

DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY FALL 2016

COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

PHIL 1310-001	Critical Reasoning	10:00-10:50 MWF	GODDRD 101
Dr. Joe Gottlieb			
<p>The subject of critical thinking 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 this course we will develop the logical skills necessary for evaluating philosophical arguments and more casual arguments that one might encounter in the media (i.e. news, pop culture, politics, etc.). More specifically we will learn the basics of deductive logic, inductive logic, formal fallacies, and informal fallacies. Then, we will apply these skills by evaluating various forms of reasoning offered in scientific, moral, and popular contexts.</p>			
PHIL 2300-003	Beginning Philosophy	2:00-3:20 TR	MCOM 75
Dr. Anna Ribeiro			
<p><i>Beginning Philosophy</i> 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 a person? 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.</p>			
PHIL 2300-004	Beginning Philosophy	11:00-12:20 TR	MCOM 75
Dr. Francesca DiPoppa			
<p>This class will offer an overview of important questions and topics addressed in ancient and contemporary philosophical debates. Some of these questions are: what is the nature of knowledge? What is right and wrong, and how can we know? Is there a proof for the existence of God? What is a just society? What is a meaningful life? Readings include Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, Hume and contemporary philosophers such as Armstrong, Nagel, Frankfurt and others.</p>			
PHIL 2310-001	Logic	10:00-10:50 MWF	TBA
PHIL 2310-D01	Online Logic	TBA	TBA
Dr. Jonathan Dorsey			
<p>This course focuses on the syntax, semantics, and derivation system for sentential and predicate logic. The student will learn not only the formal theory of logic but also how to use it to assess the validity of arguments in natural language.</p>			
PHIL 2310-003	Logic	9:30-10:50 TR	MCOM 75
Dr. Christopher Hom			
<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. 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.</p>			
PHIL 2310-H01	Logic	10:00-10:50 MWF	ENG/PHIL 264
PHIL 2310-H01	Logic	11:00-11:50 MWF	ENG/PHIL 264
Dr. Joel Velasco			
<p>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.</p>			

PHIL 2320-002	Intro to Ethics	9:30-10:50 TR	ENG/PHIL 164
PHIL 2320-H02	Intro to Ethics	11:00-12:20 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 2320-003	Intro to Ethics	10:00-10:50 MWF	ENG/PHIL 163
PHIL 2320-004	Intro 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 2350-001	World Religions & Phil.	9:00-9:50 MWF	MCOM 00075
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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.

contemporary moral concern. Fulfills Core Humanities requirement. (Writing Intensive)

PHIL 3301-001	Classical Greek Philosophy	9:30-10:50 TR	ENG/PHIL 163
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Dr. Howard Curzer

In this course we will try really, really, really hard to understand the epistemological and metaphysical theories of Plato and Aristotle.

PHIL 3321-001	Philosophy of Law	11:00-12:20 TR	ENG/PHIL 260
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Dr. Daniel Nathan

The United States Supreme Court regularly sends down decisions that engage broad popular interest. Court decisions have lately addressed the death penalty, gun control, homosexual rights, and the government's use of torture and intrusive surveillance techniques.

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	2:00-3:20 TR	ENG/PHIL 164
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Dr. Francesca DiPoppa

Is abortion always immoral? Is it morally permissible under certain circumstance, 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 4322-001 Metaethics 2:00-3:20 TR TBA
Dr. Jeremy Schwartz
Metaethics asks not about the virtues of any particular normative ethical theory but about the status of ethical claims. Are ethical claims a form of knowledge? Are they objective? Are they part of the fabric of the world? Are they projections of our attitudes onto the world? This course seeks to make progress on these questions. Of particular importance will be developing an understanding of noncognitivism in ethics which is an ancestor of the ethical-properties-are-projections view.

PHIL 4330-001 Epistemology 12:30-1:50 TR ENG/PHIL 164
Dr. Christopher Hom
Epistemology studies the nature and scope of knowledge. This course will examine the closely related concepts of knowledge, belief, certainty, justification, rationality, inference, and perception. The central questions in this course are:

- What is knowledge (as opposed to belief or opinion or skill)?
- Are we capable of knowledge, and to what extent?
- When is it rational to have a particular belief?
- What, if anything, justifies logic, science, and perception as sources of knowledge?
- Should epistemology be a branch of cognitive science?
- What (if any) social component is there to knowledge?

These questions will be asked within a traditional analytic framework, and students will be exposed to the central problems, positions and outlooks in contemporary epistemology.

PHIL 4340-001 Metaphysics 9:00-9:50 MWF ENG/PHIL 163
Dr. Jonathan Dorsey
This course focuses primarily on the study of ontology. Topics include: i) The nature of objects and persons at a given time (synchronically) and over time (diachronically). ii) The ontological status of properties/universals, time, and possible worlds. iii) Whether time travel is possible.

PHIL 5301-001 Studies In Greek Philosophy: 2:00-3:20 TR ENG/PHIL 264
Dr. Howard Curzer
In this course we will try really, really, really hard to understand the epistemological and metaphysical theories of Plato and Aristotle.

PHIL 5310-001 History of Aesthetics 11:00-12:20 TR ENG/PHIL 163
Dr. Anna Ribeiro
This course is a chronological survey of theories of art from Plato to the early 20th century. Questions to be covered include: How do artworks affect us? Should these effects be controlled? Is the beautiful merely what pleases us? Can there be a standard for judging art? Can there be a hierarchy of the arts? Is there a type of experience or attitude peculiar to our engagement with artworks? Are artworks concrete or abstract objects? What is the purpose of art, if any?

PHIL 5312-001 Sem. In Logic 2:00-3:20 MW ENG/PHIL 264
Dr. Joel Velasco
This seminar will be a philosophically motivated introduction to first order logic 'from the ground up'. We will look at the syntax, semantics, and proof theory of propositional logic and first order logic keeping our eye on philosophical issues whenever they arise. We will cover standard metatheory topics like soundness and completeness and 'metatheory' such as why you might use one proof system over another (and in what sense-if any-this matters). One philosophical goal is to gain a better understanding of the notion of logical consequence and what it means. But another goal is to prepare you to teach beginning logic and to give you the deeper understanding of logic needed to do more advanced work in the field. No specific background in logic is required - anyone should be able to (and is encouraged to!) take it. This includes students who already know quite a lot of logic - there will still be plenty of interesting things for you as well (and I will give you interesting things to do if I am wrong about this).

PHIL 5331-001 Philosophical Psychology 4:00-6:50 W**TBA****Dr. Joe Gottlieb**

A central task of a theory of consciousness is to give the conditions under which a mental state is conscious as opposed to unconscious. In this regard, two broad theoretical approaches dominate: *first-order* (FO) theories of consciousness, and *higher-order* (HO) theories of consciousness. HO theories are united by their acceptance of the *transitivity principle*, viz. the claim that conscious mental states are mental states we are aware of in some way. FO theories are best defined negatively, united by their *rejection* of the transitivity principle. This seminar will focus on the debate between FO and HO theories. Our overarching aim will be to get a grip on the motivations for and against these theories, and (to a lesser extent) explore certain metaphilosophical issues at play in the debate.

PHIL 5350-Seminar in Teaching Phil 4:00-5:50 M**ENG/PHIL 264****Dr. Daniel Nathan**

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.