STRUCTURE CONFIRMATION THEORY

Texts   Readings will be made available in the philosophy copy room. Some are also available online through NYU libraries. My own *Notes on Bayesian Confirmation Theory* can be found at the class website.

Content   What is the nature of inductive reasoning in science? What counts as scientific evidence for a hypothesis, a theory, an unobservable entity? To answer these questions, we will examine the virtues, problems, and variants of the Bayesian view of confirmation, and we will compare Bayesianism to some of its rivals, both historical and modern. Bayesian topics include: splitting up praise and blame among hypotheses under test; "subjective" versus "objective" Bayesianism; the question whether Bayesianism even constitutes a theory of induction; the "new theory/old evidence" problem. Other topics include: instantialist approaches to confirmation (including my own recent efforts in this direction), the nature of evidence, the social structure of scientific inquiry. No background will be presupposed.

Evaluation   Your grade is based on the three items of coursework for this class: two 10 page papers (40% each) and a presentation in class (20%).

- The second paper may be an extension and rewrite of the first. If you pursue this option, you will submit a 10 page paper and then a 20 page paper that is based on (and may incorporate all of) the first.

- Your presentation may also overlap as much as you like with your paper(s).

- The first paper is due on November 7th. The second paper is due on the last day of term, which is December 13th.

Website   The class website is at
http://www.nyu.edu/gsas/dept/philo/user/strevens/Classes/Conf06/

- You can also get there via this shorter URL:
http://www.strevens.org/classes/conf06/

Contact   Office hours are Wed 12–1, and by appointment.
Room 503F, Silver Center

strevens@nyu.edu ■ www.strevens.org