

DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY SPRING 2016

COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

PHIL 2300-002 Beginning Philosophy 10:00-10:50 MWF MCOM 075

Dr. Darren Hick

This is a general introduction to philosophy, designed to acquaint students with certain significant problems as they are considered by major philosophical figures. These are not esoteric questions but instead ones central to ordinary human experience. Students will be encouraged to formulate and defend their own answers to these questions, using the concepts and methods of inquiry introduced in the course. This process will help improve students' abilities to think more critically and to communicate with greater clarity and precision.

PHIL 2300-003 Beginning Philosophy 2:00-3:20 TR MCOM 075

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 2310-002 Logic 11:00-12:20 TR AGED 102

Dr. Christopher Hom

A central aspect of reasoning is the ability to give deductive 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.

PHIL 2310-D01 Logic ONLINE COURSE TBA

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 Intro to Ethics 9:30-10:50 TR MCOM 075

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 2320-002 Intro to Ethics 9:00-9:50 MWF ENG/PHIL 151

PHIL 2320-005 Intro to Ethics 11:00-11:50 MWF ENG/PHIL 164

Douglas Westfall

We will investigate why you ought to be a good person and what that means. We will try to achieve this by examining the moral theories of Kant, Mill, and especially Aristotle and Plato. Since it doesn't do much good to know what we're supposed to do if we don't know how to cultivate the disposition to do good things, special attention will be paid to practical tips for living the good life by becoming a better person.

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| 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. THIS COURSE FULFILLS THE CORE CURRICULUM HUMANITIES REQUIREMENT.

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| PHIL 2330-001 | Science and Society | 9:30-10:50 TR | PETROENG 121 |
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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 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.

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| HONS 3301-001 | Buddhist Life & Thought | 11:00-11:50 MWF | ENG/PHIL?? |
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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 3303-001 Modern European Phil. 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 3334-001 Philosophy of Biology 12:30-1:50 TR ENG/PHIL 163

Dr. Joel Velasco

This course will examine a range of philosophical questions that arise within the study of evolutionary biology and its application to the human sciences. We'll first discuss questions concerning selection, fitness, adaptationism, and evolutionary explanations. We'll then look at Sociobiology and Evolutionary Psychology with an eye toward thinking about humans and human nature. We will then ask how we can (and should) study human behavior and finally, we will ask if human races exist.

PHIL 4321-001 Political Philosophy 1:00-1:50 MWF ENG/PHIL 163

Dr. Walter Schaller

In this course we will study three topics: torture, just war theory, and terrorism.

(1) Is torture ever justified? Would it really be better to allow thousands to die rather than cause temporary pain to one person (the terrorist himself)? But how far are you willing to do? Maybe waterboarding doesn't seem that bad, but suppose he can withstand innumerable water boardings. Is it OK to use more horrible techniques--scalding, amputation, mutilation, branding, drilling his teeth?

(2) The 30 years since Michael Walzer published *JUST AND UNJUST WARS* has seen a flourishing of scholarship on just war theory, some of it (primarily by Jeff McMahan) aimed at rejecting some of Walzer's central claims. McMahan, for example, rejects the Symmetry Thesis (to wit, that unjust combatants have the same moral right to kill just combatants as the latter have to kill the former) and the Independence Thesis (to wit, that the principles of *jus in bello* are logically independent of the rules of *jus ad bellum*). We will try to figure out who is right on these questions and many others.

(3) Terrorism is often defined as the intentional targeting of innocents (or noncombatants). Some think terrorism is never morally justified; others think it can be justified in rare instances. I like to discuss this question in terms of Walzer's idea of a Supreme Emergency. Walzer thinks that Britain was morally justified in bombing German cities (like Hamburg) in 1940-1941-in fire bombing them--because Britain faced a Supreme Emergency. But those raids directly targeted civilian population centers and thus violated the *jus in bello* Principle of Discrimination (or Non-combatant Immunity). How could that be justified? Was it? And once we have answered those questions, we can turn to contemporary terrorism and figure out whether it is ever justified.

Walzer's defense of the Supreme Emergency Exemption appeals to the idea of 'dirty hands'-the claim that sometimes it is both right and wrong (or, as he says, it is both wrong and a moral duty) to perform an action like intentionally killing innocents. But, as he recognizes, that seems crazy (he calls it paradoxical). Is it? Others have tried to amend Walzer's idea so that it is not quite so paradoxical (or contradictory), but it is not clear they succeed.

PHIL 4323-001 Aesthetics 2:00-3:20 TR ENG/PHIL 163

Dr. Darren Hick

We spend a lot of our time with the arts—we read novels and poetry, we watch movies and television, we go to art galleries and the theater. Some works of art are simply distractions from our own lives. But others (and not always the ones we expect) raise important philosophical questions:

- If I weave a basket, is it art? If so, is it art in the same way that the *Mona Lisa* is art? What is the difference between art and craft?

- Why is a perfect copy of a novel like *Lord of the Flies* a genuine instance of the novel, but a perfect copy of a statue like Michelangelo's *David* is only a reproduction?

- Why do we get sad, excited, and frightened by what happens to characters in shows like *The Walking Dead*? After all, don't we know the characters are *fictional*?

These questions and many others besides will serve to frame discussion in the class as we investigate theories of art and beauty from the Ancient Greeks to the present.

PHIL 5314-001 Contemp. Aesthetics 11:00-12:20 TR ENG/PHIL 264

Dr. Anna Christina Ribeiro

How and when did art begin, and why? Are cave paintings art? Is body ornamentation art? Are religious and other didactic plays, paintings, and songs art? Is the concept 'art' a modern Western construct? How do we define 'art'? What kinds of things are symphonies, novels, movies and dance performances—concrete, abstract, or some other kind? What are aesthetic properties such as beauty, and how do they relate to the other properties of an object or event? What is an 'aesthetic experience', and do we ever have those? When we interpret works of art, must we always defer to the artist's own interpretation if we are to be correct? How do we evaluate one work of art as better than another—are there correct criteria of evaluation? Why do we value art at all? We will discuss these and other questions as we consider particular art forms and art works and read philosophical works on these topics from the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. This is a reading- and writing-intensive course.

PHIL 5320-001 Seminar In Ethics: 12:30-1:50 TR ENG/PHIL 264

Contemporary Virtue Ethics

Dr. Howard Curzer

Recently a growing number of ethicists have become dissatisfied with Utilitarian and Deontological approaches to ethics. Virtue ethicists believe that insufficient attention has been paid to questions concerning the good life and the good person. To remedy that neglect, virtue ethics undertakes the study of the virtues.

In this course, we will try to answer 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, and reverence-for-the-environment virtues, for example? In what sense do the virtues form a unity? Can virtue ethics generate concrete, plausible accounts of right action, irresolvable dilemmas, and moral luck? Is virtue ethics best grounded in Aristotelian, Humean, or Nietzschean thought? Will virtue ethics revolutionize role ethics, applied ethics, and ethics education? Can virtue ethics survive challenges from, and contribute to the disciplines of psychology, sociology, and women's studies?

We will read both founding and recent works by the reigning virtue ethics triumvirate: Hursthouse, Swanton, and Slote. We will also read essays by the current cool kids: Calhoun, Russell, Tessman, Doris, Kristjánsson, and others.

PHIL 5331-001 Philosophical Psychology 3:00-6:00 M ENG/PHIL 264

Dr. Jonathan Dorsey

This seminar focuses on physicalist theories of consciousness, ranging from theories that essentially deny its existence to those that hold that it pervades the physical universe. In preparation for, and to some extent during, the exploration of these theories, the hard problem of consciousness and issues concerning how to define physicalism receive close attention. The overarching purpose of the seminar is to assess the prospects for a viable physicalist theory of consciousness and to try to determine, at least in outline, what such a theory might be.

PHIL 5333-001 Seminar in Philosophy of Language 3:30-6:30 T 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. 'limey'), honorific terms (e.g. 'sir'), evaluative terms (e.g. 'honorable') and predicates of personal taste (e.g. 'beautiful'). Along the way, we will consider various issues such as 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. A previous course in philosophy of language (e.g. PHIL 4331) is recommended but not required.

PHIL 5341-001 Great Figures in Philosophy 4:00-7:00 W ENG/PHIL 264

Dr. Jeremy Schwartz

The goal of this class is to think through Kant's practical philosophy. To this end we will read the *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, the *Critique of Practical Reason*, the *Metaphysics of Morals*, and selections from *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone* and *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*. Since Kant's ethics is still a live project in contemporary ethics, there will be some attempt to understand not just Kant's thoughts but their contemporary significance.