PL401/402: PHILOSOPHY COLLOQUIUM GUIDELINES

PL401/402 is designed as a “capstone” experience in the Major. The aim is to introduce you to the practice of professional philosophy. A central part of that practice is listening to professional philosophers speak about their recent work and engaging them in public dialogue about that work. Completion of PL401/402 is required for the Major.

Procedures and Expectations:

* There will be a total of four colloquium speakers each year, two per semester, with a different faculty member hosting each speaker. Prior to each colloquium talk, there will be a pre-colloquium discussion meeting to prepare for the talk. Thus, there will be a total of four events each semester: two colloquium talks, and two pre-colloquium discussion meetings. The schedule for these four events will be provided to you at the start of each semester.

* Before each pre-colloquium discussion meeting, the host faculty will provide you with the paper that the colloquium speaker will read.

* Upon receiving this paper, you will read it and formulate a question that you are willing to pose to the colloquium speaker. You will submit your question to the host faculty as directed. In preparing your question, be sure to explain why you are asking that question. What part of the paper sparked that question? Why is it important to the author’s project that s/he be able to answer that question?

* For each colloquium talk, a number of “first responders” will be chosen. These students will read their questions to the rest of the students at the pre-colloquium discussion meeting. The entire group will then discuss how to improve and hone those questions. In light of this feedback, the “first responders” will revise their questions before the actual colloquium. The aim is to have each student serve once as a “first responder” over the course of the year.

* At the colloquium talk, “first responders” will sit at the front of the room during the talk. After the speaker’s presentation, they will be the first to ask their prepared questions. The speaker will then respond, and the “first responders” will have a chance to follow up. After this exchange, the floor will be open to other questions from the audience.

Rules and Practices:

* You must attend all four colloquium events each semester, in their entirety, to receive credit. Discussion meetings last 1 hr. and colloquium sessions last 1 ½ hr.

* If you cannot attend an event due to illness or emergency, you may miss and “make up” EITHER one discussion meeting OR one colloquium session per semester. To "make up" a missed event you must submit a well-organized, carefully crafted 2-3 page critical response essay as directed by the faculty host within one week of the missed event.

* If you are not a “first responder,” you are still expected to raise your hand and ask your question. Don’t be shy! And don’t assume your question isn’t good enough. You’d be surprised at how much others will appreciate your asking it.