

# Fall 2019

## Philosophy Department Course Descriptions

### ***Philosophy 101 Philosophical Problems—Professor Johnson***

**MWF 1300-1350 180 PLC**

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. Grades based on written essays and discussion participation.

### ***Philosophy 102 Ethics—GE Newton***

**MTWR 0900-0950 301 CON**

This course will offer an introduction to the central concepts of ethical inquiry and moral philosophy. What is of paramount importance for us as individuals and as a society? To guarantee equal rights for all? To provide better lives for those less fortunate? To treat well those with whom we interact? And can all of these be of paramount importance at once? In this course you will first learn the basic frameworks of the most influential classical moral theories (we will read selections from Aristotle on virtue ethics, from Immanuel Kant on rights-based deontology, from John Stuart Mill on utilitarianism, and from William James on pragmatist approaches to the very idea of moral philosophy). Following this background exposure to the basic organizing concepts of contemporary moral theory, you will then learn how to utilize, enrich, and critique these theories by examining some of the most pressing ethical conflicts we face today. Critical moral issues we will consider in this part of the class will include economic inequality, racial injustice, and the ethics of emerging technologies of surveillance (here we will read, among others, selections from Ta-Nehisi Coates, Cornel West, Michelle Alexander, John Rawls, and Peter Singer).

### ***Philosophy 103 Critical Reasoning—GE Showler***

**MTWR 0900-0950 101 ALL**

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***

**MW 1400-1520 180 PLC**

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 120 Ethics of Enterprise and Exchange—GE Ospina***

**MTWR 0900-0950 195 ANS**

This course aims to provide an introduction to ethical theories and the study of issues related to ethical concerns around a free market world, corporation responsibility, capitalism and labor, globalization, neoliberalism, economic and social rights, and the environment. We will begin the first part of the course investigating the nature of some ethical theories, to get a sense of how the ethical notions and questions function in these broad inquiries pertaining to the corporate world. We will look then a wide variety of approaches and arguments, both in terms of ethical theories and practical ethical problems faced by corporations, consumers, and other agents and institutions within the corporate capitalist world.

***Philosophy 130 Philosophy & Popular Culture—Professor Brence***

**MWF 1200-1250 302 GER**

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—GEs Ralda & Friaz***

**Two sections: MTWR 0900-0950 246 GER and MTWR 0900-0950 360 CON**

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 199 Ethics in the Life Sciences—Professor Morar***

**MW 1000-1150 250C SC**

Research in the life sciences raises numerous ethical issues about the use of human cells and non-human animals in experiments; about the potential harms associated with development of biotechnologies such as CRISPR-Cas 9; about synthetic biology and the production of genetically modified organisms, or about the role of conservation biology in environmental debates, among many others. In addition, this course will explore how recent findings emerging in microbial biology provide new ways for understanding ourselves. Are our physiological capacities the single product of our evolution? Are our psychological states and emotions, in a word our personality, nothing else than the expression of our organic properties? Today, microbial biology calls into question the most traditional understandings of human beings and, thus has a direct impact on our ethical conceptions of who we are.

***Philosophy 216 Philosophy & Cultural Diversity—GE Ferrari***

**TR 1600-1750 254 STB**

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 four short 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 307 Social & Political Philosophy—Professor Koopman***

**MW 1200-1320 110 FEN**

This course will focus on the development and contemporary status of the political philosophy of "liberalism". The term "liberalism" refers to forms of political theory that emphasize the values of liberty for, and equality among, citizens. In academic discussion and scholarship, the word does not simply refer to "left-leaning" politics in the sense of "liberal" common in contemporary political discourse. Rather, "liberalism" refers to any political vision that puts freedom, especially equal freedoms, first. Thus "liberalism" is the common vision of both contemporary Democrats and Republicans in the U.S. (or, at least most of them). In this sense of the term, the standard sense in scholarly and academic discussion, liberalism has long been the dominant theoretical tradition in contemporary political philosophy throughout developed societies. Accordingly, this course will focus on the origins, development, and challenges of liberalism. In Part I, we will begin by considering the major theoretical and cultural origins of modern liberalism. We will briefly consider the earliest statements of liberalism by the English philosophers Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), John Locke (1632-1704) and the Scottish philosopher David Hume (1711-1776), before taking an extended tour through John Stuart Mill's (1806-1873) classic statement of liberalism, exploring how Mill saw himself as reconciling the twin imperatives of romanticism and utilitarianism central to nineteenth-century British culture. In Part II, we will use this historical context to develop a fuller understanding of some of the foremost work in contemporary liberal theory. The contemporary liberalisms on which we focus will include John Rawls's (1921-2002) egalitarian political liberalism, Friedrich Hayek's (1899-1992) constitutionalist market liberalism, and Martha Nussbaum's (1947- ) liberal theory focused on equity for diverse persons to achieve the capabilities and functionings that basic human dignity requires. In Part III, we will then briefly conclude with discussion of some of the most pressing challenges facing liberal political societies. Here we will read small selection of influential approaches in critical political theory: our readings here will be drawn from the writings of Karl Marx (1818-1883), Emma Goldman (1869-1940), and in more detail Michel Foucault (1926-1984).

***Philosophy 310 History of Philosophy, Ancient-Medieval—Professor Vallega***

**MW 1400-1520 101 LIB**

PHIL 310 offers an introduction to Ancient Greek philosophy, primarily through a reading of selections from the texts of Plato and Aristotle. We will also look at other Greek philosophical figures, such as Parmenides and Heraclitus. The course also considers the emergence of Western philosophy in relation to tragic narratives, like those of Oedipus and Antigone. In this regard, Socrates is considered both as a foremost philosophical question and as a possible tragic figure.

***Philosophy 320 Philosophy of Religion—Professor Warnek***

**TR 1000-1120 140 TYKE**

This course examines classical and contemporary religious topics in the Western philosophical tradition, including the existence and nature of God; the problem of evil; the relationship between faith and reason; the meaning of religious language; the justification of religious belief; and the philosophical problems raised by the fact of religious pluralism. The aim of the course is to introduce students to the philosophical investigation of religion: that is, to thinking deeply, clearly, and critically about religious issues, including your own religious views.

***Philosophy 323 Moral Theory—Professor Alvarado***

**MW 1400-1520 248 GER**

In this course we will explore fundamental questions in moral theory. In particular, we will examine the role and significance of metaethical commitments—to well-being, rationality and/or virtue—that underlie major moral theories. The course will also focus on understanding foundational principles related to consequences, duty, and character that help guide moral judgment in different moral theories. We will end the course by examining an important distinction, seldom disentangled in major moral theories, between a moral life, a meaningful life and a good life.

***Philosophy 335 Medical Ethics—Professor Russell***

**MW 1400-1520 105 ESL**

Medical Ethics (or, more broadly, Bioethics) is the branch of ethics that studies moral values in the biomedical sciences, and can include a very large range of issues. This course aims to offer an interesting sampling of the ideas and practices that can be considered and examined in this area. This sampling is centered on the critical philosophical examination of the various assumptions, values, and socio-political forces underlying clinical, research and biotechnological systems and practices. We will ask not only, "What are good or poor systems and practices and why?" but also, "What are the conceptual frameworks available for, assumed by or perpetuated through this system or practice?" and "What are the effects of this system or practice on people, on their lives, on possibilities for democracy/equality, and on potentials for injustice?" We focus on five major themes: Principles, Inequality, Normativity, Disability, and Enhancement. The work of this course should leave you better able to approach ethical dilemmas in your future work not only with reason and intelligence, but with sympathy and respect for human difference and an eye toward justice.

***Philosophy 421/521 Ancient Philosophers: Topic Aristotle—Professor Warnek***

**R 1600-1850 195 ANS**

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 philosophically 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 423 Technology Ethics: hardware and software at the cutting edge—***

***Professor Alvarado***

**T 1400-1750 252 STB**

In this course we will explore some of the many ethical challenges posed by contemporary technology as well as by older machinery from the industrial, technological, scientific and digital revolutions. Readings will include work from Aristotle, Langdon Winner, Shannon Vallor, Lewis Mumford and Shoshana Zuboff (among others). This course will provide the student with an understanding of fundamental ethical questions related to technology. It will also provide a historical contrast with which to compare and contextualize the novel and exciting challenges of the 21st century.

***Philosophy 443 Feminist Philosophy: Topic Ecofeminism—Professor McKenna***

**MW 1000-1150 203 CON**

This course will focus on ecofeminism and ecowomanism. Concerned that some feminist theory uncritically accepted the identification of men with reason, culture, and theory and women with emotion, nature, and practice some feminists took up these linkages seriously. Ecofeminists generally critique the over-reliance on reason and the idea that the human (meaning male) goal is separation from, or domination over, the rest of nature. Ecofeminists and ecowomanists examine how race and class complicate the identification of women and nature. This course will take up an intersectional analysis of what ecofeminists call the “logic of domination” and examine issues such as food, pollution, and consumption by linking environmental justice with social justice.

***Philosophy 453/553 19<sup>th</sup> Century Philosophers: Topic James—Professor Brence***

**MW 1600-1750 252 STB**

This course will aim to help students develop a wide understanding of and appreciation for the depth and breadth of thought of one of America's greatest philosophers, William James. With an uncommonly engaging and expressive style, he treats some of the most basic questions from the received tradition of Western philosophy in often startlingly original, but still very powerful, ways. We will begin our exploration of highlights of his larger body of writings with portions of his *Principles of Psychology*, widely regarded as among the greatest works ever written in the English language. We will then read and consider seminal essays from *The Will to Believe*, *Pragmatism*, *A Pluralistic Universe* and *Essays in Radical Empiricism*, aiming at developing a rich understanding of both his metaphysical and moral pluralism. We will also explore James' relation to other schools of thought, including European phenomenology and subsequent American pragmatism.

***Philosophy 463/563 20<sup>th</sup> Century Philosophers: Topic Derrida—Professor Stawarska***

**MW 1000-1150 121 MCK**

This course introduces you to the philosophy of Derrida via a close reading of select primary texts, as well as relevant canonical texts that he subjected to a deconstructive reading. You will therefore be able to study the method of deconstruction in some detail, and become familiarized with some of its key themes, such as the metaphysics of presence, arche-writing, trace, etc. We will be reading from *Speech and Phenomena*, *Dissemination*, *Limited Inc*, *The Ear of the Other*, as well as select essays from anthologies.

***Philosophy 607 Seminar: Philosophy & Teaching—Professor Vallega-Neu***

**T 1300-1350 250C 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 Johnson***

**T 1000-1250 250C SC**

We will begin by examining the motivating values and assumptions that gave rise to early analytic philosophy's focus on language, reference, and truth (e.g., Frege, Hempel) in the form of logical empiricism. Some of these key assumptions then led to criticisms and to richer and more adequate alternative views by Austin, Wittgenstein, Quine, Putnam, Feyerabend, Kuhn, and others. This opened the way for neo-pragmatism (e.g, Rorty) and for more recent extensive work on the cooperative intersection of analytic philosophy of mind and language with research in cognitive science. Although the main focus is on issues concerning mind, meaning, language, and truth, we will consider implications for ethics from the earliest days (e.g., Ayer; Stevenson) to contemporary debates (e.g., Rorty; Putnam).

***Philosophy 641 Social and Political Philosophy: Topic Neo-Liberalism and Biocapitalism—Professor Muraca***

**R 1000-1250 250C SC**

Putting Life to Work. From Neoliberalism to Biocapitalism

In the seminar we will discuss some of the seminal works from different traditions of thought about what neoliberalism is and how it operates (such as Hayek, Foucault, Harvey, Brown, Dardot & Laval, Springer, Deleuze & Guattari). More specifically, we will focus on the neoliberal restructuring of society as a response to the ecological crisis of the 1970s that aimed at 'putting life to work'. Following the literature on Biocapitalism (i.a. Lazzarato, Codeluppi, Bazzicalupo, Leonardi, Fumagalli), we will analyze and explore the ways in which life in all its forms (affective, emotional, cognitive life of individuals as well as the transformative creativity of living processes beyond human life) is incorporated as main source of economic valorization. Topics include: biopolitics, governmentality, biocapitalism, green and circular economy, biomimicry, neo-extractivism, necropolitics, commons.