

## DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY SPRING 2021 COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

**PHIL 2300-001**                      **Beginning Philosophy**                      **11:00 -12:20**    **TR**                      **IMSE 121**  
**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 2300-003**                      **Beginning Philosophy**                      **1:00 - 1:50**    **MWF**                      **IMSE 121**  
**Douglas Westfall**

This class will examine the traditional topics of an intro to philosophy course (God, morality, free will, the soul, etc.) by examining what important transitional works have had to say about the subject. We will read Plato's *Republic* (Ancient), Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy* (Medieval) and Descartes's *Meditations on First Philosophy* (Modern). This will allow you to understand the topics from radically different approaches, see the development of these ideas, and familiarize you with some classic texts.

**PHIL 2300-005**                      **Beginning Philosophy**                      **2:00-3:20**    **TR**                      **CHEM 49**  
**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 2310-001**                      **Logic**                      **10:00-10:50**    **MW/F**                      **MLAB 125**  
**Dr. David Boylan**

Here's one argument: Roger is a gerenuk; therefore *something* is a gerenuk. Compare it to another: *some* babirusas have horns; therefore *all* babirusas have horns. You don't need to know what a gerenuk or a babirusa is to tell that the first argument is better than the second. Why? Because arguments can be good or bad simply because of their *structure*. But how do we know what the structure of an argument is? And how can you tell what structures are good? This is the subject matter of logic. In this course, we will study two systems of logic, propositional and first order, which rigorously define of this notion of structure and give us purely mechanical tools for assessing arguments.

**PHIL 2310-D01**                      **Logic**    **ONLINE**    **TBA**                      **ASYNCHRONOUS**

**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**    **10:00-1050**    **MWF**    **ME 132**

**PHIL 2320-002**                      **Introduction to Ethics**    **11:00-11:50**    **MWF**    **SUB 119**

**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-H01**                      **Introduction to Ethics**    **11:00-12:20**    **TR**    **MCOM 270**

**PHIL 2320-H02**                      **Introduction to Ethics**    **9:30-10:50**    **TR**    **MCOM 270**

**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-D01**                      **Introduction to Ethics**                      **ONLINE**    **TBA**                      **ASYNCHRONOUS**

**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

**PHIL 2350-001**                      **World Religion & Philosophy**                      **10:00-10:50**    **MWF**                      **SYNCHRONOUS**

**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 3303-001**                      **Modern European Philosophy**                      **11:00-12:20**    **TR**                      **SYNCHRONOUS**

**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 3321-H01**                      **Philosophy of Law**                      **12:30-1:50**    **TR**                      **SYNCHRONOUS**

**Dr. Daniel Nathan**

The United States Supreme Court regularly sends down decisions that engage broad popular interest. For example, court decisions have lately addressed questions of transgender rights, gun control, same-sex marriage, the government's use of intrusive surveillance, voting rights and restrictions, and immigration policy. 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 the 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 in the current term and recent years. Enrollment in this class is limited to students in Honors College or with permission of the professor.

**PHIL 3330-001**                      **Philosophy of Science**                      **2:00-3:20**    **TR**                      **MCOM 359**  
**Dr. Joel Velasco**

In this class we will examine some philosophical questions about the nature of science. Topics include criteria for the confirmation and falsification of scientific theories, the character of scientific explanation, realism about unobservable entities, and the objectivity of science. Near the end of the course, we will look to medicine as a case study by looking at specific issues such as the nature of health and disease as well as causation in medicine and ask whether medicine is a science and to what extent it is similar to, or distinct from, other sciences.

**PHIL 3342-001**                      **Philosophy Of Film**                      **2:00-3:20**    **MW**                      **AGED 102**  
**Dr. Anna Ribeiro**

This course covers a variety of philosophical questions related to motion pictures: What is film? Is film art? What is the difference between fiction and documentary films? How does narration work in film? How should we understand our emotions for fictional characters? Who is the author of a film? Can we judge the quality of a film on the basis of the moral message it appears to endorse? Can we learn from films? We will read key works by contemporary philosophers in the analytic tradition as we consider these questions. The course also has a lab component; we will watch films every Fridays 2:00 - 4:00 PM.

**PHIL 4300-001**                      **Topics in Philosophy**                      **11:00-12:20**    **TR**                      **SYNCHRONOUS**  
**Dr. Christopher Hom**                      **Philosophy of Race**

The course will look examine issues of race and gender from the perspective of contemporary analytic philosophy along three distinct dimensions: 1) metaphysics: what *is* race/gender; 2) epistemology: how do race/gender affect knowledge; and 3) philosophy of language: how are race/gender represented in language and media. Specific questions will include:

- Is race a natural kind or a social construction?
- Should we eliminate the concept of race?
- What is implicit bias?
- What do racial and gendered slurs mean, if anything?
- Does pornography harm women, and if so, how?
- Should slurs and pornography be protected under the First Amendment?
- How does language function as a tool of propaganda?

**PHIL 4331-001**                      **Philosophy of Language**                      **9:30-10:50**    **TR**                      **MCOM 353**  
**Dr. David Boylan**

This course is about language, meaning and communication. First we will ask some foundational questions. We will consider what meaning is and how words can have it, how the structure of sentences determines their meaning, and how we can use sentences to say and do things that go beyond their literal meaning. Then we will focus on particular words and expressions and how they are used. We will ask what the best theory of the meaning of descriptions like “the king of France” is, see how expressions like “might” and “must” have motivated unorthodox theories of meaning, examine proposals for the meanings of sentences like “birds lay eggs” and “boys don’t cry”, and investigate some of the more insidious ways speech can be used to subordinate others.

**PHIL 5302-001**                      **Studies in Modern Philosophy**                      **2:00-3:20**    **TR**                      **SYNCHRONOUS**

**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, Malebranche, Astell, Hobbes, Kant.

**PHIL 5311-001**                      **Seminar in Epistemology**                      **3:30-4:50**    **TR**                      **ENG/PHIL 264**

**Dr. Amy Flowerree**

Moral Encroachment, Belief, and the Epistemology of #MeToo

The #MeToo movement involves a public exercise in epistemology. Pleas to #believewomen and #believesurvivors enjoin us to take seriously the testimony of rape accusations. Traditional epistemology has a wealth of resources to bring to this discussion, though it often focuses on abstract idealized situations. Another recent development in epistemology has been to examine the ways moral requirements and epistemology impinge on each other (Moral Encroachment). This class will examine emerging work on both topics.

**PHIL 5320-001**                      **Seminar in Ethics**                      **6:00-8:40**    **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.

**PHIL 5330-001**                      **Philosophy of Science**                      **2:00 -3:20**    **MW**                      **ENG/PHIL 164**

**Dr. Joel Velasco**

Classification, Natural Kinds, and Kinds of Humans:

We will start by looking at some classic papers on natural kinds and classification in the sciences such as Goodman, Quine, Hacking, and Boyd. Then we will move to thinking about classification in the human sciences and in particular, kinds of humans. Are males and females natural kinds? What about man and woman? Are sex and gender different kinds of things? What about human races? Are there any such things? If there are, are they socially constructed? Or biologically real? Or something else?