

DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY SPRING 2020 COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

PHIL 2300-002	Beginning Philosophy	12:00-12:50	MWF	ENG/PHIL 163
PHIL 2300-003	Beginning Philosophy	1:00 - 1:50	MWF	ENG/PHIL 163
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 2300-004	Beginning Philosophy	11:00-11:50	MWF	ENG/PHIL 152
Hossein Mohayjei				

After a quick try to get a sense of what philosophy is and how it works, the class will be focused on the Theory of Knowledge and Ethics. First, we will try to answer questions like: What is Knowledge? How can we acquire it? Does knowledge entail certainty? Second, we will focus on moral questions: Is right and wrong a matter of taste or cultural conventions? Does disagreement about morality entail relativism? What are our moral duties and obligations? Are we ever morally responsible? And finally, we will talk about broader ethical questions like: How should one live? Does life have a meaning? What is friendship? What is Love?

Class discussion and participation will be a very important part of the final grades. Top students, in terms of class participation, will receive 10% final grade bonus.

PHIL 2300-005	Beginning Philosophy	11:00-12:20	TR	AGED 102
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 2300-D01	Beginning Philosophy	ONLINE	TBA	TBA
Dr. Francesca DiPoppa				

What makes us the same person over time? How do we figure out what is the right thing to do? Do non-humans have moral rights? What is the difference between an opinion and an argument? Is it true that morality and truth are just points of view? Can philosophy be used to prove or disprove the existence of God? Come to think of it, what does "philosophy" even *mean*? In this online class, you will be introduced to some of the most important philosophical questions, and you will realize that they are not just for philosophers.

Come for the humanities requirement, stay for the cute puppy videos!

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

This is an introduction to symbolic logic via the study of sentential and predicate logic. Topics to be discussed include analyzing arguments, translating ordinary prose into a formal language, as well the methods of truth-tables, truth trees, and natural deduction in sentential and predicate logic.

PHIL 2310-D01	Logic	ONLINE	TBA	TBA
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 inference from premises to 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.

This is an online course, so all lectures, handouts, assignments and exams will be on Blackboard. Exams require a regular computer (Windows/Mac computer or laptop). You cannot take exams from mobile devices (e.g. iPhone, iPad, Android devices, etc.). You also need a working webcam and microphone, and your computer will need the Google Chrome web browser.

PHIL 2320-001	Introduction to Ethics	10:00-10:50	MWF	ENG/PHIL 163
Douglas Westfall				

This class will examine questions like: Can personal choices be right or wrong? Are there things or acts that should appropriately be referred to as good or evil? Is there a right way to live, and why should I live that way? If there is one, how do you go about living it out in practice? Do I have obligations towards other people and if so, what are they? How should I think about conflicts between my self-interest and my responsibility to others? We will consider skeptical positions before turning to examine competing answers regarding these questions. This class will rely on original source materials (e.g. Plato's *Republic* and Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*) for us to understand the primary schools of ethics in hopes of becoming better people.

PHIL 2320-002	Introduction to Ethics	12:30-1:50	TR	ENG/PHIL 104
Lawson Hamilton				

The fundamental question of ethics is "What should I do?" In this class we will consider several influential answers, both historical and modern, to this and other questions, such as: "What does it mean to live a good life?" and "What rights and responsibilities do I have in relation to others?" Along the way, we will think about what these theories mean for several contemporary moral issues. Our goal, overall, is to examine what we believe and why we believe it with the hope of ensuring we have good reasons for holding our moral beliefs.

PHIL 2320-003	Introduction to Ethics	1:00 - 1:50	MW	BIOL LH100
Justin Tosi				
<p>What makes a human life go well? Can I be wrong about what is good for me, or is it just good to get what I want? Is figuring out the right thing to do in any case just a matter of figuring out what would do the most good, or are there some things we should not do no matter how much good results? And isn't all of this just subjective anyway? This course surveys some of the main philosophical views on these issues. Along the way we'll apply what we've learned to contested moral questions about issues like abortion, torture, and poverty relief.</p>				

PHIL 2320-H01	Introduction to Ethics	11:00-12:20	TR	ENGL/PHIL 300
Dr. Daniel Nathan				
<p>How <i>ought</i> persons behave toward one another? Does it even make sense to <i>reason</i> 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.)</p>				

PHIL 2320-H02	Introduction to Ethics	9:30-11:50	TR	ENG/PHIL 260
Dr. Jeremy Schwartz				
<p>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.</p>				

PHIL 2350-001	World Religion & Philosophy	12:30-1:20	TR	ENG/PHIL 163
PHIL 2350-701	World Religion & Philosophy	1:21-1:50	TR	ENG/PHIL 163
Jordan Botello				
<p>This course introduces students to the major world religions while placing a special emphasis on the philosophical issues related to religion. We will survey particular religions in the context of the larger traditions to which they belong. 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. We give special attention to the different understandings of human nature and personhood, problems of human existence, and proposed solutions.</p>				

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** **2:00 PM - 3:20** **MW** **ENG/PHIL 260**

Dr. Joseph Gottlieb

Environmental ethics examines the moral dimensions of our relationship with the environment. This course takes a broad view of this topic, examining issues such as population axiology (and related issues like the non-identity problem and the repugnant conclusion), whether we have obligations to future generations (and if so, what those obligations look like), diachronic rationality, the science and ethics of climate change, and the moral permissibility (or impermissibility) of eating meat.

PHIL 3334-001 **Philosophy of Biology** **12:30-1:50** **TR** **ENG/PHIL 164**

PHIL 3334-H01 **Philosophy of Biology** **9:30-10:50** **TR** **ENG/PHIL 264**

Dr. Joel Velasco

In this class we will examine a range of questions that arise within the study of evolutionary biology and its application to the human sciences. We will begin by reading Richard Dawkins' *The Selfish Gene* which introduces evolutionary theory and natural selection in a memorable (and controversial) way. After studying the evolution of animal behavior, we will move to sociobiology and evolutionary psychology as applied to humans. We will study the relationship of evolution to ethics as well as looking into debates about nature and nurture in human development. Finally, we will look at what biology can tell us about sex, gender, and race.

PHIL 3341-001 **Philosophy and Literature** **2:00-3:20** **TR** **ENG/PHIL 164**

Dr. Anna Ribeiro

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.

PHIL 4300-001**Topics in Phil****2:00-3:20 MW****ENG/PHIL 150****Dr. Justin Tosi**

This course offers a philosophically rigorous introduction to issues of political economy—the study of the reciprocal relationships between markets and politics. Political economy explores the relations between individual action and collective outcomes as they shape and are shaped by environmental conditions, institutions, social norms, ideologies, and strategic and communicative interaction, paying special attention to the consequences of these relations for politics, law and economic policies, aggregate economic outcomes, and justice and human welfare. In other words, to study political economy as we will in this course is to learn a sophisticated approach to addressing questions about what matters, and what works.

The approach we will take is interdisciplinary, drawing tools from philosophy, political science, and economics. To illustrate, take the topic of political authority. We'll use philosophy to work out what political authority is and how it might be morally justified. Using basic game theory, we'll see what problems are especially likely to arise in the absence of political authority, even among good people. And using work from political science, we'll discuss the conditions in which political authority is actually effective in solving those problems.

PHIL 4330-001**Epistemology****2:00-3:20 TR****ENG/PHIL 163****Dr. Amy Flowerree**

We find ourselves surrounded by information. Some voices call for us to believe one thing, and others call for the opposite. This raises an important question: what should we believe? Should we always believe the truth? And what justifies our beliefs? And can we ever truly know anything? In this class we will draw on historical and contemporary discussions of belief and knowledge. We will explore the nature of knowledge, evidence, and justification. We will consider whether practical and moral considerations ever bear on what we should believe. And finally, we will turn to the social dimension of belief and explore what we should do in cases of epistemic injustice and fake news.

PHIL 5302-001**Studies in Modern Philosophy****2:00-3:20 TR****ENG/PHIL 264****Dr. Francesca DiPoppa**

This will be a survey of (mostly) metaphysics and epistemology during the 17th and 18th century. Readings will include (but not limited to) Descartes, Hume, Spinoza, Cavendish, Malebrahche, Astell, Hobbes, Kant.

PHIL 5308-001**Basic Issue-Contemp Phil****6:00 W****ENG/PHIL 264****Dr. Jeremy Schwartz**

Suppose that Betsy, a philosophy major, wants to graduate on time. She knows that she needs to take logic next semester in order to graduate on time. Based on this, she forms the intention to take logic next semester. In recent years, there has been an increasing amount of philosophic attention paid to this kind of reasoning. It has played a role in such debates as the nature and scope of rational requirements, whether morality is "built in" to our practically rational natures, and whether practical considerations encroach on our epistemic reasoning. At the same time, however, there is an increasing awareness that practical reasoning is not as straightforward as philosophers used to believe. In this class, we will try to understand the form, nature, and possibility of practical reasoning.

PHIL 5320-001**Seminar in Ethics****2:00-3:20 MW****ENG/PHIL 264****Dr. Howard Curzer**

In this course, we will try to answer *some* of the following questions: What is a virtue? How are virtues acquired, maintained, and exercised? What role do reason, passion, and perception play? Do all virtues have the same psychological structure? What are the virtues? Are integrity, care, open-mindedness, and reverence-for-the-environment virtues, for example? In what sense do the virtues form a unity, guide action, and construct a self? Can virtue ethics generate concrete, plausible accounts of right action, irresolvable dilemmas, and character development? Is virtue ethics best grounded in Aristotelian, Humean, Confucian, or Nietzschean thought? Will virtue ethics revolutionize role ethics, applied ethics, and ethics education? Is virtue ethics overly individualistic, narcissistic, and anachronistic, or does it offer useful insight into social issues such as abortion, climate change, and internet activism? Can virtue ethics survive challenges from, and contribute to the disciplines of psychology, sociology, education, and social epistemology?

PHIL 5324-001**Philosophy of Religion****3:30 - 4:50 MW****ENG/PHIL 264****Dr. Mark Webb**

This seminar will study to what extent religions—and religious belief in particular—can be given a naturalistic explanation, and whether such an explanation “explains it away.” We will read Freud, Marx, and Pascal Boyer, as well as classical and recent articles in the epistemology of religion.

PHIL 5333-001**Sem. In Philosophy of Language****3:30 - 6:20 T****ENG/PHIL 264****Dr. Christopher Hom**

In the philosophy of language, propositions are traditionally thought of as the abstract meanings of sentences, the primary bearers of truth and falsity, and the objects of the attitudes. But what *exactly* are they, and can we get along without them? The seminar will start by looking at classical theories of propositions given by Frege and Russell. We will then consider propositions as sets of possible worlds. Finally, we will turn to contemporary theories of propositions presented by Hanks, King, Soames and Speaks. Requirements include a short paper, a long paper, and an in-class presentation.