

Department of Philosophy

Undergraduate Course Descriptions

Spring 2018

PHI 101 Introduction to Philosophy

Francesco Franda

MWF 9:00AM - 9:50 AM

Class #22255

Examines general topics in various areas of philosophy showing different sides of issues; develops critical thought and philosophical method.

PHI 101 Introduction to Philosophy — A World Philosophy

Associate Professor J.M. Lawler

T, R 11:00 AM - 12:20 PM

Class #13612

The course will provide a general description of the basic philosophies of different major civilizations evolving in world history. The background to the development of world philosophies will first be presented to serve by way of contrast and condition to distinctly philosophical development. Philosophies provide general meanings to human life in reflective form with rational justifications, rather than in the form of religion with its appeal to emotion and its dependence on authority and tradition. The first worldviews that evolve into philosophical worldviews are the early religions of the world, beginning with the animistic outlook of hunter-gatherers in which human beings understand themselves in a spiritual/emotional connection with the surrounding natural world. The major philosophies of India and China, the philosophies of the East, provide philosophical reflective meanings that are continuous with this animistic background, while the philosophies of the West, beginning with Greek philosophy, break from such animistic unity with the surrounding world.

After providing this general framework, the course first examines the major philosophical concepts of India, China, and Greece in the context of distinctive characteristics of these three civilizations, so as to show the connection between their philosophical orientations and these historically specific characteristics. The course then examines the development of philosophy in Western Europe in the context of the rise of modern science—as both a development and transformation of ancient Greek philosophy under the impulse of the new sciences. The resulting “Enlightenment” philosophies of the early modern Western period of the 17 and 18 century is then criticized by Kant and 19 century Continental philosophers, resulting in historically relative concepts of reason (Hegel and Marx) as well as anti-rational philosophies appealing to religion (Kierkegaard) or power (Nietzsche).

The course concludes with an examination of 20 century Western philosophy as a continuation of the conflict between the empirical/analytical orientation of early modern philosophy prominent in Great Britain and the United States and the critical, synthetic philosophies of Continental Europe.

PHI 105 Contemporary Moral Problems
Visiting Assistant Professor Devlin Russell
MWF 10:00 AM - 10:50 AM
Class #20946

This course will engage some of the most pressing ethical issues of our time: privacy, narcissism, sexuality, reproductive rights, oppression, war and terror, euthanasia and health care, and our environment. Our aim will be to use philosophical theory to help develop real solutions for what seem to be insurmountable problems.

PHI 105 Contemporary Moral Problems
Michael Moran
T, R 12:30 PM - 1:50 PM
Class #24827

This course will philosophically examine contentious moral issues of the day. Among the topics that may be discussed are abortion, capital punishment, affirmative action, obligations of wealthy nations to poor nations, duties to non-human animals, vegetarianism, sex workers, pornography, legalized gambling and lotteries, gun control, drone warfare, human enhancements through drugs and prostheses, homosexual marriage, racial profiling, and legalization of currently illegal drugs.

PHI 107 Introduction to Ethics
Assistant Professor Nicholas Bommarito
T, R 9:30 AM - 10:50 AM
Class #17894

Don't cheat. Don't lie. Help others. Parents and teachers go on and on about what's right and what's wrong, but what makes something the right thing to do? What makes someone a good person? This course will examine a range of different philosophical theories that attempt to explain these issues. In addition to reading and discussing classic works, both ancient and modern, students will understand the central concepts in a variety of moral theories and how they apply to real life.

PHI 115 Critical Thinking**Angela Menditto**

MWF 11:00 AM – 11:50 AM

Class #19452

This course will focus upon developing students' critical thinking skills through careful analysis, reasoned inference, and thoughtful evaluation of contemporary culture and ideas. Students will learn how to clarify ideas, analyze arguments, and evaluate inductive, deductive, comparative, ideological, and empirical reasoning.

PHI 217 Professional Ethics**Assistant Professor Lewis Powell**

MWF 10:00 AM - 10:50 AM

Class #23785

There is a big difference between simply having a job and being a professional. With some jobs, when you leave work at the end of the day, you're done with work until you clock in the next morning. Professions are different. They blur the line between your work life and your personal life. Professionals are afforded additional respect and prestige in society. Perhaps most importantly, professionals are trusted as experts in their respective fields.

Being a professional means being in a position of authority. And there are good and bad ways to use one's professional power and authority. The other courses you take along the way to becoming a professional are designed to give you expertise in mechanical engineering, or procedures of civil law, or the techniques of nursing (and so on). This course is designed to get you thinking about how you should use that expertise. What special responsibilities do you take on, in virtue of becoming a professional?

PHI 234 Environmental Ethics**Visiting Assistant Professor Devlin Russell**

MWF 1:00 PM - 1:50 PM

Class #:18131

How should we, as a society, live with our environment? Is it wrong for us to be a meat-eating society? Is it wrong for Americans to consume natural resources at the rate we do? How does the threat of climate change bear on our present behavior? In this course, we will use philosophical theory to think hard about the answers to these questions.

PHI 237LEC HOV, Medical Ethics: Social & Ethical Values in Medicine

Professor David Hershenov

MWF 11:00-11:50 AM

Class #: 23244

The course is designed both to provide moral guidance to future medical professionals as well to enable citizens to develop informed and reasonable positions on the most important bioethical issues of the day. Students will become familiar with the leading arguments on both sides of the following contemporary bioethical controversies: abortion, euthanasia, physician-assisted suicide, organ transplants, human cloning, commercial surrogate motherhood, advanced directives, informed consent, and the definition and criterion of death.

The readings are chosen to provide opposing positions. Each topic covered will have a second author arguing against the position defended in the first reading, usually commenting on the very author and essay just read. Even if students don't switch sides on an issue due to the course readings, lectures and discussions, the hope is that they will not only be able to give a stronger defense of their own positions but will also come to better appreciate the considerations that favor the opposing side. This might play a small role in making public debate more civil and reasonable.

The methodologies employed in the class should make students more aware of their own values, perhaps revealing to them commitments of which they were previously unaware. Students will learn how to construct philosophical arguments and critically read philosophy essays. All the required reading will be made available through the library electronic course reserve.

PHI 237 P13-LEC Medical Ethics: Social & Ethical Values in Medicine

Shane Hemmer

MWF 10:00 AM – 10:50AM

Class #: 21025

Examines current ethical positions and their application to ethical and social questions in medicine.

PHI 237 P14-LEC Medical Ethics: Social & Ethical Values in Medicine

Joshua Merlo

TTH 9:30 AM – 10:50AM

Class #: 21027

Examines current ethical positions and their application to ethical and social questions in medicine.

PHI 237 PFE-LEC Medical Ethics: Social & Ethical Values in Medicine

Andrew Pfeuffer

Online

Class #: 21026

In this course, we will consider a variety of ethical issues that arise in the biomedical field. You will be introduced to some of the major ethical frameworks within moral philosophy (e.g. utilitarianism, deontology) as well as the basic method and tools of philosophical analysis. We will survey examples of applications of these frameworks to various bioethical issues. You will develop the skills needed to read, discuss, and write about philosophical issues within bioethics. You will practice applying the tools of philosophical analysis in order to (i) recognize the ethical frameworks being applied to various bioethical issues, (ii) identify arguments presented in the readings and assignments, (iii) discuss your own critical evaluations of the arguments, and (iv) construct and defend your own evaluations and arguments about these issues in writing. The main goal is to get you to become better, more careful thinkers, both in general and about bioethical questions in particular. Not only will you become familiar with a number of different views surrounding ethical issues in medicine, you will also have the opportunity to further develop your own view on these important issues.

PHI 237 PAR-LEC Medical Ethics: Social & Ethical Values in Medicine

Harjeet Parmar

Online

Class #: 10972

This course encompasses the following learning outcomes:

- Understanding the nature and value of autonomy and informed consent in medical decisions
- Understanding how the leading theories of our worth and dignity influence life and death issues
- Understanding Kantian arguments about moral duties towards oneself & their bearing on suicide
- Understanding conflicts between one's right to control one's body & duties to save another's life
- Understanding theories about the authority of advanced directives for treating the incompetent
- Understanding the moral issues involved with increasing the supply of transplantable organs
- Understanding the standard objections raised to cloning, commercial surrogacy and enhancements
- Understanding the methodology of philosophical arguments
- Developing the ability to critically read a philosophy text

- Developing the ability to write a critical philosophy paper

PHI 240LEC HOV, Philosophy of Medicine

Professor David Hershenov

MWF 1:00 PM-1:50 PM

Class #: 23857

This course will investigate some very influential conceptions of health and disease and then apply the theories to some major controversies in medicine. We will first explore some of the leading conceptions of health and disease. Many of these arose in response to the anti-psychiatry movement that emerged in the 1960s, so we will begin with a paper representative of the latter group. Then we will examine leading naturalist, normativist, and hybrid accounts of disease. The naturalist offers a value-free analysis of health and disease, relying upon the biological notions of function and dysfunction. Dysfunction will be sufficient for disease. The normativist will argue that diseases must harm individuals and that the society's values will determine what is harmful. Hybrid theorists claim part dysfunction is merely a necessary but not sufficient condition for someone to be unhealthy. What is also required for disease is that the individual be harmed by the dysfunction.

After obtaining some clarity about the competing philosophical conceptions of health and disease, we will bring such theoretical treatments to bear upon current controversies in medicine. We will consider whether medicine is essentially pathocentric and doctors should refrain from using their medical knowledge to promote other goals like enhancements, euthanasia, judicial executions, and military interrogations etc. We will explore whether mental health practitioners are failing to distinguish diseases from "problems of living" and consequently are medicating healthy people. We will further pursue this question with a study of whether "normal" grief is to be viewed as a pathological condition like a wound or is a properly functioning process of healing. Then we will tackle the controversial issue whether the disabled should be cured or rather the focus should be on altering an "ableist" society that makes their mere disability into a harmful condition. A somewhat related issue is whether children born with sexual organs of both sexes should they be surgically altered to remove their ambiguous sexuality or should medicine and the broader society change its attitudes to them? We next will examine whether health is the key condition to our being autonomous. Then we will explore the issue of whether the addicted are diseased and so not responsible for their conduct. We will end with a discussion of whether aging is a healthy normal stage or a pathological loss of abilities.

PHI 246LEC Philosophy in Literature

Associate Professor Maureen Donnelly

TTH 9:30 AM – 10:50AM

Class #: 23859

Literary works often deal with philosophical issues such as how we should live, what counts as a good life, and whether (and to what extent) we are free to direct our own lives. In this class, we will consider these sorts of philosophical issues through both philosophical and literary works. Our readings will include selections from, among others, Aristotle, Sophocles, Boethius, Henry David Thoreau, Henry James, and Jean-Paul Sartre. Grades will be based on short written assignments, class presentations, exams, and one longer paper.

PHI 301LEC, Writing Philosophy (CL2)

Associate Professor Neil Williams

MWF 10:00 AM-10:50 AM

Class #: 23861

Topic: Philosophy of Colour

This course is a writing-intensive undergraduate seminar-style course designed to provide detailed guidance in the construction of philosophical essays. Developing this skill is of central importance to anyone interested in serious work in philosophy, but is useful for anyone in disciplines or trades that seek written work with clearly articulated argumentative structure. We will work through all the parts of the philosophical essay, from the title to the bibliography, in discrete sections, before combining them in complete essays. This will take us through the full process of developing a paper, from research to presentation, and onto final revisions. Final papers will be prepared for blind review, with an eye to submission to an undergraduate journal of philosophy. The final paper will be uploaded to your eportfolio. This course satisfies the Communication Literacy 2 (CL2) requirement.

Students will be expected to submit a series of weekly shorter writing assignments to help students focus and refine their writing skills en route to the construction of a 3000 word critical essay. Students will present written work in class regularly, and will give a major presentation of their 3000 word essays.

The content for the writing seminar will vary from year to year, with the major focus being writing instruction. Nevertheless, one has to write about something. This year that something will be the philosophy of colour: We experience the world as having a wonderful array of bright colours, but is the world outside of our experience actually coloured? Most physicists say no. This raises a host of questions: Where do our experiences of colour come from? Are those experiences in any way veridical? To what, if anything, do our colour terms refer? Where do our colour categories come from? Is green as I experience it the same as when you do? Where is colour?

Philosophical investigations into the nature of colour intersect a wide range of philosophical sub-disciplines, including: mind, language, epistemology, metaphysics, and aesthetics. We will start with a brief look at early modern discussions of colour, before shifting to the contemporary literature.

PHI 335LEC Contemporary Ethical Theory

Assistant Professor Alexandra King

TTH 11:00 AM – 12:20 PM

Class #: 20134

This course will familiarize students with contemporary (20th century to the present) ethical theories and debates. We will examine in detail the four major normative ethical theories: utilitarianism/consequentialism, deontology, virtue ethics, and ethics of care. Students will be assumed to have at least a passing familiarity with the basic elements of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, Mill's *Utilitarianism*, and Kant's *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*. A previous course in introductory or applied ethics should be sufficient preparation.

PHI 356LEC Special Topics: Buddhist Philosophy

Assistant Professor Nicholas Bommarito

TTH 12:30 PM – 1:50 PM

Class #: 23862

Siddhārtha Gautama, the historical Buddha, claimed to have discovered the key to eliminating suffering. Suffering, he thought, arises because our most basic experiences of the world are mistaken. In the thousands of years that followed, his philosophical and psychological insights have been developed by thinkers around the world. This course will present an introduction to the basic philosophical positions of Buddhist philosophy and their development.

PHI 388LEC 20th Century Philosophy

Associate Professor J.M. Lawler

T, R 2:00 PM - 3:20 PM

Class #24048

The history of 20th century philosophy is divided along geographic lines, with Continental Europe on one side, and Great Britain and its colonial offspring, especially the United States, on the other. This course will consider exemplary figures from each side of this divide, based on short articles that explore the relationships between seemingly unlikely pairs. Carnap's early critique of Heidegger brings into perspective the origins of 20th century thought in 19th century precedents, August Comte and Friedrich Nietzsche. Daniel Dennett argues for a phenomenology distinct from that of Edmund Husserl. Considering seemingly opposite positions of Quine and Heidegger on the role of logic in science brings out surprising compatibilities. Opposition to John Searle's defense of the correspondence theory of truth finds agreement on both sides of the divide on the part of Michel Foucault and Donald Davidson. But apparent

compatibilities between Davidson and Hans Gadamer on the interpretation of texts can conceal the recognition of deeper differences. And there is the issue of the evolution of analytic philosophy itself, with the phenomenon of “postanalytical” thinkers such as Richard Rorty and earlier, perhaps, Ludwig Wittgenstein. Through detailed comparisons of exemplary figures the perception of an unbridgeable gulf between two opposing modes of philosophizing will be challenged even as the general outlines of the two orientations are constructively elaborated.

PHI 417 Modal Logic

Associate Professor T. E. Bittner

Monday 1:00 PM – 3:50 PM

Class #22454

Studies logical systems designed to express concepts of necessity and possibility. Develops semantic accounts employing systems of possible worlds. Examines philosophical topics and problems related to necessity and possibility.

PHI 489 SEM Topics in Ethics: Metaethics

Assistant Professor A. R. King

Thursday 1:00-3:50 PM

Class # 23863

This course will serve as a primer to the major contemporary metaethical theories. We will examine questions about the objectivity and metaphysical status of morality, how it motivates us, how we know about it, and how moral language works. We will pay special attention to the ways in which these different considerations intertwine, and why an answer to one of these questions often forces answers to others. As background, it is recommended that students have some familiarity with (in rough order of importance) philosophy of language, metaphysics, philosophy of mind, and/or epistemology.