

DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY FALL 2017 COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

PHIL 1310-001 Critical Reasoning 11:00-11:50 MWF ENG/PHIL 163

Dr. Joseph Gottlieb

The aim of this course is to teach you to reason well in a world awash with poor reasoning. Critical reasoning concerns the skills, methods, and strategies needed for effectively evaluating and formulating arguments. Being able to identify both good and fallacious reasoning is not only useful for engaging arguments given in academic settings, but it is incredibly helpful for responding to arguments that we encounter in our day-to-day lives. In addition to developing the skills necessary for evaluating philosophical arguments and more casual arguments that one might encounter in the media (i.e. news, pop culture, politics, etc.), we will also look at issues in polling methodology, cognitive biases, conspiracy theories, and the science versus pseudoscience distinction.

PHIL 2300-003 Beginning Philosophy 11:00-1220 TR MCOM 359

Dr. Anna Ribeiro

Beginning Philosophy is an introduction to philosophy via some of its central questions: What is the moral way to conduct our lives? Do we have free will? What is the self? Is there a difference between the mind and the brain? How do we know the answers to these and other questions? Each of these questions will correspond to a section of our course: ethics, free will, personal identity, the mind-body problem, and the theory of knowledge.

PHIL 2300-004 Beginning Philosophy 9:30-10:50 TR MCOM 353

Dr. Christopher Hom

“Philosophy is to be studied, not for the sake of any definite answers to its questions, but rather for the sake of the questions themselves; because these questions enlarge our conception of what is possible, enrich our intellectual imagination and diminish dogmatic assurance which closes the mind against speculation.”

(Bertrand Russell, *The Problems of Philosophy*, 1912)

This course will investigate some basic philosophical issues: knowledge, the mind, the self, God, morality, justice, and the meaning of life. Students will be encouraged to explore their own views in these problematic areas, and then to refine their own positions on the issues by familiarizing themselves with some classic arguments in these areas. By thinking critically about their own opinions students should come to a deeper understanding of these issues and their own stance toward them. The aim for this course will be learning to *read* actively, to *engage* problems with sophistication, to *reason* creatively and with precision, to *write* thoughtfully, and ultimately to *spark* one’s philosophical imagination.

PHIL 2310-H01 Logic 10:00-10:50 MWF ENG/PHIL 264

Dr. Joel Velasco

Factoring a large number, putting a huge list of names in alphabetical order, or solving a sudoku problem: each is an example of the kind of problem that can clearly be formalized and solved in a rote manner if you know the right method, or better, if you have access to the right computer program. But is every problem like that? What about analyzing the latest telescope data or even analyzing an editorial in the newspaper? Does the same logic underlie every type of problem? In this class, we will study notions like logical reasoning, logical consequence, and proof, and learn how to prove what follows (or doesn’t follow) from what. Along the way, we will look at the scope and the limits of logic. To do this, we will see how logic connects with the real world (which we will explore through the history of the computer) and how it might extend into the most abstract of concepts such as the notion of infinity.

PHIL 2310-001	Logic	11:00-11:50	MWF	MCOM 353
Dr. Joel Velasco				
<p>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. To do this we will study two formal systems, sentential logic and predicate logic, and learn about how to represent english arguments in these systems and to carry out formal proofs within them.</p>				

PHIL 2310-003	Logic	9:00-9:50	MWF	ENG/PHIL 260
Staff				
<p>Development of formal methods for evaluating deductive reasoning. Additional topics may include uses if of language, definition, nondeductive inference. Partially fullfills core Mathematics requirement (in conjunction with a mathematics course).</p>				

PHIL 2320-001	Introduction to Ethics	12:00-1250	MWF	AGRI 214
Dr. Howard Curzer				
<p>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).</p>				

PHIL 2320-003	Introduction to Ethics	10:00-10:50	MWF	ENG/PHIL 164
PHIL 2320-004	Introduction to Ethics	11:00-11:50	MWF	ENG/PHIL 164
Dr. Walter Schaller				
<p>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.</p>				

PHIL 2320-H01

Introduction to Ethics

9:30-10:50 TR

ENG/PHIL 264

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-H02

Introduction to Ethics

2:00-3:20 TR

ENG/PHIL 164

Dr. Daniel Nathan

How *ought* persons behave toward one another? Does it even make sense to *reason* about moral questions? After all, perhaps morality is just an individual subjective response, like one's taste in ice cream. Or maybe it's just a matter of religious dogma, so that one needn't think for oneself or bother trying to reason about it at all. Or perhaps all behavior boils down to self-interest anyway, so that talk of "moral obligation" is merely empty rhetoric. And, if it is not empty talk, what could possibly ground moral obligation? Imagine having one of those heavy late-night dorm discussions, but with Plato, Thomas Hobbes, John Stuart Mill, and Immanuel Kant sitting in. In this course, we will explore the potential of thinking hard and deeply about morality, and we will do so in the company of some of the giants of Western moral philosophy. (**Limited to students enrolled in the Honors College.**)

PHIL 3301-001

Classical Greek Philosophy

12:30-1:50 TR

ENG/PHIL 163

Dr. Jeremy Schwartz

This class we will investigate Ancient Greek Philosophy by closely studying Plato's Republic and Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics. These books, perhaps more than any others, invented philosophy as it is practiced in the West. By diving deep into these masterpieces, students will grapple with fundamental question about the nature of justice and the nature of happiness.

HONS 3301-H02 Seminar in Humanities: 11:00-11:50 MWF ENG/PHIL 301

Buddhist Life and Thought

Dr. Mark Webb

This course will be an introduction to and survey of Buddhism from its inception in ancient India to its many varieties worldwide today. We will begin by examining the life of the Buddha in the setting of Indian culture of the time, to understand how it relates to earlier Vedic religion and to the other movements beginning at the same time. In the second part of the course, we will investigate Theravada Buddhism by looking at the Pali Canon, the body of texts they preserved to the present day, as well as a few very early post-canonical works. During this phase of the course we will pay special attention to the distinction between the monastic life and the lay life, and examine the philosophical and doctrinal issues that were argued and finally settled in this period, especially the doctrines of dependent origination and no-self. Then, in the third part of the course, we will address the Mahayana and Vajrayana movements, with a view to understanding a) what in Theravada they were reacting to, and b) how they accommodated themselves to local religious practices. In this phase of the course we will examine the doctrines of emptiness and Buddha-nature—how they developed and were defended, how they played out in the various Mahayana sects, and how they changed the character of Buddhism in North and East Asia. Finally, in the fourth part of the course, we will spend some time looking at how Buddhism survives in the modern world, especially in Europe and the Americas. In all four segments of the course, we will be concerned not only with what Buddhists believe, but also how they live. Recurring themes will include how Buddhist understanding of its central doctrines has changed; how Buddhism interacts with other religions as it moves around the world; and what is “essential Buddhism.”

PHIL 3321-001 Philosophy of Law 11:00-12:20 TR ENG/PHIL 163

Dr. Daniel Nathan

The United States Supreme Court regularly sends down decisions that engage broad popular interest. For example, court decisions have lately addressed questions of transgender rights, gun control, same-sex marriage, the government's use of intrusive surveillance, voting rights and restrictions, and immigration policy. Each of these decisions has been viewed by the general public as highly controversial, and has generated a broad spectrum of political and personal responses. But popular political views rarely reflect an understanding of the nature of law and legal systems, or a familiarity with the Court's reasoning in relevant previous cases, or even a superficial acquaintance with philosophically and legally reasonable views of the ideas of justice, privacy, or liberty. This course will try to remedy some of these gaps in understanding, first by studying the nature of law and its relation to morality, then by turning its focus to the nature of justice, privacy, and liberty in specific relation to the legal issues raised by Supreme Court cases during the past several years.

PHIL 3322-001 Biomedical Ethics 11:00-1220 TR ENG/PHIL 260

Dr. Francesca DiPoppa

Is abortion always immoral? Is euthanasia? Are these morally permissible under certain circumstances, or maybe always? Everyone has an opinion about this. But there is a big difference between feeling a certain way about abortion, or euthanasia, or stem cell research, and having a philosophically informed opinion. This class will offer you the tools to be a philosophically informed participant in some of the most important debates in bioethics today.

PHIL 3340-001 Minds, Brains, & Computers 2:00-2:50 MWF ENG/PHIL 164

Dr. Joseph Gottlieb

This course is an introduction to issues in philosophy of mind and philosophy of psychology. Topics include: the relationship between mind and brain, consciousness, the nature of mental representation, artificial intelligence, and "uploading" debates in personal identity.

PHIL 3341-001	Philosophy of Literature	2:00-3:20	TR	ENG/PHIL 163
Dr. Anna Ribeiro				
<p>What kinds of texts are literary works? Is a work identical with its text? How do we interpret literary works? How do we evaluate them? Is it irrational to feel emotions for fictional characters? Do we acquire knowledge by reading poems or novels that we could not have acquired by other means? We will discuss these and other questions relating to literature as they have been investigated by contemporary analytic philosophers as well as Plato, Aristotle, David Hume and others.</p>				

PHIL 4340-001	Metaphysics	11:00-11:50	MWF	ENG/PHIL 152
Staff				
<p>Prerequisite: Previous coursework in philosophy or consent of instructor. Consideration of the nature of what there is (ontology) or of the nature of the universe as a whole (cosmology).</p>				

PHIL 5125-001	Introduction to Research Ethics	2:00-2:50	W	ENG/PHIL 163
Dr. Jeremy Schwartz				
<p>There are norms that govern being a good brother, a good friend, and a good citizen. There are also norms that govern being a good researcher. Some of these norms, like intelligence, patience, and diligence have few if any ethical dimensions, but other norms, like academic integrity and honesty do have ethical dimensions. In this class, we will reflect upon the particular ethical challenges that face researchers. The ethical dimensions of research are increasingly being emphasized (in part due to the public outcry over their infringement), and reflection on these dimensions is increasingly being recognized as part of the training of a researcher. This class attempts to contribute to this training.</p>				

PHIL 5308-001	Basic Issues in Contemporary Phil: Existentialism	2:00-3:20	MW	ENG/PHIL 264
Dr. Howard Curzer				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What unites the existentialists is not their individual philosophies, but the nature of the problems that they set out to explore. We will discuss the following themes: • Primacy of Individuals: Traditional philosophy, modern science, and the industrial revolution have reduced people to an abstraction. Existentialists maintain that the truths of human existence cannot be known through detached observation and contemplation, but must be inwardly appropriated through the experience of personal involvement growing out of one's own passionate concern. • Critique of Reason: If reason is but part of human nature, rational fulfillment alone is not enough for a complete and authentic life. Moreover, the investigation of reality cannot be left to logic and reason alone. • Authenticity: The inauthentic person never acquires a distinctive individual identity, but simply plays a part, acts out an assigned role, unquestioningly follows a pattern of behavior given by society. The authentic person seeks self-awareness and chooses to actualize a true self, discovered through introspection. • Boundary Situations: Suddenly there comes a moment when a direct awakening is inescapable. Inauthenticities and illusions are exposed. Typical boundary situations include chance, choice, guilt, and especially death. Typical responses include alienation, nothingness, and dread. 				

PHIL 5311-001	Seminar in Epistemology	2:00-3:20	TR	ENG/PHIL 264
Staff				
A study of one or two questions about the justification of our knowledge of the external world, the mind, mathematics, or logic. May be repeated as topic varies.				

PHIL 5330-001	Philosophy of Science	4:00-5:20	MW	ENG/PHIL 264
Dr. Joel Velasco				
In this seminar we will look at some central issues in "general philosophy of science" which have an epistemological flavor (rather than for example, metaphysics or ethics). Sample topics might include the demarcation problem, the problem of induction, theory choice and underdetermination and non-deductive reasoning more generally including, for example, bayesian confirmation theory, model selection theory, common cause reasoning, parsimony, and more.				

PHIL 5333-001	Seminar in Philosophy of Language	4:00-6:50	T	ENG/PHIL 264
Dr. Christopher Hom				
In this advanced introduction to the philosophy of language, we will address the following questions: How does language relate to the world? How do we manage to use words to talk about things? What is the relationship between the words we use and the thoughts that they express? Along the way, we will explore the concepts of meaning and communication. We will begin by investigating the work of Frege and Russell on the meaning of proper names. According to them, the relationship between a name and the object it picks out is mediated by descriptive information in the mind of the speaker. Their theories will be contrasted with 'direct reference' theories of names, where the semantic relationship between a name and its bearer is unmediated by descriptive information. The differences between these two competing approaches will be brought out in our discussion of propositions and belief reports. We will go on to examine further implications of direct reference theories for meaning and thought. Other related topics in the course include: meaning skepticism, context, language use, fiction, and expressive language.				

PHIL 5350-001	Seminar in Teaching Philosophy	3:30-6:20	R	ENG/PHIL 264
Dr. Francesca DiPoppa				
Theory, practice, and problems of teaching philosophy for beginning instructors. Development of course objectives, syllabi, and teaching techniques. Practical pedagogical and associated philosophical issues. Required of all teaching assistants.				