Readings for Graduate Proseminar Phil 680A on Idealization and Ideal Theory Fall 2026

Week 1: Wed Sept 9 Introduction to the course, no reading assigned.

Week 2: Wed Sept 16. Basics of ideal theory and its critics.

- Rawls, John. "Justice as fairness." *The philosophical review* 67, no. 2 (1958): 164-194.
- Mills, Charles W. "“Ideal theory” as ideology." *Hypatia* 20, no. 3 (2005): 165-183.

Week 3: Wed Sept 23. More criticisms of ideal theory.

- Kittay, Eva Feder. "The ethics of philosophizing: Ideal theory and the exclusion of people with severe cognitive disabilities." In *Feminist ethics and social and political philosophy: Theorizing the non-ideal*, pp. 121-146. Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 2009.

Week 4: Wed Sept 30. Criticisms and defenses of ideal theory.

- Sen, Amartya. "What do we want from a theory of justice?." *The Journal of philosophy* 103, no. 5 (2006): 215-238.
- Hancox-Li, Leif. "Idealization and abstraction in models of injustice." *Hypatia* 32, no. 2 (2017): 329-346.

Week 5: Wed Oct 7. Defenses of ideal theory and idealization philosophy of science.

- Táíwò, O. O. (2023). Uncommon Features: Defending Ideal Theory with Model-to-World Inference. In U. Okeja (Ed.), *Routledge Handbook of African Political Philosophy* (1st ed., pp. 198–216). Routledge.
- Sullivan, Emily, and Kareem Khalifa. "Idealizations and understanding: Much ado about nothing?." *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 97, no. 4 (2019): 673-689.

Week 6: Wed Oct 21. Using highly idealized models in social sciences.

- **(primary paper)** Ylikoski, Petri, and N. Emrah Aydinonat. "Understanding with theoretical models." *Journal of Economic Methodology* 21, no. 1 (2014): 19-36.
- Sugden, Robert. "Credible worlds: the status of theoretical models in economics." *Journal of Economic Methodology* 7, no. 1 (2000): 1-31.

Week 7: Wed Oct 28. Idealized models and causes of inequity.

- Rubin, Hannah, and Cailin O'Connor. "Discrimination and collaboration in science." *Philosophy of Science* 85, no. 3 (2018): 380-402.

- Feiten, Tim Elmo. "The Map/Territory Relationship in Game-Theoretic Modeling of Cultural Evolution." *Philosophy of Science* 90, no. 5 (2023): 1427-1436.

Week 8: Nov 4. More on bargaining models as idealizations

- Charusheela, S. "18 Empowering work? Bargaining models reconsidered[1]." *Toward a feminist philosophy of economics* (2003): 287.

- England, Paula. "A feminist critique of rational-choice theories: Implications for sociology." *The American Sociologist* 20, no. 1 (1989): 14-28.

Week 9: Nov 11. The relationship between idealization in science and ideal theory in philosophy

- Nefdt, Ryan M. "Scientific models and political theory: The ideal theory debate revisited." *Theoria* 87, no. 6 (2021): 1585-1608.

- Ismael, Jenann. "A philosopher of science looks at idealization in political theory." *Social Philosophy and Policy* 33, no. 1-2 (2016): 11-31.

Week 10: Nov 18. Idealization, oppression, and alienation

- Primary paper: Khader, Serene J. "How is feminist philosophy nonideal theory?." *Social Theory and Practice* 50, no. 4 (2024): 619-642

- Saint-Croix, Catharine. "Alienation, Idealization, and Modeling." *Hypatia* (2026): 1-22.

Week 11: Nov 25. Critical race structuralism, decolonization, and non-ideal theory

- Ruíz, Elena, and Nora Berenstain. "Non-Ideal Theory." *The Routledge Handbook of Non-Ideal Theory* (2024).

- Tuck, Eve and K. Wayne Yang. (2012). Decolonization is not a metaphor. *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1(1): 1-40.