

**DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY  
UNDERGRADUATE COURSE DESCRIPTIONS**

**Fall Semester August 27 - December 7, 2018**

**PHI 101 POW, Introduction to Philosophy**

**Dr. Lewis M. Powell**

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

Class #: 18671

Philosophy is a broad field of inquiry, encompassing questions about the nature of the world around us, our own natures, our values, and about how we should live our lives. In this course, we will look to historical and contemporary writings on a vast array of issues, including debates in ethics, free will, metaphysics, and epistemology. Our inquiry will span from the extremely practical to the extremely abstract, and students will develop philosophical skills for engaging with these debates.

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

**PHI 101 TA1, Introduction to Philosophy**

**Francesco Franda**

M W F, 11:00 AM – 11:50 AM

Class #: 21865

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

**PHI 105 MUL, Contemporary Moral Problems**

**Dr. Ryan Muldoon**

T TH, 9:30 AM – 10:50 AM

Class #: 20250

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 PHI, Contemporary Moral Problems**

**Michael Moran**

M W F, 8:00 AM – 8:50 AM

Class #: 24236

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 STA, Introduction to Ethics**

**Jacob Monaghan**

M W F, 2:00 PM – 2:50 PM

Class #: 24841

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.

### **PHI 107 DON, Introduction to Ethics**

**Dr. Maureen Donnelly**

T TH, 11:00 AM – 12:20 PM

Class #: 20121

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 TA2, Critical Thinking**

**Angela Menditto**

M W F, 10:00 AM - 10:50 AM

Class #: 21869

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 162 MUL, Law, Authority, and Morality**

**Dr. Ryan Muldoon**

T TH, 2:00 PM – 3:20 PM

Class #: 20251

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 BEE, UB Seminar - Science and Religion**

**Dr. James Beebe**

M W F, 9:00 AM - 9:50 AM

Class #: 23648

In this course we will examine a variety of questions 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. In addition to examining some of these broad theories about the relationship between science and religion, we will look at the following specific areas of science and ask what (if anything) they tell us about core religious beliefs: Big Bang cosmology, scientific theories of the origins of life, evolutionary theory, and the psychological study of religion. Students will gain experience in constructing and evaluating arguments for and against controversial positions.

The three credit UB 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 consequence 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. This course is equivalent to any 199 offered in any subject. This course is a controlled enrollment (impacted) course. Students who have previously attempted the course and received a grade of F or R may not be able to repeat the course during the fall or spring semester.

## **PHI 199 DON, UB Seminar - Philosophy In Literature**

**Dr. Maureen Donnelly**

T TH, 9:30 AM - 10:50 AM

Class #: 20923

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 basic understanding of a particular issue 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.

Prerequisites: Students who have already successfully completed the first year seminar course may not repeat this course. If you have any questions regarding enrollment for this course, please contact your academic advisor.

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### **PHI 199 LAW, UB Seminar - Morality, Reality, and the Meaning of TV**

**Dr. James Lawler**

M W F, 11:00 AM - 11:50 AM

Class #: 20922

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, in recognizing 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.

Prerequisites: Students who have already successfully completed the first year seminar course may not repeat this course. If you have any questions regarding enrollment for this course, please contact your academic advisor.

The three credit UB 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 consequence 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. This course is equivalent to any 199 offered in any subject. This course is a controlled enrollment (impacted) course. Students who have previously attempted the course and received a grade of F or R may not be able to repeat the course during the fall or spring semester.

### **PHI 215 BIT, Symbolic Logic**

**Dr. Thomas Bittner**

M W F, 12:00 PM - 12:50 PM

Class #: 17990

This course will be dedicated to learning symbolic techniques for evaluating the validity of arguments. We will formulate a symbolic language and learn to translate ordinary English sentences into it. We will then apply precise formal techniques for determining whether the symbolic versions of these arguments are valid.

Introduces the formal techniques of deductive reasoning.

Note: Students must register in PHI 215 to get this section.

Chained Courses: Students must register in one of the classes below to get the above section:

PHI 215LR R1 REC

PHI 215LR R2 REC

### **PHI 215 R1, Symbolic Logic**

**Dr. Thomas Bittner**

W, 11:00 AM - 11:50 AM

Class #: 21258

Introduces the formal techniques of deductive reasoning.

Note: Registering in the above section will automatically place you in the following class: PHI 215LR BIT LEC

**PHI 215 R2, Symbolic Logic**

**Dr. Thomas Bittner**

M, 1:00 PM - 1:50 PM

Class #: 21259

Introduces the formal techniques of deductive reasoning.

Note: Registering in this section will automatically place you in PHI 215LR BIT LEC.

**PHI 234 PHI, Environmental Ethics**

**Michael Moran**

T TH, 12:30 PM – 1:50 PM

Class #: 24237

Examination of how humans should interact with the environment, both as individuals and as members of groups or organizations.

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

**Dr. David Hershenov**

M W F, 11:00 AM - 11:50 AM

Class #: 21891

The course is designed both to provide moral guidance to future medical professionals as well as 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 STA, Medical Ethics: Social & Ethical Values in Medicine**

**Joshua Merlo**

M W F, 9:00 AM – 9:50 AM

Class #: 24825

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

**PHI 237 TA5, Medical Ethics: Social & Ethical Values in Medicine**

**Andrew Pfeuffer**

ONLINE

Class #: 23835

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.

**PHI 237 TA6, Medical Ethics: Social & Ethical Values in Medicine**

**Jonathan Vajda**

ONLINE

Class #: 23836

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

Note: 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.



## **PHI 237 TA7, Medical Ethics: Social & Ethical Values in Medicine**

**Shane Hemmer**

M W F, 8:00 AM - 9:20 AM

Class #: 24235

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

## **PHI 248 LAW, Philosophy and Pop Culture**

**Dr. James M. Lawler**

M W F, 2:00 PM - 2:50 PM

Class #: 23935

Study of philosophical issues, ideas and questions presented or raised by fiction, plays, music and other components of popular culture.

Contemporary television programs and films, as well as popular novels, often contain the same issues, questions and probing reflections that philosophers have explored since the time of Plato. On the one hand, stories that are told with skill and imagination in popular culture provide compelling illustrations of ideas treated abstractly by philosophers. Connecting the scenarios found in contemporary culture with the concepts developed by philosophers helps philosophy to make concepts more real and students to take them more seriously. But sometimes the themes developed in popular culture go beyond illustration of previously developed ideas and provide explorations that take philosophical thought to unexpected levels, and so providing fresh stimulus for deeper philosophical reflection. In either case, bringing together some of the most prominent works in contemporary popular culture with relevant classical texts of the history of philosophy is both entertaining and intellectually fruitful.

The course will discuss *The Simpsons*, *The Matrix Trilogy*, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, Woody Allen's *Crimes and Misdemeanors*, *Star Wars*, Mel Gibson's film, *The Passion of the Christ*, and Dan Brown's, *The Da Vinci Code*. Classical writings to be discussed: Plato, canonical and gnostic Gospels, Kant, and Hegel.

## **PHI 321 WIL, Philosophy of Science**

**Dr. Neil E. Williams**

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

Class #: 23936

This course is intended as an introduction and consideration of some of the philosophical issues that arise in the natural sciences (these are primarily issues concerning the epistemology and metaphysics of science). We will cover some selection of the following philosophical topics:

Demarcation: What is the difference between science and non-science? What makes it the case that the theories of one are scientific and the other are not?

Medicine: Is medicine a science? How does evidence in medicine differ from that of physics or biology?

Race and Gender: Do race and gender figure into the biological sciences? Can there be a science of race or gender?

Explanation: What do we do when we seek to provide scientific explanations? Do explanations have to be true to explain?

Theories and Confirmation: Scientists provide theories about the world around us: what is the nature of those theories? Can scientific theories be proven true? How rigorous must testing be for us to accept scientific theories? What do we do if two theories are equally supported by the scientific evidence?

Scientific Realism: What is the ontological status of entities posited by our best theories? What attitude should we take to those posited entities? Do advancements in science get us closer to truth?

Laws of Nature: What is the nature of the laws of nature? Can the laws of nature change, or are they fixed? Do the laws of nature govern? Are the laws of nature exceptionless?

Students are expected to have either a background in the physical sciences or have taken at least one previous philosophy course; both are desirable but not required. This course should be of great interest to anyone engaged in the physical or social sciences and associated fields as well as students of philosophy.

Examines the nature of theories in the sciences and the philosophical issues associated with them, explores causation, explanation, and induction.

## **PHI 328 BRA, Philosophy of Language**

**Dr. David Braun**

M W F, 10:00 AM - 10:50 AM

Class #: 23937

Words and sentences in English and other languages are meaningful. So, it seems that 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? How do words and sentences get their meanings and referents? How do we use words to mean things that our words do not mean, and how do our hearers understand what we do mean? Why do some pairs of words, such as 'feces' and 'shit,' differ in their social acceptability? Why are some words so offensive that we hesitate even to quote people who use them? 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 special topics, such as language in the law, metaphor, and bad language.

Pre-requisite: One prior course in 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. Tentative required work: two online quizzes, two exams, and three papers of three to four pages each.

### **PHI 345 KNG, Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art**

**Dr. Alexandra King**

M W F, 11:00 AM - 11:50 AM

Class #: 20929

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 listenings and viewings.

Considers artistic creativity and expression, beauty and the sublime, and the role of art in society.

### **PHI 360 TA1, Ancient Philosophy**

**Michael Moran**

M W F, 2:00 PM - 2:50 PM

Class #: 20147

Reviews the history of Greek philosophy from Pre-Socratic philosophers to the Hellenistics.

### **PHI 370 POW, Early Modern Philosophy**

**Dr. Louis M. Powell**

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

Class# 21897

Reviews the history of metaphysics and epistemology from the Renaissance to Kant.

We're all familiar with the claim that 'appearances can be deceiving,' or that 'things aren't always what they seem.' And we've all had experiences that exemplify those claims as well; we glance quickly from a distance and wind up mistaking a stranger for a close friend, or we get confused by an optical illusion. Since we make our judgments about the way things *are* on the basis of the way things *seem*, it makes sense to ask ourselves how we can tell the cases where appearances are deceiving from the cases where they are not.

What is reality like, and how can we figure that out from the way things seem or appear to be? This question was a major concern for philosophers in the early modern period, and in this course, we will study some of the most important/influential attempts to answer it

offered by leading scholars of the day. We will also see how their answers to these questions relate to their views on freedom of the will, ethics, and personal identity.

Undergraduate Tutorial Sections:

PHI 401 Philosophy Honors Tutorials

PHI 498 Philosophy Undergraduate Tutorials

PHI 499 Philosophy Undergraduate Tutorials

*Meeting days and times as arranged with professors.*