

DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

SPRING 2024

PHIL 2300-002 BEGINNING PHILOSOPHY 10:00-10:50 MWF ENG/PHIL 260
PHIL 2300-003 BEGINNING PHILOSOPHY 11:00-11:50 MWF ENG/PHIL 260
DR. MICHAEL SCHON

Philosophy begins with curiosity about the world around you, about yourself, and about what might happen if things were different. In that sense, you've all already begun a philosophical exploration of the world. This class is designed to help you further that philosophical exploration through providing tools to improve your thinking about some of the topics you've already begun exploring, introducing you to philosophical topics you may not have thought about at all, and introducing you to the ideas of people who have thought a great deal about these philosophical issues. In particular, we will explore the following questions, in order. What can we know about the world, if anything? What is the relationship between the mind and the brain? Do we have free will? Does God exist? What is the nature of morality? We'll examine various answers to these questions and discuss how well each of these answers is justified.

PHIL 2300-004 BEGINNING PHILOSOPHY 11:00-12:20 TU/TH ENG/PHIL 260
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 2310-001 LOGIC 11:00-12:50 TU/TH ENG/PHIL 400
DR. JOSEPH GOTTLIEB

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.

PHIL 2310-D01
PHIL 2310-D02

LOGIC

ONLINE

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
PHIL 2320-002

INTRO TO ETHICS

12:00-12:50
1:00-1:50

MWF
MWF

ENG/PHIL 260
ENG/PHIL 260

DOUG 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 2320-004

INTRO TO ETHICS

9:30-10:50

TU/TH

ENG/PHIL 260

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-DO1	INTRO TO ETHICS	ONLINE	ASYNCHRONOUS
PHIL 2320-DO2			

DR. JUSTIN MORTON

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 2340-001	MEANING AND VALUE	9:30-10:50	TU/TH	ENG/PHIL 360
PHIL 2340-002	IN THE ARTS	2:00-3:20	TU/TH	ENG/PHIL 260

DR. ANGELA CURRAN

In this class, we will explore the nature and meaning of art through various media, such as literature, motion pictures, dance, theater, music, and visual art. We will examine whether a pile of bricks can be considered art and what makes art valuable. We will also discuss whether art is a source of pleasure, knowledge, and self-expression or has another purpose. Our focus will be on works of art from the 20th and 21st centuries that challenge traditional thinking about art. Additionally, we will read classic articles in the philosophy of art and works that examine contemporary debates in the field, such as cultural appropriation and the arts.

-----This class fulfills the Core Curriculum Creative Arts requirement. -----

PHIL 2340-DO1	MEANING AND VALUE	ONLINE	ASYNCHRONOUS
PHIL 2340-DO2	IN THE ARTS		

DR. FRANCESCA DI POPPA

Artwork is steeped in its time and society. Many celebrated artworks contain morally questionable themes. How should we address such artwork? Should we erase from museums any artwork belonging to artists and cultures incompatible with our values of liberty and justice? To what extent is "they didn't know any better" a good excuse? Is there a duty to seek artwork from underrepresented or oppressed groups, even if it makes us uncomfortable? Do we have a right to merely enjoy artwork, or should we educate ourselves about the "dark side," even if this undermines our enjoyment? All of these are philosophical questions. This class will offer you an introduction to concepts in philosophy of art and will explore artwork, past and contemporary, to encourage you to think about these questions.

-----This class fulfills the Core Curriculum Creative Arts requirement. -----

PHIL 2350-001 WORLD RELIGIONS 11:00-11:50 MWF ENG/PHIL 350
AND PHILOSOPHY

DR. MARK WEBB

Philosophical study of the doctrines and practices of the major world religions, including Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. Fulfills multicultural and core Language, Philosophy, and Culture requirements.

PHIL 2350-DO1 WORLD RELIGIONS ONLINE ASYNCHRONOUS
PHIL 2350-DO2 AND PHILOSOPHY

DR. JUSTIN MORTON

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.

PHIL 3300-001 FEMINIST PHILOSOPHY 12:30-1:50 TU/TH ENG/PHIL 450

DR. ZARA AMDUR

This class assumes that this basic tenet of feminism is true: people who identify or are identified as women are oppressed. Over the course of this semester, we will ask philosophical questions within feminism. What is feminism? What is sexism? Does sexism affect our sexual ethics? What does the oppression of women look like and how is it perpetuated? How do other aspects of one's social and political identities change gendered oppression? A key theme throughout the course will be how to make feminism responsive to the diversity of women and the differing forms of subordination each faces. In pursuing that goal, we will read and listen to a number of women, including Sandra Bartky, Marilyn Frye, Kimberlé Crenshaw, and Audre Lorde.

PHIL 3300-002 ANCIENT AND CONTEMPORARY 11:00-12:20 TU/TH ENG/PHIL 360
VIEWS OF THE EMOTIONS

DR. ANGELA CURRAN

The nature of emotions has been a subject of philosophical debate for centuries, and many questions remain unanswered. Do emotions involve thoughts or perceptions, or are they simply bodily reactions? Are emotions inherently irrational? Should we suppress our emotions? Are our moral values based on them? What role do emotions play in moral decision-making? What exactly is empathy, and how does it differ from sympathy? This class explores various emotional concepts from ancient Greek philosophy to modern-day debates. We will also delve into the role of emotions in the moral psychology that shapes our moral decision-making. Furthermore, we will examine the debates surrounding specific emotions, such as whether empathy serves as the foundation of morality or if certain emotions like anger should be eliminated from our lives as negative influences.

PHIL 3303-001 MODERN EUROPEAN 3:30-4:50 TU/TH ENG/PHIL 350
PHILOSOPHY

DR. JOHN DEPOE

This course will survey some of the most important philosophical texts in the modern era of the Western tradition of philosophy with an emphasis on the development of metaphysics and epistemology of during this era. The writings of philosophers such as Descartes, Leibniz, Locke, Berkeley, Hume, Kant, and a number of women philosophers from this era will be studied and critically assessed through the progress of the course.

PHIL 3304-001 EXISTENTIALISM 9:30-10:50 TU/TH ENG/PHIL 450

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 Individuals: 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: 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 3321-001 PHILOSOPHY OF LAW 12:30-1:50 TU/TH ENG/PHIL 400

DR. DANIEL NATHAN

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 *Dodds v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*, the Court will likely be addressing cases concerning politically or racially driven redistricting, 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, 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, liberty, or the rule of law itself. This course will try to remedy some of these gaps in understanding, first by studying the nature and authority 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 over the past several years.

PHIL 3322-001 BIOMEDICAL ETHICS 11:00-12:20 TU/TH ENG/PHIL 450

PHIL 3322-002 2:00-3:20 TU/TH ENG/PHIL 350

DR. JUSTIS KOON

This course is a general introduction to ethical thought, and to topics in ethics related to the practice of medicine. The course is divided into two units, a theory unit and an applied unit. For the first third of the semester, we'll cover three influential ethical theories: utilitarianism, Kantianism, and W. D. Ross's ethics of prima facie duties. The remainder of the term will be devoted to four hotly-contested issues in bioethics: how the medical community should respond to a pandemic, abortion, euthanasia, and the nature of disability.

PHIL 3324-001 PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION 1:00-1:50 MWF ENG/PHIL 350

DR. MARK WEBB

An examination of general philosophical problems that arise in connection with religion. Topics may include the nature of religion, the existence of God, the problem of evil, the relation between faith and reason, and the relation between religion and morality.

PHIL 3325-001 ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS 10:00-10:50 MWF MCOM 268

DOUGLAS WESTFALL

We will discuss the conceptual and moral questions surrounding human population and consumption of resources, loss of biodiversity and wilderness areas, and human use of nonhuman animals by focusing on questions like: Since we probably can't live without harming the environment in some way, is there a way to reduce or offset that harm? How do we decide between competing harms? Is there a moral justification for eating meat? What do we do if our obligations to present and future people conflict? A surprising variety of questions are inextricably linked to environmental concerns, and we will try to understand the implications of various positions by using the concepts and methods of inquiry introduced in this course. You will be encouraged to explore and refine your own positions by familiarizing yourself with some contemporary arguments in these areas and making a recommendation for action with your final assignment.

PHIL 3325-DO1 ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS ONLINE ASYNCHRONOUS
PHIL 3325-DO2

DOUGLAS WESTFALL

We will discuss the conceptual and moral questions surrounding human population and consumption of resources, loss of biodiversity and wilderness areas, and human use of nonhuman animals by focusing on questions like: Since we probably can't live without harming the environment in some way, is there a way to reduce or offset that harm? How do we decide between competing harms? Is there a moral justification for eating meat? What do we do if our obligations to present and future people conflict? A surprising variety of questions are inextricably linked to environmental concerns, and we will try to understand the implications of various positions by using the concepts and methods of inquiry introduced in this course. You will be encouraged to explore and refine your own positions by familiarizing yourself with some contemporary arguments in these areas and making a recommendation for action with your final assignment.

PHIL 3341-001 PHILOSOPHY AND LITERATURE 2:00-3:20 TU/TH ENG/PHIL 450

DR. ANNA RIBEIRO

What kinds of texts are literary works? Is a work identical with its text? How do we interpret literary works? How do we evaluate them? Is it irrational to feel emotions for fictional characters? Do we acquire knowledge by reading poems or novels that we could not have acquired by other means? We will discuss these and other questions relating to literature as they have been investigated by contemporary analytic philosophers as well as Plato, Aristotle, David Hume, and others.

PHIL 4322-001

METAETHICS

2:00-3:20

MW

ENG/PHIL 350

DR. JUSTIS KOON

Have you ever wondered what morality is, what makes moral claims true, or how any of our moral beliefs can be justified? These questions belong to the field of metaethics, which investigates the nature of moral properties, moral language, and moral knowledge. This course begins by surveying the five main perspectives on meta-ethics: non-naturalism, naturalism, the error theory, relativism, and non-cognitivism. We then turn to a recent challenge to moral realism: once we recognize that morality, like everything else about us, is the product of evolution by natural selection, how can we maintain that moral truths are in any way objective or mind-independent?

PHIL 4335-001

PHILOSOPHY OF MIND

1:00-1:50

MWF

ENG/PHIL 450

DR. MICHAEL SCHON

What is the relation between the mind and the brain? Or, more narrowly, what is the relation between properties of our experience and properties of physical objects? Are their differences merely matters of appearance, hiding a deeper similarity? Or is there a genuine and irreconcilable difference? These questions (and their more sophisticated counterparts) are at the heart of the mind-body problem. This class will focus on the contemporary debates surrounding the mind-body problem and survey the solutions that have been offered. We'll begin by exploring various arguments for dualism, the position that states that the mental and the physical are, indeed, fundamentally different. We'll then explore arguments for materialism, the position that states that the mind fundamentally is the brain, in some way or another. These are the two most popular sorts of solutions to the mind-body problem. We'll finish the course by exploring a burgeoning list of non-standard positions, such as neutral monism and contemporary forms of panpsychism and idealism.

GRADUATE COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

SPRING 2024

PHIL 5301-001 STUDIES IN GREEK 3:30-6:20 TU ENG/PHIL 264
 PHILOSOPHY

DR. ZARA AMDUR

This course is on Plato's uses of the erotic. Eros, meaning "love" or "sexual desire," is paradoxical. It is a "madness" (Phdr. 245b), a "sickness" (Phdr. 231a), but also a philanthropist (Symp. 189d) and "the best helper for human beings" (Symp. 212b). It is the aim of the best education in music and poetry (Rep. 403c) and the unquenchable desire ruling the tyrannical soul (Rep. 573a-d). At the level of dramatic action, Plato's character Socrates both proclaims that he knows erotics (Symp. 177d) and is accused of only feigning as a lover (Symp. 222b). This course will explore eros through a close reading of several Platonic dialogues, including Symposium, Phaedrus, and Lysis. Along the way, we will ask questions, such as: Are like attracted to like or do opposites attract? Do we love our other halves or only the good? Do people act better or worse in front of their lovers? Is desire impervious to reason or can we transform our desires through rational thought? Is there a distinction between the erotic and the pornographic? Along the way, we will engage with oft-cited works on Plato's texts by Michel Foucault, Francis Cornford, Gregory Vlastos, and Martha Nussbaum. In addition, we will consider non-Platonic reflections on erotic power, including Anne Carson's poetic readings of Sappho and the black feminist thought of Audre Lorde.

PHIL 5302-001 STUDIES IN MODERN 2:00-3:20 MW ENG/PHIL 264
 PHILOSOPHY (1600-1800)

DR. FRANCESCA DIPOPPIA

In this class we will examine the metaphysics and epistemology of two authors who stand on opposite ends on many issues: Spinoza and Hume. Michael Della Rocca has argued that, if a philosopher wants to endorse the Principle of Sufficient Reason, the Spinoza way is the only way to avoid Hume's lethal objections. Is he right? We will discuss Ethics I and II to investigate Spinoza's use of PSR, and read some secondary literature. Then, after reading Della Rocca's paper, we'll move on to Hume's criticism of both 17th century rationalism and empiricism in Treatise and Enquiry.

PHIL 5308-001 BASIC ISSUES IN 12:30-1:50 TU/TH ENG/PHIL 264
 CONTEMPORARY PHILOSOPHY

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 Individuals: 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: 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 5320-001 SEMINAR IN ETHICS: 6:00-8:50 M ENG/PHIL 264
KANT'S ETHICS

DR. JEREMY SCHWARTZ

The goal of this class is to think through Kant's practical philosophy. To this end, we will be reading most of what Kant published on practical philosophy along with some commentaries. In the beginning we will be going slowly through the Groundwork and supplementing our reading with classic secondary literature. Toward the end, we will be reading almost exclusively primary texts. By the end, you should have a feel for the whole Kantian system and be able to follow debates and scholarship in Kant's ethics.

PHIL 5333-001 SEMINAR IN 3:30-6:20 W ENG/PHIL 264
PHILOSOPHY OF
LANGUAGE

DR. CHRISTOPHER HOM

This seminar will focus on ideology, propaganda, their essential relationship, and their social significance. Questions we will address include: What is ideology? What is our cognitive relationship to ideology? What role does it play in social life? What risks come with ideology? Does it present a special problem for the possibility of social criticism? What would a critique of ideology look like? What is propaganda, and what are its various forms? What is the relationship between ideology and propaganda? Is all propaganda bad, and what makes it bad? Readings will include foundational work in the analytic tradition and culminate in chapters from a book manuscript by Hom & May (under contract with MIT Press). Seminars will include guest commentaries on these chapters from experts in the field. Requirements will include a short paper, a long paper, a seminar presentation, and a presentation commentary.

PHIL 5340-001 SEMINAR IN 2:00-3:20 TU/TH ENG/PHIL 264
METAPHYSICS

DR. JOSEPH GOTTLIEB

You may be lots of things. A university student. A human under 10 feet tall. A friend. But presumably you could have failed to be all these things. This course asks: what are you fundamentally? In asking this question, we will also explore various theories of how you persist over time.