

DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY SPRING 2017 COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

PHIL 2300-001	Beginning Philosophy	10:00-10:50	MWF	ENG/PHIL 153
PHIL 2300-002	Beginning Philosophy	12:00-12:50	MWF	ENG/PHIL 163
PHIL 2300-004	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 2300-003	Beginning Philosophy	12:30-1:50	TR	AGRISCI 308
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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 2310-001	Logic	9:00-9:50	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.

PHIL 2310-D01	Logic	ONLINE	TBA	TBA
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Dr. Jonathan Dorsey

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.

PHIL 2320-001	Introduction to Ethics	9:30-10:50	TR	HOLDEN 77
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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 11:00-11:50 TR ENG/PHIL 163

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 164

PHIL 2320-006 Introduction to Ethics 11:00-11:50 MWF ENG/PHIL 164

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 2320-H01 Introduction to Ethics 9:30-10:50 TR ENG/PHIL 264

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 2330-001 Science and Society 9:30-10:50 TR HUMSCI 226

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** **HUMSCI 226**

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 3304-001 **Existentialism & Phenomenology** **12:30-1:50** **TR** **ENG/PHIL 163**

Dr. Howard Curzer

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 the Individual: 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 and Inauthenticity: 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 3322-H01 **Biomedical Ethics** **2:00-3:20** **TR** **ENG/PHIL 105**

PHIL 3322-001 **Biomedical Ethics** **3:30-4:50** **TR** **ENG/PHIL 164**

Dr. Darren Hick

Biomedical Ethics (sometimes simply referred to as "Bioethics") is the study of ethics as applied to the medical profession (of both the clinical and research sorts). As such, the topics we will be looking at are of interest not only to philosophers, but also to health practitioners, research scientists, and anyone who ever has or will go to the doctor or hospital. Biomedical Ethics covers a broad range of topics, from the doctor-patient relationship to genetics research to the availability of health care to abortion. We will be reading Rebecca Skloot's multiple-award-winning book, *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*, using this as a touchstone as we progress through the course.

PHIL 3324-001 **Philosophy of Religion** **11:00-11:50** **MWF** **ENG/PHIL 260**

Dr. Mark Webb

This course is a survey of general philosophical problems that arise in connection with religion. Topics include the nature of religion, the existence of God, and the problem of evil. In addition, we will spend part of the semester considering the following questions about religious experience. Can people have direct experience of God, the Tao, Brahman, or whatever? What kind of grounds can it give them for religious belief? And finally, what kind of evidence can one person's religious experience provide for another person?

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 4310-001 **Advanced Logic: Conditionals** **2:00-3:20** **TR** **ENG/PHIL 164**

Dr. Joel Velasco

Any competent speaker of English can deploy and understand a bewildering variety of conditional statements - statements of the form "If P then Q". But what do they mean? This question belongs primarily to the philosophy of language and logic, but answering it also requires discussion of issues in metaphysics, philosophy of mind, epistemology, and probability theory.

Because conditionals are everywhere, they are intrinsically interesting. Their ubiquity in everyday life is mirrored in philosophy, so careful consideration of their nature has instrumental philosophical value as well. Here are a few philosophical topics where conditionals play an important role:

1. Metaphysics and philosophy of science: causation; dispositions; laws of nature; temporal asymmetry; free will
2. Epistemology: counterfactual and reliabilist accounts of knowledge and justification; safety and sensitivity; epistemic modality
3. Ethics and decision theory: deliberation; obligation; Newcomb's problem (and other puzzles)
4. Philosophy of religion: God's foreknowledge of free actions (the "middle knowledge" debate)

Readings: Much of the course will be structured around reading Jonathan Bennett's *A Philosophical Guide to Conditionals* and some of the primary literature he discusses.

PHIL 4341-001 **Great Figures in Philosophy** **11:00-12:20** **TR** **ENG/PHIL 164**

Dr. Francesca DiPoppa

In this class, we will study great figures in the history of early modern political thought. We will read from works of authors such as Machiavelli, Spinoza, Hobbes, Locke, Hume, Kant, Burke, and others. We will examine questions such as the nature and legitimacy of political power, political conflicts, forms of government; we will look at works defending or questioning freedom of speech, freedom of religion, equality, women's rights, and many other notions. This class meets the Early Modern European Philosophy requirement for Philosophy Majors.

PHIL 5125-001 **Introduction to Research Ethics** **6:00-6:50** **T** **ENG/PHIL 264**

Dr. Jeremy Schwartz

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.

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

Dr. Francesca DiPoppa

Studies in major philosophical works of the modern period drawn from such philosophers as Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz, Locke, Berkeley, Hume, and Kant. May be repeated as topic varies.

PHIL 5314-001 **Contemporary Aesthetics** **11:00-12:20** **TR** **ENG/PHIL 264**

Dr. Darren Hick

In this course, we will focus on contemporary philosophical problems in the arts, with particular focus on the interrelated roles played by art, artist, and audience, as well as by society at large. We will seek to answer such questions as: What makes art, art? How are the various arts different? How are they alike? Who is the artist? Who is the audience? Is art the proper subject of ethical inquiry? How should we think of government sponsorship and censorship of the arts?

PHIL 5315-001 **Topics in Aesthetics** **3:30-6:20** **R** **ENG/PHIL 264**

Dr. Anna Ribeiro

This seminar will be on the philosophy of poetry (possibly the first of its kind in the history of philosophy!). It is an experimental course in that we will focus on my monograph, *Beautiful Speech: The Nature, Origins, and Powers of Poetry*, a work in progress. We will read the ten chapters that comprise the book, plus several readings related to each of the chapters. We will work through some metaphysical topics (definition of poetry, ontology of poems), evolutionary psychology (origins of poetic practice), philosophy of psychology (cognitive processing, aesthetic effect, emotional effect), philosophy of language (tropes, abstract thought, the nature of fiction), and value theory (the nature of poetic value). This will be a highly interdisciplinary course, as readings will be from various areas in philosophy as well as from scholarship in English, classics, evolutionary psychology, linguistics, anthropology and archaeology on oral and written poetic traditions ancient and contemporary.

PHIL 5320-001 **Seminar in Ethics** **6:00-9:00** **W** **ENG/PHIL 264**

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.

PHIL 5340-001 **Seminar in Metaphysics** **3:00-5:00** **M** **ENG/PHIL 264**

Dr. Jonathan Dorsey

The purpose of this course is to think critically about what an ontological thesis is and especially about the role 'fundamentality' plays in such theses. First, general concepts typically employed in ontological theses (e.g. individuals, properties, facts, events) will be reviewed in conjunction with classic readings in contemporary metaphysics in order to supply necessary background. 'Fundamentality' will then take center stage. What, ontologically speaking, makes one thing (e.g. a fact) more fundamental than another? Metaphysical relations that may help to provide answers to this question are: identity, constitution, reduction, supervenience, realization, and the now much discussed relation of grounding. Each of these relations will be reviewed in conjunction with more recent readings in contemporary metaphysics (emphasis being on the latter four relations) and related to the question of what 'fundamentality' amounts to. Though a course in pure metaphysics, these issues cut across philosophical sub-disciplines (e.g. ethics, aesthetics, philosophy of mind, philosophy of science, philosophy of religion). The course should thus benefit those who have primary interests in areas other than metaphysics in addition to those simply interested in metaphysics.