

DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY SPRING 2018 COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

PHIL 2300-001	Beginning Philosophy	10:00-10:50	MWF	ENG/PHIL 164
PHIL 2300-002	Beginning Philosophy	11:00-11:50	MWF	ENG/PHIL 164
Dr. Jonathan Drake				

This course introduces students to the philosophical treatment of significant issues. Such issues include:

- How should we live, and why? What should we do?
- What is it to be rational? What is knowledge? How can I get it?
- Does God exist? What is God like? Can we prove it?
- What is it to have a mind? To be conscious? How is subjective experience possible?
- What is it to be a person? What is it to be *me*?

We will get acquainted with philosophy by trying to understand what some of the great philosophers have said about some of these questions, and by talking about these questions together.

PHIL 2300-003	Beginning Philosophy	12:00-12:50	MWF	MCOM 168
PHIL 2300-004	Beginning Philosophy	1:00-1:50	MWF	MCOM 168
Douglas Westfall				

This class will take seriously the questions that have bothered you since childhood. Questions like: What can we know? Do I have a soul? Free will? Is there a God? How should I live my life? What is justice? etc. This class will focus on classic texts in order to shed light on these problems while providing an introduction to the philosophic cannon.

PHIL 2300-005	Beginning Philosophy	2:00-3:20	TR	FORL 105
Dr. Anna Ribeiro				

What is philosophy? Has it always existed? Some of the questions that philosophers have tried to answer include what is the essence of all that exists, whether we have free will, what is the right way to live one's life, whether God's existence can be proven, and whether reason or sensory experience is the foundation of knowledge. We shall cover these and other questions in their historical context as we read through philosophical texts by some of the most influential thinkers in the Western tradition.

PHIL 2310-001	Logic	11:00-11:50	MWF	ENG/PHIL 260
PHIL 2310-002	Logic	10:00-10:50	MWF	ENG/PHIL 260
Dr. Joseph Gottlieb				

In this course, students will be introduced to the basic concepts of symbolic logic via a study of sentential and predicate logic. By the end of the course, students will gain competence in analyzing arguments, translating ordinary English sentences into a formal language, as well the methods of truth-tables, truth trees, and natural deduction in sentential logic and predicate logic.

PHIL 2310-003 **Logic** **11:00-12:20** **TR** **ENG/PHIL 164**

Dr. Christopher Hom

A central aspect of reasoning is the ability to give arguments for one's conclusions. Logic is the formal representation of arguments, so mastering logic is essential for good reasoning. In this course, we will investigate the underlying, logical form of sentences and the deductive relations that hold between them, thus giving us deeper insight into the notion of logical inference from premises to its conclusion. The course will present three logical systems, each in increasing expressive power: sentential logic, monadic quantificational logic, and polyadic quantificational logic. For each system, we will closely examine the syntax of the system, its relation to English, its particular semantic features, and the general properties of satisfiability, validity, implication and equivalence.

PHIL 2320-003 **Introduction to Ethics** **9:30-10:50** **TR** **ENG/PHIL 260**

Dr. Howard Curzer

Contemporary ethics is dominated by three systems (virtue ethics, utilitarianism, deontology) proposed by three great philosophers (Aristotle, Mill, and Kant). Students in this course will come to understand these three moral systems. Students will be able to compare and contrast these three moral systems, weighing their strengths and weaknesses. Students will also apply each of these three moral systems to two contemporary moral problems (abortion and economic justice).

PHIL 2320-004 **Introduction to Ethics** **11:00-12:20** **TR** **ENG/PHIL 350**

Dr. Jeremy Schwartz

How should we live? What is a good life? Ought I to forgo my own interests for the interests of another? Is it sometimes permissible to kill innocent human beings? Is it permissible to kill animals for food? Ethical philosophy attempts to answer these sorts of questions through reason and reflection. Within current ethical philosophy, there are three major schools of thought on how these sorts of questions should be answered: utilitarianism, virtue theory, and deontology. While each of these attempts to shed light on all of these questions merely through reason and reflection, each of them arrives at very different answers to these questions. In this class, we will investigate utilitarianism, deontology, and virtue theory in some detail by closely reading both the founding texts of each of the ethical theories as well as reading some modern re-interpretations and criticisms. In addition, in the last part of the class, we will seek to apply these theories to three test cases: abortion, animal rights, and global poverty. The application to test cases should both shed light on our intuitions about these morally contested issues but also shed light on the ethical theories themselves.

PHIL 2320-005 **Introduction to Ethics** **10:00-10:50** **MWF** **ENG/PHIL 163**

PHIL 2320-006 **Introduction to Ethics** **11:00-11:50** **MWF** **ENG/PHIL 163**

Dr. Walter Schaller

This course will be centered on the moral theories of John Stuart Mill and Immanuel Kant. We will read selections from Mill's two most important books, UTILITARIANISM and ON LIBERTY. We will pay particular attention to Mill's defense of individuality (and his criticism of social tyranny) in ON LIBERTY and try to figure out how it is consistent with utilitarianism. In the process we will also want to evaluate Mill's argument for freedom of speech and his criticisms of paternalism, the offense principle, and legal moralism. We will also consider some important theoretical questions about the moral relevance of the distinction between killing and letting die, and between intending and merely foreseeing harm.

PHIL 2330-001 Science and Society 9:30-10:50 TR ENG/PHIL 163

Dr. Joel Velasco

In this class we will not be doing science, but rather will be reflecting on the nature of science and the role that it should and does play in our modern lives. During the course we will examine such questions as whether there is a sharp dividing line between science and non-science (a "demarcation criterion") and we will carefully consider the relationships between science and religion, between science and ethics, between science and the humanities, and between science, business, and politics. Finally, we will examine the role that science plays in a democratic society such as ours and how we as citizens should think about funding and directing scientific research.

PHIL 2350-001 World Religion & Philosophy 9:00-9:50 MWF FORL 105

Dr. Mark Webb

This course introduces students to the major world religions while placing a special emphasis on the philosophical issues related to religion. My approach is to cover each religion alongside the other religions of the larger tradition. I give special attention to the the different understandings of human nature and personhood, problems of human existence, and proposed solutions. We cover the Vedic Tradition (Hinduism, Jainism, Sikhism, and Buddhism), the Chinese Tradition (Confucianism and Daoism), and the Abrahamic Tradition (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam). In addition to discussing the basic tenets, practices, and history of each religion, we consider some of the philosophical commitments entailed by various religious beliefs. When feasible, we will invite guest speakers representing different religions and take field trips to worship sites.

PHIL 3303-001 Modern European Philosophy 11:00-12:20 TR ENG/PHIL 163

Dr. Francesca DiPoppa

This course will offer an overview of the major philosophical debates in the age from Bacon to Kant (early 17th to late 18th century). Among the topics covered, issue in metaphysics and epistemology (such as the problem of causation and the quest for a clear and certain knowledge), ethics (questions on duty and human happiness), religious epistemology and some political thought. We will read, among others, Descartes, Bacon, Malebranche, Hobbes, Spinoza, Leibniz and Kant.

PHIL 3325-001 Environmental Ethics 1:00-1:50 MWF ENG/PHIL 260

Dr. Joseph Gottlieb

Environmental Ethics examines our relationship with the environment. In particular, it examines the *moral* dimensions of this relationship. Is the environment something to be used on our own personal whims? Or can the environment be "mistreated"? If the answer to the this latter question is yes, what are the bounds of ethical behavior with respect to the environment? Topics to be discussed include: climate change, the relationship between humans and other animals, the politics of industrial food production and its relationship to biotechnology, the value of nature, and nature's future.

PHIL 3334-001

Philosophy of Biology

12:30-1:50 TR

ENG/PHIL 163

Dr. Joel Velasco

This course will examine a range of philosophical questions that arise within the study of evolutionary biology and its application to the human sciences. We'll first discuss questions concerning selection, fitness, adaptationism, and evolutionary explanations. We'll then look at Sociobiology and Evolutionary Psychology with an eye toward thinking about humans and human nature. We will then ask how we can (and should) study human behavior and finally, we will ask if human races exist.

PHIL 3341-H01

Philosophy Through Literature

12:30-1:50 TR

ENG/PHIL 264

Dr. Howard Curzer

The course will bridge cultures, disciplines and centuries. It will investigate, compare, and contrast the foundational epics and philosophic dialogs of the ancient Greeks, Chinese, and Israelites. The core question of the course will be this: "How does a person become good?" Reading the epics philosophically and the dialogs as literary works brings them closer together in form, yet they disagree among themselves both about the nature of virtue and moral knowledge, and also about how to gain these things. For example, the dialogs suggest that people become good through directed dialog while the epics attempt to induce moral development via vicarious experience. Another example is this. While the Greek tradition endorses reason as the driver of the moral maturation process, the Confucian tradition takes ritual to be the main mechanism, and the Israelite tradition focuses upon righteousness, understood as following certain rules.

EPICS: *Odyssey* by Homer, *Monkey* by Wu Ch'êng-ên, *Exodus*, *Numbers*, *Joshua* by ???

DIALOGS: *Republic* by Plato, *Analects* by Confucius, *Talmud* by Hillel et al.

PHIL 4300-001

Topics in Philosophy: Phil of Race

2:00-3:20 TR

ENG/PHIL 152

Dr. Christopher Hom

The course will look examine issues of race and gender from the perspective of contemporary analytic philosophy along three distinct dimensions: 1) metaphysics: what *is* race/gender; 2) epistemology: how do race/gender affect knowledge; and 3) philosophy of language: how are race/gender represented in language and media. Specific questions will include:

- Is race a natural kind or a social construction?
- Should we eliminate the concept of race?
- What is implicit bias?
- What is stereotype threat?
- What do racial and gendered slurs mean, if anything?
- Does pornography harm women, and if so, how?
- Should slurs and pornography be protected under the First Amendment?

Assignments will include weekly reading questions, a midterm exam, one short paper, and one longer, final paper. A previous course in philosophy is recommended.

PHIL 4331-001 Philosophy of Language 2:00-3:20 MW ENG/PHIL 152

Dr. Bruno Whittle

If I say that Henry VIII was a less than ideal husband, then I seem to have said something about a thickset guy who lived hundreds of years ago in England. But what is the connection between those sounds that I produced and that man that makes this possible? Alternatively, suppose that I show you my stab at the great American novel, and ask what you think. You say that you really like the font—and you don't say anything else. Although you didn't *say* that you don't like my novel, I will of course infer that. What are the rules that govern such communication, that goes beyond what we explicitly say? More generally, in this class we will look at philosophers' attempts to understand that richest and most fascinating of our creations: language.

PHIL 5302-001 Studies in Modern Philosophy 5:00 - 7:50 W ENG/PHIL 264

Dr. Francesca DiPoppa

This class will focus on history of political theory. We will read texts including Machiavelli, Grotius, Locke, Hobbes, Burke, Kant, and discuss issues such as the nature and legitimacy of political power, natural and political rights, discrimination, state and church, and others.

PHIL 5311-001 Seminar in Epistemology 2:00-3:20 MW ENG/PHIL 264

Dr. Jonathan Drake

This seminar will be concerned with foundational and central contemporary issues in epistemology. Such issues include:

- What is knowledge? Why think knowledge is attainable?
- What does it amount to to be rational, or have a justified belief?
- What is a reason for believing? What is a *good* reason for believing?
- What are the sources of knowledge and justification? What is evidence?
- Is rationality a matter of coherence, or is more required?

We will develop our expertise in and mastery of epistemology by trying to understand what some of the great philosophers have said about some of these questions, and by talking about these questions together.

PHIL 5314-001 Contemp. Aesthetics 11:00-12:20 TR ENG/PHIL 264

Dr. Anna Ribeiro

How and when did art begin, and why? Are cave paintings art? Is body ornamentation art? Are religious and other didactic plays, paintings, and songs art? Is the concept 'art' a modern Western construct? How do we define 'art'? What kinds of things are symphonies, novels, movies and dance performances—concrete, abstract, or some other kind? What are aesthetic properties such as beauty, and how do they relate to the other properties of an object or event? What is an 'aesthetic experience', and do we ever have those? When we interpret works of art, must we always defer to the artist's own interpretation if we are to be correct? How do we evaluate one work of art as better than another—are there correct criteria of evaluation? Why do we value art at all? We will discuss these and other questions as we consider particular art forms and art works and read philosophical works on these topics from the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. This is a reading- and writing-intensive course.

PHIL 5320-001

Seminar in Ethics

6:00-8:50 T

ENG/PHIL 264

Dr. Jeremy Schwartz

In order to get a better understanding of some of the major strands of contemporary normative ethics, we will look closely at some important works from within each of these strands. Although the works were selected as representatives of traditions that they help found, we will not read them as such. Instead, we will read them as much as possible on their own terms. The works will include: Sidgwick *Methods in Ethics* (selections); Korsgaard, *Sources of Normativity*; MacIntyre, *After Virtue*; Scanlon, *What We Owe to Each Other*, and Broome, *Weighing Goods*.

PHIL 5322-001

Law and Philosophy

3:30-4:50 TR

ENG/PHIL 264

Dr. Daniel Nathan

Issues of interpretation abound when it comes to law and, over the last few decades, such controversies have even become familiar to the general American public. Thus, for example, discussions swirl about whether the Supreme Court should use Framer's Intent as their ultimate guide in interpreting the Constitution in politically charged cases. This seminar will look at arguments in favor of and against the use of intention in legal interpretation, with particular consideration of legal theorist Ronald Dworkin's view, and a recent debate on interpretation between Justice Antonin Scalia and Dworkin. However, because there are interesting and deep parallels between interpretation in law and the arts, the theoretical focus of the seminar will be much broader than just legal interpretation: Instead we look closely at the broader debate in aesthetics, and from there we will examine and compare interpretive approaches in both law and the arts. So, while we will motivate the topic of the seminar with examination of the debate in law, we will look at the development of interpretive theory in both art and law, and how both can be informed by an understanding of the question of authorial intention generally.