

Fall 2022

Philosophy Department Course Descriptions

Philosophy 101 Philosophical Problems—Professor Johnson

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—Orlando Hawkins

This course aims to equip students with philosophical concepts and questions related to philosophical ethics by providing with an in-dept analysis and examination of ethical theories from a wide-range of authors and philosophers. This course will cover a variety of foundational philosophical works within the Western philosophical tradition, along with contemporary issues related to politics, race, and gender/sexuality that expand ethical questions beyond the traditional philosophical canon. Topics covered in this course ranges from metaethics, moral absolutism/relativism, existential ethics and the role and relationship philosophical ethics has to contemporary issue related to racism and gender inequality.

Philosophy 110 Human Nature—Professor Vallega

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 Plato, Hobbes, Foucault, Aníbal Quijano, and María Lugones. The course will consist in a close reading of Plato’s Republic in contrast with other ancient, modern, and contemporary ways of understanding the many senses of being human.

Philosophy 120 Ethics of Enterprise and Exchange—Brooke Burns

This course serves as an introduction to a range of ethical questions related to our practices of enterprise and exchange (working, buying, selling, advertising, etc.) and the broader social contexts in which they occur. We will begin with an overview of some of the most influential normative ethical theories and then explore how these theories bear on moral issues related to business. Some of the questions that we shall explore include: What responsibilities do businesses have to promote the social good? To what lengths should corporations go to ensure the protection of the environment, or the economic, social, and political stability of the communities within which they operate? Do markets inhibit our ethical relations with others? Are there certain things—like human organs, sex, or votes—that should not be bought or sold? How should decisions within a business be made? Do humans have a right to meaningful work? If so, what steps ought companies or governments take to ensure that work is meaningful? Is there anything morally wrong with marketing products that are harmful or addictive? When does advertising limit our ability to act autonomously?

Philosophy 123 Internet, Society, and Philosophy—Professor Alvarado

Introduction to philosophical problems of the Internet. Primary focus on social, political, and ethical issues with discussion of epistemological and metaphysical topics.

Philosophy 130 Philosophy and Popular Culture—Sr. Instructor Brence

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—Kirstin Waldkoenig

Love and sex appear to be central to our lives while philosophy seems less central. Yet, the seeming importance of love and sex demands that we take a closer look at *what* they are and *how* they shape us. Philosophy is a practice of close-looking, honing our attention in a love of wisdom. In this course, we will take a close philosophical look at prominent issues and questions that arise in the context of love and sex – *and* we will examine love and sex in their relation to philosophical practice itself. With an eye toward love, sex, and philosophy, we will begin to see how our bodies create our worlds and are created by them, how these worlds determine which bodies are desirable bodies, and how a practice of attention guides us to love well.

Philosophy 225 Introduction to Formal Logic—Sr. Instructor Brence

This course will serve as a substantial introduction to symbolic logic. At its completion students will be proficient in determining the formal validity of arguments with propositional (sentence) logic and predicate logic. Though often the course will resemble a math course, and mathematical techniques will be employed virtually throughout, the purpose of the course is to inquire into patterns of effective thought concerning potentially all manner of human interests. How do we draw correct inferences and think effectively? How do we avoid errors in reasoning and drawing unwarranted conclusions? What form does compelling evidence for a warranted conclusion take?

Philosophy 310 History of Philosophy, Ancient-Medieval—Professor Warnek

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 315 Introduction to Feminist Philosophy—Professor McKenna

This class serves as an advanced introductory survey of feminist philosophy. Feminist philosophy addresses questions related to women and gender and seeks to redress historical and enduring forms of exclusion. In this course we will examine different schools of feminist thought and a variety of conceptual and practical issues of interest to feminist philosophers. We will learn about the similarities and differences among various schools of feminist thought such as liberal feminism, radical feminism, socialist feminism, Marxist feminism, Black feminism, and ecofeminism. Along the way we will examine particular issues that connect with sex/gender oppression such as how to understand oppression, how to address oppression, and how to be heard and understood within oppressive contexts. These discussions will be informed by a variety of perspectives such as black feminist thought, indigenous feminisms, mestiza consciousness, and queer theory.

Philosophy 323: Advanced Moral Theory-John Montani

Moral theory is an inquiry into the fundamental principles that guide human action and seek a common good. In this course, we will examine four different moral theories and evaluate their relevance for us today. We will read from Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, Kant's *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*, Mill's *Utilitarianism*, and Feminist Care Ethics. At issue in each of these theories are problems that are by no means "theoretical." We will learn how each theory is addressed to the choices we make and to the actions we take in our lives. We will also learn how each theory arises from specific historical lineages which have come to shape our sense of what is good and what is bad, what is right and what is wrong, what is better and what is worse. The class will consist of careful readings of primary texts and discussions about moral issues related to themes like happiness, virtue, justice, pleasure, habits, responsibility, freedom, care, and the good.

Philosophy 335 Medical Ethics—Professor Russell

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 341/615: Africana Philosophy: Stawarska

This course provides an overview of contemporary African philosophy, that is, intellectual contributions and scholarly debates pursued by philosophers working primarily on the African continent. Considering that the very existence of a distinct branch of philosophy 'made in Africa' has been subject to a lively debate, we open with the so-called 'ethnophilosophy' (a traditional belief system shared by African people) and its critique developed most famously by Paulin Hountondji (*African Philosophy: Myth and Reality*). We read some representative 'ethnophilosophical' texts, notably by Tempels, Senghor and Mbiti, alongside the critique. We then turn to contemporary research that critically engages distinctly African epistemic perspectives without essentializing them into an immutable tradition. We read Diagne's reflections on the oral and graphic reason that demonstrate the existence of a robust written tradition in Africa (*The Ink of Scholars*). We consider Wiredu's contributions to philosophical understanding of truth, language, and morality, developed in particular attention to the language and thought of the Ghanaian Akans (*Cultural Universals and Particulars*). We track how Akan philosophizing can address some of the paradoxes plaguing the Western philosophical tradition, such as the supernaturalist foundations of morality and the mind-body problem. We conclude with a discussion of contemporary African feminist philosophy, and its impact on Western philosophies of gender. Oyewumi's study of social organization among the Nigerian Yoruba (*The Invention of Women*) demonstrates that, contrary to the Western feminist view that the subordination of women is universal, the old Yoruba do not organize society by gender but by relative age, and do not construct a gender binary opposing 'women' to 'men'. Ultimately, this course offers an expanded way of understanding both the African and the Western philosophical traditions within a decolonial comparative framework.

Philosophy 342: Latin American Phil: Professor Martinez Valasco

History of Latin American philosophy through the study of ideas, issues, problems, and forms of thinking in the work of key periods, movements, and authors.

Philosophy 423 Technology Ethics-Professor Alvarado

Advanced inquiry in ethics with a focus on technology. Addresses moral, political, and cultural issues raised by socio-technical systems for everyday living and democratic citizenship. Repeatable once for a maximum of 8 credits when the topic changes.

Philosophy 426/526: Advanced Logic-Professor Pratt

This course covers classical and non-classical logics. A review of propositional and predicate logic, using the 'tableaux' proof method, and the introduction of basic modal logic will be followed by a consideration of the "non-normal" logics of strict implication, conditional logic, many-valued logic, and first-degree entailment. The course will consider philosophical issues raised by these diverse logics. PHIL 526 satisfies the graduate logic requirement. The course may be taken for a grade or P/NP. **Prereq: PHIL 225 or PHIL 325 or graduate status.**

Philosophy 453/553 Topic – Hegel’s Philosophy of Right Professor Warnek

Repeatable when Philosopher changes. Concentrates on the work of a single philosopher, typically Hegel, Nietzsche, Marx, or Kierkegaard. **Prereq: PHIL 312.**

Philosophy 463 Topic-Michael Foucault-Zeinab Nobowati

This course offers the chance for intensive and in-depth engagement with the work of Michel Foucault, one of the most influential philosophers and social theorists of the 20th century. Through close readings of major works like *Discipline and Punish* and *The History of Sexuality Vol. 1* and some other works, we will track the emergence of Foucault’s essential ideas about history, power, knowledge, and subjectivity through exploring his accounts of concepts such as sexuality, genealogy, normalization and subjectivation. We will particularly consider how Foucault’s ideas were formulated in direct response to pressing social issues—including the politics of sexual liberation and the rights of prisoners. We will also explore how Foucault’s insights can be used to understand contemporary sites of social and political contestation, from the functioning of the modern-day university to ongoing struggles against police violence and mass incarceration. No prior knowledge of Foucault’s work is necessary.

Philosophy 473/574: Advanced Intro Feminist Phil-Professor Mann

The purpose of this course is twofold: 1) to give students an opportunity to reflect on what it means to study and practice philosophy as a woman, i.e. from a position of alterity in relation to the dominant traditions in Western philosophy and 2) to introduce students to basic texts and basic topics in feminist philosophy. By the end of the term students should be able to speak competently about important themes in feminist philosophy, such as identity, the self-other relation, sexuality, gendered embodiment, race, coloniality, agency and freedom; and about the contributions of a number of important thinkers in feminist philosophy. Students will gain exposure to feminist appropriations and criticisms of the Western philosophical tradition as well as debates within feminist thinking.

Feminist philosophy is philosophical thought that emerges out of and in relation to social movements for women’s emancipation, thus it is a liberatory undertaking, interested in the amelioration of injustice in all

forms. It works toward the recuperation of women's and feminist thought in the history of philosophy, an understanding of the human condition as it is lived by diverse women, an articulation of women's ways of knowing in relation to epistemologies that have implicitly or explicitly excluded them—whether based on sex, gender or other aspects of identity—and interrogating political and ethical practices from a feminist perspective. Though we commonly think of “feminist philosophy” as a recent development, scholars agree that philosophical work that exhibits a feminist sensibility has been a critical counter-voice to the mainstream Western tradition since its inception. Nevertheless, philosophy today remains the most male dominated field in the humanities. Yet feminist philosophers have been passionate in their claims that the discipline of philosophy prepares us to ask the questions we need to ask and address the problems that we confront—even as philosophy is transformed in the process. These are some of the questions we will explore in the course: How does feminist thinking both appropriate and change the practice of philosophy? What questions are opened up by feminist philosophical inquiry that are not opened by more traditional approaches? How does feminist philosophy invite us to challenge some of our most deeply held assumptions about knowledge, human nature, power, and political and ethical practices?

I employ a variety of strategies to engage students in classroom discussions and reflection about the topics for the course. In addition to listening to lectures, you can expect to participate in small group discussions in class, to be called on to explain key concepts to a group of your peers, to do short, in-class writings as a kick-off for discussion, and to actively respond to lectures. This term we will start each of two sessions/class with a student led discussion (the first 20 minutes of each session), this will generally be followed by a lecture, with more discussion at the end of the class period.

Philosophy 607 Philosophy & Teaching Seminar—Professor Koopman

This course is offered to all philosophy graduate students, and is required for any students who are also in their first year of service as graduate teaching fellows in the Philosophy Department. The course runs for the entire year, each quarter offering a different core focus. All three quarters provide opportunity for reflection on pedagogical technique, classroom and campus issues of equality and inclusiveness, and additional broader themes in the philosophy of education. The first quarter offers focuses on the classroom as a pedagogical site in the context of the broader purposes of education in an egalitarian(-aiming) society. The second quarter extends our focus to include attention on curriculum and syllabus construction (with a particular eye to inclusive syllabi for a more egalitarian classroom). The third quarter engages pedagogies of reading and writing before finally zooming out to consider big questions about a democratic and egalitarian philosophy of education. Throughout the year, the goal is to improve teaching effectiveness and provide new teachers with a forum for discussing some of the challenges that they face in the classroom and the challenges we all face as educators.

Philosophy 620: Pragmatism & Cognitive Science-Professor Johnson

This seminar is an investigation into the productive intersection between the Pragmatist philosophy of John Dewey (and other pragmatists) and recent empirical research coming from the biological, cognitive, and neurosciences. The result is a naturalistic, non-dualistic, and non-reductivist philosophy of mind, meaning, thought, knowledge, and values. The science supports, expands, and sometimes critiques key Pragmatic claims, while the philosophy reveals the basic assumptions, limitations, and implications of the various scientific approaches. All of this rests on the fundamental continuity between our basic bodily functioning and our “higher” rational, social, and cultural values and practices.