

DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY FALL 2021 COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

PHIL 2300-003 **Beginning Philosophy** **12:00-12:50** **MWF** **ENG/PHIL 00001**

Dr. Amy Flowerree

Do you have free will even if your actions are causally determined? Can you know that you are not living in a computer simulation? Can you survive your own death? Can you prove that God exists? Why should we be moral? What is morality? In this class, we will use the tools of philosophical reasoning to examine and evaluate these and other significant life questions.

PHIL 2300-004 **Beginning Philosophy** **2:00-3:20** **TR** **MCOM 00057**

Dr. Anna Ribeiro

We all want to live a good life. But what is a life well lived? Some of us want lots of money. Others want success. Others want to play video games or watch Netflix all day long. How do we find out what is best? Philosophers have been grappling with this question for thousands of years. It takes us into many directions, including the question as to what makes us human, how we should make moral choices, whether we are free to choose, what we should believe, what love is, and what it is to be a full-fledged person. We will tackle these in turn, concluding the course with perhaps the biggest question of all: what is the meaning of life?

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.

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.

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| PHIL 2320-004 | Introduction to Ethics | 12:00-12:50 | MWF | ENG/PHIL 260 |
| PHIL 2320-005 | Introduction to Ethics | 1:00-1:50 | MWF | ENG/PHIL 152 |

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.

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| PHIL 2320-D01 | Introduction to Ethics | ONLINE | TBA | TBA |
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Dr. Justin Tosi

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, poverty relief, and freedom of expression.

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| PHIL 2320-H01 | Introduction to Ethics | 9:30-10:50 | TR | ENG/PHIL 164 |
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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.

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| PHIL 2330-001 | Science and Society | 9:30-10:50 | TR | MCOM 266 |
| PHIL 2330-H01 | Science and Society | 11:00-12:20 | TR | ENG/PHIL 164 |

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.

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PHIL 2340-H01 **Meaning & Value in the Arts** **2:00-3:20** **TR** **EDUC 165**

Dr. Daniel Nathan

Art is a central part of almost everyone's life. But what makes something a work of art? And once we know we are confronting a work of art, how are we to handle the task of making sense of it?

Focusing on specific and often challenging works of art, this course will introduce students to critical thinking in and across the arts—including music, literature, theatre, architecture, and the visual arts—with an emphasis on issues that apply across the artistic disciplines. Focusing on twentieth and twenty-first century art and theory, this course will center on a few broad questions: What, if anything, sets art apart from other areas of human activity (craft, technology, and sport, for example)? Is there a *right* way and a *wrong* way to interpret artworks? And, how do the arts *fit into* or perhaps *complicate* our lives; is there a distinct value of art to human life?

Through such an examination, the course will foster a better understanding of the various art forms, of their unique connections and differences, and of the variety of critical approaches to interpreting and evaluating particular works of art.

PHIL 2350-001 **World Religions And Philosophy** **10:00-10:50** **MW** **CHEM 00025**

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 3301-001 **Classical Greek Philosophy** **9:30-10:50** **TR** **ONLINE**

Dr. Howard Curzer

The theme of this course is **ancient philosophy of mind**. However, for Plato and Aristotle philosophy of mind is just a starting point. (a) In the *Phaedo*, Socrates offers arguments about the mind/body problem and the immortality of the soul, but underneath those arguments lies a Platonic inquiry into the form/matter relationship and the nature of change. (b) In the *Theaetetus*, Socrates sets out to understand perception, but that project becomes an inquiry into the nature of true and false belief, and eventually into a cryptic description of the nature of knowledge. (c) In the *Charmides*, Socrates takes up the problem of self-knowledge, but that project somehow turns into a discussion of the nature of a meta-theory about bodies of knowledge. (d) Aristotle's *De Anima* (On the Soul/Mind) begins as an account of perception, reasoning, and imagination, but eventually turns mystical and theological. In this course, ancient philosophy of mind will be a train station from which trains depart into the neighborhoods of (a) metaphysics, (b) epistemology, (c) philosophy of science, and (d) philosophy of religion.

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PHIL 5310-001 **History of Aesthetics** **2:00 - 4:50** **M** **ENG/PHIL 264**

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 5321-001 **Social/Political Phil** **3:30-6:20** **R** **ENG/PHIL 264**

Dr. Justin Tosi

This is a survey course on important work in contemporary political philosophy. Topics will likely include state legitimacy, immigration, distributive justice, and relational egalitarianism.

PHIL 5331-001 **Philosophical Psychology** **12:30-1:50** **TR** **ONLINE**

Dr. Howard Curzer

*“I can't explain myself, I'm afraid, Sir,” said Alice, ‘because I'm not myself today you see.’ ‘I don't see,’ said the caterpillar.” – Lewis Carroll, *Alice in Wonderland**

What is the self? Is it an artifact that each of us creates? An innate part of us? An immortal part? A social construction? An illusion? A solution to the problem of personal identity? The transcendental unity of apperception? With a theory of the self in hand, we will turn to further issues. What does an agent with **self-knowledge** know? How is **self-deception** even possible? Who (or what) do people with **self-control** control; who is the controller; and how can anyone lack self-control? Is being **proud or ashamed of oneself** really a relationship to other people? **How many selves** do we have?

PHIL 5333-001 **Sem. In Philosophy of Language** **6:00-8:50** **M** **ENG/PHIL 264**

Dr. Christopher Hom

The seminar will focus on how contemporary theories of meaning account for expressive aspects of language. Expressive language includes insults (e.g. 'jerk'), exclamations (e.g. 'oops'), swear words (e.g. 'f**k'), racial epithets (e.g. the N-word), honorific terms (e.g. 'sir'), evaluative terms (e.g. 'honorable') and pornographic representations. Along the way, we will consider various issues such as the internalism-externalism distinction, the semantics-pragmatics distinction, nominalism about meaning, context-sensitivity, social dimensions of language, and how (or whether) norms are linguistically represented.

Requirements include a seminar presentation, a presentation commentary, a short paper, and a longer, research paper.

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PHIL 5350-001

Sem. In Teaching & Writing

2:00-4:50 W

ENG/PHIL 264

Dr. Amy Flowerree

This is a class for all first year graduate students. It is designed to equip students with the professional skills necessary to succeed in various aspects of academic philosophy: teaching, reading, writing, and applying to PhD programs. These skills will be developed through rigorous and careful study of the core concepts, arguments, and texts in contemporary theories of action.