Winter 2018
Philosophy Department Course Descriptions

Philosophy 101 Philosophical Problems—GE
MTWR 0900-0950 303 GER
Living a human life poses certain problems for each of us: Who am I? Is there some meaning to my life? How should I act? Using short philosophical readings, we will reflect on issues such as the role of reason in our lives, the nature of religious belief, whether human existence makes any sense, how our personal identity is shaped, and how we construct meaning in our lives. 4 credits (3 lectures plus discussion section). Grades based on written essays and discussion participation.

Philosophy 102 Ethics—Professor Russell
MWF 1200-1250 150 COL
A study of basic views on how we ought to live our lives. The following kinds of questions are examined: What is goodness? Can we, and if so how can we, justify our basic ethical principles? Can ethical statements be true (or false), or are they solely a matter of preference? This course canvasses several of the main ethical theories in the history of philosophy. According to virtue ethics, the aim of ethics is to cultivate good character, from which right action naturally flows. According to deontological ethics, the aim of ethics is to formulate and act upon universalizable rules — rules that anyone, anywhere, at any time should follow. According to consequentialism, the aim of ethics is to act so as to produce the best possible resulting state of the world. We will discuss the strengths and weaknesses of each view, from both theoretical and empirical points of view.

Philosophy 103 Critical Reasoning—GE
MTWR 1400-1450 105 FEN
Introduction to thinking and reasoning critically. How to recognize, analyze, criticize, and construct arguments. Through the practice of argumentation in relation to current and classic controversies, this course is designed to improve your reasoning skills as well as your critical writing capabilities. Along the way, students will also explore informal fallacies, basic rules of deduction and induction, issues pertaining to the ethics of belief, and some general reflections on the political dimensions and promise of argumentation. Typical assignments include argumentative journals, homework sets, and in-class exams. Class time involves a mixture of lecture, discussion, and group work.

Philosophy 110 Human Nature—Professor McKenna
MWF 1300-1350 150 COL
What does it mean to be human? What makes us “human”? What is the place of humans in the world? Much of the history of philosophy wrestles with these questions in one way or another. Religion, science, politics, and ethics are all informed by the various answers these questions have received and they, in turn, inform the answers. In this course we will look specifically at how some of the answers to these questions have resulted in legacies of sexism, racism, and speciesism with which we still live today. This means we will be addressing sensitive topics that demand respectful discourse.

Philosophy 130 Philosophy & Popular Culture—GE
MTWR 0900-0950 105 FEN
This course enables students to engage in the critical reflection central to the discipline of philosophy—that which would facilitate living an “examined life” -- about, in, and through popular culture. What is popular or mass culture? Is it something merely “manufactured” by special interests, or is it still in any way genuine culture, the product of free and spontaneous human interaction? Are the products of popular culture (movies, music, games, sports, etc.) merely sources of entertainment or distraction, or might they serve other purposes such as providing for a sense of community and identity? Do they serve merely to bypass (or even undermine) reflection to inculcate particular perspectives or values into those who are exposed to or who participate in them? Might they rather, upon scrutiny, provide the basis for the kind of critical reflection commonly regarded as facilitated only by “high” culture? By way of testing the last of these perspectives, of the capacity for popular culture to facilitate genuinely critical reflection, a range of products of popular culture will be examined alongside texts that seek to illuminate and reveal the ideas at work in them, and in relation to some works of classical philosophy, ancient and modern. As a result, students should expect to develop an enhanced capacity for intelligent reflection upon popular culture and upon a range of central issues that have been the subject of considerable philosophical examination.
Philosophy 170 Love & Sex—GE
MTWR 0900-0950 106 FR
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 ask 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 Warnek
MW 1400-1520 229 MCK
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—GE
TR 1400-1550 360 CON
Cultural events and cultural differences are created by individuals, but exceed individual intentions and actions. Because there are strong group differences within societies and between societies, culture is a constant process of negotiating diversity. There are two senses of culture—products such as books, paintings, music, and how people act and react in society. Our focus will be on how people act and react in society with readings about: policy, ideology, business, race and ethnicity, art, discourse, gender and sexuality, class, popular cultural products, and transnationalism. Course work will consist of Ten 1-2 page papers (no exams), with normal letter grading. The course can be applied to the Arts & Letters group requirement and the University multicultural requirement (as an “AC” or American Culture course).

Philosophy 308 Social & Political Philosophy—Professor Brence
TR 1000-1150 199 ESL
Major historical and contemporary social/political theorists. Inquiry into such ideas as freedom, ideology, identity, social/political reconstruction and revolution. We will focus primarily upon the social/political dimension and consequences of problems confronting human agency. How do we act in a world as organized, complex, and controlled as our own? Is there any possibility for meaningful self-determination in a globalized and technologically managed economy? Can we regard contemporary free-market capitalism as still democratic without a positive answer to that question? What is the nature of contemporary ideology such that these questions and their answers are often obscured?

Philosophy 311 History of Philosophy: Modern—Professor Vallega-Neu
MW 1400-1520 117 ED
This course is the second of a three-course introduction to the history of western philosophy. The purpose of this course is to examine the history of western philosophy in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as well as to consider the importance and relevance of the history of philosophy for us today. The course will focus on three key subjects relevant to the history of philosophy in this period. Primarily, we will engage with readings from canonical figures in the modern traditions of Rationalism (selections may be from Descartes, Spinoza, and Leibniz) and Empiricism (selections may be from Locke, Berkeley, and Hume). Additionally, we will also consider works from figures not normally in the canon (most notably early modern women philosophers) who played a more central role in the development of these philosophical traditions than is often acknowledged.
Philosophy 315 Introduction to Feminist Philosophy—GE  
MW 1000-1150 199 ESL  
This course examines basic concepts and important texts in feminist philosophy. We will talk about what the great philosophers have said about women’s ability to do philosophy, what it means to do philosophy as women, how feminism has challenged the most basic assumptions of the Western philosophical tradition, and contemporary issues in feminist philosophy. This course is a prerequisite for some upper division courses in feminist philosophy.

Philosophy 325 Logic, Inquiry, Argument—Professor Pratt  
MW 1400-1520 101 LIB  
In this course, we will examine the processes and practices of inquiry and argumentation by considering the logic that underlies them. In the first part of the course, we will consider the phenomenology of inquiry, the structure of arguments, the role of guesswork (abduction), and the practices of communicative action. In the second part, we will study the basics of Aristotelian logic and the role and practice of induction. In the final section, we will consider the idea of ordered systems and formal logic and will conclude with a discussion of the role of agency in logic and its implications for a normative theory of argumentation and what it means to be rational. Upon completion of this course, you will have developed both a facility with and understanding of formal and informal logic, but also an understanding and appreciation of their deep connections to the rational processes of an active social life. This course satisfies the logic requirement for a major in philosophy.

Philosophy 339 Introduction to the Philosophy of Science—Professor Zack  
F 1400-1650 111 LIL  
Philosophy of Science is unique to philosophy. It raises questions about facts, theories, reality, explanation, and truth not often addressed by scientists or other humanistic scholars. This course will provide the basics of Philosophy of Science with concrete examples as science now applies to contemporary subjects such as Climate Change, Feminism, and Race. Students will also have an opportunity to choose their own branches of inquiry. Work will consist of reading, discussion, four 3-page papers and an end-of-term team oral report (with a written option).

Philosophy 340 Environmental Philosophy—Professor Brence  
MW 1200-1320 302 GER  
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  
MW 1200-1320 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 17th 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 372 Teaching Children Philosophical Inquiry—Professor Bodin
MW 1600-1750  117 ED
This is a course that will ask students to apply their understanding of philosophical ideas in ethics, epistemology, political and environmental philosophy, and aesthetics towards the goal of leading effective and engaging discussions with children in grades 2 through 5 in local Eugene public school classrooms. Working alone or in a two-person team, seminar students will show children how they can practice philosophy through collaborative circle discussions around topics that connect to their curiosity and sense of wonder about the world. Discussion questions will include: Is it always wrong to lie? What does it mean to be a girl or a boy? Do animals have rights? What does it mean to have an identity, to change over time, or belong to a community? Can we define beauty or understand the quality of an artistic experience? During the process of leading eight weekly classroom discussions under the guidance of the instructor, the course GE and an elementary classroom teacher, seminar students will hone their skills as discussion facilitators. They will model with children the importance of framing a coherent opinion supported with reasons, showing empathy and respect for a diversity of ideas, constructing counter examples that challenge claims made by peers, and accepting discomfort when dealing with complexity.

Philosophy 407 Philosophy of Education Seminar—Professor Meens
MW 1600-1750  349 MCK
Description TBA

Philosophy 421/521 Ancient Philosophers: Plato—Professor Warnek
W 1600-1850  123 MCK
This course is devoted to a careful reading of Plato's dialogue, The Republic. The course will proceed as a seminar, and the emphasis will be on developing an interpretation of the dialogue as we proceed in discussion. We will also be asking general questions that concerns the unique challenges presented in reading a Platonic dialogue. What is philosophical important about a dialogical text? How do the mythic and dramatic aspects of the texts bear upon the dialogue as it is presented. We will also consider how different interpretive assumptions lead to different conclusions concerning what this dialogue reveals. Is the account of the "best city," for example, meant to be taken programmatically, as a political project, or does it instead reveal something about the limits of philosophical discourse in being able to address the concerns of political life? What is the relation between the concern with the life of the individual as a psyche and the life of the community as a polis? How does the dialogue challenge us to think differently both about the nature of the political in general and about the political dimension of philosophical inquiry?

Philosophy 453/553 19th Century Philosophers: Marx—Professor Zambrana
T 1600-1850  121 MCK
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 practice 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.

Philosophy 607 Seminar: Philosophy and Teaching—Professor Vallega-Neu
T 1300-1350  211B SC
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 Professional Seminar: Analytic Philosophy—Professor Zack
R 1000-1250  250C SC
A survey of Anglo-American analytic philosophy over the 20th century, to include the historical developments of logical atomism and logical positivism, ordinary language philosophy, neo-Pragmatism, and cognitive science. Important subjects and key figures in metaphysics, epistemology, philosophy of science, ethics, and philosophy of mind will form the content. From G.E. Moore to Jerry Fodor, the pace will be fast. Seminar format with student presentations as we go along, short papers, opportunities for critique from other traditions.

Philosophy 607 Seminar: Race, Reproduction, & Bioethics—Professor Russell
T 1000-1250  250C SC
Description TBA
Philosophy 607 Seminar: Time-Space Non-Western—Professor Vallega
M 1600-1850 250C SC
Description TBA