

DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY
GRADUATE COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

Spring Semester January 31 – May 13, 2022

PHI 519 Modal Logic

Dr. David Braun

Monday, 1:00 PM – 3:40 PM

Class #: 24272

This course will introduce a variety of logical systems beyond first-order predicate logic that are commonly used in philosophy. We will spend most of our time on modal logic (the logic of necessity and possibility). We will, however, begin with ordinary sentential logic. We will describe its semantics and proof theory in a more rigorous way than is common in beginning logic courses. We will then show that the semantics and proof theory “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 exam** period.

Pre-requisite, strictly enforced: Philosophy 215 (Symbolic Logic) at UB or instructor permission. I strongly encourage undergraduate students who have taken Philosophy 215 to contact me before they enroll in this class; they should enroll in this class only if they got excellent grades in Philosophy 215. Students who have not taken Philosophy 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.

PHI 576 Special Topics: Hume

Dr. Lewis Powell

Tuesday, 1:00 PM – 3:40 PM

Class #: 24761

This course concerns David Hume's *Treatise of Human Nature*, with a particular focus on book one ("Of the Understanding"). Hume's project in the *Treatise* was to "propose a compleat system of the sciences, built on a foundation almost entirely new, and the only one upon which they can stand with any security" (T, p. 3). The work is divided into three books, concerning the understanding, the passions, and morals, respectively.

In my view, one of David Hume's greatest strengths is his commitment to systematic philosophy. This commitment, and Hume's many keen insights, make Hume an excellent target for philosophical investigation. Also valuable is the ambitious nature of Hume's project. The magnitude of his project is extreme, even if we set aside his goal of making the study of human nature the foundation of all science, and focus simply on his aim of producing a system that explains everything in our mental lives.

Our goal for this course is to learn about, gain an appreciation of, and evaluate, the portion of Hume's project that focuses on cognition. For Hume, this aspect of mind is termed "the understanding," and its central activities are imagining, judging, and reasoning.

PHI 579 The Science of Morals

Dr. James Beebe

Wednesday, 1:00 PM – 3:40 PM

Class #: 24646

This course is an introduction to moral psychology, an interdisciplinary field of research that combines philosophical theorizing about morality with empirical research (from psychology and other cognitive and social sciences) on how people think about moral matters and how they act in light of their moral values or beliefs. Students will learn about and critically examine the ways that psychologists draw upon philosophical theories to guide their empirical research and the ways that philosophers and scientists argue that empirical findings should shape philosophical thinking about morality.

PHI 579 Descartes' Meditations

Dr. James Lawler

T Th, 11:00 AM – 12:20 PM

Class #: 24672

Descartes' *Meditations* is one of the major texts of the history of modern philosophy. It is a relatively short, accessible text, designed to be meditated on in a spirit of quiet contemplation. The main focus is on the existence of God and the nature of the human being, understood in the light of the new sciences of modern era.

Descartes argues that modern science requires an intellectual break with direct sensory experience as the foundation of knowledge, and so presupposes confidence in the powers of reason. Sensory experience by itself leads to the pre-modern worldview, epitomized by the philosophy and science of Aristotle, with the sun revolving around the earth as we directly see it doing. But the new science of Copernicus and Galileo holds that the reality is just the opposite of the way things appear in sensory experience: it is really the earth that revolves around the sun. The new sciences presuppose, therefore, that human reason can overcome the limits of direct sensory experience.

But if we can't rely on sense experience to know the reality of things, if our senses so clearly deceive us, how do we know we can rely on our reason? This is where Descartes' arguments for the independent reality of the rational mind and the existence of God become crucial to modern science itself. We can trust our reasoning abilities, Descartes argues, because we can know that a God who would not deceive us exists and creates us as beings who can think for ourselves.

The course will relate Descartes' ideas on these topics to the philosophical background in the work of Plato and Aristotle, as well as to later developments that presuppose Descartes' *Meditations*, in Hume and Kant, as well as in the 20th century existentialism of Jean-Paul Sartre.

PHI 604 Teaching Philosophy

Dr. David Gray

Friday, 1:00 PM – 3:40 PM

Class #: 24731

This will be a course in philosophical pedagogy. Required work may include preparation of syllabi and assignments, 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 The Metaphysics of Food and Drink

Dr. Neil Williams

Thursday, 1:00 PM – 3:40 PM

Class #: 22384

This course will be an examination of the metaphysical issues embedded in the culinary arts and posed by the production of potent potables. Chief among the topics to be considered will be those concerning: the nature of recipes and their repeatability; what constitutes food; questions of authenticity; and culinary taxonomy, all carefully paired with the finest hand-picked readings on beer, wine, and cocktails.

PHI 637 Applied Ontology

Dr. Barry Smith

ONLINE

Class #: 24730

Course description will be forthcoming at a later date.

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 702 MA Thesis Guidance Tutorials (Arranged with Professor)

PHI 704 Dissertation Guidance Tutorials (Arranged with Professor)