PHIL 412 / 510 – (Topics in) Philosophy of Science
‘Biological and social kinds’

Fall Term 2017
Tue, Thu 12:30–1:50 pm, Assiniboia Hall 2-02A

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Office hours: by appointment
Website at https://eclass.srv.ualberta.ca

A. Course overview
In this seminar on biological and social kinds, we will take a look at different concrete kinds from the biological, biomedical, and social sciences. We will especially address kinds that include a mutual influence of biological and social factors, which one therefore could call ‘biosocial kinds’ or ‘human kinds,’ when they classify humans. Examples to be covered include sex/gender, race, and mental disorders. The general philosophical issues we will address are natural vs. nominal kinds, realism vs. social constructivism, essentialism about kinds, different types of kinds, how kinds and classification in the social sciences differ from the biological sciences, and whether a scientific account of something as a kind is dependent on human aims and values, such as explanatory / investigative aims, social-political aims, and normative values.

After an introduction on why traditional, essentialist accounts of kinds are inadequate, we begin with realism vs. social constructivism about kinds. For a general overview, we consider a taxonomy of different types of kinds (e.g., historical kinds, homeostatic property cluster kinds, and institutional kinds), and survey a few brief examples of kinds from chemistry to psychiatry. Then we will take a closer look at concrete cases, discussing controversies about their status as kinds and the distinctive considerations to be used when construing them as kinds. We will cover race, sex and gender, emotions (as an instance of cognitive kinds), and several psychiatric kinds (including the notion of interactive kinds). We conclude by returning to the issue about social construction and mind-dependence of kinds, discussing what lessons our concrete cases provide for these general philosophical issues about the nature of kinds.

B. Prerequisites
To take the class as an undergraduate (PHIL 412), you must have previously completed two philosophy classes (including one class at the 200-level or higher) or obtain my permission.

C. Required texts
The required readings consist of journal articles and book chapters, and are listed below in Section K. A substantial part of the readings can be accessed online via our course website.
D. Course requirements

- Term paper(s) 70%
- Oral presentation 20% (0% for PHIL 412 students not giving an oral presentation)
- Participation 10% (30% for PHIL 412 students not giving an oral presentation)

**Term paper(s) (70%):** You must write either one long term paper, worth 70% of credit, or two short term papers, each of which is worth 35% of credit. An electronic version of the long term paper is due on Friday, December 15 at noon. If you choose the short paper option, an electronic version of the first paper is due on Thursday, November 2 at 12:30pm, and the second one is due on Friday, December 15 at noon.

Approximate length of a long paper: 4000–5000 words if you are an undergraduate student (signed up for PHIL 412); 5000–7000 words if you are a graduate student (PHIL 510).

Approximate length of each short paper: 2000–2500 words if you are an undergraduate student; 2500–3500 words if you are a graduate student.

I am happy to provide comments on term paper drafts. In the case of the long paper and the 2nd short paper, I guarantee comments if you send me an electronic draft by December 10.

**Oral presentation (20% for those giving one):** Every student in PHIL 510 must give one oral presentation. Students in PHIL 412 may give an oral presentation. Your task as a presenter is to briefly summarize this meeting’s readings (highlighting points that you find particularly relevant) but primarily to start the discussion by having prepared some questions (e.g. about problematic issues in the readings). I ask you to (a) prepare a short handout and email me a draft in advance so that I can provide comments, and to (b) make copies of the final version for the whole class, so that everyone has a summary of your presentation. You may give your presentation using PowerPoint (and use a printout of the slides as a handout).

**Participation (10%, but 30% for PHIL 412 students not giving an oral presentation):** Attendance and active participation is important for this class. It is the responsibility of each student to come to class prepared to engage actively in discussion. Each of you will probably have picked up different points from the readings or have questions or objections, so please share them! You can also obtain participation credit by starting topics and replying to posts at the discussion forum on our website.

E. Course website

The course has a website at [https://eclass.srv.ualberta.ca](https://eclass.srv.ualberta.ca). Some of our assigned readings can be accessed from this site, and I use it to post presentation handouts and additional material. The site also contains a discussion board. Let me know if you audit the class (or upon login do not see PHIL 412 / 510 under ‘My Courses’), so that I can add you to the list of online participants.

F. Academic integrity and plagiarism

The University of Alberta is committed to the highest standards of academic integrity and honesty. Students are expected to be familiar with these standards and to uphold the policies of the university in this respect. Students are urged to familiarize themselves with the Code of Student Behaviour and avoid any behaviour which could potentially result in suspicions of cheating, plagiarism, misrepresentation of facts and/or participation in an offence. Academic dishonesty is a serious offence and can result in suspension or expulsion from the university.
The Code of Student Behaviour defines plagiarism as follows (summary):

No Student shall submit the words, ideas, images or data of another person as the Student’s own in any academic writing, essay, thesis, project, assignment, presentation or poster in a course or program of study.

Students should consult the information provided by the Office of the Dean of Students regarding avoiding cheating and plagiarism in particular and academic dishonesty in general. If in doubt about what is permitted in this class, ask the instructor. An instructor or coordinator who is convinced that a student has handed in work that he or she could not possibly reproduce without outside assistance is obliged, out of consideration of fairness to other students, to report the case to the Associate Dean of the Faculty (see the Academic Discipline Process).

The library also has information on citing and avoiding plagiarism.

G. Schedule of classes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reference</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sep 5</td>
<td>Introduction. Khalidi, <em>Natural Categories and Human Kinds</em>, Section 1.1</td>
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<td>Sep 7</td>
<td>Traditional essentialism. Khalidi, <em>Natural Categories and Human Kinds</em>, Sections 1.3–1.7 (1.5 can be skipped)</td>
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<td>Sep 14</td>
<td>Realism and social construction. Boyd, ‘Kinds as the &quot;workmanship of men&quot;: realism, constructivism and natural kinds,’ Sections 0–3</td>
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<td>Sep 19</td>
<td>HPC account of kinds. Brigandt, ‘Natural kinds in evolution and systematics: metaphysical and epistemological considerations’</td>
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<td>Sep 26</td>
<td>Various types and examples of kinds. Khalidi, <em>Natural Categories and Human Kinds</em>, Sections 4.6–4.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sep 28</td>
<td>Various types and examples of kinds. Khalidi, <em>Natural Categories and Human Kinds</em>, Sections 3.6 and 5.1–5.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oct 3</td>
<td>Various types and examples of kinds. Khalidi, <em>Natural Categories and Human Kinds</em>, Sections 5.5–5.7</td>
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<td>Oct 5</td>
<td>Kinds and values. Ludwig, ‘Ontological choices and the value-free ideal’</td>
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<td>Oct 10</td>
<td>Race as a kind. Mallon, ‘RACE: normative, not metaphysical or semantic’</td>
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<td>Oct 12</td>
<td>Race as a kind. Kaplan, ‘When socially determined categories make biological realities’</td>
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<td>Oct 17</td>
<td>Sex and gender. Stone, ‘Essentialism and anti-essentialism in feminist philosophy’</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oct 19</td>
<td>Sex and gender. Sveinsdóttir, ‘The metaphysics of sex and gender’</td>
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<td>[optional: Ainsworth, ‘Sex and gender redefined’]</td>
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<td>Oct 24</td>
<td><strong>Emotion as a kind.</strong> Griffiths, ‘Is emotion a natural kind?’ and Section 4 of ‘Emotions as natural and normative kinds’</td>
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<td>Oct 26</td>
<td><strong>Emotions as kinds.</strong> Barrett, ‘Emotions are real’</td>
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<td>Oct 31</td>
<td><strong>Interactive kinds.</strong> Hacking, <em>The Social Construction of What</em>, Chapter 4</td>
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<td>Nov 2</td>
<td><strong>Interactive kinds.</strong> Tekin, ‘The missing self in Hacking’s looping effects’</td>
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<td>Nov 7</td>
<td><strong>Psychiatric kinds.</strong> Haslam, ‘Kinds of kinds: a conceptual taxonomy of psychiatric categories’</td>
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<td>Nov 9</td>
<td><strong>Psychiatric kinds.</strong> Godman, ‘Psychiatric disorders <em>qua</em> natural kinds: the case of the &quot;apathetic children&quot;’</td>
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Fall term reading week

| Nov 21 | **Psychiatric kinds.** Charland, ‘Character: moral treatment and the personality disorders,’ pp. 64–73  
| Nov 23 | **Psychiatric kinds.** Potter, ‘Oppositional defiant disorder: cultural factors that influence interpretations of defiant behavior and their social and scientific consequences’ |
| Nov 28 | **Psychiatric kinds.** Horwitz, ‘The social functions of natural kinds: the case of major depression’ |
| Nov 30 | **Construction and mind-dependence again.** Ludwig, ‘Indigenous and scientific kinds’ |
| Dec 5  | **Construction and mind-dependence again.** Khalidi, *Natural Categories and Human Kinds*, Sections 6.1 and 6.3–6.5 |
| Dec 7  | **Construction and mind-dependence again.** [optional: Reydon, ‘From a zooming-in model to a co-creation model’] |

Dec 15  Long term paper / 2nd short term paper due at noon

H. Student Services

The university provides various services, including [Student Accessibility Services](#) (exam and classroom accommodations for students with a disability, chronic health condition, or anxiety disorders), the [Student Success Centre](#) (e.g., note-taking and writing skills), and the [Centre for Writers](#) (writing support, in the basement of Assiniboia Hall).
I. Attendance, Absences, and Missed Grade Components

Regular attendance is essential for optimal performance in any course. In cases of potentially excusable absences due to illness or domestic affliction, notify your instructor by e-mail within two days. Regarding absences that may be excusable and procedures for addressing course components missed as a result, consult the “Attendance” and “Examinations” sections of the Academic Regulations of the University Calendar. Be aware that unexcused absences will result in partial or total loss of the grade for the “attendance and participation” component(s) of a course, as well as for any assignments that are not handed-in or completed as a result.

J. Recording of lectures

Audio or video recording of lectures, labs, seminars or any other teaching environment by students is allowed only with the prior written consent of the instructor or as a part of an approved accommodation plan. Recorded material is to be used solely for personal study, and is not to be used or distributed for any other purpose without prior written consent from the instructor.

K. Bibliography of readings


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*Policy about course outlines can be found in [Course Requirements](#), [Evaluation Procedures and Grading](#) of the University Calendar.*