

**Fall 2016**  
**Department of Philosophy**  
**Undergraduate Course Descriptions**

[http://www.buffalo.edu/cas/philosophy/undergrad-study/ug-courses/fall\\_ug.html](http://www.buffalo.edu/cas/philosophy/undergrad-study/ug-courses/fall_ug.html)

**PHI 101 Introduction to Philosophy**

Professor David Braun  
MWF 10:00 - 10:50  
Class #20283

This course will provide an introduction to philosophy by discussing three of its central topics: the problem of free will and determinism, the mind-body problem, and the existence and nature of God. Among the questions we will ask are the following: Do human beings have free will? Is free will compatible with scientific law? Are human beings purely physical things? Could a purely physical thing have thoughts and experiences? Do human beings have souls? Is it possible for a human being to survive death? Does God exist? Are there good arguments for the existence of God? Is the existence of evil compatible with the existence of God? We will formulate several views on each of our three topics, and consider arguments for and against each view we formulate. Our goals will be to understand these views and evaluate the arguments for and against them. No pre-requisites. Required work: Three exams and one paper.

**PHI 101 Introduction to Philosophy**

Graduate Teaching Instructor, Shane Hemmer  
T TH 11:00 - 12:20  
Class #17942

Philosophy is a broad field of inquiry, encompassing questions about the nature of the world around us, our own natures, our values, and how we should live our lives. In this course, we will look to historical and contemporary writings on a variety of issues, which may include debates in ethics, free will, the existence of God, and the nature of mind. Among the questions we may address are these: Do human beings have free will? Is free will compatible with scientific law? Are there general rules for determining whether an action is morally right or wrong? Are human beings purely physical things? Can purely physical things think? Do human beings have souls that can survive the deaths of their bodies? What is the difference between knowledge and mere opinion? What can we know and what can we not know? Does God exist? Is the existence of God compatible with the existence of evil? Students will read classic and modern works on these topics, or similar ones, and develop skills for engaging with them.

## **PHI 101 Introduction to Philosophy**

Graduate Teaching Instructor, Uriah Burke

MWF 11:00 - 11:50

Class #24730

This is an introductory philosophy course with a compact and yet expansive design. Instead of the frequently adopted, but seldom fully exploited textbooks averaging 600 pages, we have chosen a text with only 130 pages, but packing content that is literally “global”: *John Dewey, Confucius and Global Philosophy*, by Joseph Grange (2004). We will also use several handouts that make up a short collection of the instructor’s own most recent writings.

The choice of the two names, Dewey and Confucius, is symbolic of today’s global philosophical situation. It is in terms of actual working connection, of living necessity for dialogues between classical Asian culture and modern Western thinking, that the issues of “global philosophy” can be condensed into Dewey and Confucius. Dewey was a typical American philosopher who was most open to the world, lecturing in Beijing for two years, but also thoroughly at home in Kant’s “Critique”, and capable of transcribing Hegelian speculative dialectic into American common sense jargon, as when he said: “Breathing is as much an affair of lung, as it is an affair of the air”, and “Walking is as much an affair of the feet, as it is an affair of the earth.”

## **PHI 105 Contemporary Moral Problems**

Professor Ryan Muldoon

T TH 9:30 - 10:50

Class #22727

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.

## **PHI 107 Introduction to Ethics**

Professor Nicolas Bommarito  
MWF 11:00 - 11:50  
Class #19696

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 answer these questions. 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 107 Introduction to Ethics**

Professor Maureen Donnelly  
T TH 9:30 - 10:50  
Class #22444

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 107 Introduction to Ethics**

Graduate Teaching Instructor, Ariane Nomikos  
T TH 12:30 - 1:50  
Class # 22738

*Course description forthcoming*

## **PHI 115 Critical Thinking**

Professor James Beebe  
T TH 12:30 - 1:50  
Class #19904

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 115 Critical Thinking

Professor Thomas Bittner  
MWF 2:00 - 3:00  
Class #24035

Thinking *well*, i.e., *critically*, is a skill that every student needs to acquire for “[c]ritical thinking is the ability to think clearly and rationally. It includes the ability to engage in reflective and independent thinking” (<http://philosophy.hku.hk/think/critical/ct.php>). Logic plays an important role in critical thinking and acquiring skills in logical analysis and correct reasoning are mandatory.

*Logic*, very generally speaking, is the theory of correct reasoning. Typically it is directed at evaluating reasoning expressed in written arguments. *Deductive* logic concerns itself with those forms of reasoning such that if some thoughts (“premises”) are certain, necessary or can be known, then other thoughts reasoned from them (“conclusions”) are also certain, necessary, or can be known.

PHI 115 is an introduction the basic concepts of deductive logic, especially the concepts of *argument* and *validity*. We will also examine some of the techniques that have been advanced for assessing the quality of arguments, including Aristotle’s theory of the syllogism and various techniques that use diagrams.

## PHI 162 Law, Authority, and Morality

Professor Ryan Muldoon  
T TH 2:00 - 3:30  
Class #22728

What is the law? Why does it have authority over us? What relationship does the law have with morality? These are timeless questions, and we will look at them through a contemporary lens. This course will be divided into three parts. In the first part of the course, we will survey the philosophical literature on the authority of the law, and its sources of political and moral justification. We will learn about why we have the law, and how it is meant to structure the relations between citizens and state.

In the second section, we will explore what happens when the law is out of step with prevailing social norms. For instance, if nobody else follows the law, should you? What really commands our loyalty? Are laws legitimate if no one pays attention to them? In the final part of the course, we will explore what happens when the law is used for illegitimate ends. We will focus on cases of racially discriminatory laws and discriminatory enforcement of otherwise neutral laws. We will look at such issues as laws governing housing, civil asset forfeiture, and stop and frisk. We will also pay particular attention to the events that sparked the Black Lives Matter movement to see what philosophical lessons we can draw. The goals for this course are to connect the abstract ideals of the authority of the law with the lived reality that we see around us.

## **PHI 199 Risk: Responding Rationally and Ethically to Life's Uncertainties**

Professor James Beebe  
T TH 2:00 - 3:20  
Class #24038

This course will introduce students to the most important contemporary ideas about how we should rationally and ethically respond to risky situations. These ideas are drawn from a variety of disciplines, including philosophy, psychology, economics, and the law. We will ask what it means to be rational, whether being rational and being moral ever conflict and how we should respond if they do, when it is and is not rational to enter into cooperative agreements with others, how we should treat people who fail to honor cooperative agreements, and how we should prepare (if at all) for events that have a very low probability of occurring but would be disastrous if they ever did occur. Students will be introduced to the basic ideas of probability theory, decision theory, game theory, and the ethics of risk.

## **PHI 199 Living Well**

Professor Nicolas Bommarito  
MWF 1:00 - 1:50  
Class #24036

This course explores the question of what it means to live well and some of the obstacles to living well from a philosophical point of view. Students will become familiar with classic ideas of philosophers like Aristotle and Zhuangzi, but also more contemporary work. We will examine issues relevant to becoming a university student like procrastination and note-taking from a practical point of view with an eye to solving common obstacles to living well. We will also critically examine the underlying concepts. For example, considering how procrastination relates to theories of rationality and the ideas of memory and originality that are involved in academic writing.

## **PHI 199 Philosophy in Literature**

Professor Maureen Donnelly  
T TH 11:00 - 12:20  
Class # 24040

Literary works often deal with important philosophical issues. For example, many narratives are structured around underlying ethical distinctions between good and bad actions or between good and bad character traits. In addition, many narratives raise questions about human nature or the structure of the world in which we live and act. The purpose of this class is to consider how a general philosophical issue might be investigated through a work of literature. We will read both philosophy texts and literary texts, using the philosophy texts first for a basis understanding of a particular issues and then comparing the treatment of that philosophical issue in a selection of literary works. We focus initially on questions of human freedom. What does it mean for human beings to be free to direct their lives and choose to commit, or refrain from committing, particular actions? Is the world structured in a way that allows for human freedom? Is freedom a requirement for moral responsibility? The second half

of the course focuses on ethical issues. What sorts of actions are morally permissible? What sorts of actions are morally impermissible? What sorts of habits or personality traits characterize morally virtuous people? What sorts of habits or personality traits characterize morally degenerate people? How, generally, should we live? What are the attributes of a good life? Particular philosophical texts used in the course include selections from Aristotle, Epictetus, Boethius, Kant, and Bentham. Literary readings include works of Sophocles, Henry James, David Thoreau, and Benjamin Franklin.

## **PHI 199 Pop Culture and Philosophy: Morality, Reality, and the Meaning of Life**

Professor James Lawler  
MWF 1:00 - 1:50  
Class #24039

Contemporary television programs and films often involve the same issues, questions and probing reflections that philosophers have explored since the time of Plato: How do we know what is a morally right action? How do we know whether something is real, or only a dream or illusion? Is there more to reality than what we can experience with our senses? Do individuals have a purpose or destiny as a result of external conditions or forces, or is this a matter for individuals themselves to decide?

Bringing together pop culture and philosophy is beneficial to both sides. Stories told with skill and imagination in popular culture provide compelling illustrations of ideas treated abstractly and systematically by philosophers. Connecting popular culture with the concepts developed by philosophers makes the concepts seem less abstract, more real. At the same time, by showing the presence of profound conceptual content in the works of pop culture, we will take these works more seriously—as more than mere entertainment. Often, the best of pop culture provides explorations that take philosophical ideas to unexpected levels, and so provide fresh stimulus for deeper philosophical reflection. Bringing together some of the most prominent works in contemporary popular culture with relevant classical texts from the history of philosophy is both entertaining and intellectually fruitful.

The course will examine episodes from the TV series, *The Simpsons* and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, as well as the films, *Crimes and Misdemeanors*, *The Matrix*, and *Avatar*.

Course text: James Lawler, *The God Tube: The Hidden Spiritual Message in Pop Culture* (Chicago: Open Court Publishers, 2010).

## **PHI 215 Symbolic Logic**

Professor John Kearns  
T TH 9:30 - 10:50  
Class #19400

### ***PHI 215 Recitation/Discussion Groups - (See HUB)***

In the West, Aristotle invented logic as a subject matter, or field of study. For more than 2000 years, Aristotle's logic was about all there was. In the second half of the nineteenth century, a German philosopher and mathematician, Gottlob Frege, reinvented logic. Modern logic dates from that period. In the modern period, logic quickly became an active field of research, which it continues to be. Logic is now important for philosophy, mathematics, computer science, cognitive science, and ontology, among other fields. It is a valuable resource for scholars working in those areas, and its further development promises to provide new understanding of many subjects and issues.

In this course, we develop logical theories investigating the two fundamental languages of modern logic, the propositional language whose logical expressions are symbolic connectives, and the quantificational language of first-order logic with identity. In developing each theory, we will consider the truth conditions of sentences in the language, we will learn how to understand and to make statements employing the logical expressions in the language, and will devise techniques for determining when statements are logically true, when statements imply other statements, and when statements are incompatible. For the propositional language, these techniques involve truth-tables. For each theory, we will set up a deductive system for constructing arguments and proofs which employ sentences of the logical language, and will gain proficiency in constructing such arguments.

This course is a suitable introduction to more advanced studies in logic, but the primary goal for most students taking the course is to improve the ability to recognize, evaluate, and carry out reasoning that is deductively correct.

## **PHI 217 Professional Ethics**

Professor Lewis Powell  
MWF 10:00 - 10:50  
Class #24050

### ***PHI 217 Recitation/Discussion Groups - (See HUB)***

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 237 Medical Ethics: Social & Ethical Values in Medicine**

Graduate Teaching Instructor, Andrew Pfeuffer  
MWF 10:00 - 10:50  
Class #19288

This course will deal with contemporary moral controversies in medical ethics. Students will examine the rights of patients and the responsibilities of health care providers in dealing with conflicts that arise in medical settings. Many of these issues will involve decisions about creating, enhancing and ending human lives. Students will become familiar with the nature of moral arguments and the type of reasoning that is required to understand and resolve the moral issues that arise in the practice of medicine.

### **PHI 237 Medical Ethics: Social & Ethical Values in Medicine**

Graduate Teaching Instructor, Jon Houston  
MWF 10:00 - 10:50  
Class #19625

This course will deal with contemporary moral controversies in medical ethics. Students will examine the rights of patients and the responsibilities of health care providers in dealing with conflicts that arise in medical settings. Many of these issues will involve decisions about creating, enhancing and ending human lives. Students will become familiar with the nature of moral arguments and the type of reasoning that is required to understand and resolve the moral issues that arise in the practice of medicine.

### **PHI 237 Medical Ethics: Social & Ethical Values in Medicine**

Graduate Teaching Instructor, Stephen McAndrew  
MWF 11:00 - 11:50  
Class #19697

This course will deal with contemporary moral controversies in medical ethics. Students will examine the rights of patients and the responsibilities of health care providers in dealing with conflicts that arise in medical settings. Many of these issues will involve decisions about creating, enhancing and ending human lives. Students will become familiar with the nature of moral arguments and the type of reasoning that is required to understand and resolve the moral issues that arise in the practice of medicine.

### **PHI 237 Medical Ethics: Social & Ethical Values in Medicine**

Graduate Teaching Instructor, Jake Monaghan  
T TH 11:00 - 12:20  
Class #24060

This course will deal with contemporary moral controversies in medical ethics. Students will examine the rights of patients and the responsibilities of health care providers in dealing with conflicts that arise in medical settings. Many of these issues will involve decisions about creating, enhancing and ending human lives. Students will become familiar with the nature of moral arguments and the type of reasoning that is required to understand and resolve the moral issues that arise in the practice of medicine.

### **PHI 237 Medical Ethics: Social & Ethical Values in Medicine**

Graduate Teaching Instructor, Brian Donohue  
MWF 9:00 - 9:50  
Class #24061

This course will deal with contemporary moral controversies in medical ethics. Students will examine the rights of patients and the responsibilities of health care providers in dealing with conflicts that arise in medical settings. Many of these issues will involve decisions about creating, enhancing and ending human lives. Students will become familiar with the nature of moral arguments and the type of reasoning that is required to understand and resolve the moral issues that arise in the practice of medicine.

### **PHI 237 Medical Ethics: Social & Ethical Values in Medicine**

Graduate Teaching Instructor, Clint Dowland  
MWF 11:00 - 11:50  
Class #24062

This course will deal with contemporary moral controversies in medical ethics. Students will examine the rights of patients and the responsibilities of health care providers in dealing with conflicts that arise in medical settings. Many of these issues will involve decisions about creating, enhancing and ending human lives. Students will become familiar with the nature of moral arguments and the type of reasoning that is required to understand and resolve the moral issues that arise in the practice of medicine.

## **PHI 260 Ancient Philosophy**

Professor Jiyuan Yu  
T TH 3:30 - 4:50  
Class #22509

This course will cover the development of Greek philosophy from Pre-Socratics, Plato, Aristotle, to the Hellenistic period, focusing on the issues of happiness and virtue. Students are expected to learn and understand the basic assumptions, methods, terminologies, and doctrines of Greek philosophy that have so deeply shaped Western culture. Course sessions will combine lectures, presentations, and in-class discussions.

Textbook: *Introductory Readings in Ancient Greek and Roman Philosophy*, eds. by Reeve and Miller (Hackett, 2006)

## **PHI 328 Philosophy of Language**

Professor David Braun  
MWF 12:00 - 12:50  
Class #24052

Words and sentences in English and other languages are meaningful. So, words and sentences have meanings. But what are meanings? Are meanings entities of some sort? Are they physical objects? Mental objects? Abstract objects? What are the meanings of such words as 'Barack Obama', 'dog', 'red', 'run', 'and', and 'the'? How are meaning, reference, truth, thought, and communication related? And how do words and sentences get their meanings and referents? We will begin this course by considering several theories about the nature of meaning and reference. We will then consider the use of language in communication and other speech acts. We will end with applications of philosophy of language to law, ethics, and metaphor. Pre-requisite: One prior course in philosophy, preferably in analytic philosophy. I will use some symbolic logic, which I will explain as fully as possible in the time we have, but you may find this course easier if you have taken a course in symbolic logic. Required work: There will (tentatively) be two exams and two papers of roughly five pages each.

## **PHI 329 Metaphysics**

Graduate Teaching Instructor, David Limbaugh  
MWF 1:00 - 1:50  
Class #22510

Metaphysics is concerned with the most fundamental categories of existence. These include events, particulars, properties, persons, facts, and so on. The best way to approach metaphysics is through the consideration of certain problems; as one begins to think about how best to solve these problems, the connections between the many metaphysical problems become clear. Our aim in the course is to consider answers to, and methodologies employed in answering, the question: what is there? With that in mind, this course will pay close attention to five major metaphysical issues (universals;

particulars; time; causation; persistence) but in so doing we are likely to touch on most of the topics that fall within the range of metaphysics. Students are required to have taken at least one previous philosophy course to register. Given the content of the course, more than one previous course is highly recommended.

### **PHI 345 Aesthetics**

Professor Alexandra King  
MWF 11:00 - 11:50  
Class #24053

What is a work of art? Does it matter if “a five-year-old could draw that”? Is aesthetic judgment all just a matter of taste? We’ll explore questions like these, both abstractly and in terms of different artistic media. We’ll also look at different particular media: traditional forms like painting and music, as well as applied and popular arts, including architecture, design, food, and comics. This multimedia course will draw readings from both philosophers and artists themselves, as well as incorporate listening’s and viewings.

### **Undergraduate Tutorial Sections**

PHI 401 Philosophy Honors Tutorials

PHI 499 Philosophy Undergraduate Tutorials

Meeting days and times as arranged with professors.

[See HUB Registration site](#) for Individual Course Sections with Philosophy faculty.

[Contact the UB Registrar for policy and registration requirements.](#)

[UB PHILOSOPHY COURSE ARCHIVE: Our Course Archive contains a listing of courses that have been offered in recent years.](#)

*Updated 06/08/16 - TM.*