

DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY SPRING 2023 COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

PHIL 2300-002	Beginning Philosophy	10:00 - 10:50	MWF	ENG 001
Dr. Amy Flowerree				
<p>We live in an age of #MeToo, Covid-19, echo chambers, corrupt political parties, protests (riots?), climate disaster, and constant outrage. In this moment, how should you think and act?</p> <p>The goal of this class is to use the tools of philosophy in order to understand and act in our current context. We will articulate and analyze arguments, we will clarify concepts, and we will discuss what responsibilities we have as citizens, social media members, students, and friends. We will pursue understanding in the context of great thinkers in the philosophical tradition.</p>				

PHIL 2300-003	Beginning Philosophy	2:00 - 2:50	MWF	PHIL 260
Douglas Westfall				
<p>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 <i>Republic</i> (Ancient), Boethius’s <i>Consolation of Philosophy</i> (Medieval) and Descartes’s <i>Meditations on First Philosophy</i> (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.</p>				

PHIL 2300-D01	Beginning Philosophy	9:30 - 10:50	TR	SYNCHRONOUS ONLINE
Dr. Francesca DiPoppa				
<p>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 <i>mean</i>? 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. Come for the humanities requirement, stay for the cute puppy videos!</p>				

PHIL 2310-001	Logic	9:30 - 10:50	TR	PHIL 260
Dr. Joseph Gottlieb				
<p>This is an introduction to symbolic logic via the study of sentential and predicate logic. Topics to be discussed include analyzing arguments, translating ordinary English sentences into a formal language, the methods of truth tables, truth trees, and natural deduction in sentential and predicate logic.</p>				

PHIL 2310-D01	Logic	ONLINE	ASYNCHRONOUS	
Dr. John DePoe				
<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 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.</p> <p>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.</p>				

PHIL 2320-001	Introduction to Ethics	10:00-10:50	MWF	PHIL 260
PHIL 2320-002	Introduction to Ethics	11:00 -11:50	MWF	PHIL 260
Douglas Westfall				
<p>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 <i>Republic</i> and Aristotle's <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i>) for us to understand the primary schools of ethics in hopes of becoming better people.</p>				

PHIL 2320-004	Introduction to Ethics	9:30-10:50	TR	MCOM 166
Dr. Jeremy Schwartz				
<p>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.</p>				

PHIL 2320-D01	Introduction to Ethics	ONLINE	ASYNCHRONOUS	
Dr. Justin Tosi				
<p>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</p>				

PHIL 2340-001	Meaning and Value in the Arts	1:00 - 1:50	MWF	PHIL 260
Dr. Angela Curran				
<p>Could a pile of bricks be art? How can we know the real meaning of a work of art? Why do we value art? Is art a source of pleasure, knowledge, and self-expression, or is art valuable for some other reason? What sets art apart from different areas of human activity? This class draws on various media—including literature, motion pictures, dance, theater, music, and visual art—to examine these questions. We focus on works of twentieth and twenty-first-century art that challenge traditional thinking about what makes something art. We read classic articles in the philosophy of art and works that examine contemporary debates in the philosophy of arts, such as cultural appropriation and the arts.</p>				

PHIL 2350-001	World Religion & Philosophy	2:00-2:50	MWF	ENG 106
Dr. Mark Webb				
<p>This course is a study of seven major world religions: Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, Islam, Judaism, and Christianity. We will study the doctrines and practices of each of these religions; then, for each religion, we will critically examine some element of doctrine or practice to see if it can be justified. For example, we will critically examine the doctrines of karma and reincarnation, the doctrine of monotheism, the problem of evil, and the doctrine of the incarnation. This course satisfies the multiculturalism requirement.</p>				

PHIL 3300-002	Topics in Philosophy:	11:00 - 11:50	MWF	ENG 350
Dr. Mark Webb	Buddhist Life and Thought			
<p>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 in order 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 <i>Pali Canon</i>, 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.”</p>				

PHIL 3303-001	Modern European Philosophy	12:00 -1:50	TR	ENG 400
Dr. Francesca DiPoppa				
<p>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.</p>				

PHIL 3321-H01	Philosophy of Law	11:00 -12:20	TR	PHIL 264
PHIL 3321-001	Philosophy of Law	2:00 -3:20	TR	ENG 455
Dr. Daniel Nathan				
<p>The United States Supreme Court regularly sends down decisions that engage broad popular interest, and this term will be no exception. In addition to the Supreme Court’s most recent reproductive rights decision in <i>Dodds v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization</i>, the Court has lately addressed (and/or will soon be addressing) cases concerning voting rights, same-sex marriage, transgender rights, affirmative action, and immigration policy. Decisions in each of these areas tend to be viewed by the general public as highly controversial, and have generated a broad spectrum of political and personal responses. However, 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 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 direct relation to the legal issues raised by Supreme Court cases this term and during the past several years.</p>				

PHIL 3322-001	Biomedical Ethics	10:00 - 10:50	MWF	ENG 305
PHIL 3322-002	Biomedical Ethics	11:00 -11:50	MWF	ENG 305
Dr. Angela Curran				
<p>The COVID pandemic has brought our attention to how we all need health care. Whether we are patients, medical professionals, or citizens interested in shaping health care policy, we face many medical decisions. These choices can be life-altering, life-creating, or life-ending. In this class, we critically reflect on and discuss the ethical dimensions of these decisions. Topics we examine include: Is the government justified in taking action to curb obesity? Are doctors morally required to honor a patient’s wishes to discontinue treatment? Is euthanasia ever morally permissible? How should we allot limited medical resources such as ventilators or vaccines? Is race relevant for medical practice and medical research? What is a disability? Should parents use genetic screening to select their version of the “best” child? We critically reflect on the debates surrounding these issues and examine ethical theories that can shed light on what makes a medical decision morally right or wrong.</p>				

PHIL 3325-D01	Environmental Ethics	ONLINE	ASYNCHRONOUS
Douglas Westfall			
<p>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.</p>			

PHIL 4300-001	Topics in Philosophy: Protecting the Future	12:30 - 1:50	TR	ENG 455
Dr. Joseph Gottlieb				
<p>Many of you will have children. Upon reflection, that should be enough to make you realize that you care about the future: you want to leave the world in good shape for them, however many of them there should be. But how much should you care about the future? Answering that question depends in large part on how valuable the future may be, and whether we will have one at all. This course will examine these questions and related ones concerning existential risks (from, for example, nuclear war, engineered pandemics, artificial intelligence), along with foundational issues in population ethics and intergenerational justice.</p>				

PHIL 4320-001	Ethics	9:30 -10:50	TR	ENG 455
Dr. Howard Curzer				
<p>Since the Enlightenment, normative ethics has been dominated by Consequentialism and Deontology. But Virtue Ethics is gaining ground fast. Virtue Ethics is the new, cool kid on the ethics block. What is Virtue Ethics? In this class, we will discuss two versions of Virtue Ethics: Rosalind Hursthouse's neo-Aristotelian Virtue Ethics, and Christine Swanton's target-centered Virtue Ethics. We will consider several central issues that any version of Virtue Ethics must confront. Which character traits are virtues? How are virtues acquired? How is Virtue Ethics grounded? What role should character ideals play? How are moral dilemmas to be understood and resolved? We will examine applications of Virtue Ethics to medical ethics, environmental ethics, epistemology, education, and activism.</p>				

PHIL 4331-001	Philosophy of Language	11:00 -12:20	TR	ENG 455
Dr. David Boylan				
<p>How does language relate to the world? How do we manage to use words to talk about things? What is the relationship between the words we use and the thoughts that they express? These are the central questions for this course. Along the way, we will explore the concepts of meaning, truth, and belief. We will begin by investigating the work of Frege and Russell on the meaning of proper names. According to them, the relationship between a name and the object it picks out is mediated by descriptive information. The differences between these two competing approaches will be brought out in our discussion of propositions and belief reports. We will go on to examine further implications of direct reference theories for meaning and thought. Other related topics in the course include: truth and meaning, the role of contemporary linguistics, pragmatics and context, metaphor, and pejorative words.</p>				

SPRING 2023 GRADUATE COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

PHIL 5302-001	Studies in Modern Philosophy:	3:30- 4:50	TR	PHIL 264
Dr. Francesca DiPoppa	Early Modern Philosophy of History			

In the 17th century, the term "history" was used to label rigorously researched empirical matters, including, but not limited to, human and civic histories. In this class, we will be thinking about human history in the 17th-18th century, and attempt to answer some of the following questions: what was the nature, methodology, and philosophy of history for thinkers such as Spinoza, Bacon, or Hume? How do we move from the religious cosmopolitanism of the Middle Ages to the (largely) secular cosmopolitanism of the Enlightenment? Is there an epistemology of history? And finally, can we use the reflections of these philosophers to gain insight about how we think, or should think, of history today? We will start with an overview of Ancient and Medieval views on history, make a quick stop through Machiavelli and Erasmus, and read authors including Hobbes, Spinoza, Vico, Rousseau, Burke, Kant.

PHIL 5312-001	Seminar in Logic	2:00-4:50	M	PHIL 264
Dr. David Boylan				

In this class we will learn about modal logic and its applications to philosophy. The first part of the seminar will focus on modal logic itself: we will learn the basics of proof theory and semantics for modal logic. We will then consider a range of questions from across philosophy where modal logic has been fruitfully applied, perhaps including the nature of knowledge and justified belief, vagueness, indicative and counterfactual conditionals, and metaphysical possibility and necessity. Assessment will be through semi-regular problem sets throughout the semester, a short paper and a final paper.

PHIL 5320-001	Seminar in Ethics:	6:00-8:50	W	PHIL 264
Dr. Jeremy Schwartz	Obligation			

In "The Reasons We Can Share," Korsgaard says "The primal scene of morality, I will argue, is not one in which I do something to you or you do something to me, but one in which we do something together. The subject matter of morality is not what we should bring about, but how we should relate to one another." We have the power to oblige each other not necessarily because of non-relational properties that we have, but because of relationships that we have formed with each other. In this class, we will pursue various attempts to work out this idea. In particular, we will read work by Korsgaard, Wallace, Scanlon, Darwall, and Gilbert.

PHIL 5320-002	Seminar in Ethics:	2:00 - 3:20	TR	PHIL 264
Dr. Howard Curzer	Contemporary Virtue Ethics			

Since the Enlightenment, normative ethics has been dominated by Consequentialism and Deontology. But Virtue Ethics is gaining ground fast. Virtue Ethics is the new, cool kid on the ethics block. **What is Virtue Ethics?** In this class, we will discuss two versions of Virtue Ethics: Rosalind Hursthouse's neo-Aristotelian Virtue Ethics, and Christine Swanton's target-centered Virtue Ethics. We will consider several **central issues** that any version of Virtue Ethics must confront. Which character traits are virtues? How are virtues acquired? How is Virtue Ethics grounded? What role should character ideals play? How are moral dilemmas to be understood and resolved? We will examine **applications** of Virtue Ethics to

PHIL 5330-001	Philosophy of Science	2:00 -4:50	W	PHIL 264
Dr. Joel Velasco				

Causation, Laws, and Explanation - and the relationship between them. Questions to be addressed include: What are laws of nature? Are there laws other than those described by physics (for instance, are there laws of biology, meteorology, or economics?) Are there ceteris paribus laws (that is, laws which hold 'other things being equal')? What is the nature of causation and how does it relate to laws? What is a scientific explanation? Is it necessarily a causal one? Can we have scientific explanations that do not cite laws of nature?