

Università
della
Svizzera
italiana

Faculty
of
Communication
Sciences

Master of Arts in Philosophy

2017/18





Philosophy.

The Master in Philosophy at USI is a research master with a special focus on theoretical philosophy and its history. It is a research master in that it requires students to submit regular written work, to produce research papers and to develop their discussion skills in class. It focuses on theoretical philosophy and its history in particular. The master offers courses in contemporary analytic philosophy, metaphysics and philosophy of mind, and in the history of philosophy, ancient and medieval, which are designed to complement each other. Unlike other masters in philosophy, the Master in Philosophy at USI has a strong thematic unity. The topic of the 2017-8 Master is time – the metaphysics of time, temporal consciousness, the logic and linguistics of time, the philosophy of history, the nature of narratives, time and social ontology. The special focus on time allows students to have a closer look at one of the most hotly debated topics in contemporary philosophy.

Awarded Degree

Master of Arts in Philosophy

Application Deadline

April 30th / June 30th depending on the nationality of the applicant.

Tuition fees per semester

Residents CHF 2'000.– / international CHF 4'000.–

Duration

4 semesters (2 years) - 120 ECTS

Scholarships

Fondazione per le Facoltà di Lugano

CHF 4'000.–

Contacts/information

www.map.usi.ch

orientamento@usi.ch

Goals and contents

The Master in Philosophy at the USI aims to allow students to deepen their understanding of philosophical problems, to develop the ability to think, argue, write and speak clearly and effectively, and to become acquainted with aspects of current research in philosophy and the history of philosophy.

It aims to provide an absorbing grounding in a number of interrelated fields, to equip students with several skills of great value in the job-market, and to qualify students for teaching positions at high schools as well as at lower levels, and for the most demanding PhD programmes.

It aims to combine contemporary philosophy and the history of philosophy within the framework of a unified, thematic approach. In 2017-18 the topic of the programme is time – physical time, time in culture, society, history and art, and the awareness of time. Teaching and courses in metaphysics and social ontology, the philosophy of mind and history, aesthetics, the logic and linguistics of time and tense, and the history of philosophy, ancient and modern are designed to give a solid grasp of some of the many aspects of time. The detailed exploration of the philosophy of time aims to provide a full grasp of one central philosophical topic and an introduction to contemporary research in philosophy and the history of philosophy.

Language

This programme is entirely held in English. Applicants who are not native English speaker or whose first degree was not taught in English, must supply an internationally recognised certificate to demonstrate a C1 level on the Common European Framework of Reference for language learning (CEFR).

Admission requirements

The formal requirement for admission to the Master's degrees in Philosophy is a Bachelor's degree granted by a recognised university in the field of Philosophy or related disciplines. Admissions will be treated on a case by case basis.

Career opportunities

Graduates of the Master programme possess soft skills that are of great value in a variety of careers, in particular logical, rhetorical and argumentative skills, the ability to analyse problems, formulate arguments, clarity and effectiveness of expression. Philosophy students constantly perform better than students in other fields in these areas, especially in verbal expression and analytic writing. Such skills are highly valued in several professions, for example in law, government, HR and business, healthcare. Graduates of the Master programme are also qualified for teaching philosophy at high school in Switzerland and elsewhere. Graduates with high marks are well qualified to apply to the most demanding PhD programmes around the world. Moreover, they will be trained within the Swiss academic network. Switzerland is committed to investing substantially in all areas of research, including philosophy. Switzerland is unusual in making available generous research grants both in universities and at the national level. The Swiss National Science Foundation awards both individual grants (such as doc.ch) and grants for research projects and training networks.

Contacts

USI Università della Svizzera italiana
Study Advisory Service
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studyadvisor@usi.ch

Study programme

Study programme			
First semester	Core Courses	Ancient Philosophy - Time, metaphysics & Mind I	3.0
		Medieval Philosophy - Time, metaphysics & Mind I	3.0
		Masterclasses I	3.0
		Time in Philosophy	6.0
		Temporal Consciousness I	6.0
		History of political thought I	6.0
Second semester	Core Courses	Ancient Philosophy - Time, metaphysics & Mind II	3.0
		Medieval Philosophy - Time, metaphysics & Mind II	3.0
		Temporal Consciousness II	6.0
		Logic	3.0
		Masterclasses II	3.0
		Time	6.0
		Time travel	3.0
		History of political thought II	3.0
Third semester*	Core Courses	History - Metaphysics & Mind III	6.0
		Persistence	6.0
		Masterclass I	3.0
	Minor A: Mind, Language, and Society	Diachronic personal identity	6.0
		Normativity, Time, and Communication	3.0
		Argumentation	3.0
		Semantics and pragmatics	3.0
	Minor B: History and Literature	Philosophy of History and Art	6.0
		Electives in Italian Literature (in Italian)	(9.0)
Fourth semester*	Core courses	Masterclasses II	3.0
	Minor A: Mind, Language, and Society	Social ontology	3.0
		Electives in mind, language, and society	(6.0)
	Minor B: History and Literature	Aesthetics	3.0
		Electives in Italian literature (in Italian)	(6.0)
		Thesis	18.0

Please be aware that slight changes in the study programme may occur.

* The course descriptions of the second year will be defined soon.

First semester

Core Courses

Ancient Philosophy - Time, metaphysics & Mind I

The course provides students with an introduction to ancient metaphysics and philosophy of mind, with a special focus on his treatment of the topic of time.

During the first semester, the course will deal with Aristotle in particular. We will discuss Aristotle on (i) the nature of time, (ii) change, becoming, and the persistence of substances through change, (iii) the passage of time and its perception, (iv) the temporal aspects of human choice, (v) poetry and prose and their timeless moral lessons.

Medieval Philosophy - Time, metaphysics & Mind I

The course is designed as an introduction to the topics of being, time and eternity and their relationships in the philosophy of Thomas Aquinas.

The course deals with central questions in metaphysics, philosophy of religion, theology and philosophical psychology. How are being, time and eternity related? If life implies time, is God's eternity consistent with a living God? If intelligence and will imply time, is God's eternity consistent with a personal God? Are God's eternity, immutability and impassibility consistent with God as love? Is God's eternity consistent with the (Aristotelian conception of the) eternity of the world? Is God's eternal foreknowledge of future human deeds consistent with human freedom? Does God's eternity denote timelessness or everlastingness? Can "time" be said in many ways (as "tempus", "aevum", "aeternitas")? Aquinas' answers to these questions, the answers given by some of his critics and by later philosophers will be presented and evaluated.

Masterclasses I

The key question of ontology, for Quine, is 'What is there?'. The key question of metaontology is 'What do we mean when we ask "What is there?"'. Additionally, metaontology is about the methodology of ontology: How should we do ontology? Via conceptual analysis, or thought experiments? By looking at our best natural science? By systematizing our intuitions? This course introduces to metaontology, which encompasses a good deal of the most interesting ontological research of the XXI Century. The different options will be applied to questions about time.

The course will present and critically discuss a number of meta-ontological stances: mainstream Quinean metaontology; ontological pluralism and neo-Fregeanism; neo-Carnapianism; Fictionalism; Meinongianism; and grounding theory. All these

metaontological stances will then be applied to the case of the metaphysics of time and of persistence, where theories such as eternalism and presentism, and three- and four-dimensionalism, are presented in Quinean, fictional, and grounding versions, to mention a few.

Time in Philosophy

The course is designated as a general introduction to the topic of the philosophy of time. First, it provides students with a general overview of the aspects of time that will be treated, and with a systematic introduction of the main theories of time that are present in the contemporary philosophical debate. Second, it introduces some key philosophical tools in mereology, the theories of identity, attributes and modality that will be put at work in other courses of the MA.

The course consists of a series of lectures alternating with presentations given by students and general discussions. The students will be required to submit regular written work and produce a research paper at the end of the course.

Temporal Consciousness I

The course provides students with an introduction to the place of the philosophy of temporal experience within the philosophy of mind. It looks first at the relations between perception and the present, memory and the past, expectation and the future and then at the relation between folk-psychology and the B-theory. The course presents and evaluates a number of views about the relation between perception, memory and expectation, on the one hand, and the present, past and future, on the other hand. It considers a number of ways of distinguishing between immediate and mediate memory and expectation. It considers the relations between the view that the A-series is all in the head and similar views about secondary qualities.

Second semester

Core Courses

Ancient Philosophy-Time, metaphysics & Mind II

The course provides students with an introduction to ancient metaphysics and philosophy of mind, with a special focus on his treatment of the topic of time.

Medieval Philosophy-Time, metaphysics & Mind II

The course is designed as an introduction to the topics of being, time and eternity and their relationships in medieval philosophy. While the topic of time and diachronic identity is a non-issue throughout the scholastic era (with some interesting exceptions), reflection on God's eternity and on his relationship to temporal entities is of central importance within medieval philosophy. In this course, the questions considered in Being, Time and Eternity I remain the same but it is the answers to them given by medieval authors such as Augustine, Boethius, Anselm of Canterbury, Avicenna, Averroes, Alexander of Hales, Albert the Great, Bonaventure, Henry of Ghent, and by some contemporary philosophers which are presented and evaluated.

Temporal Consciousness II

The course provides students with an introduction to some of the most important theories of the ways in which experience represents time and of the relations between the temporal properties of the experience of time and what such experience presents and represents. The course presents and evaluates some 9 views about the nature of temporal experience and consciousness and considers their respective merits, in particular their relations to the philosophy of modes, contents, conceptual and non-conceptual, and objects.

Logic

The characterization of the modal structure of the world is one of the main issue in contemporary metaphysics. The present course aims at introducing the basic systems of modal and temporal logic and at discussing the crucial connections between ontic modalities, modal semantics and metaphysics of necessity, on the one hand, and temporal modalities, temporal semantics and metaphysics of time, on the other. The course is divided into two parts. The first one is dedicated to a general presentation of normal systems of modal logic, both from an axiomatic and a semantic point of view. In the second part, we will focus on temporal logic and consider the main metaphysical models of the structure of time and the way in which they are connected to our intuitions about the truth conditions of tensed proposition. In particular,

Masterclasses II

we will study the basic Priorian systems, their possible extensions including Kamp's operators, the Peircean and Ockhamist interpretations of branching time logic.

The aim of this masterclass is to discuss two out of the three main theories about the persistence of objects through time with two of their leading supporters. Achille Varzi will introduce the stage theory, defend it from criticisms and offer arguments in favour of it. Kit Fine will do the same about three-dimensionalism. The course is divided into two parts. The first one, taught by Achille Varzi, introduces and defends the stage theory, according to which no object persists. The second one, taught by Kit Fine, introduces and defends three-dimensionalism, according to which objects persist and do so by being wholly present at each instant of their persistence. The course will cover the precise characterization of the view and the growing controversies concerning their proper definition. Varzi and Fine will then adopt their own version of the views and defend them from the criticisms that are discussed in contemporary discussions. Finally, they will provide what they consider being the most conclusive arguments for favouring their view vis-à-vis all other competing theories.

Time

The course provides students with an introduction to the topic of the ontology of time. Students will be introduced to key questions such as the relation between the A-series (present-past-future) and the B-series (before-after), the nature of the passage of time and of becoming. The course begins with a review of the principal categories and theses employed in the ontology and metaphysics of time. It then considers in detail the arguments for and against some of the main views about time, including the claims that A-time is all in the head, that there is no change, that past and future exist, that the passage of time is an illusion.

Time travel

The course is an overview of the topic of time travel in philosophy. It has two main goals. First, by appealing to the case study of time travel, the course aims to provide students with an understanding of the various conceptions of time in contemporary metaphysics (A- vs. B-theory, eternalism, presentism, growing block, branching time, etc.). Second, as the main part of the course focuses on the puzzles that the possibility of time travel raises in connection with notions such as causality, free action, knowledge and information, the course aims to give students the resources to address the following questions: Is there an intrinsic directionality to causal connections? Is ignorance of the future an essential part of free agency? Are all circular explanations per se bad? And so on. In the first part of the course (the first four lessons), we will discuss different views and approaches to (i) the ontology and metaphysics of time, (ii) the structure, topology, and directionality of time, and (iii) temporal persistence and identity over time. In the second part of the course, by exploiting the topic of time travel as a "limiting case", we will consider how those issues relate to the problems of causality, action, and information.

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