The MA Writing Workshop is a collaborative research endeavor and writing-intensive course designed to provide advanced training in philosophical writing and research methods for post-graduate students in Philosophy. Its primary target is first year MA and Doctoral students, though others may participate by consent of the instructor. The topic of the course varies from year to year; for Autumn 2007 the research theme will be Normative Naturalism. Both in the course of everyday life and more narrowly within philosophy, various habits and practices are either commended as “natural” or condemned as “unnatural.” The cereal box boasts of its “All Natural Ingredients”; moralists denounce one or another sexual practice as “unnatural and perverse.” Is this all bluster or is there anything to it? Could the fact that something is natural be a reason to choose it? And what would it mean for something to be natural anyway? In tackling these topics we will take as our point of departure Phillipa Foot’s elegant and influential little book, Natural Goodness, together with a review by Alastair MacIntyre and a pair of related papers by Foot’s former student, Michael Thompson (“The Representation of Life”, “Apprehending Human Form”). If time permits we may also delve into the genealogy of Normative Naturalism (who came up with this idea anyway?), together with its application in some specific domains (de Sade on sexual mores, Seneca and Rousseau on Conscience, etc.) At least two meetings of the workshop will be set aside for participants to present other work in progress.

Requirements: The primary requirement for the course is one solid term of obscenely hard work. (Think: Basic Training in the Marine Corps sense.) There will be weekly reading and writing assignments; students will be expected to present research and field Q&A. Throughout the aim will be to advance fundamental research and writing skills through practice and close feedback.

Timetable: Weekly writing assignments are due by email submission by <<time tbc>>. The first writing assignment will be due <<time tbc>>. We meet in workshop-format <<time tbc>>. In addition there will be weekly small-group feedback-meetings at times to be arranged.

Assessment: This course is unassessed in the formal sense that there is no mark assigned or recorded. There will be no exam or further assignments due after the end of instruction. The aim is to provide continual assessment over a short period in the form of feedback on philosophical research and writing.

Note: M.A. students planning to apply for Ph.D. places for 2008-2009 are particularly encouraged to participate. The hope is that the Workshop may also function as a venue for honing post-graduate applications and grant/fellowship proposals.

for more information:
Go to the Essex Philosophy website
http://www.essex.ac.uk/philosophy
Follow the links to
→ People → Academic Staff → Martin → Courses