

# Philosophy and Psychedelics

MA module: PHLM013/014

## Mini Module Descriptor 2021

**Convenors:** Dr Peter Sjöstedt-Hughes and Prof. Christine Hauskeller (with guest lecturers)

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**Place:** Byrne House Seminar Room, Ground Floor

**Days and times:** Thursdays, 2 – 4 pm

### Introduction:

The renewed and increasingly intensified study of psychedelic substances over the past decade has suddenly presented us with a set of new, apparently positive pathways covering psychiatry, pharmacology, neuroscience, and so too global politics concerning prohibition and liberty, ideology generally, and thus ethics. Beyond practical medicalization and its wake, psychedelic substances and their associated phenomenology can be viewed through a multiplicity of perspectives, an overview that itself has implications for the whole cultural turn concerning these substances.

In this module we consider this multiplicity of perspectives and their implications, using the tools and insights that philosophy can provide. As well as the ethical considerations aforementioned, we shall look at the phenomenology and philosophy of mind of psychedelic experience, the aesthetics, the debate between perennial and contextual interpretations of experience, with concern to indigenous and historical epistemics. We shall also consider the relation of psychedelics to religion, 'self', mysticism, and classic metaphysics, as well as current clinical practices, nature connectedness and ecology, and the future of the psychedelic endeavour.

### Module Aims:

This module aims to provide a critical, pluralistic understanding of psychedelic substance use past and present, as well as a deeper, focussed understanding of certain emerging concerns related to problems of the mind and of power relations. As such, pivotal issues in philosophy can be used and developed in this exponentially growing field, such as:— the relation of 'mental health' to metaphysical, phenomenological, and political analyses of the 'self'. The unfathomable extent of consciousness, and thus the extension of aesthetics and the augmentation of the subject and object of philosophies of mind. Related thereto arise questions of cognitive liberty, indigenous epistemicide, environmentalism, and the potential of future theologies of mysticism.

Students will gain knowledge of this emerging field, and therewith new arenas in which philosophical knowledge can be fruitfully applied. Moreover, students will realize and benefit from the web of interconnections that psychedelic research allows philosophy to weave throughout cultural and social anthropology, political science, neuroscience, theology, in addition to psychology and psychiatry.

### Intended Learning Outcomes:

<b>Module Specific Skills and Knowledge:</b>
Demonstrate solid knowledge and understanding of multiple perspectives on psychedelic narratives.
Demonstrate understanding of the problems of mind highlighted by psychedelic experience.
Present your own analyses of the implications of theories on pressing debates of our time.
<b>Discipline Specific Skills and Knowledge:</b>
Demonstrate a high level of knowledge about psychedelic theories and their application
Demonstrate sound knowledge of past and current debates in philosophic psychedelia.
<b>Personal and Key Transferable/ Employment Skills and Knowledge:</b>
Demonstrate capacity to conduct research independently
Demonstrate aptitude for succinct oral presentations to groups
Write reflective academic review and research essays

### LEARNING AND TEACHING For the 15-credit PHLM013:

#### LEARNING ACTIVITIES AND TEACHING METHODS (given in hours of study time)

Scheduled Learning & Teaching activities	26	Guided independent study	124	Placement/study abroad	0
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#### DETAILS OF LEARNING ACTIVITIES AND TEACHING METHODS

Category	Hours of study time	Description
Scheduled Learning and Teaching Activities	22	11 x 2 hour taught sessions - 30-minute lectures and 1.5 hour seminar discussion of readings for each 2-hour session.
Scheduled Learning and Teaching Activities	4	2 x 2-hour facilitated tutorial with student presentations.
Guided Independent Study	16	Analyse one course reading and write a succinct summary of the key arguments of the text.
Guided Independent Study	58	Reading of the module texts for each week
Guided Independent Study	50	Writing independent research essay. Conduct guided and independent research on a theme from the course; write a brief scholarly essay to be submitted after the end of term.

### LEARNING AND TEACHING For the 30-credit PHLM014:

#### LEARNING ACTIVITIES AND TEACHING METHODS (given in hours of study time)

Scheduled Learning & Teaching activities	26	Guided independent study	274	Placement/study abroad	0
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#### DETAILS OF LEARNING ACTIVITIES AND TEACHING METHODS

Category	Hours of study time	Description
Scheduled Learning and Teaching Activities	22	11 x 2 hour taught sessions - 30-minute lectures and 1.5 hour seminar discussion of readings for each 2-hour session.
Scheduled Learning and Teaching Activities	4	2 x 2-hour facilitated tutorial with student presentations.
Guided Independent Study	26	Analyse one course reading and write a succinct summary of the key arguments of the text.
Guided Independent Study	76	Reading of the module texts for each week
Guided Independent Study	44	Prepare a presentation on the topic for essay and the key arguments from the literature in a dedicated course session.
Guided Independent Study	128	Writing independent research essay. Conduct guided and independent research on a theme from the course; write a scholarly essay to be submitted after the end of term.

### ASSESSMENT for 15-credit PHLM013:

#### FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT - for feedback and development purposes; does not count towards module grade

Form of Assessment	Size of the assessment e.g. duration/length	ILOs assessed	Feedback method
Presentation of essay plan	10 minutes	1-4, 6, 7	Oral

#### SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT (% of credit)

Coursework	100	Written exams	0	Practical exams	0
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#### DETAILS OF SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT

Form of Assessment	% of credit	Size of the assessment e.g. duration/length	ILOs assessed	Feedback method
Essay	80	3,000 words	1-6, 8	Written
Reading Review	20	1 x 800 words	1-5, 8	Written

#### DETAILS OF RE-ASSESSMENT (where required by referral or deferral)

Original form of assessment	Form of re-assessment	ILOs re-assessed	Time scale for re-assessment
Essay	Essay (3,000 words)	1-5, 6, 8	August/September reassessment period
Reading Review	Reading Summary (800 words)	1-4, 6, 8	August/September reassessment period

#### RE-ASSESSMENT NOTES

The forms of re-assessment have the same credit percentage as their original form of assessment.

### ASSESSMENT for 30-credit PHLM014:

#### FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT - for feedback and development purposes; does not count towards module grade

Form of Assessment	Size of the assessment e.g. duration/length	ILOs assessed	Feedback method
Presentation of essay plan	10 minutes	1-4, 6, 7	Oral

#### SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT (% of credit)

Coursework	100	Written exams	0	Practical exams	0
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#### DETAILS OF SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT

Form of Assessment	% of credit	Size of the assessment e.g. duration/length	ILOs assessed	Feedback method
Essay	70	7,000 words	1-6, 8	Written
Reading Review	10	1 x 800 words	1-5, 8	Written
Presentation of essay plan	20	15 minutes	1-4, 6, 7	Oral

#### DETAILS OF RE-ASSESSMENT (where required by referral or deferral)

Original form of assessment	Form of re-assessment	ILOs re-assessed	Time scale for re-assessment
Essay	Essay (7,000 words)	1-5, 6, 8	August/September reassessment period
Reading Review	Reading Summary (800 words each)	1-4, 6, 8	August/September reassessment period
Presentation	Short essay 1500 words	1-4,6,8	August/September reassessment period

#### RE-ASSESSMENT NOTES

The forms of re-assessment have the same credit percentage as their original form of assessment.

## CONTENT

**WEEK 1:** Introduction to Philosophy and Psychedelics

**WEEK 2:** Philosophy of Psychedelics and Mysticism

**WEEK 3:** Ethics of the Medicalization of Psychedelics

**WEEK 4:** The Self and Psychedelics

**WEEK 5:** Indigenous Psychedelic Cosmologies

**WEEK 6: READING WEEK**

**WEEK 7:** Biopiracy and Anthropology vis-à-vis Psychedelics

**WEEK 8:** Gender and Psychedelics

**WEEK 9:** Cognitive Liberty and the Law vis-à-vis Psychedelics

**WEEK 10:** Nature Connectedness, Ecology, and Psychedelics

**WEEK 11:** Aesthetics and Psychedelics

**WEEK 12:** Open Doors

[All subject to minor changes]

## SOME RELEVANT TEXTS

**Key text:** Hauskeller, C., & Sjöstedt-Hughes, P. (forthcoming) *Philosophy and Psychedelics* (London: Bloomsbury)

Aronovich, A. (2019) Beyond Psychological Patriarchy: Plant Medicines and the Resurgence of Medical Eros. In: Papaspyrou, M, Baldini, C., and Luke, D., eds. (2019) *Psychedelic Mysteries of the Feminine* (Rochester: Park Street Press), pp. 242–255.

Baier, K. (forthcoming) ‘High Mysticism: On the interplay between the psychedelic movement and academic study of mysticism’

Benjamin, W. (1927–34) *On Hashish*

Blood, B. P. (1874) *The Anaesthetic Revelation and the Gist of Philosophy*

Boothroyd, D. (2006) *Culture on Drugs: Narco-cultural Studies of High Modernity*

Clark, M. (2017) *The Tawny One: Soma, Haoma and Ayahuasca*

Clark, W. H. (1970) *The Psychedelics and Religion*

Davy, H. (1800) *Researches Chemical and Philosophical – chiefly concerning Nitrous Oxide*

Davy, H. (1829) *Consolations in Travel, or, The Last Days of a Philosopher*

De Quincey, T. (1821) *Confession of an English Opium Eater*

Ellis, H. (1898) *Mescal: A New Artificial Paradise*

Foucault, M. (1970) *Theatrum Philosophicum*

Gibson, L. (2013) 'A Whiteheadian Perspective on Psychedelic Experience and Research: An Update'

Grof, S. (1975) *Realms Of The Human Unconscious: Observations From LSD Research*

Heard, G. (1963) *Can This Drug [LSD] Enlarge Man's Mind?*

Hofmann, A. (1979) *LSD: My Problem Child*

Hofmann, A., Ruck, C. A. P., Wasson, R. G. (1978) *The Road to Eleusis: Unveiling the Secret of the Mysteries*

Huxley, A. (1954) *The Doors of Perception*

Huxley, A. (1956) *Heaven and Hell*

Huxley, A. (1999) *Moksha: Aldous Huxley's Classic Writings on Psychedelics and the Visionary Experience*

James, W. (1882) *The Subjective Effects of Nitrous Oxide*

James, W. (1902) *The Varieties of Religious Experience*

Jay, M. (2019) *Mescaline: A Global History of the First Psychedelic*

Jay, M. (2009) *The Atmosphere of Heaven: The Unnatural Experiments of Dr Beddoes and His Sons of Genius*

Jünger, E. (1970) *Approaches: Drugs and Ecstatic Intoxication*

Kerenyi, C. (1962) *Eleusis: Archetypal Image of Mother and Daughter*

Langlitz, N. (2016) *Is There a Place for Psychedelics in Philosophy?*

Leary, Metzner, and Alpert (19XX) *The Psychedelic Experience*

Leary, T. (19XX) *High Priest*

Letcher, A. (2006) *Shroom: A Cultural History of the Magic Mushroom*

Luke, A. (2019) *Toward a Radical Uncertainty: Into the Darkness*. In: Papaspyrou, M, Baldini, C., and Luke, D., eds. (2019) *Psychedelic Mysteries of the Feminine* (Rochester: Park Street Press), pp. 158–166

Letheby, C. (2017) 'Naturalizing Psychedelic Spirituality'

Letheby, C. (2021) *Philosophy and Psychedelics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press)

Lundborg, P. (2014) *Note Towards a Definition of a Psychedelic Philosophy*

Masters and Houston (1966) *The Varieties of Psychedelic Experience*

Marincolo, S. (2015) *What Hashish Did to Walter Benjamin: Mind-Altering Essays on Marijuana*

Michaux, M. (1956) *Miserable Miracle* [mescaline]

Nutt, D. (2020) *Drugs Without the Hot Air* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.)

Osmond, H. (1957) A Review of the Clinical Effects of Psychotomimetic Agents, *Annals New York Academy of Sciences*, pp. 418–434

Osmond, H. (1971) *Philosophical Aspects of Psychedelics*

Papaspyrou, M, Baldini, C., and Luke, D., eds. (2019) *Psychedelic Mysteries of the Feminine* (Rochester: Park Street Press)

Partridge, C. (2018) *High Culture: Drugs, Mysticism, and the Pursuit of Transcendence in the Modern World*

Paz, O. (1973) *Alternating Current*

Pollan, M. (2018) *How to Change Your Mind: The New Science of Psychedelics*

Price, H. H. (1964) *A Mescaline Experience*

Riedlinger, T. J. (1982) *Sartre's Rite of Passage* [mescaline]

Rinella, M. A. (2010) *Pharmakon: Plato, Drug Culture, and Identity in Ancient Greece*

Russell, B. (1910) *Mysticism and Logic, and Other Essays*

Sacks, O. (2012) *Hallucinations*

- Sadie, P. (1999) *Writing on Drugs*
- Shanon, B. (2002) *The Antipodes of the Mind*
- Shulgin, A. & Shulgin, A. (1990) *Pihkal: A Chemical Love Story*
- Sjöstedt-Hughes, P. (2015) *Noumenautics: Metaphysics, Meta-ethics, Psychedelics*
- Smythies, J. R. (1953) *The Mescaline Phenomena*
- Strassman, R. (2010) *DMT: The Spirit Molecule*
- Suzuki, D. T. (1971) 'Religion and Drugs'
- Thompson, S. J. (2014) 'From 'Rausch' to Rebellion: Walter Benjamin's On Hashish and the Aesthetic Dimensions of Prohibitionist Realism'
- Ustinova, Y. (2018) *Divine Mania: Alterations of Consciousness in Ancient Greece*
- Walsh, C. (2016) Psychedelics and cognitive liberty: Reimagining drug policy through the prism of human rights, *International Journal of Drug Policy*, 29, pp. 80–87.
- Ward, R. H. (1957) *A Drug-Taker's Notes*
- Watts, A. (19XX) *The Joyous Cosmology*
- Winter, J. (2020) *Our Love Affair with Drugs: the History, the Science, the Politics*
- Zaehner, R. C. (1957) *Mysticism Sacred and Profane: An Inquiry into Some Varieties of Praeternatural*
- Zaehner, R. C. (1972) *Zen, Drugs, and Mysticism*