

**DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY
UNDERGRADUATE COURSE DESCRIPTIONS**

Spring Semester January 28 - May 10, 2019

PHI 101 LAW, Introduction to Philosophy – A World-Historical Perspective

Dr. James Lawler

T Th, 11:00 AM – 12:20 PM

Class #: 13343

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 17th and 18th centuries are then criticized by Kant and 19th 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 20th 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 101 PH1, Introduction to Philosophy

Botan Dolun

M W F, 9:00 AM – 9:50 AM

Class #: 20718

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

PHI 105 PH2, Contemporary Moral Problems

Michael Moran

T Th, 9:30 AM – 10:50 AM

Class #: 19777

Are sweatshops exploitative, or the best means we have of lifting people out of poverty? Do we even owe moral consideration to people who are far away from us? Are there limits to what should be sold in the market? Are there limits to our rights to free speech? Is pornography harmful? In a world of increasing diversity, what obligations do we have to overcome our own biases about others? Is accommodating the moral and religious beliefs of others an infringement of the free exercise of our own beliefs? In this course, we will investigate these and other questions, with the goal of understanding how we fit into an increasingly complex moral environment. We will explore these contemporary challenges using not just our life experiences, but drawing on the tools that moral philosophy provides. This course will expose you to methods of reasoning that can help you decide how to respond to a wide array of contemporary moral challenges.

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 105 PH3, Contemporary Moral Problems

Francesco Franda

M W F, 1:00 PM – 1:50 PM

Class #: 23789

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 DON, Introduction to Ethics**Dr. Maureen Donnelly**

M W F, 11:00 AM – 11:50 AM

Class #: 23792

Introduces value theory, good and bad, justification of obligations to others, relationship of free choice and determinism, and contemporary moral problems analyzed by ethical principles.

Nearly everyone assumes that some human actions are morally good (or at least morally permissible), while other actions are morally wrong. However, there is often considerable disagreement over the moral worth of particular actions. The primary purpose of this class is to examine different principles which have been advocated for distinguishing between morally acceptable and morally unacceptable actions. Special attention will be paid to principles which are based on substantial philosophical arguments and which purport to be independent of specific cultural practices. We will also consider: i) the extent of a person's responsibility for his or her actions and ii) what reasons can be given for choosing good actions and refraining from bad actions. Students should expect regular readings from historical and contemporary sources. Grades are based on written homework, regular class participation, and examinations. No prior background in philosophy is required for this course.

PHI 115 BIT, Critical Thinking**Dr. Thomas Bittner**

T Th, 9:30 AM – 10:50 AM

Class #: 18506

Examines techniques of problem solving, decision making, and evaluating pros and cons of an issue; organizing data; forming strategies and giving reasons; perceptual, cultural, emotional, intellectual, and expressive blocks to thinking; and simple inductive reasoning and statistical fallacies.

PHI 198 BEE, UB Seminar – Science and Religion**Dr. James Beebe**

Th, 2:00 PM – 2:50 PM

Class #: 23814

In this course we will examine different views about the relationship between science and religion. Some religious believers argue that existing scientific evidence supports their perspective, while others say that science undermines religion. Still others claim that science and religion exist in separate spheres and thus neither support nor disconfirm one another. Students will gain experience in constructing and evaluating arguments for and against controversial positions.

The one credit UB Transfer Seminar is focused on a big idea or challenging issue to engage students with questions of significance in a field of study and, ultimately, to connect their studies with issues of consequences in the wider world. Essential to the UB Curriculum, the Seminar helps students with common learning outcomes focused on fundamental expectations for critical thinking, ethical reasoning, and oral communication, and learning at a university, all within topic focused subject matter. The Seminars provide students with an early connection to UB faculty and the undergraduate experience at a comprehensive, research university.

PHI 217 PH4, Professional Ethics

Michael Moran

M W F, 2:00 PM – 2:50 PM

Class #: 21872

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 PH5, Environmental Ethics

Michael Moran

T Th, 11:00 AM – 12:20 PM

Class #: 17294

Examination of how humans should interact with the environment, both as individuals and as members of groups or organizations. 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 237 PFE, Medical Ethics: Social & Ethical Values in Medicine

Andrew Pfeuffer

ONLINE

Class #: 19831

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

Notes: This course is conducted entirely online, including any exams the course might include. This course is the same as SSC 237, and course repeat rules will apply. Students should consult with their major department regarding any restrictions on their degree requirements.

No recitation is required for this section. 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 PH6, Medical Ethics: Social & Ethical Values in Medicine

Jake Monaghan

ONLINE

Class #: 10857

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

Notes: This course is conducted entirely online, including any exams the course might include. At no time will this course require students to be present on campus. This course is the same as SSC 237, and course repeat rules will apply. Students should consult with their major department regarding any restrictions on their degree requirements.

No recitation is required for this section. 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 PH8, Medical Ethics: Social & Ethical Values in Medicine

Uriah Burke

T Th, 8:00 AM – 9:20 AM

Class #: 19830

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

PHI 237 PH9, Medical Ethics: Social & Ethical Values in Medicine

Joshua Merlo

M W F, 8:00 AM – 8:50 AM

Class #: 19832

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

PHI 240 HOV, Philosophy of Medicine: Theory and Practice

Dr. David Hershenov

T Th, 2:00 PM – 3:20 PM

Class #: 21933

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 of whether the disabled should be cured or if 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 be surgically altered to remove their ambiguous sexuality or should medicine and the broader society change its attitudes towards 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 252 BOM, Eastern Philosophy

Dr. Nicolas Bommarito

T Th, 2:00 PM – 3:20 PM

Class #: 23815

This course will introduce students to a range of philosophical texts and concepts from Asia. Students will become familiar with the context, central ideas, and classic works from different traditions throughout Asia. We will cover key figures and texts from Hinduism, Confucianism, Taoism, Jainism, Buddhism, and more.

PHI 301 KNG, Writing Philosophy

Dr. Alexandra King

T Th, 12:30 PM – 1:50 PM

Class #: 21937

Topic: Bernard Williams

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 on to 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 philosophical thought of twentieth-century philosopher Bernard Williams. We will read his monograph *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy* in full, as well as many of his papers across value theory. Williams was interested in a wide variety of different issues from across moral philosophy, both historical and non-historical. His approach is sensitive to subjectivity and the human condition, but he also aims to defend a view relating these to morality and other external demands. His work has been incredibly influential, and provides a good model for students interested in combining abstract philosophical theorizing with value as we experience it in our everyday lives.

PHI 333 BEE, Epistemology

Dr. James Beebe

T Th, 12:30 PM – 1:50 PM

Class #: 23816

This course will look at contemporary debates about the nature of knowledge, evidence, and rationally justified belief. Considers epistemology: The nature, sources, kind, scope, and certainty and validity of knowledge.

Pre-Requisite: One prior PHI course.

PHI 335 KNG, Contemporary Ethical Theory

Dr. Alexandra King

T Th, 9:30 AM – 10:50 AM

Class #: 19110

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.

Pre-Requisite: One prior PHI course.

PHI 338 MCA, Law and Morality

Stephen McAndrew

M W F, 10:00 AM – 10:50 AM

Class #: 23817

This course explores the moral status of legality and the legal status of morality, the status of unjust laws, and the role of moral judgments of lawmakers. Is the good law one that does good? Martin Luther King, Jr. wrote, in a *Letter from a Birmingham Jail*, that “a just law is a man-made code that squares with the moral law or the law of God. An unjust law is a code that is out of harmony with the moral law.” However, many have rejected this claim that laws must be based on moral principles, and instead hold that laws are the written rules (e.g., statutes, regulations, and judicial decisions) made by governmental bodies with the authority to such rules. This course will explore this debate and other issues concerning the relation between law and morality.

Pre-Requisite: One prior PHI course.

PHI 342 MUL, Political Philosophy

Dr. Ryan Muldoon

M W F, 11:00 AM – 11:50 AM

Class #: 23818

What is Justice? Is it something we have reason to want? Are rights real things, or did we just make them up? When is the state allowed to coerce us? Why have a state at all? If we have one, how do we justify it? This course will explore modern political philosophy, with a focus on the justification and legitimate purpose of the state, and how the basic structure of society influences how we engage with each other as citizens. To explore these issues, we will look at the development of the Social Contract tradition, and responses to it. This course starts by examining the earliest hint of social contract theory, first raised by Glaucon in Plato's *Republic*. This will begin our discussion of justice, and what kind of thing it is. After that, we will jump ahead in history to look at what is in many ways the most important book ever written in political philosophy, Hobbes' *Leviathan*. Much of the rest of the course is an attempt to respond to Hobbes. The two main responses to Hobbes in the Modern era were from Locke and Rousseau, each going in quite different directions. We will see that David Hume in many ways ended the social contract tradition with a powerful critique, while Rawls famously brought it back to life in the 20th century. Rawls has since come to dominate the landscape in political philosophy – much of the work in political philosophy for the past 40 years has been a response to him. We will close the course by considering several contemporary critiques of this approach. The course surveys political theories in a systematic or historical way.

PHI 356 BOM, Special Topics: Buddhist Philosophy

Dr. Nicolas Bommarito

T Th, 11:00 AM – 12:20 PM

Class #: 21938

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. The course critically considers a selected philosophical issue.

Undergraduate Tutorial Sections:

PHI 498 Philosophy Undergraduate Tutorials

PHI 499 Philosophy Undergraduate Tutorials

Meeting days and times as arranged with professors.