The New Directions Fellowship

The aim of the New Directions Fellowship is to allow graduate students in philosophy to pursue significant coursework and/or lab work in a scientific discipline relevant to their philosophical interests. It is open only to current graduate students in Philosophy at UC Berkeley. Normally candidates will be expected to have passed the Qualifying Examination, though exceptions will be considered with adequate justification.

**Motivation.** Some of the most central questions of philosophy are questions about how our scientific understanding of ourselves and our world relates to our ordinary conceptions. For example, how can our conceptions of ourselves as agents be reconciled with what science tells us about the causal basis of our thoughts and actions? Should the findings of color science make us doubt the reality of colors? How can ordinary ideas about time be squared with what relativistic physics tells us about the geometry of spacetime? What do psychological findings about our moral intuitions tell us about ethics?

Grappling intelligently with questions of this sort requires a firm grounding in both philosophy and the relevant science, and this can be difficult for our students to attain. Students are free to take courses in other departments, and a few do this. Some even participate in labs. But it is very difficult to get very far in studying a scientific field while doing philosophical research and serving as a GSI. The purpose of the New Directions Fellowship is to make it possible for students to engage more deeply with scientific work in their philosophical research, and to seed future collaboration between philosophers and scientists.

**The fellowship.** The fellowship will pay all university tuition and fees for a semester, plus a $10,000 semester stipend and a $4,500 summer stipend. Optionally, tuition will be paid for up to 8 units of summer coursework. This will allow Fellows to complete important prerequisites during the summer, freeing them to take courses more directly relevant to their interests in the Fall. Fellows are not allowed to work as GSIs while receiving the stipend. They will be expected to enroll in at least one course in the relevant science for credit, and to audit others or participate in lab work, while continuing with their philosophical research. At the end of the fellowship
term, Fellows will be expected to submit a report describing the work they did and the impact it has had on their philosophical work.

**The mentor.** A mentor will be identified in the relevant science. This might be a graduate student, a postdoc, or a faculty member (possibly emeritus). The mentor will be given a research fund of $5,000, and will be expected to meet with the Fellow on a regular basis, to talk about what the Fellow is learning, help the Fellow navigate through the field, and possibly discuss issues of philosophical significance. Ideally the mentor would have philosophical interests; the idea is that if the relationship goes well, the mentor might turn into a collaborator on interdisciplinary projects in the future.

**The colloquium.** At the end of the fellowship term or the beginning of the next term, Fellows are expected to give a joint colloquium in the department, together with their mentors. This is not a standard research talk, but rather an opportunity for Fellows to talk informally about what they have learned about the relevant science that is of philosophical interest, and for all the participants to explore these connections through open discussion.

**Applications.** Applications are due in March for the following year (the precise date varies and will be announced). Applicants should submit the following to Klaus Corcilius (corcilius@berkeley.edu):

- a description of the proposed course of study, including courses to be taken and specifying whether the fellowship is to be taken in Fall or Spring;
- an explanation of why the proposed course of study is important, given the applicant’s research interests and trajectory;
- a description of any prior background in the relevant science;
- the name of a potential mentor from the relevant science; and
- a statement from the mentor agreeing to serve in this capacity if the applicant is selected.

In addition, applicants should arrange for a confidential letter from one of the candidate’s advisors to be sent directly to corcilius@berkeley.edu. This letter should assess the value of the proposed course of study for the candidate’s dissertation plans and the candidate’s capacity to carry it out.

The department’s Admissions and Fellowships committee will review the applications and make a selection only if there is a sufficiently deserving candidate with a well-motivated project.