

# Expanded Course Descriptions-PHILOSOPHY

## Spring 2024

### **PHIL 101: Philosophical Problems (Montani) 35434**

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 (Burns) 33932**

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 (Alvarado) 35435**

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.

### **PHIL 104: Hist of West Phil (Vallega-Neu) 33933**

This course is an introduction to some currents, seminal thinkers, and texts of the Western philosophical tradition from the Ancient Greeks to Medieval Philosophy, Modern Philosophy, and 19th and 20th Century Philosophy. Student will gain insight into some major questions and developments in the Western history of philosophy. We will read mostly classical text but also text from women philosophers that in the past had been excluded from the canon. Among the Philosophers we will read are Plato, Aristotle, Epictetus, Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Descartes, Elisabeth of Bohemia, Cavendish, Conway, Hume, Kant, Hegel, Nietzsche, James, Heidegger and Beauvoir. We will read about topics such as how to live a "good" life, how we perceive and can know things, what time is, what truth is, the relation between mind and body, and the constitution of human subjectivity in relation to others and the world. Class time will consist in broader lectures on different epochs and currents in Western philosophy and closer readings of a few primary source texts. There will also be in-class exercises to learn basic skills in

reading and analyzing philosophical texts and responding to philosophical questions. This course fulfills the requirement for the UO Arts & Letters Core Education.

### **PHIL 110: Human Nature (Stawarska) 33936**

From a variety of viewpoints, this course takes up the question, 'what does it mean to be a human being, and who's asking, anyway?' Perspectives considered may include genetics, psychoanalysis, Euro-American philosophy (including feminism as well as Latin American thought). Problem areas include the nature of sexuality, racial identity, embodiment, intersubjectivity, and projects of personal meaning. Typical assignments include exams and short papers. Class time involves interactive lecturing and dedicated discussion sections.

### **PHIL 135: Ethical Life Science (Morar) 33944**

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.

### **PHIL 170: Love & Sex (McKenna) 33945**

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 220: Food Ethics (McKenna) 33957**

This is a class in ethics. It is not the role of ethical theory to give answers to particular problems, but to provide frameworks which challenge individuals to think critically and clearly about ethical issues and help them come to their own conclusions. Moral philosophy demands that one have reasons for moral decisions and explores possible principles one can apply in an attempt to arrive at a consistent and well thought out moral position. Most of the issues we face have no obvious or immediate answer, but much can be gained by struggling with what appears to be irresolvable.

This particular class has a focus on ethical issues related to food. Who and what we eat reflects, and has consequences for, who we are as individuals and as a society. This course will examine some of the ethical concerns related to the conditions of human and other animal beings involved in the production of food and help students arrive at their own considered opinions regarding these issues. Animal welfare and environmental issues will be a central focus. Some specific issues will include: the environmental impacts of farming, livestock welfare, food waste, food safety, and food justice. Students in this class

should bring their own questions and concerns about food to shape the reading and discussion. Some questions might include: Does it make sense to love dogs and eat pigs? If I am concerned about the environment, should I eat packaged food? Should I buy food from companies that don't pay a fair wage? How should we grow, harvest, transport, and prepare food? How much should we eat? Who is responsible for our food habits? Are choices about food simply personal choices, or are there ethical, social, and political implications we must take into account?

### **PHIL 225: Logic (Schiano) 33960**

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 299: Sp St Sports Ethics (Weiser) 35442**

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 309: Global Justice (Waldkoenig) 35443**

This course raises and examines philosophical questions of justice and society from an environmental angle, specifically focused on the discourses of ecojustice and climate ethics. As diverse people from particular social, historical, and geographical contexts, how should we face the warming of our home planet and widespread environmental destruction that imperils both human and nonhuman lives? What might a just society look like, and how can we put our vision of a better world into action? Since this is a course in philosophy, we will primarily be interested in conceptual critique and the generation of visions of a good world to guide our lives together. We will begin with an examination of how justice is defined, then tour some major debates in the philosophical literature on justice and environment, including: environmental intersections with gender, race, class, and geographical location; geoengineering as a means to achieving a just future; and responsibility beyond human society.

### **PHIL 312: Hist of Phil: 19C (Martinez Velasco) 33962**

This course focuses on the work of the three most influential philosophers of the late 18th and early 19th centuries, namely, Kant, Hegel, and Marx, and with an eye on the way in which each thinker theorizes the project of human freedom. With regard to Kant, his critique of metaphysics and his moral philosophy focus the lectures and assignments. With regard to Hegel, the central issue is his absolute idealism and the philosophy of history it inspires. Finally, Marx is considered in terms of his early confrontation with German Idealism. Typical assignments include short essays, a final, synthetic paper, and an in-class final that tests knowledge of key concepts. Class time involves interactive lecturing and dedicated discussion sections.

### **PHIL 323: Moral Theory (Lindgren) 35447**

In this class, we will take the basic questions of ethics, such as how to live a 'good' life, to a deeper level. How do we decide what makes a life or an action good in the first place? How are certain groups of

people included or excluded in this framework? And finally, what are the wider political ramifications to our individual moral or ethical principles? The course will engage in both classical and critical answers to these and many more questions about moral philosophy.

### **PHIL 332: Philosophy of Film (Brence) 33969**

Arguably now the predominant medium for the origination and communication of culture, film (along with associated media such as video and television) has nevertheless largely been ignored by philosophers. This course, however, will approach film as a form of thought more than adequately rich, subtle, and meaningful enough to inform and guide genuine philosophical reflection and inquiry. In it, particular films will be allowed to raise problems of wide human import, and to advance claims about, and perhaps propose solutions to, those issues. Those problems, claims, and proposed solutions will then be carefully examined, measured and evaluated. We will begin with an exploration of the particular medium that is film, rendering more accessible its unique ways of advancing meaning through the combined and controlled use of color, texture, sound, perspective, transitions, and time, as well as narrative content. As the course proceeds to the “development” of particular films, weekly film assignments will begin in week 2. Student work will consist of contributions to discussion on Canvas, short readings, written responses, and two essays written on films that students will develop independently.

### **PHIL 335: Medical Ethics (Ghosh) 35448**

From questions about the permissibility of human subjects research to the ongoing debate about health care, this course surveys some of the most important social questions of our time: *Is an embryo a person? How do our answers to this question inform our views about abortion? Or stem cell research? Is there any moral difference between active and passive euthanasia? Should we experiment on human beings and animals? Do we, as members of an advanced society, have a right to health care? Are there ethnic and racial disparities in the healthcare system in the United States?* In this class, you will develop a baseline knowledge about issues in biomedical ethics, and you will develop the tools to analyze and evaluate conflicting positions on complex moral issues. In this class, we are not merely interested in what certain people believe, but rather, whether the reasons they give for their beliefs are good ones. We will study the legal, moral, and philosophical debates surrounding emerging biomedical technologies, policies, and practices. The course begins with a brief introduction to philosophical methodology and then takes up applied and theoretical questions about abortion, autonomy, confidentiality, consent, research, enhancement, reproduction, euthanasia, and healthcare services in the United States.

MORE SPECIFICALLY

In addition to providing a survey of the standard positions defended by prominent figures, we will investigate some “critical perspectives” that challenge the ways that the mainstream debate frames these issues. These critical perspectives will be drawn from, among other areas, disability rights groups, critical philosophy of race, contemporary continental philosophy, and feminist philosophy. We will also discuss the wider ramifications of these problem areas, which often extend beyond the doctor-patient relationship into broader social and political issues.

### **PHIL 340: Environmental Philosophy (Muraca) 33974**

The idea of ‘nature’ is vague and obvious at the same time. Rooted in the Western tradition of thought, it seems unavoidable and problematic due to its colonial load. In this course we will follow the adventures of this idea, trace its history and contradictions, and explore alternative paths for environmentalism. Topics addressed in class include a critical analysis of wilderness and ‘wild nature’, natural capital, political ecology, ecofeminism, decolonial studies, and global

environmental justice. We will discuss and compare different models of relationship to 'nature' and discuss the different forms of environmentalism that stem from them.

This course meets the Core Education requirements of **Arts and Letters** and the Methods of Inquiry in **Written Communication** and **Critical Thinking**, as well as the **Global Perspective Requirement**. Through reading responses and the final project, you will not only improve your writing skill and demonstrate your understanding in written form, but also use relevant sources to sustain your arguments; the reading responses as well as the mid-term report on human-natural relationships will allow you to critically engage with the class material, identify and question assumptions and employ hermeneutical method to different media.

### **PHIL 399: Decolonial Phil (Gualdron Ramirez) 35451**

In this class, we will review contemporary approaches to social and political philosophy from a decolonial perspective. Unlike many of the ancient and modern Western approaches to political philosophy, focused on an abstract reflection on the kind of society that we could or should construct, we will base our analysis in studying the history of how our political present came to be what it is. In our particular present, this history is marked by the colonial construction of racial, gendered, and economic categories constituting and epistemic and political system that can be theorized as one of coloniality, still operating today.

We will deal with questions, such as: What does the construction of systems of oppression under coloniality say about the materiality of the political realms we inhabit? Does it point only to structures of oppression, or does it also involve practices and possibilities of resistance and liberation. Do we get to imagine new ways of being together, politically, by analyzing, for example, the history of the colonization of the Americas? Or does this analysis constitute a completely unforeseen (unforeseeable?) endeavor?

### **PHIL 410: Clinical Ethics (Morar) 35452**

Clinical ethics has emerged over the past few decades as a subfield of bioethics with the specific goal of addressing ethical questions that emerge directly in a hospital setting. While its more theoretical cousin, medical ethics, has always focused on finding ways to define a series of principles that should guide patient-doctor relations (autonomy, informed consent, etc.) or help us think through life and death situations (abortion, assisted suicide, etc.), clinical ethics is distinguished by strongly emphasizing clinical cases and their educational value for medical staff (future or present students, residents, physicians). The core focus of this course will be a selection of clinical issues that will enable students to both engage with ethical dilemmas in a hospital setting and also to experience how healthcare professionals deal with such challenges in their daily activities.

### **PHIL 421/521: Top Plato (Vallega) 35796/35797**

This is an advanced introduction to Plato's thought. The course will consist in learning to read Plato's dialogues. In doing so we will begin to engage the ways of thinking that Plato opens for us in his works in manners that will offer us new thresholds for philosophical thought. The Platonic dialogues are unlike any other philosophical text, and in their uniqueness, they offer ways to rethink philosophy's sense, its limits, and delimitations. Furthermore, with such turns the very way in which we encounter and articulate the cosmos, worlds, identities, intersubjectivity, and all senses of being are themselves put in question and open to transformation. We will focus on the *Phaedo*, and read from *The Republic*, and from the *Timaeus*. The course will consist in close reading of texts, with some lectures that situate them

historically, in terms of their reception, and conceptually. All lectures will be based on the original Greek texts, and, while reading in translation, students will be responsible for developing a basic Ancient Greek philosophical vocabulary as part of their course work.

### **PHIL 433/533: Descartes (Neal) 35453/35459**

The Scientific Revolution in the 16th and 17th centuries led to sweeping changes in both the description of the natural world and the methods through which individuals investigated the natural world. During this period, science and philosophy were largely indistinguishable, with individuals we now identify as philosophers offering new systematic ways of organizing the natural world. In this course, we will survey the development of natural philosophy and the “new science,” using Descartes’ mechanistic philosophy as our focal point. We will consider Descartes both as a philosopher and a natural philosopher, taking seriously his physics, epistemological methods, and philosophy of science. We will see how he developed his new philosophical system against the backdrop of the dominant Aristotelian worldview, and we will also look at various historical and contemporary responses to this new Cartesian project, including feminist critiques of Descartes and Cartesian philosophy.

### **PHIL 443: Top Fem Phil: Beauvoir (Mann) 35454**

*The Second Sex* is Beauvoir’s most important philosophical work, and the book often credited with being the intellectual spark of the international 2<sup>nd</sup> wave feminist movement. This course will focus on a close reading of the English translation of *Le Deuxième Sexe*, rather than a broad selection of philosophical writings. Particularly, we will consider Beauvoir as an early practitioner of feminist phenomenology. We will situate her work within the broader, emerging tradition of feminist phenomenology, paying particular attention to themes of time, space, affect and imagination. We will consider the difference between a phenomenology of sexual difference and a critical feminist phenomenology, and try to understand what sort of relation Beauvoir might have had to this distinction had she lived long enough to see it emerge. We will pay very close attention to *how* Beauvoir practices phenomenology, even as she doesn’t have much to say about it explicitly—our goal will be to come away with a clear understanding of the elements of her practice in order to reflect on and develop our own phenomenological practice.

### **PHIL 452: Philosophy and Race (Russell) 33983**

In this course, we will explore how various philosophers (and philosophically adjacent scholars) have taken up questions of race and racism with a focus on the US. The readings for this course have been chosen based on the idea that we are currently living through the United States’ third “racial reckoning” (where Reconstruction is understood as the first and the Civil Rights Era as the second). The focus will therefore be primarily on anti-Black racism and resistance, rather than race and racism more broadly conceived, though students are welcome to take up questions beyond the “black-white binary” in their individual research. I hope that this class will help students to consider and analyze the current moment, which we might expect to be described in the future as the Black Lives Matter Era.

### **PHIL 453/553: Top Hegel (Martinez Velasco) 33984/33989**

We will concentrate on one of Hegel’s principal works: *The Phenomenology of the Spirit*. This work, in many ways, is a good representative of philosophy written in the 19th century. We will review the context and a brief introduction to the author. Also, we will understand the main structure of the book (main sections: consciousness, self-consciousness, reason, and

spirit). Finally, special attention will be given to the subtitles: sensible certainty, force and understanding, lordship-bondage, stoicism, skepticism, and unhappy consciousness and spirit.

### **PHIL 472/572: Adv Intro Analy Phil (Alvarado) 35455**

In this course you will learn about the conceptual history and philosophical significance of numerous developments in the tradition of analytic philosophy. Analytic philosophy offers a unique perspective on a wide range of philosophical topics from epistemology and metaphysics to ethics and metaethics. This course will focus primarily, although not exclusively, on the core areas of analytic philosophy as it developed across the twentieth century and continues to develop today. These core areas include the philosophy of language (focused on such issues as meaning, truth, and references), epistemology (focused on questions of how we know and how we justify our knowledge), and metaphysics (focused on such notions as necessity and causation as well as the very viability of metaphysics). In addition to readings focused on central debates in these core areas of analytic philosophy, this course will attempt to convey some of the primary commitments and values that underlie much of analytic of philosophy (including such values as clarity, rigor, and truth).

### **PHIL 610: Decolonial Phil (Gualdron Ramirez) 35457**

In this class, we will review contemporary approaches to social and political philosophy from a decolonial perspective. Unlike many of the ancient and modern Western approaches to political philosophy, focused on an abstract reflection on the kind of society that we could or should construct, we will base our analysis in studying the history of how our political present came to be what it is. In our particular present, this history is marked by the colonial construction of racial, gendered, and economic categories constituting and epistemic and political system that can be theorized as one of coloniality, still operating today. In that sense, the goal of our semester is to review varied attempts at theorizing not only the construction of coloniality, with a particular focus on the present, but also the possible responses to this system both in terms of resistance and construction of new worlds. We will read very different approaches that we can group under the categories of Black, Indigenous, and Latinx, that permanently intersect, and refuse a clear delimitation and exclusion of each other.

We will deal with questions, such as: What does the construction of systems of oppression under coloniality say about the materiality of the political realms we inhabit? Does it point only to structures of oppression, or does it also involve practices and possibilities of resistance and liberation. Do we get to imagine new ways of being together, politically, by analyzing, for example, the history of the colonization of the Americas? Or does this analysis constitute a completely unforeseen (unforeseeable?) endeavor?