

Expanded Course Descriptions-PHILOSOPHY

Winter 2024

(not all available courses are listed below-all courses can be viewed [here](#))

PHIL 101/PHILOSOPHICAL PROBLEMS/ RING

Our attempts to make sense of our lives and to find meaning in our existence lead us to ask certain classic philosophical questions. The course begins with the question of the proper role of reason in a life intelligently lived. Is philosophical thinking a necessary and important part of life? Second, we ask what role religion should play for a philosophically reflective person. This leads into questions about whether existence is absurd, without purpose or reason, or whether there is some overarching rationality and direction to our lives. Finally, we examine some of the many conditions that together define our identities as persons, conditions like our biological makeup, social narratives, cultural values, gender, and race. In other words, the key question is 'Who are you?' and 'What makes you who you are?' Our discussions of these issues are centered on classical and contemporary texts in philosophy, literature, and film.

PHIL 102/ETHICS/ MURACA

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.

PHIL 103/CRITICAL REASONING/ BURNS

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 argumentatio. Typical assignments include argumentative journals, homework sets, and in-class exams. Class time involves a mixture of lecture, discussion, and group work.

PHIL 120/ETH OF ENTERPR & EXCHG/BRENCE

How do our jobs and consumer products both facilitate and frustrate our efforts to live well? Given that our social structures of enterprise and exchange are the hands that feed us, what does a responsible critique of business look like, and what do we hope to achieve by it? Where are the lines between personal identity and work roles? The class explores these and other questions using classic philosophical essays, contemporary reflections on business ethics, cases, movies, fiction, and guest speakers.

PHIL 170/LOVE & SEX/WELLBORN

Philosophers have deeply explored knowledge, existence, politics and ethics. Yet love and sex, which for most of us are central features of a good life, have received far less attention. When they have been addressed, particularly in the Western tradition, they have often been relegated to a place of lower status along with the body and passions in general. The result is that though love and sex may occupy a good deal of our time, attention, and emotional energy; though they cause us more acute joy and pain than most other human practices; we don't have ready access to a strong tradition of thinking about these aspects of human life. In this course, material from the philosophers who have thought about love and sex will be explored along with contemporary struggles around sexuality, sexual identity, sexual violence, love, romance, intimate relationships and marriage. Students will be challenged to develop their own philosophy of love and sex as a resource for exploring and surviving the challenges we all face in intimate and romantic relationships. This course will include the use of film and other visual images that some students may find offensive or troubling.

PHIL 211/EXISTENTIALISM/VALLEGA-NEU

Existentialism focuses on philosophical questions regarding human existence in light of the lack of ultimate foundations or last principles we could rely on. Existentialism raises these questions internally, i.e. with respect to how we find ourselves questioning who we are, how to understand our individuality in light of social dependency; how to make choices; how to live with others; how to overcome fears; how to find freedom; and how to be able to affirm life in spite of its constrictions and groundlessness. This course addresses these questions through the readings of four influential existentialist thinkers: Friedrich Nietzsche (Book V of *Gay Science*), Jean

Paul Sartre (“Bad Faith” in *Being and Nothingness*), Simone de Beauvoir (*The Ethics of Ambiguity*) and Franz Fanon (*Black Skin White Masks*).

PHIL 223/DATA ETHICS/ALVARADO

In this course we will explore some of the ethical challenges particular to the design, development and deployment of computational methods of analysis such as the ones used in data science. This course will provide the student with an understanding of fundamental ethical questions about agency, responsibility and privacy as they relate to the practices of data science, its methodology and technology. This course begins by providing an overview of the conceptual trajectory from computer ethics, to information ethics, to data ethics. At the same time this course will provide a general overview of the main elements in ethical theory: from metaethical foundations to normative components of major theoretical frameworks. Furthermore, in this course, we will review the challenges of thorough ethical thought in applied contexts such as computer engineering and modeling, behavioral sciences, marketing and predictive algorithms. Although our contextual framework will be that of the multiple facets of data science, our focus will be on fundamental issues related to (moral and epistemic) agency, (social and individual) autonomy, and (personal and distributed) responsibility, which persist even when bias, error and transparency are accounted for in scientific practice.

PHIL 225/INTRO TO FORMAL LOGIC/SCHIANO

This course will serve as an introduction to basic symbolic or formal logic. At its completion, students will be proficient in determining the formal validity of arguments with propositional (sentence) logic and predicate logic as well as in the use of truth trees in respect to both. 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 the 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 thus warranted conclusions take?

PHIL 307/SOCIAL & POLITIC PHIL/BRENCE

This course will offer an introduction to political philosophy by way of a detailed examination of prominent thinkers and concepts from the history of political philosophy. This term the course will be focused on the central theoretical tradition of modern political philosophy, namely 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. (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.

PHIL 311/HIST PHIL: MODERN/STAWARSKA

The purpose of this course is to examine the history of western philosophy in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and to introduce you to the work of several philosophers who have been particularly influential in the development of the western philosophical tradition. We will examine the work of these philosophers as responses, within European philosophy, to the discovery of the American continents. In order to understand more fully the nature of the response, we will also examine instances of the “non-western” philosophy of the people indigenous to the Americas. Work in this course will involve the practice of philosophical investigation through the activities of critical reading, writing projects, and regular discussions.

PHIL 335/MEDICAL ETHICS/CAPLAN

The COVID-19 pandemic, the overturning of *Roe v. Wade*, and controversies surrounding LGBTQ+ healthcare have brought ethical questions concerning healthcare to the forefront of our lives. Both in personal conversation and in online interaction, our social and political environment is deeply saturated with moral claims about autonomy, consent, dignity, and justice. Within this broader setting, this class investigates contemporary problems in the biomedical sciences from a philosophical perspective. In the first half of the term, we will draw upon traditional frameworks in applied ethics order to articulate the hidden premises, biases, and assumptions made within common moral arguments about personhood and personal autonomy. In applying the moral theories to biomedicine, we will look, in particular, at debates concerning medical paternalism, abortion, and euthanasia. Then, in the second half of the term, we will expand beyond the orthodox scope of bioethics to explore issues related to disability, discrimination, medical technology, and health communication. The course will conclude with each student developing an empirically-informed research paper on a relevant topic of their choosing.

PHIL 339/INTRO PHIL OF SCIENCE/NEAL

This course Examines theories of scientific practice, rationality, objectivity, values in science, and the role of science in society. Science is the leading source of knowledge in our times. Yet, humanities majors are often innocent of its methods

and content, and scientists are often unaware of how their facts are related to their theories, the nature of scientific truth and the question of whether they are studying the real world or an artifact of their practice.

PHIL 340/ENVIRONMENTAL PHILOS/WALDKOENIG

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.

PHIL 342/INTRO LATIN AMER PHIL/MARTINEZ VELASCO

This course is an introduction to Latin American philosophy. As such its aims are to give a firm ground in the history of Latin American philosophy; to introduce some of the crucial ideas, issues, problems and forms of thinking that occur in some of the most important periods, movements and figures in Latin American thought; to cultivate the ability to read this tradition in its own right, and to recognize its distinct and meaningful contributions to world philosophies. The course will involve close reading and analysis of texts, background lectures and class discussions. Some of the central issues broached in this class will be ethnic identity, border culture, race, exile, social justice, history, time, writing, memory, the relationship between poetry and philosophy, the configuration of Latin American Hispano American, and Afro-Hispanic-American identities, alternative temporalities, and the role diverse manners of discourse and experience may play in the configuration of philosophical ideas. The course will draw its material from the writings of philosophers, literary figures, essayists, political figures and indigenous chronicles.

PHIL 342 satisfies the criteria for Arts & Letters under General Education. The study of Latin American philosophy by the very nature of its subject, concepts, issues and

manner of inquiry promotes open inquiry from a variety of perspectives. Latin American philosophy concerns a history of diversity in the formation of its identities from its Indigenous-Afro-European beginnings. Moreover, the inquiry into the various modes of thought developed through this rich cross-pollination occurs as students do not only learn fundamental methods and concepts in philosophy, but specifically as they apply them through engaging in the analysis and interpretation of philosophical concepts in their distinct forms in Latin America.

PHIL 342 course will satisfy the Multicultural course criteria, Category IC (International Cultures). The course provides the basic background for understanding fundamental conceptual elements in Latin American thought, a tradition in its own right that has a long and complex history and in this sense, is an international offering bringing insight into conceptual and cultural elements outside the United States. At the same time, given this emphasis on the distinctness of Latin American philosophy, the course offers the chance to explore and understand concepts and issues that inform the relationship between Latin American thought and Western European and North American philosophers. As a history of thought in Latin America, the course also offers crucial insight into the Latino/Latina culture in the US in relation to Latin America. Finally, Latin American philosophy is marked by the question of its identity, a question inseparable from issues of race, colonialism and contemporary global discourses. Indeed, Latin American discourses of identity arise out of the encounter of Native, European and African traditions that give shape to transformative and new forms of culture and thought.

PHIL 343/CRITICAL THEORY/MARTINEZ VELASCO

Critical Theory will serve as a 300-level introduction to subfields in philosophy. Other courses of this types include environmental philosophy, philosophy of the arts, philosophy of film. Critical Theory is a subfield that engages the philosophical and methodological problems posed by the idea of immanent critique. If a theory of society is implicated in its object of study – society itself – how is it possible to comprehend the structures of social injustice and to unearth resources for their overcoming? Critical Theory thus examines the normative bases for analyses of society that aim at identifying, diagnosing and criticizing forms of injustice. The course will allow for systematic, historical and comparative work, given Critical Theory's continued engagement with American Pragmatism, 19th century Continental Philosophy, 20th century Analytic Philosophy, feminism, psychoanalysis, and the social sciences. The course may therefore serve as an advance introduction of philosophy and a general education course introducing students to the field, methods, and contemporary debates in social philosophy from a critical-theoretical perspective.

Critical Theory satisfies Social Science Group criteria in that it will examine key concepts and issues in social and political philosophy as they relate to the problem of immanent critique. The course will cover a representative cross-section of key issues, philosophical perspectives, and modes of analysis in the field by considering alternative perspectives to the methodological, epistemological, moral and political issues involved in specifying the idea of justice implicit in diagnosing and addressing forms of injustice. These perspectives will also be assessed in light of examples germane to the problem of immanent critique and debated within the field. Students who successfully complete the course will have an understanding of the philosophical challenges involved in a critical analysis of society; an understanding of recent theoretical developments in the field of critical social philosophy and theories of normativity; and advanced reading, writing and critical thinking skills.

PHIL 415/AMERICAN PHIL/VALLEGA-NEU

A distinctive feature in the development of Continental Philosophy in the United States concerns the performative aspect of thinking and language. Thinking and language are understood not as opposed to or distinct from a world, things in the world and ideas one would “objectively” describe or argue about, but as a way in which the world, things, and ideas eventuate. Of primary importance for this development is Heidegger’s thought of language, for which the engagement with poetry is essential. This course focuses on a close reading of three lectures Heidegger gave in 1957-58 with the title “The Essence of Language.” From there, we will branch out to other lectures and texts that help us understand the development of Heidegger’s thinking about language in relation to poetry as well as its legacy for continental philosophy.

PHIL 420/AMERICAN PHIL/MCKENNA

Survey of significant areas of the American tradition, e.g. 19th-, 20th-, and 21st-century thought, African and Native American thought, feminism, recent pragmatism, the self, and pluralism. Repeatable when topic changes.

PHIL 463/DEWEY/CISTERNINO

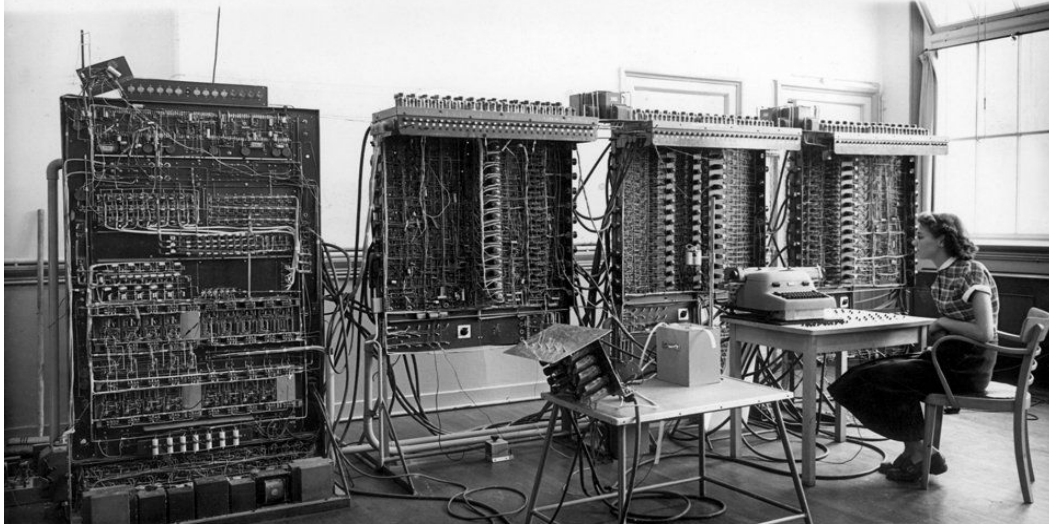
In his magnum opus *The Liberal Tradition in America* (1955), political scientist and historian Louis Hartz made the paradoxical claim that “it is not accidental that America which has uniquely lacked a feudal tradition has uniquely lacked also a socialist tradition.” Albeit biased and inaccurate, the idea that America has never been capable of a genuine socialist tradition due to its attachment to the basic tenets of the Lockean classical liberalism still characterizes the thought of conservatives and progressives alike. In order to challenge such a widespread

position, this advanced class in philosophy will look at one of John Dewey's most representative philosophical and political works: *Individualism old and New* (1930). Through a close reading of this book, students will be able to confront themselves with what constitutes the key to Dewey's political and social philosophy: the organic conception of the individual. This notion, which Dewey borrows from British thinker Thomas Hill Green, finds a perfect equivalent in R. W. Emerson, whose democratic individualism represents for Dewey the solution to the 1929 Wall Street economic crisis. The exploration of this and other complementary topics such as the critique of the American materialistic lifestyle and K. Marx's historical materialism will not only aid the comprehension of the peculiar character of Dewey's liberal socialism, but also, and, perhaps, more importantly, of the relevance that his liberal socialist views can still have today.

PHIL 471/571/ADV INTRO AMER PHIL/PRATT

This course is an introduction to American Philosophy broadly understood. Rather than a historical review, students will read and discuss a range of primary texts and their relation to the history of philosophy in North America. American philosophy is sometimes seen as a narrow field informed primarily by the so-called "classical pragmatists," C. S. Peirce, William James, and John Dewey, lately augmented by thinkers including Josiah Royce, Jane Addams, Mary Calkins, Mary Follett, W. E. B. Du Bois, Alain Locke and a few others. In contrast with the evolving "canonical" approach, this course takes up "strands" in the philosophical tradition that have emerged in geographical North America over the last century and can be characterized as philosophies of resistance. These American philosophies developed in resistance to ideas inherited from Europe that underlie social, political, and economic systems whose practices have led to oppression through immiseration, assimilation, exclusion, and genocide. Focal thinkers and texts to be engaged will include (selections from) John Dewey, *Art as Experience*; Josiah Royce, chapters on the conception of community; James Cone, *God of the Oppressed*; Gloria Anzaldúa, *Light in the Dark/Luz en lo oscuro*; Angela Davis, *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism*; James and Grace Lee Boggs, *Revolution and Evolution in the Twentieth Century*; and Nick Estes, *Red Nation Rising: From Bordertown Violence to Native Liberation*. This course satisfies the Philosophical Traditions Requirement for the Philosophy PhD and MA degrees.

PHIL 623/MTAPYSCS ALGRTHM ARTFC/ALVARADO



Understanding the materiality of powerful industrial machinery was key to a proper critique of its place and the understanding of its implications in the expansion of economic forces driving both the progress and inequities of the 19th century. Understanding the material practices of formal processing systems— in governance (technocracies), industry (management), or academia (big science)— has been key to successfully navigate or challenge their relentless role in the development of 20th century power.

Computational artifacts—such as algorithms, deep neural networks, large language models, recommender systems, search engines, computer simulations, and smart devices— have come to dominate the way in which we interact with our environment, with each other and even with ourselves. Furthermore, 21st century power structures now depend on the ubiquity of computational methods and devices as decisions in banks, universities and governments rely more and more on such artifacts to analyze, categorize, cluster, target, prioritize, or exclude groups of people. Computational components and resources such as chips, datasets, computer clusters and servers are now determinant factors in matters of national security and foreign policy from the largest to the smallest economies of our planet. Computational tools, however, are not exactly like other industrial-era technologies or like institutions. Rather these artifacts are epistemic machines with a less tangible materiality and domain of operation than an internal combustion engine. As such, their role in the many dimensions of our lives cannot be fully understood simply by looking at other technologies, or solely by relying on philosophical and sociological analyses of the technologies of other eras.

Hence, in this seminar we will explore the nature and properties of such devices from a philosophical perspective —i.e., metaphysics (what are computational artifacts?), epistemology (can we rely on such tools for knowledge?) and ethics (how are we to relate to such technology, and how ought we to use it to relate to one another?)— in order to best understand their role, their promise and their limitations for our century.