

# Spring 2014

## Philosophy Department Course Descriptions

### ***Philosophy 101 Philosophical Problems—Staff***

**MTWR 0900-0950 204 CHA**

Philosophical study of morality (e.g., ethical relativism; justification of moral judgments; concepts of duty, right, and wrong). The course is about relations with others that concern human well being. Its philosophical aim is for students to understand the intellectual beliefs assumed in their opinions and values and to learn how to analytically defend those beliefs and engage in critical dialogue about them. Student participation is encouraged throughout and the focus is on the individual's moral or ethical system. Ideas that all moral beliefs are relative are challenged early on and a concept of moral universalism is built up through the practice of giving reasons for beliefs. The reading, thinking and writing in the course is abstract in its focus on philosophical views but also concrete through the use of literary and real life examples. Students are required to engage in moral theory by contrasting, comparing and choosing among the different moral systems of deontology, utilitarianism and virtue ethics.

### ***Philosophy 103 Critical Reasoning—Staff***

**MTWR 0900-0950 106 FR**

What does it mean to be human? What makes us "human"? What is the place of humans in the world? This course will explore influential traditional, modern, and contemporary approaches to human nature. Thinkers examined include Felipe Guamán Poma de Ayala, Plato, Hobbes, Foucault, Frantz Fanon, Julia Kristeva, and Enrique Dussel. Teaching will take the form of large group lectures and dedicated discussion sections.

### ***Philosophy 120 Ethics of Enterprise and Exchange— Staff***

**TR 1200-1320 100 AGH**

In a free market world, what are the limits that a society or government should impose on the corporate world? In the absence of universal ethical standards in business ethics, how should we hold individual entrepreneur players responsible? What is ethically problematic about Gordon Gecko's famous proclamation "greed is good"? Is self-interested behavior determined by an individual's character, or is it more the product of the capitalist system in which individuals operate? Are there moral obligations that go beyond legal restrictions? This course provides a moral examination of business by considering the nature of enterprise and exchange. Topics will include corporate and consumer responsibility, meaningful work, and leadership.

### ***Philosophy 170 Love & Sex—Professor Mann***

**MWF 1300-1050 180 PLC**

Love and sex are so central to human life that many would argue that our intimate relationships are the key to self-esteem, fulfillment, even happiness itself; in fact, our intimate relationships are probably more important to our sense of well-being than our careers. Yet we spend remarkably little time *thinking* about love and sex, even as we spend years preparing ourselves for the world of work. In this course you will be asked to reflect on the most intimate sphere of human existence. We will draw on historical, sociological, religious, feminist and philosophical work to shed critical light on a variety of questions, including: What is love exactly? Why do we continually associate love and sex with happiness and pleasure when they often make us so utterly miserable? Is there, or should there be, an ethics of love and sex? What is moral, what is normal, and who gets to decide? What happens to sex when it is associated with "scoring" (the conquest model of sex)? How are our understandings of masculinity and femininity tied in with what we believe about love and sex?

### ***Philosophy 211 Existentialism—Professor Zack***

**MWF 1200-1250 123 GSH**

In the 1950s, Existentialism was a cutting edge perspective on the world (European nihilism after World War II), a lifestyle for intellectuals (in smoke-filled coffee houses), and a glamorous corner of academic philosophy itself (Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir). But the origins of Existentialism go back to at least the nineteenth century in the Western tradition--- Dostoevsky, Nietzsche, and Kierkegaard. Is existentialism relevant today? Yes, if there are philosophical truths about human life that have to be lived, if individual subjectivity is important, and if we are responsible for our lives. The course will survey all of the figures just mentioned, and more. Our main work will be to address questions such as: Am I free? Is it my fault? Does life have a purpose? What does death mean? **All required reading** will be from *Existentialist Philosophy*, ed. Oaklander, 2nd ed. Prentice Hall isbn 0-13-373861-2 pbk. **Work** will consist of reading (about 30 pp a week) student participation (despite a large class) and 5 very short (2pp) papers out of a choice of 10.

### ***Philosophy 216 Philosophy & Cultural Diversity—Professor Pratt***

**MWF 1000-1050 182 LIL**

In this course students will investigate some of the philosophical issues raised by the recognition of the culturally diverse character of American society from the perspective of a number of philosophical traditions in America: European, African, Asian, Islamic, Latina, and Native. In the process of the investigation, students will also be introduced to the practice of

philosophy where philosophy is understood, in part, as a mode of inquiry that can contribute to the resolution of social conflict. At the beginning of the last century, W. E. B. Du Bois asserted “the problem of the Twentieth Century is the problem of the color line.” To the degree that America at the beginning of the Twenty-first Century still faces the problem of how to be a culturally diverse society, philosophy provides a means to address the problem. The course can be applied to the Arts & Letters group requirement and the University multicultural requirement (as an "AC" or American Culture course).

***Philosophy 312 History of Philosophy, 19<sup>th</sup> Century—Professor Zambrana***  
**MWF 1300-1350 240C MCK**

Hegel, Marx, and Nietzsche can be described as “masters of suspicion.” In different yet equally groundbreaking ways, they call into question perennial philosophical assumptions about reality, knowledge, and value. What they share, however, is a deep suspicion of abstract accounts of the self. In their texts we find accounts of the self as embodied—as bound to desire, need, and affect. We also find accounts of the self as social—other selves, relations of labor and power, and history are constitutive of the self. Albeit in different ways, then, the body, other selves, and socio-historical relations constitute the self. In this course, we will explore these themes by examining selections from Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Marx’s 1844 *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, *On the Jewish Question*, and *Capital*, and Nietzsche’s *Genealogy of Morals*. Although not exclusively, Hegel, Marx, and Nietzsche were responding to Kant’s Copernican Revolution. Therefore, we will begin the course by examining selections from Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason*. We will end the course considering Emma Goldman’s work on anarchism and women’s suffrage in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century. We will ask whether her work further complicates the nineteenth century critique of abstract notions of the self.

***Philosophy 340 Environmental Philosophy—Professor Brence***  
**MWF 1500-1550 207 CHA**

Considers the nature and morality of human relationships with the environment (e.g., the nature of value, the moral standing of nonhuman life). Environmental philosophy addresses the human relationship with the non-human world from a variety of philosophical perspectives: ethical, political, aesthetic, epistemological, and metaphysical. In what sense are human beings a 'part of nature'? Does the natural world have intrinsic value, and what are our ethical obligations toward it? Can a distinction be drawn between humans and animals? Can nature be compared aesthetically to a work of art? How is the exploitation of nature linked to the exploitation of women, indigenous people, and other groups? What political options are open for developing a sustainable relationship between society and the natural world? To address these questions, the course will begin with a survey of dominant movements in recent environmental philosophy, including animal rights, deep ecology, ecofeminism, social ecology, bioregionalism, environmental pragmatism, and eco-phenomenology. The second half of the course explores key topics of current debate in the field, such as human/animal relations, holism and individualism, our proper relationship with technology, environmental aesthetics, and the ethical and political implications of radical environmental activism.

***Philosophy 345 Place in the Cosmos—Professor Vallega-Neu***  
**MW 1400-1520 105 ESL**

The aim of this course is to deepen a philosophical understanding and questioning of the human place in the cosmos through close reading of seminal texts in the Western tradition. To question our place in the cosmos requires that we reflect on the notions of cosmos or world, of place and space, and that we question our place in relation to other living and non-living things, to planets, stars, and the divine or divinities. The course considers Ancient cosmogonies and cosmologies, traces the development of different views of the cosmos in Medieval thought, and highlights fundamental changes occurring in our relation to the cosmos with the scientific revolution and mathematization of nature in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Among the primary texts we will read are Plato’s *Timaeus*, Descartes’ *Principles of Philosophy*, and texts by Heidegger. The course requires close reading and text analysis, and leads to the critical comparison of different approaches to the question of the human place in the cosmos, as well as to questioning ourselves with respect to how we view our place in the cosmos today.

***Philosophy 407 Philosophy of Mind Seminar—Professor Johnson***  
**TR 1400-1550 353 PLC**

We will begin by surveying some of the more important historical treatments of mind, including Descartes, Hume, James, Dewey, and 20<sup>th</sup> century behaviorism and functionalism. Then we will focus primarily on contemporary naturalistic views that have emerged from cognitive science and neuroscience, in which mind is conceived as an embodied, enactive, culturally embedded, social process.

***Philosophy 410/510 Philosophy & the News—Professor Zack***  
**MW 1400-1550 123 MCK**

Philosophers have opinions on contemporary events and draw on them for examples in theoretical work; philosophers also address social problems directly in theory and some believe that philosophy should be about the world. But philosophers less often theorize about contemporary events as they are happening, as philosophical work. The subject matter of this course will be major news stories occurring during the time of the course. For example, if the course had been given in Fall 2012---when I first proposed this course---likely topics would have been the US presidential election campaign, Hurricane Sandy, the scandal surrounding General David Petraeus, the Israel-Hamas conflict, the pending US Supreme court case, *Fisher v. The*

University of Texas, and the looming so-called “fiscal cliff.” Philosophical frameworks of political theory, disaster, feminism, war, racial theory and economics could have been brought to all of these unfolding stories and will be brought to the stories that emerge during Spring term 2014. Classroom discussion will facilitate a plurality of background interests and methodologies. The news contents will be determined by events.

**Required Texts:**

PHIL 410/510 Philosophy and the News,

1. *In the Shadow of the Silent Majorities*, Baudrillard, Semiotext, 13-978-1-5835-038-5 pbk
2. *Don't Think of an Elephant*, Lakoff, Chelsea Green, 1-931498-71-7 pbk -
3. *Understanding Media*, Marshall McLuhan, MIT Press, 0-262-63159-8 pbk

Additional postings on BB, TBA.

**Work:** Choice of one or two big news stories, two 5-7page papers for Phil 410. For Phil 510, one 10-15 page revised paper, suitable for conference presentation.

**Philosophy 420 American Philosophy: Pragmatism & Metaphysics—Professor Koopman**

**TR 1000-1150 353 PLC**

This course will focus on the status of metaphysics in pragmatist philosophy. Pragmatism is often thought to be a boldly anti-metaphysical form of philosophizing, but it is just as true that many of the classical pragmatists took their philosophies to involve a reconceptualization of the very work of metaphysics itself. In this course we will interrogate the work of key pragmatist thinkers who have directly engaged with the metaphilosophical question of the status of metaphysics. Our focal figures will be William James, John Dewey, and Richard Rorty. We will also consider a number of contemporary challenges to pragmatism’s philosophical optic. Students will be expected to: write a research paper at the end of the term, make one formal presentation in class, and participate during every class session in advanced discussions that presume a focused reading of the assigned material beforehand.

**Philosophy 443 Feminist Philosophy: Sex & Gender—Professor Mann**

**MW 1000-1150 248 PLC**

If there is one thing everyone thinks they know today about the differences between men and women, it is that there is a distinction between sex and gender. Sex is a biological difference and everyone has one. Gender, on the other hand, is a difference that relates to psychology and social-identity. But where did the sex/gender distinction come from and how did it get to be our common-sense way of thinking about the differences between men and women? In this class, we will trace the philosophical genealogy of the sex/gender distinction, and feminist debates about the distinction. What were the political stakes of the distinction in early second wave feminism? How does the distinction help us to or prevent us from negotiating the divide between nature and culture, necessity and freedom? How and why did the distinction collapse in much feminist work after the second wave, particularly in poststructuralist and radical materialist feminisms? What have been the consequences? How and why have feminist phenomenologists resisted the distinction from the beginning? This course will help students develop a sense of the variety of feminist philosophical approaches to the question of sexual difference, to notice that there is not one singular feminist point of view, and to identify the often conflicting philosophical and political commitments at work in feminist appropriations of and elaborations of social theory, poststructuralism, materialism, psychoanalysis and phenomenology.

**Philosophy 453/553 19th-Century Philosophers: Marx—Professor Zambrana**

**MW 1000-1150 112 WIL**

This course will serve as an introduction to Marx’s thought. We will pay particular attention to Marx’s treatment of the relation between theory and praxis consistent throughout his corpus. Readings will provide occasion to discuss the structure and contemporary relevance of basic concepts such as alienation, capital, class struggle, ideology, and emancipation. In addition to primary texts, we will briefly consider Marx’s reception in the work of Luxemburg, Gramsci, Lukács, Althusser, and Mariátegui.

**Philosophy 463/563 20<sup>th</sup> Century Philosophers: Gadamer—Professor Vallega-Neu**

**MW 1800-1950 121 MCK**

This course introduces Gadamer’s hermeneutics through a close reading of his major work *Truth and Method*, and also with consideration of later texts (see *The Gadamer Reader* and *Philosophical Hermeneutics*). The course will consist in close reading and analysis along with discussions. We will focus on such concepts as “understanding,” “interpretation,” “truth,” “effective history,” “historically effective consciousness,” “dialogue,” and “language.” This will open discussions on a variety of subjects central to hermeneutics like the relevance of art, the finitude and historicity of all interpretation, the possibility and relevance of a genuine encounter with the past and with others, the dialogical character of understanding, and language as the medium of understanding.

**Philosophy 463/563 20<sup>th</sup> Century Philosophers: Kristeva—Professor Stawarska**  
**TR 1200-1350 122 MCK**

This course surveys philosophical works by the contemporary living French philosopher and psychoanalyst, Julia Kristeva, with a focus on some of the central topics found in her work, such as poetic and ordinary language; the meaning and possibility of revolt today; love; gender and women's experience. We will be reading from *Revolution in Poetic Language*, *Sense and Non-Sense of Revolt* and *Intimate Revolt*, as well as a selection of essays from Kristeva's other works.

**Philosophy 607 Seminar: Philosophy & Teaching—Professor Pratt**  
**W 0800-0850 250C SCH**

This course is offered for philosophy graduate students who are also in their first year of service as graduate teaching fellows. The course runs for the entire year, each quarter offering a different focus. The first quarter concerns pedagogical technique, the second, course design, and the third, broader issues in the philosophy of education. During the fall quarter, the goal is to improve teaching effectiveness and to provide new teachers with a forum for discussing some of the challenges they face in the classroom. Note that this is a one credit course that meets weekly.

**Philosophy 607 Seminar: Žižek—Professor Warnek**  
**MW 1600-1750 250C SCH**

The sheer volume of material published by Slavoj Žižek over the last two decades makes him a particularly challenging author. How to do justice to this thinker, author and social critic? He simply defies any of the ways in which he might be predictably categorized: Marxist, Lacanian, Schellingian, Critical Theorist. He is a (presumably atheist) Marxist who defends St. Paul's Christian *agape* while offering interpretations of popular cultural icons, such as Hitchcock's *Vertigo* or Jan de Bont's *Speed*, or the animated series, *The Flintstones*. Through close readings of Heidegger, Hegel and Schelling, he speaks of a monstrous truth, and develops a critical perspective on multiculturalism and the ecological movement. His claims are controversial yet deeply provocative and strangely compelling. We will read a selection of his more important and controversial texts, including *The Ticklish Subject*, *The Indivisible Remainder* and *The Fragile Absolute*. Along the way we will seek to formulate an account of Žižek's project and ask in what sense it makes sense to ask whether he has a project.

**Philosophy 615 Continental Philosophy: Derrida—Professor Vallega**  
**T 1600-1850 250C SCH**

This course is an advanced introduction to the thought of Jacques Derrida. We will focus on some of his final lectures 2001-2003 (in *The Beast and the Sovereign I and II*) as the occasion to begin to engage his work: in it such issues as alterity, difference, and the dissemination of philosophy beyond its circumscription as a matter of subjectivist rationalist linguistics, the "linguistic turn," and "the human." The course's aim will also be to mark the relevance of Western lineages in Derrida's sense of *différance*. Students will be expected to also read *Robinson Crusoe* by Defoe (with Virginia Woolf's introduction), "Goodbye Robinson" by Julio Cortázar, and Heidegger's *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude*. The course will include general lectures, visiting lecturers, as well as close reading presentations by the participants.

**Philosophy 620 American Philosophy: After Metaphysics—Professor Koopman**  
**TR 1400-1550 250C SCH**

The potentiality of pragmatism in our contemporary philosophical moment is currently being developed along two, possibly incompatible, trajectories. This debate in pragmatism maps to a larger debate that is increasingly characterizing our philosophical present: *either* abandon the pretense of philosophical foundationalism that for so long seemed the inevitable outflow of any and every metaphysics-first philosophy *or* refocus the work of a metaphysics-centered philosophy such that it can at last do away with its haunting foundationalist shadow. The first half of the course will involve surveying representatives of each side of this contemporary theoretical divide. On the side of 'philosophy beyond metaphysics' we will consider Richard Rorty's *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (1989) and key chapters from Habermas's *Postmetaphysical Thinking* (1988). On the side of a 'renewal of speculative metaphysics' we will read Quentin Meillassoux's speculative refusal of correlationism in *After Finitude* (2006) and Jane Bennett's new materialist political theory in *Vibrant Matter* (2010). In the second half of the course we will turn to key texts from the classical pragmatists, including William James's *Pragmatism* (1907), *A Pluralistic Universe* (1909) and possibly also selections from John Dewey's *Experience and Nature* (1925). In reading these texts we will be in a good position to ask which side of today's theoretical divide is most conducive for forwarding classical pragmatism. Throughout the term our overarching attention will be focused on the possibilities of pragmatism (as either post-metaphysical or newly-metaphysical) as a philosophical mode of engaging our cultural (ethical, political, scientific) present in its specificity. The point of the course will be to interrogate the options available to philosophy in the present and thus the course will be useful to students on both sides of the above-described theoretical divide.

**Philosophy 658 Philosophy of Mind—Professor Johnson**  
**TR 1000-1150 250C SCH**

After a brief look at Behaviorism and Functionalism, we will focus primarily on naturalistic views of mind that draw support from scientific research on mind, thought, and language coming especially from the cognitive sciences and neuroscience.