

UO Philosophy Department

Fall 2023 Course Descriptions

Course Distribution Requirements are Online at:
<https://philosophy.uoregon.edu/undergraduate/courses/>

PHIL 101: PHILOSOPHICAL PROBLEMS/PRATT (MW 12:00-1:20 PM)

Questions of meaning and methods of how problems are solved are part of what is called culture—the habits, relations, practices, values that frame daily experience. When elements of culture break down and no longer provide meaning or reliable ways of addressing problems, people call established ways and beliefs into question and find new ways to bring meaning into their lives. This work of seeking new ways of making things and actions meaningful is the work of philosophy.

This course focuses on examples of philosophical inquiry in response to the troubles of our day framed by the role of truth in divided communities. Anti-Black and gun violence, political insurrection, abortion rights, voting rights, nationalism, COVID, and more mark a time when established methods of addressing shared problems seem unable to generate meaningful solutions. If philosophy is a form of inquiry aiming to find new ways to address the intractable problems of the wider community—then surely this is a time that demands philosophers. As Grace Lee Boggs said in *Revolution and Evolution*, “It is the essence of philosophy to provide a concept of the relationship between ideas and reality (past, present, and future) and the critical bearing which each has on the other. Philosophy begins when individuals question reality.”

PHIL 102/ETHICS/TBA (MWF 2:00-2:50 PM)

Study of moral theories and issues central to moral theory (such as justification of moral judgments and concepts of duty, goodness, and virtue) as well as theoretical engagement with pressing contemporary moral debates.

PHIL 104/HISTORY OF WESTERN PHIL/TBA (MTWR 9:00-9:50 AM)

The course is an introduction to some currents, seminal thinkers, and texts of the Western philosophical tradition from the Ancient Greeks to Medieval, Modern, and 19th and 20th Century Philosophy. The course includes both classical text and readings traditionally excluded from the canon.

PHIL 110/HUMAN NATURE/TBA (MTWR 9:00-9:50 AM)

Consideration of various physiological, cultural, psychological, and personal forces that characterize human beings, taking into account issues of class, gender, race, and sexual orientation.

PHIL 123/INTERNET, SOCIETY, & PHILOSOPHY/TBA (MTWR 4:00-4:50 PM)

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

PHIL 130/PHILOSOPHY AND POP CULTURE/BRENCE (TR 12:00-1:20 PM)

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.

PHIL 170/LOVE & SEX/TBA (MTWR 9:00-9:50 AM)

Philosophical study of love, relationships, marriage, sex, sexuality, sexual identity, and sexual representation.

PHIL 225 INTRO TO FORMAL LOGIC/BRENCE (TR 10:00-11:20 AM)

Introduction to formal methods in symbolic logic. At the completion of the course, students will have a proficiency in identifying the formal validity of arguments with propositional (or truth-functional) and predicate (or quantificational) systems of symbolic logic. The course often resembles a mathematics course and uses mathematical techniques throughout, but the course's purpose is to inquire into the patterns of valid reasoning in thinking. Attempting to answer questions such as: How do we distinguish valid from invalid forms of reasoning?

What are right versus wrong methods for drawing inferences? How do we avoid errors and think validly and correctly? What forms offer compelling evidence for warranted versus unwarranted conclusions?

PHIL 299 SPORTS ETHICS/WEISER (MW 2:00-3:50 PM)

Introduction to the nature of sport within the framework of the philosophical study of ethics and its implication for the athlete and spectator. We will study sport—amateur, intercollegiate, professional, post-amateur—throughout history as well as current, controversial topics in sport ethics such as athlete well-being, transgender and intersex athletes, cheating, sportsmanship, gender equity, minority hiring, the role of (social) media, and the power of highly visible sport administrations, particularly the NCAA, IOC, and NFL.

PHIL 310/ANCIENT PHILOSOPHY/WARNEK (TR 12:00-1:20 PM)

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.

PHIL 315/INTRO FEMINIST PHIL/MANN (TR 10:00-11:20 AM)

Feminist theory tends to be broadly interdisciplinary and varied, so it is often thought that it is better to talk about feminisms rather than one feminism. In this course, we have the opportunity to read several texts in feminist theory from cover-to-cover. I have chosen our texts for their diversity of concerns, philosophical approaches, disciplinary “homes,” and time periods. Students will be introduced to the breadth and depth of feminist theory, its widely divergent subject matter and methods, but yet (at least to some extent) unified aspirations. A basic feminist tenet is that there is no subject that cannot be investigated from a feminist point of view, no way of framing the fundamental crisis-points of a society that cannot benefit from feminist intervention, and no disciplinary framework that cannot be enriched philosophically by a feminist analysis. A serious commitment to reading and active participation in class discussion (small group and/or whole class) is essential.

PHIL 335/MEDICAL ETHICS/RUSSELL (MW 10:00-11:20 AM)

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.

PHIL 341/AFRICANA PHILOSOPHY/STAWARSKA (MW 10:00-11:50 AM)

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.

PHIL 345/PLACE IN THE COSMOS/VALLEGA-NEU (MW 12:00-1:20 PM)

This course aims at deepening a philosophical understanding and questioning of the human place in the cosmos mainly through close reading of seminal texts in the Western tradition. A close reading of Plato’s *Timaeus*, Descartes *Principles of Philosophy*, and Heidegger’s “Building, Dwelling, Thinking” will be supplemented with broader introductory lectures on Ancient cosmology, Medieval cosmology, as well as lectures that highlight the fundamental change in the Western understanding of our place in the cosmos through the mathematization of nature, which occurred in the 17th century along with the new

astronomical theories of Kepler, Copernicus, Galileo, and Newton. We will end with a look at (non-Western) Inca cosmology in order to question the limits of our contemporary Western senses of being in the world. We will see how throughout the Western philosophical and scientific tradition, the understanding of our place in the cosmos has undergone significant shifts, which occur together with radical changes in how we understand ourselves and the physical world as well as ourselves in relation to the physical world. Understanding these radically different senses of the human place in the cosmos opens venues for reflecting critically on how we view or might view our place in the cosmos today.

PHIL 407/507/FEMINIST PHENOMENOLOGY /MANN (TR 12:00-1:20 PM)

A course on contemporary feminist phenomenology is necessarily taught in relation to the texts of Simone de Beauvoir and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, the first being often credited with having inaugurated the practice and the second having been one of its most significant influences. We will read some key passages from these two thinkers, but focus on themes and works in contemporary feminist phenomenology. We will emphasize themes of spatiality (or space-experience), temporality (or time-experience), affect and materiality. We will consider phenomenological method and what changes it undergoes when it becomes critical and feminist. Because I take feminist phenomenology to be an instance of the broader movement of critical phenomenology, we will begin the class with an effort to understand how critical phenomenology both builds on and is distinct from the classical phenomenological tradition. *Early on in the course, each student will choose a particular phenomenon that is of concern in feminist contexts and conduct their own phenomenological study as a requirement for the course. They will receive coaching (particularly in relation to method or practice) and do several "benchmark" assignments related to their study over the course of the term.*

PHIL 453/553/ WILLIAM JAMES AUTHOR COURSE /JOHNSON (MW 10:00-11:50 AM)

This course aims 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 and insightful ways. We will build our discussions around key chapters in James's *Principles of Psychology*, widely regarded as among the greatest works ever written in the English language. We will supplement this with some of his other seminal essays and we will compare his scientific and naturalistic perspective on mind, meaning, thought, and values with some contemporary cognitive science that supports and enriches many of his key claims.

PHIL 463/563/FRANTZ FANON AUTHOR COURSE/STAWARSKA (MW 2:00-3:50 PM)

This course is dedicated to the philosophical writings of the 20th C. French Martinican author Frantz Fanon. We will consider Fanon's complex conceptions of sexuality, gender, race and racism, religion, and time; the violence of colonialism, anticolonial struggle, and postcolonial society and culture, as well as the pluralism of philosophical methods (phenomenology, existentialism, psychoanalysis, race theory, Marxism).

Phil 463/AUTHOR COURSE, AUTHOR TBD/GE TBD (TR 10:00-11:50 AM)

This course will focus on the work of a single twentieth-century philosopher and will qualify as an Author's Course for majors and minors. The author to be studied will be announced shortly (we expect it to be posted to the Philosophy Department's course lists by Friday May 18th - navigate to the Philosophy Department Homepage, then click 'Undergraduate' on the menu and then 'Courses' on the menu). Unlike most other author's courses that are mixed undergraduate and graduate, this course will be for undergraduates only.

PHIL 607/FIRST-YEAR PEDAGOGY SEMINAR/PRATT (T 2:00-2:50 PM)

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 employees with teaching responsibilities 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 equity and inclusiveness, and additional broader themes in the philosophy of education. The first quarter focuses on the classroom as a pedagogical site in the context of the broader purposes of education in a pluralistic (and sometimes deeply divided) society. The second quarter extends our focus to curricula and syllabus construction (with a particular eye toward research-led, inclusive teaching). The third quarter engages the implications of pedagogies in contexts of student diversity, developing technologies, and commitment to democratic 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. Texts to be considered during the year will include, among others, *A Third University is Possible*, ia paperson, *Teaching to Transgress*, bell hooks, and *Experience and Education*, John Dewey.

PHIL 607 /THIRD-YEAR WRITING PRACTICUM/RUSSELL (T 3:00-3:50 PM)

(NB: This seminar is strongly encouraged for 3rd year students and open to students beyond their third-year of the program.)

The goal of this practicum is to facilitate the transition from writing in coursework to writing for independent projects (i.e. comprehensive exams, publications, and the dissertation). In the fall we will focus making time for writing, developing a daily writing practice, and pre-writing

techniques to cultivate your ideas. In the winter we will work on strengthening central arguments, giving and receiving feedback on works-in-progress, and getting to know yourself and your process as a writer. In the spring we will focus on peer review, revision, and developing systems of accountability. All this work will be centered on your current writing project(s), so you should expect to make progress in and receive feedback on those projects over the course of the practicum.

PHIL 615/ ARENDT, FREEDOM & RESPONSIBILITY/WARNEK (M 4:00-6:50 PM)

This course serves as an introduction to the work and thought of Hannah Arendt (1906 - 1975), one of the most important yet controversial political thinkers of the 20th century. While it is sometimes lamented that Arendt does not present her thought in a systematic manner, this criticism is arguably misplaced, since the central concern of her work remains throughout constant and evident: how is it possible in our time to recover a space for political freedom and action as it would both promote and belong to a possible human flourishing? Beginning with this concern, Arendt undertakes a careful yet critical examination of the Western philosophical tradition, beginning with the Greeks, especially as this tradition continues to subordinate the political world and the life of action to theory and contemplation. Above all, Arendt is a thinker who considers human life according to its essential *natality*, that each of us, in being born, marks a new beginning, harboring unforeseeable possibilities. To take up history in her view is thus never a matter of a mere return to the past but to accept the possibility of a new and unheard of future. And it is by engaging this history that we are first able to encounter the future as a radically open horizon. We will read and discuss selections from a number of different works, spanning the entirety of Arendt's exceptional career.

PHIL 645/ WILDLIFE ETHICS/MCKENNA (R 4:00-6:50 PM)

This course will examine ethical concerns related to a number of ways human and other animal beings, especially "wild" animal beings, relate and we will examine some of the connections between these relationships and questions within environmental ethics. There are many underlying assumptions connected with human relationships with animal beings. In this class we will focus on those animal beings considered "wild" as we explore how ontological views about human and other animal beings have informed these relationships and how challenging those ontological assumptions may open up new and more ethical ways of relating. The course is posited on the idea that it is important to get to know something about particular animal beings in relations with particular human beings in order to have an informed and productive discussion of the ethics of how they might relate in more informed and ethical ways. Human beings' relationships with other animal beings are of ethical concern in their own right. They also have consequences for a host of other issues, many of which relate to environmental concerns. For example, raising animal beings for food (for humans and "pets") has consequences for the "wild" animals and the environment; hunting and fishing have consequences for the "wild" animals and for

ecosystem health; waste from “pets” can result in disease transfer to “wild” animal beings and polluted waterways; the conceptualization and capture of “wild” animals for the pet trade impacts animal and human communities; feeding free living birds can result in increased predation. But does this mean we are ethically required to adopt a vegan diet, refrain from all hunting and fishing, stop living with “pets,” and never assist wildlife? This course will explore the complexity of such issues and examine competing perspectives on how such issues might best be approached. Students will be asked to bring their own particular interests/concerns to the course to shape our readings and discussion. The main books for the course will be: *Wild Souls: Freedom and Flourishing in the Non-Human World*, by Emma Marris and *Animal Traffic: Lively Capital in the Global Exotic Pet Trade*, by Rosemary-Claire Collard. We will also read and workshop parts of a book I have in process: *Predators, Pests, and Playthings: A Pragmatist Ecofeminist Wildlife Ethic*.

PHIL 670/ SOUL IN EARLY MODERN PHILOSOPHY /VALLEGA-NEU (W 4:00-6:50 PM)

The course focuses on the notion of soul in early Modern philosophy. We will focus on Modern thinkers for whom soul is not restricted to human consciousness (as it is in Descartes) but rather can be found in all of nature such that soul accounts for the self-movement, the striving, or the force of things in nature. Margaret Cavendish understands nature in terms of an infinite self-moving body and each thing in nature as well as self-moving and as having sensation, perception, and knowledge, and thus, soul. In his *Ethics*, Baruch Spinoza rethinks what he previously called “souls” as “minds” that are modes of being of nature (God) and are characterized by *conatus*, an inherent striving to persist in being. Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz sought the principles of phenomena one observes in nature in what he calls monads or souls such that each monad or soul is a “primitive force.” Class time will consist in lectures concerning lineages that inform the texts we will be reading, close reading and text analysis, and class discussions.