanding social and scientific developments. As such, they give students an excellent foundation for understanding their own disciplines from a broader perspective and thinking more critically. The skills courses, Argumentation I and II, further develop these critical thinking skills, and teach students how to analyse and present arguments rigorously and effectively.

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The full minor period is offered in several courses as described in the following:

Course period 1: Contemporary World History

Course code: COR1003

Coordinator: Dr. M. Stout; mark.stout@maastrichtuniversity.nl

ECTS credits of this course: 5

Full course description

The course intends to trace back current situations to their historical backgrounds. The first three tasks, under the caption “Toolkit”, will therefore consist of a brief exploration of the philosophy of history and some issues regarding historical perspective, a discussion of the concepts of “state” versus ‘nation’ (in anticipation of issues regarding decolonization, specific regional conflicts, and possible sources of conflict in general that will be discussed in later tasks), and a discussion of the Cold War as an influential factor in recent history.

Each of the following tasks, under the captions of “Area surveys” and “Assessment of the current global situation” respectively, will be built around a case that represents the underlying problem, and both combined will lead students to specific source material. Examples of such cases are decolonization, the economic development of Asia, conflict in Africa, and the implications of the current position of the USA as “solitary superpower”.

Course objectives

- To provide students with an understanding of the main trends in politics, demography, society and culture over the last 70 years and to put these trends in a global context.
- To develop a critical attitude towards the use of historical theory, and the interpretation of historical data and processes.

Prerequisites

None.

Teaching methods

Tutorial group meetings and lectures

Assessment method

A final written exam, a paper and participation.

Course period 1: Science, Reason and Human Progress

Course code: COR1006

Coordinator: Dr. M. Heins, manuela.heins@maastrichtuniversity.nl

ECTS credits of this course: 5

Full course description

Science never stands still, and for some time now, there appears to be a growing shift in intellectual enquiry and discovery toward more cross-disciplinary and interdisciplinary thinking. The core course Science, Reason and Human Progress takes this observation as a starting point. In doing so, its ultimate goal is to make students aware of the value of scientific inquiry across different academic domains and of its fundamental relevance to societal developments. Such awareness can only be developed by first getting a basic understanding of 'how scientific inquiry works'. To achieve this the course has three aims that are more specific. The first is to introduce students to scientific thought, language and behaviour and their relation to human progress. In this context, it will become clear that academic, scientific, and intellectual work interacts with political, social and moral change, which in turn often starts with scientific inquiry. The second aim is to help students develop and apply scientific inquiry skills. The third aim is teaching Liberal Arts & Science students to recognise how they can become part of this change in scientific and human progress that scientific inquiry brings about and possibly even lead it. In order to do so, throughout the course, emphasis lies on recognition of past, present and (possible) future scientific works (theory and applications).

Course objectives

- Students learn to recognise, define, and analyse scientific and intellectual achievements grounded in enlightenment and describe their relation to human progress.
- Students learn to review scientific theory and thought, scientific jargon and its application in a critical manner.
- Students are encouraged to recognise and illustrate the interdisciplinary nature of successful scientific endeavour
- Students are trained to apply the scientific inquiry method. In addition, they practice cross- and interdisciplinary thought and use it to review and report solutions to a real-world issue

Prerequisites

None.

Teaching methods

Tutorial group meetings and lectures

Assessment method

An individual scientific inquiry paper and an (group) paper (i.e. writing an interdisciplinary practise-focussed work for a simulation client).

Course period 1: Argumentation I

Course code: SKI2049

Coordinator: Dr. W. Giernalczyk, wolfgang.giernalczyk@maastrichtuniversity.nl

ECTS credits of this course: 2.5

Full course description

In this skills training we work from two fundamental assumptions regarding arguments:

1. They have a specific structure, which can be made visible and evaluated.
2. The quality of an argument depends on its structure as much as it depends on its content.

In order to “get a grip” on arguments the course is divided into four parts that introduce information and exercises to gradually develop the skill of argument analysis. The first part will serve as an introduction discussing the general characteristics and typology of arguments. Furthermore, in this part students learn how arguments can be standardized and how argumentative structures can be visualized by drawing patterns. The core question this part of the course seeks to answer is: What is the structure of arguments and how can one reveal this structure?

In part two an informal but systematic method for evaluating the quality of arguments, the ARG-method, is introduced. By assessing the acceptability of premises, the relevance of premises with regards to the conclusion they are supposed to support, and the logical connection between premises and the following conclusion, the ARG-method enables us to examine both structure and content of an argument. During this part of the course an introduction to bad arguments, so-called fallacies, is provided as well.

In the third part the knowledge and skills provided in the first two parts will be applied to complete texts, seeking to isolate the arguments they present in a systematic way and evaluate whether or not they are good arguments.

Part four moves beyond the analysis of already existing arguments. In this part, standardization and patterns of arguments, as well as the ARG-method, will be used to construct arguments. Furthermore it will be practiced how the skills learned throughout the course can be applied for the purpose of writing academic papers.

Note: Students considering enrolling for the skill training in argumentation should be aware that the course will not focus on rhetoric and debating skills (although it can be assumed that the analytical skills acquired in this course will be helpful for debates).

Course objectives

This skills training provides a general introduction to the analysis of arguments. At the end of the skills training students should be able to:

- Identify and carve out the underlying structures and logical connections of written and verbal arguments.

- Translate these structures into a visual representation by drawing patterns of these arguments.
- Evaluate arguments with regards to their structure and content by applying Govier's "ARG method" (this entails the ability to identify fallacies).
- Build and present own arguments in a structured and cogent fashion, taking the evaluative criteria of the "ARG method" into account.
- Improve their approach to structure papers, exam answers and presentations.

Prerequisites

Students who take the course need to have written at least one academic paper.

Teaching methods

Assignment-based discussion in tutorial sessions.

Assessment method

A midterm assignment asking students to conduct an analysis of one of their own papers using the techniques of argument analysis and a final assignment in which students compose an argument of their own.

Course period 2: Philosophy of Science

Course code: COR1002

Coordinator: L. Boon, louis.boon@maastrichtuniversity.nl; Dr. P. Vermeer, peter.vermeer@maastrichtuniversity.nl

ECTS credits of this course: 5

Full course description

Typical issues in this course are: What is the role of observation in science? What is a scientific explanation? What roles do theories and experiments play in science? What is the nature of scientific progress? Can we rationally decide between scientific viewpoints? In what ways are the social sciences similar to or different from the natural sciences?

The course presents an introduction to major issues in the philosophy of science. It can be divided into four parts. In the first we will deal with traditional positions on the objectivity and methodology of science, like those of logical empiricism. The second focuses on objections to this received view as formulated by critical rationalism and by Thomas Kuhn's paradigm theory. Kuhn's theory revolutionized thinking about scientific knowledge and led to the so-called sociological and historical turn in the philosophy of science. The course then addresses two fundamental problems in the field: 'Do our theories describe reality?' (The problem of realism) and 'Do we now have better knowledge than in the past' (The problem of cognitive progress). In the final part of the course problems in the philosophy of the social sciences will take center stage: How do the social sciences explain and predict events? Does the method of understanding present an alternative methodology for social science? And finally: What is the role of social science in society.

Course objectives

- To familiarize students with the philosophical foundations of the scientific method.

Prerequisites

None.

Teaching methods

Tutorial group meetings and lectures

Assessment method

An essay and a test with open questions.

Course period 1: Political Philosophy

Course code: COR1004

Coordinator: D. Meacham, d.meacham@maastrichtuniversity.nl

ECTS credits of this course: 5

Full course description

Politics is a complex and puzzling subject. If only taken at their word, it is difficult to understand why people act the way they do and believe the things they purport to believe in. As political philosophers we try to understand underlying conceptions and values that shape politics and which are used to justify concrete policies. We are not concerned with what people claim to believe, but rather with the underpinning structures, values and ideas that shape how it is that we live together. We are concerned with how the language and concepts that people use comes to define who they are. In other words, we don't have ideas, ideas have us. Our task in this course is to understand those ideas.

This course will provide an introduction to contemporary philosophical debates about core political concepts such as *justice, liberty, equality, community, and democracy* in modern liberal-democratic societies. Students will become familiar with the thought of some of the leading modern political philosophers, like Thomas Hobbes, Mary Wollstonecraft, John Rawls, Hannah Arendt, Isaiah Berlin, Frantz Fanon, Martha Nussbaum, Achille Mbembe. Since conceptual analysis is the core business of philosophy, students will learn to analyse concepts, to clarify fuzzy moral ideas, and to make explicit the tensions and contradictions inherent to our political lives. Students will learn how to apply these concepts to current political debate and practice.

Course objectives

- The course will provide an introduction to western political philosophy. Students will learn to analyse, discuss, and apply basic concepts in contemporary political philosophy such as justice, equality, liberty and community.
- Students will apply these core concepts to various local, national, and global political issues such as migration and global justice.
- Students will be trained in normative political argumentation. They will exercise their ability to debate contentious ethical issues of public life.

Prerequisites

None.

Teaching methods

Tutorial group meetings, debates and lectures

Assessment method

A midterm take-home paper; endterm take-home paper; two short written group assignments; class participation. NB. Assessment will depend on the mode of course delivery.

Course period 2: Argumentation II

Course code: SKI3002

Coordinator: Dr. P. Vermeer, peter.vermeer@maastrichtuniversity.nl

ECTS credits of this course: 2.5

Full course description

In this sequel to SKI2049 Argumentation I, we will zoom in on the structure of arguments. In the first part of the skills training the Toulmin model of argumentation is introduced. This model goes beyond the basic distinction of premises and conclusions as constituent parts of arguments by distinguishing the different functions that premises can fulfill. The Toulmin model is more flexible than argumentative analysis based on formal logic, but also more specific and logically rigorous than the tools introduced in Argumentation I. Therefore it can be a powerful tool for specific and sophisticated argumentative analysis. Such analyses will be conducted during this skills training, first on small, simplified academic arguments and afterwards on a larger scale, analyzing examples from real life discourse. Finally, in the midterm assignment, students are asked to apply the Toulmin model to design an argument themselves.

The second part of the course takes the analysis of argumentative structures a step further and the tools that are used are logically even more rigorous. This part introduces students to basic sentential logic, a strictly formal, almost mathematical approach to argument analysis. Sentential logic introduces a simple set of rules and procedures that allows students to test whether an argument is formally valid, i.e. if its structure is correct, independent of its content. To test for the validity of an argument in this way, the structure of English sentences will be separated from their content by translating the sentences into symbols; afterwards formal rules will be applied (by using truth tables and semantic tableaux) to check whether an argument logically works or not.

Note: Students should be aware of the abstract nature of formal logical reasoning when enrolling for this course. Learning this is highly valuable to train a particular way of thinking, but students might perceive this skill as less directly applicable to, for example, paper writing or discussions than the tools that are introduced in Argumentation I.

Course objectives

Argumentation II is the sequel to Argumentation I. In this respect the main objective of Argumentation II is to further develop the skills of argument analysis and design. The particular focus of this skills training will be on the structure of arguments. At the end of the course students should be able to:

- Identify and assess the different functions that different parts of an argument fulfill according to the Toulmin model.
- Formally evaluate the validity of arguments by applying the basic methods of sentential logic.
- Build and present arguments of their own according to the Toulmin model.

Prerequisites

SKI2049 Argumentation I

Teaching methods

Assignment-based discussions supplemented by lectures.

Assessment method

A midterm assignment that requires students to design an argument using the Toulmin model and a written final exam on formal logic.