

DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

Course Descriptions

Summer 2009

FIRST SESSION (May 18-June 26)

107J1 Ethics MTWRF 9:40a.m. Smith

This course is an introductory course in ethics. Ethics is a branch of philosophy which is sometimes called moral philosophy. An objective of ethics might ask what is good or bad or right or wrong. Is there an objective “right” or an objective “wrong”? In this course we will explore several ethical theories which will include ethical relativism, egoism, utilitarianism, deontological theory, natural law and virtue ethics. As well, we will study ethical issues such as euthanasia, abortion, discrimination, environmental ethics, animal rights and terrorism. No previous experience in philosophy is presumed. Course requirements will consist of class attendance and participation, tests and a short paper.

115J2 Critical Thinking MTWRF 11:20a.m. Taylor

Students will learn the basic techniques of reasoning. They will be taught how to deconstruct, reconstruct, evaluate, attack, and defend their own arguments and the arguments of others (a basic survival skill for university students, business people, philosophers, and human beings in general). They will learn to avoid the most common fallacies, as these are the pitfalls of poor reasoning that beset the true path to contentment and knowledge. No previous knowledge of philosophy, logic, or reasoning will be required (or presumed). The text for the course will be Munson, R., & Black, A. *The Elements of Reasoning*, fifth edition. Plus readings (which will be handed out).

337J3 Social & Ethical Values in Medicine TR 6:30p.m. Hershenov

The course is designed to both provide moral guidance to future doctors and nurses and to enable students as 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 contemporary bioethical controversies such as informed consent, advanced directives, abortion, physician-assisted suicide and euthanasia, the definition and criterion of death, organ transplants, human cloning, embryonic stem cell research, commercial surrogate motherhood and biological enhancements. 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 basic 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. Grades will be determined by scores on three tests, participation and attendance.

THIRD SESSION (June 29-August 7)

101M2 Intro to Philosophy TR 6:30p.m. Yu

This course will introduce students to some of the main branches of philosophy through examining a number of key and traditional philosophical problems associated with each of these area. To list some of them: What is philosophy? How can we know anything? What is Real? Does God exist? Who am I? Does science explain everything? Do we have free will? What ought we do? What do 'right' and 'wrong' mean? What is the meaning of life?, and many others. In addition to the Western traditions, the course will also introduce several major non-Western philosophical schools, including Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism.

Readings will be assigned from the work of great philosophers who have made various significant responses to these and other problems. The focus will be on the arguments for and against every concept and idea discussed. By following the development of a philosophical position, students are encouraged to critically assess the position for themselves. The course is intended to train and develop the analytical capacities of the students.

Philosophy is not just about how to think clearly. It is about how to live. All the issues discussed are behind how we should lead our lives. The course is also aimed to provide the students with a framework to examine the basis on which one's life should get along.

215M3 Intro to Deductive Logic MTWRF 11:20a.m. Jensen

Logic as a practice and as a field of study is not easy to define. It permeates many aspects of human endeavor including philosophy, psychology and mathematics. A commonly accepted definition is that logic is the study of reasoning or argumentation. This is an introductory course to the principles of logic. No prerequisites are required or assumed. We will introduce and formalize the notions of an argument, validity, soundness and deduction. A primary focus will be the formal representation of arguments, their analysis and deductive technique. Content will include, but not be limited to, Aristotelian syllogisms, categorical and propositional statements, fallacies, the squares of opposition, symbolic transcription, various diagrammatic techniques like truth tables and Venn diagrams, and the deductions themselves! The best way to learn about logic is to go ahead and do some. Time permitting, discussion may include a brief survey of alternate logics, the historical development of logic, heaps, sorties, or LSAT preparation. Ideally student involvement and interest will stimulate which extra material will be covered.

The student can expect to leave the course with an understanding of basic logical concepts and analysis, the ability to symbolize and analyze arguments, determine validity and soundness, and most importantly, improved reasoning and critical thinking skills. In addition to developing a strong background in elementary logical techniques, analysis and basic proofing skills, the student should be reasonably confident in their preparation for advanced courses in predicate, symbolic or first order logic.

Grading will be based on two midterm exams, homework and class participation. No final.

337M Social & Ethical Values in Medicine MTWRF 9:40a.m. Spencer

This course will introduce students to basic ethical principles and to the ways that these principles are applied to major problems in contemporary medical ethics. This course is intended for students who do not have a background in philosophy but need or want a knowledge of issues

in medical ethics. We will begin with a survey of important contemporary ethical theories. We will then consider ethical principles, which are important for bioethics, such as informed consent and beneficence. Next, we will apply these principle and theories to specific ethical issues. These will include but are not limited to the following: abortion, stem cell research, commercial surrogacy, euthanasia, death and dying, and organ procurement. We will examine opposing positions on each of these issues.

Upon completion of this course students should have a basic understanding of important ethical principles and issues, and an ability to consider and understand the various positions on medical issues. All readings will be found on the library course reserve.