

DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY  
GRADUATE COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

Spring Semester January 28 - May 10, 2019

[PHI 578 Kant's Ethics & Aesthetics](#)

Professor James Lawler

Tuesday, 1:00 PM – 3:40 PM

Class #: 23819

Kant's ethics occupy a central place in his three critiques. The first critique prepares the metaphysical space for the second. If deterministic science is true of reality, then morality, with its crucial assumption of free will, is an illusion. So it was necessary for Kant "to deny knowledge, in order to make room for faith" as he says in the Preface to the Critique of Pure Reason. Since knowledge is limited to appearances, although we cannot *know* that we have free will, we can still *believe* that our will is free. Kant's faith-related moral philosophy therefore occupies this metaphysical space opened up by the critique of scientific knowledge. It is important to keep in mind this perspective in considering what Kant says about morality. To focus exclusively on the role of reason in Kant's ethics is to miss the significance of this initial framework, with its critique of knowledge and its grounding of a moral faith.

Moreover, it is not enough to understand what is morally right; it is necessary to *realize* one's moral duties, the culminating ideal for which is the creation of a just society, what Kant calls "the highest good." Kant's third critique, the Critique of Judgment, develops a teleological conception that complements the mechanism of science but is open to incorporating the perspectives of morality. In this perspective of the realization of the moral ideals, both Kant's aesthetics and his historical and political essays provide essential components for the understanding of morality.

The second critique therefore makes complete sense only within the frameworks provided by the first and the third critiques. In the light of the system of three critiques, the course focuses primarily on Kant's small but intricate work, the *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*. Lectures and supplied reading materials will provide sufficient information regarding Kant's three critiques and relevant essays.

In addition to regular attendance and participation in lecture discussions, a final 15-20 page paper, incorporating both research in Kant scholarship and the essential ideas of the course, will be required.

### **PHI 596 Graduate Dissertation Seminar**

Professor James Beebe

Wednesday, 4:00 PM – 6:40 PM

Class #: 20765

This course is a required course for all philosophy graduate students who have completed their coursework and are now either preparing a thesis topical or writing thesis chapters. Students may enroll more than once, and are encouraged to do so, but if space is limited (14 max.) priority will be given to students who have recently defended or are working on Topicals, typically in their 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> year of grad studies. The aim is to help students complete their dissertations in a more timely manner, and achieve greater success with career placement through practical skills training.

Offered once each year, this course is a writing intensive course with a central presentation component. Course content is entirely dictated by the dissertation topics students are engaged in – students will be presenting original work in preparation for thesis prospectus or dissertation chapters. All students will get exposure to the issues covered by their peers, and gain useful presentation skills and practice. Students will be instructed in how to improve their presentation skills, and will receive oral and written feedback from their peers and the instructor. The number and format of presentations given by students will depend on the enrollment in the course, but typically involves at least two presentations of one's own work, as well as presenting comments on another student's work.

The course will be graded Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory (S/U).

### **PHI 604 Teaching Philosophy**

Professor David Braun

Monday, 1:00 PM – 3:40 PM

Class #: 18494

This will be a course in philosophical pedagogy. We will meet for one hour a week. Required work may include preparation of syllabi and assignment, practice lectures, and similar exercises intended to prepare students to teach their own courses in philosophy. This course is open only to matriculated graduate students in philosophy.

### **PHI 634 Time, Tense, and Temporal Perspective**

Professor Maureen Donnelly

Wednesday, 1:00 PM – 3:40 PM

Class #: 22045

In this class, we will focus on the debate in the philosophy of time between detensers (or, B theorists) and tensors (or, A theorists.) Very roughly, tensors hold that times/events have objective *changing* 'A properties' (pastness, nowness, futurity) which can be captured only by tensed claims like 'It is (now) October, 2018,' or 'Elizabeth Warren will be elected president of the United States.' Detensers deny this, holding in that all objective facts about temporal position reduce to *unchanging* ordering relations between events or between events and times.

We will spend part of the semester looking at some influential arguments for and against tensed or tenseless theories of time. In particular, we will look at McTaggart's early argument for the incoherency of changing A properties, along with contemporary assessments or reconstructions of McTaggart's argument. We will also look at Prior's 'Thank goodness that's over' argument for A properties along with more recent developments of and responses to it. But the main focus of the class will be on getting a feel for what different versions of tensed or tenseless theories might look like-what, in particular, they might say about how the world is structured.

### **PHI 634 Natural Kinds**

Professor Neil Williams

Thursday, 1:00 PM – 3:40 PM

Class #: 23805

In this course we will consider issues concerning natural kinds as they arise in the natural sciences (biology, chemistry, and medical science), with focused interest in questions of realism versus anti-realism, monism versus pluralism, and the competing accounts of natural kinds. Central among our concerns will be the importance of natural kinds to scientific theory and the ontological status of kinds.

So just what is a natural kind? Our theories of the world carve it up into various groups; that is, we split the contents of the world into various kinds of things and, we generalize about these kinds. We speak of neutrons, gold, water, tigers and people, and these groupings strike us as clearly natural. But what is it for such a division to be natural; and how-if at all-does the grouping's being natural matter to scientific theory? It might be suggested that the groups capture objective distinctions in nature: but how can we be sure that the kinds we speak of capture genuine divisions in nature and are not merely the product of our own interests? And does it matter if it turns out that they are? If there are such things as natural kinds, what makes things the member of one kind rather than another? These questions and others will be considered as we study various philosophical questions of natural kinds.

### **Individual Tutorial Course Sections**

See [HUB Registration site](#) for Individual Tutorial Course Sections with Philosophy Department Faculty, to be arranged with permission of instructor:

PHI 599 Graduate Tutorial

PHI 605 Supervised Teaching

PHI 702 MA Thesis Guidance Tutorials (Arranged with Professor)

PHI 704 Dissertation Guidance Tutorials (Arranged with Professor)