

**DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY
UNDERGRADUATE COURSE DESCRIPTIONS**

Spring Semester January 27 - May 9, 2020

PHI 101 PH1 Introduction to Philosophy

Athanasios Spiliotakaras
M W F, 9:00 AM – 9:50 AM
Class #: 19996

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

PHI 101 PH2 Introduction to Philosophy

Joshua Merlo
T Th, 9:30 AM – 10:50 AM
Class #: 24058

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

PHI 101 PH3 Introduction to Philosophy

Jonathan Vajda
ONLINE
Class #: 24927

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

Dr. Duane Long
T Th, 11:00 AM – 12:20 PM
Class #: 19221

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 #: 22279

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 #: 18092

Thinking *well*, i.e., *critically*, is a skill that every student needs to acquire. 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 study 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 to 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.

Textbook:

Our textbook is one of the several most widely used and "standard" introductions to the subject:

Patrick Hurley's *A Concise Introduction to Logic* (13th edition) electronic version from cengage.com.

PHI 162 MUL Law, Morality, Authority

Dr. Ryan Muldoon

M W F, 10:00 AM – 10:50 AM

Class #: 24085

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 217 LON Professional Ethics

Dr. Duane Long

M W F, 2:00 PM – 2:50 PM

Class #: 24059

This course examines ethical issues that arise in a number of professional fields – law, medicine, journalism, engineering, and others. In examining topics specific to these fields, we will also relate specific moral challenges in one field to similar challenges in other fields and to abstract view of morality that attempt to show how there is continuity between the moral obligations of our private lives and those of our professional obligations.

PHI 234 LON Environmental Ethics

Dr. Duane Long

M W F, 9:00 AM – 9:50 AM

Class #: 24060

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

T Th, 11:00 AM – 12:20 PM

Class #: 20561

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, commercial surrogate motherhood, cloning and enhancing humans, defining death, organ transplants, conscientious objection, curing the disabled vs. changing the society to accommodate them, patient autonomy and informed consent.

The readings are chosen to provide opposing positions. 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 readings will be made available through the library electronic course reserve or UB Learns.

PHI 237 PH6 Medical Ethics: Social & Ethical Values in Medicine

Alexander Anderson

ONLINE

Class #: 10806

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 PH7 Medical Ethics: Social & Ethical Values in Medicine

Andrew Pfeuffer

ONLINE

Class #: 24061

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.

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PHI 237 PH8 Medical Ethics: Social & Ethical Values in Medicine

Eric Merrell

M W F, 8:00 AM – 8:50 AM

Class #: 19266

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

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

Bhavya Sharma

M W, 6:30 PM – 7:50 PM

Class #: 19268

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

PHI 252 BOM Eastern Philosophy

Dr. Nicolas Bommarito

T Th, 2:00 PM – 3:20 PM

Class #: 22298

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 MCA Writing Philosophy

Stephen McAndrew

M W F, 12:00 PM – 12:50 PM

Class #: 24610

Topic: Equality

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 onto 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 equality. We will examine philosophical conceptions of equality. After this analysis, we will focus on questions like: Is a world of economic inequality a just world? Must a just world be completely egalitarian? What is the role of markets in relation to economic inequality?

PHI 321 WIL Philosophy of Science

Dr. Neil Williams

T Th, 9:30 AM – 10:50 AM

Class #: 24087

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 329 HER Metaphysics

Dr. David Hershenov

T Th, 2:00 PM – 3:20 PM

Class #: 24088

The first part of the course will investigate what kinds of things exist. We will seek to answer questions such as: What causal relationships must hold between similar entities in order for them to compose larger entities? How many parts can different kinds of objects lose or acquire before they are replaced by new objects? Is it possible for distinct things to spatially coincide and have the same parts?

The second part of the class will focus on the nature of persons. We will pursue the following queries: Do persons have only material parts or do they consist of immortal souls? What is the relationship between human persons and human animals? What conditions must be obtained for persons to persist across time? Can persons cease to exist and later exist again?

The third part of the course will be concerned with the freedom of persons. We will inquire whether the freedom of human persons is compatible with their living in a world governed by causally deterministic laws or if the laws have to be indeterministic for persons to be free.

PHI 335 KNG Contemporary Ethical Theory

Dr. Alexandra King

T Th, 2:00 PM – 3:20 PM

Class #: 18645

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, 1:00 PM – 1:50 PM

Class #: 24710

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.

PHI 342 MUL Political Philosophy**Dr. Ryan Muldoon**

M W F, 1:00 PM – 1:50 PM

Class #: 24091

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 LON Special Topics: Feminist Philosophy of the Body**Dr. Duane Long**

T Th, 12:30 PM – 1:50PM

Class #: 24338

Many philosophers have talked about the mind, and the soul, but historically few have found the body to be an interesting or important topic of philosophical investigation. In addition, what has been said about it has very often been dismissive and denigrating. Of

particular interest in this course will be the historical tendency to associate three things with one another: the body, irrationality, and womanhood, in contrast to the mind/soul, rationality, and manhood. In this course, we will look at accounts of the role of the body in mediating our lives, our social interactions, and our understanding of self and others. A wide variety of theoretical outlooks will be used in this course, ranging across analytic and continental philosophy, critical race and disability studies, and others, but the emphasis of the class will be on feminist insights about (a) the significance of inhabiting the world in gendered bodies, and (b) the ethical consequences of gender and other bodily characteristics in our actions and interactions with others.

PHI 366 GRE Medieval Philosophy

Dr. Alexander Green

T Th, 9:30 AM – 10:50 AM

Class #: 24090

This course will look at how Jewish, Christian and Islamic philosophers in the Middle Ages reconciled classical Greek philosophy (Plato, Aristotle, Plotinus) and its conceptions of “nature” with the active God of the Bible, the New Testament and the Quran. Topics to be discussed include: describing and conceiving God; creation vs. eternity of the universe; ethics and happiness; psychology and freedom; divine providence and evil; politics, prophecy and law; and philosophy of history.

PHI 376 BOM Buddhist Philosophy

Dr. Nicolas Bommarito

T Th, 11:00 AM – 12:20 PM

Class #: 24556

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.

PHI 380 COH Nineteenth Century Philosophy

Dr. Richard Cohen

T Th, 3:30 PM – 4:50 PM

Class #: 24333

The 19th century Industrial Revolution (steam engine, railroad, mass production) is not yet the 20th century Communications Revolution (phone, radio, movies, TV, computers, internet, Wi-Fi, cell phones, cable). The last thoughts and outlooks of a three thousand year old spiritual-intellectual heritage in the West reach their fruition and open new prospects, such as the spread of democracy, the rise of liberal religion, the growth of metropolitan culture, and the prospect of general prosperity. Seeking these breakthroughs at their sources, we will explore the old and the new in the prose and poetry of Kant, Mendelssohn, Hegel, Feuerbach, Schopenhauer, Marx, Melville, Dostoyevsky, Whitman, Comte, Darwin, Bergson, Nietzsche and Freud, among others.

PHI 417 BRA Modal Logic

Dr. David Braun

M, 1:00 PM – 3:40 PM

Class #: 24092

This course will introduce a variety of logical systems beyond first-order predicate logic that are commonly used in philosophy. We will spend the most time with modal logic (the logic of necessity and possibility). We will, however, begin with ordinary propositional/sentential logic, so as to develop its semantics and proof theory in a more rigorous way than is common in beginning logic courses. We will show that these “match” in a certain sense. More precisely, we will introduce a proof system for propositional logic, and show that every theorem of this system is valid (this result is called “soundness”), and we will also sketch a proof that every valid sentence can be deduced within this system (“completeness”). We will then turn to modal logic. We will consider the proof theory and semantics of several systems of modal logic, and the soundness and completeness of those systems. Depending on time, we will discuss some of the following: tense logic, deontic logic, counterfactual conditionals, first-order predicate logic, modal first-order predicate logic, and definite descriptions.

Required work: Approximately fourteen homework assignments and approximately three exams. The last exam will occur during the **final exams** period.

Pre-requisite, **strictly enforced**: PHI 215 (Symbolic Logic) at UB or instructor permission. Students who have not taken PHI 215 at UB, but who believe that they have taken an equivalent course, or who think they are otherwise qualified to take the course, must contact the instructor before enrolling.

Undergraduate Tutorial Sections:

PHI 498 Philosophy Undergraduate Tutorials

PHI 499 Philosophy Undergraduate Tutorials

Meeting days and times as arranged with professors.