

**DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY
UNDERGRADUATE COURSE DESCRIPTIONS**

Fall Semester August 29 – December 9, 2022

PHI 101 PHI Introduction to Philosophy

Dr. John Beverley

ONLINE

Class #: 22939

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.

**PATHWAYS: PHI 101 Introduction to Philosophy satisfies the following pathways:
Cultures, Art and Imagination; Human Nature; Global Cultures and Expression.**

PHI 101 POW Introduction to Philosophy

Dr. Lewis Powell

T Th, 9:30 AM – 10:50 AM

Class #: 15537

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PHI 105 VIN Contemporary Moral Problems

Dr. Sarah Vincent

M W F, 9:00 AM – 9:50 AM

Class #: 20164

This course will explore contentious ethical issues. To set up our engagement with such issues, we will begin the course with an introduction to some basic terminology in ethics, as well as a brief overview of some major ethical theories (like virtue ethics, Kantianism, utilitarianism, and social contract theory). With that groundwork in place, most of the semester will involve delving into controversial issues like global poverty, immigration, hate speech, illicit drugs, euthanasia, abortion, sexual morality, and animal rights.

PATHWAYS: PHI 105 Contemporary Moral Problems satisfies the following pathways: Conflict, Violence and Resolution; Economy, Business and Society; Equality, Power and Justice; Health, Sexuality and Society; Human Nature.

PHI 107 GRA Introduction to Ethics

Dr. David Gray

ONLINE

Class #: 20165

Ethics is the branch of philosophy examining the nature of morality, good and evil, and right and wrong action. At bottom, ethics addresses the most practical question: “What ought I do?” As such, this is not some hypothetical concern, but something with which we all continually wrestle, as we go about our day-to-day lives. This suggests that ethics is an inherent and inescapable part of human existence. In this course, we will look at several influential approaches and attempts to answer that practical question of ethics. Throughout, we will discover how these divergent, and often conflicting, approaches frame present-day debates surrounding the opioid crisis, drone attacks, quotas in admissions and hiring, political corruption, world poverty, animal rights, torture, national security, and human rights.

PATHWAYS: PHI 107 Introduction to Ethics satisfies the following pathways: Economy, Business and Society; Environments, Technologies and Policy; Health, Sexuality and Society; Human Nature.

PHI 115 BEE Critical Thinking

Dr. James Beebe

T Th, 12:30 PM – 1:50 PM

Class #: 20189

This is a course on reasoning well-on what it means to reflect carefully about what you should or should not believe in light of your available evidence. You’ve been reasoning your whole life-sometimes well, sometimes poorly. This class will provide you with exercises that are aimed at refining your reasoning skills. What makes this class different from other classes that sharpen your reasoning skills in some respect is that we will not be solely focusing on reasoning within a particular domain or about a particular set of issues.

The goal of this course is to improve reasoning skills that can be applied in any domain. Toward the end of the course, we will focus for a few weeks on the kind of reasoning behind conspiracy theories, but even there our goal will be to reflect upon and hone reasoning skills that are general rather than specific in nature. Some university courses are more content-focused, while others are more skill-focused. A course about art history falls into the former category, while a course about figure drawing falls into the latter. This course has both a content component and a skill component, but the skill component may be larger than you anticipated. This means that you will not merely be asked to sit and think about critical thinking, you will be asked to do a good bit of it.

PHI 185 MUL Model-Based Reasoning

Dr. Ryan Muldoon

T Th, 11:00 AM – 12:20 PM

Class #: 20190

The world is full of complex problems and messy situations. This complexity makes it very hard for us to think through what is going on and how we might best try and develop solutions to our problems. The best tools we have for thinking through these problems are models. Models allow us to extract a simpler version of our problem from the messiness of the real world, and then test out our ideas to find the best solution. In this course, we will learn about a variety of models that the social sciences use to think about the world, and then examine the philosophical challenges of using models to guide our reasoning. We will learn about when models might help us, and when models might mislead us, and what we can do about it. Students will not only learn about models, but learn to think like a modeler.

PHI 199 BEE UB Seminar – Science and Religion

Dr. James Beebe

T Th, 3:30 PM – 4:50 PM

Class #: 16959

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 BIT UB Seminar – Deductive Logic

Dr. Thomas Bittner

M W F, 9:00 AM – 9:50 AM

Class #: 20168

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 199 is an introduction to the basic 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.

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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**.

PHI 199 DON UB Seminar – Philosophy in Literature

Dr. Maureen Donnelly

T Th, 11:00 AM – 12:20 PM

Class #: 23576

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.

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PHI 199 HON UB Seminar – Morality, Reality & Meaning

Dr. Sarah Vincent

T Th, 9:30 AM – 10:50 AM

Class #: 20166

Class Notes: This course is reserved for Honors College students only.

PHI 199 centers on questions that are relevant to college life. What kind of career do you want after college, and why? What kinds of relationships do you want? How does your race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or gender identity impact how you understand yourself? Is it wrong to cheat on an exam or to illegally download a textbook? Should college

campuses restrict certain kinds of speech? Do your personal choices, like how you act on social media, matter in the big scheme of things? This seminar will give us the chance to work through questions like these that bring one's college experience into conversation with academic philosophy.

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PHI 215 BRA Symbolic Logic

Dr. David Braun

M W F, 9:00 AM – 9:50 AM

Class #: 19243

We will learn techniques to distinguish between good arguments and bad arguments. More specifically, we will learn to distinguish between (i) arguments whose conclusions follow from their premises and (ii) arguments whose conclusions do not follow from their premises. We will call the first kind of argument 'valid' and the second kind 'invalid.' Our test for an argument's validity will start with the creation of an artificial symbolic language. We will learn to translate ordinary English sentences into this symbolic language. We will then apply precise formal techniques for determining whether the symbolic versions of the arguments are valid.

Pre-requisites: None. Required work (tentative): Weekly homework assignments (which must be completed using online software) and three exams taken in-person (if the course meets in-person, as planned). The third exam will take place during finals week.

PHI 234 PHI Environmental Ethics

Dr. Duane Long

ONLINE

Class #: 18462

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

PATHWAYS: PHI 234 Environmental Ethics satisfies the following pathways: Communities, Populations and Spaces; Environments, Technologies and Policy; Equality, Power and Justice.

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

Dr. David Hershenov

M W F, 11:00 AM – 11:50 AM

Class #: 17510

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, enhancing human abilities, defining death, organ transplants, conscientious objection, curing the disabled vs. changing the society to accommodate them, patient autonomy and informed consent, rationing scarce resources and mandating vaccinations during the Covid-19 Epidemic.

The course is designed to present competing views about the above topics. 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 UB Learns.

PATHWAYS: PHI 237 Medical Ethics satisfies the following pathways: Equality, Power and Justice; Health, Sexuality and Society.

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

Dr. Duane Long

ONLINE

Class #: 19235

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.

PATHWAYS: PHI 237 Medical Ethics satisfies the following pathways: Equality, Power and Justice; Health, Sexuality and Society.

PHI 321 WIL Philosophy of Science

Dr. Neil Williams

T Th, 9:30 AM – 10:50 AM

Class #: 23924

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, 11:00 AM – 11:50 AM

Class #: 23581

We will consider fundamental questions about language, meaning, and communication. For example, the words 'dog' and 'cat' obviously have different meanings. But what are their meanings? Are their meanings concrete objects in the world, such as particular dogs and cats? Are they instead mental entities, such as ideas, concepts, or images? Are they abstract entities? (What are those?) The sentences 'All dogs are dogs' and 'All dogs are cats' also differ in meaning. The meanings of the words in those sentences, and the arrangements of the words in those sentences, seem to determine the meanings of the full sentences. But how? And are the meanings of these sentences concrete, mental, or abstract entities? And what is the meaning of the word 'all'? The ways in which we use language raise further questions. For example, I can use the sentence 'I will be there' simply to state a fact, or to make a promise, or to warn someone. How? Sometimes when we utter words, we mean something different from what our words mean. For example, if I say 'Bill ate a billion potato chips last night', I don't really mean that Bill ate a billion potato chips. I mean something different from what my words (literally) mean. But how can my hearers figure out what I do mean? We will state, clarify, and critically evaluate various theories that try to answer some of these questions.

Pre-requisite: at least 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 already taken a course in symbolic logic.

Required work (tentative): Two to three online quizzes, two to three short papers (three to four pages), and two exams taken in-person (if the course meets in-person, as planned). The second exam will take place during finals week.

PHI 335 LON Contemporary Ethical Theory**Dr. Duane Long**

M W F, 2:00 PM – 2:50 PM

Class #: 23582

This course will explore contemporary issues about the relation(s) between reason and desire and the phenomenon of moral motivation (and its failure). We will consider the nature of moral reasons and whether judgments about moral reasons are really judgments of subjective preference or whether they are a kind of belief, whether one needs to invoke desires at all in explaining why someone would be motivated to do what they think is morally right, and whether it is possible to make a sincere moral judgment but have no motivation to act in accordance with that judgment.

PHI 341 GRA Social Philosophy

Dr. David Gray

T Th, 2:00 PM – 3:20 PM

Class #: 20191

In this course, we investigate how the interplay of individual behaviors, informal norms, and social institutions may contribute to structural injustice. In doing so, will consider questions, such as: What are social justice and injustice? How does social justice intersect with notions of equality? What does it mean to be equals within society? How might injustice and inequality become imbedded within our basic social structures? Even if we aren't to blame for structural injustice, do we have a responsibility to address it? How can these discussions help us better understand, appraise, and respond to the injustices perpetuated by sexism and racism?

PATHWAYS: PHI 341 Social Philosophy satisfies the following pathway: Equality, Power and Justice.

PHI 345 VIN Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art

Dr. Sarah Vincent

M W F, 11:00 AM – 11:50 AM

Class #: 16962

What makes something 'art'? Who decides what counts? Is everyone's interpretation of an artwork's meaning equally valid, or is expertise important? Why do some of us appreciate a particular work of art, but others don't connect to it? How have commodification and reproduction changed the art world? Throughout this course, we'll consider questions like these, bringing philosophical theories into conversation with artworks of your choice (including, but not limited to, paintings, novels, songs, plays and films).

PATHWAYS: PHI 345 Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art satisfies the following pathways: Cultures, Art and Imagination; Economy, Business and Society; Human Nature; Global Cultures and Expression.

PHI 353 GRA Conflict and Dispute Resolution

Dr. David Gray

M W F, 3:00 PM – 3:50 PM

Class #: 21940

Conflict is an intractable feature of life, occurring between family members, friends, coworkers, political organizations, citizens, nations, and even within oneself. As a result, you will often find yourself in situations where achieving your goals and meeting your obligations requires that you are able to secure the legitimate cooperation of others without resorting to force or fraud. Ultimately, it is up to you-and you alone-to negotiate and secure that cooperation in order to do your job, advance your career, and even maintain meaningful personal relationships with your family and friends. Utilizing the latest research in negotiation and conflict resolution, this course will prepare you for these challenges. In particular, you will learn the fundamentals of conflict resolution, while developing

interpersonal techniques and tactics for effectively influencing others, especially in difficult situations involving strong emotions. By the end of the course, you will have more control and confidence for productively approaching interpersonal interactions that may cause stress, anxiety, or frustration.

PATHWAYS: PHI 353 Conflict and Dispute Resolution satisfies the following pathway: Conflict, Violence and Resolution.

PHI 370 POW Early Modern Philosophy

Dr. Lewis Powell

T Th, 12:30 PM – 1:50 PM

Class #: 17511

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.

PATHWAYS: PHI 370 Early Modern Philosophy satisfies the following pathways: Human Nature; Global Cultures and Expression; Global Politics and Power.

PHI 388 LAW Twentieth Century Philosophy

Dr. James Lawler

M W F, 12:00 PM – 12:50 PM

Class #: 23583

The history of 20th century philosophy is divided along geographic lines, with Continental Europe on one side, and Great Britain and its colonial offspring, especially the United States, on the other. This course will consider exemplary figures from each side of this divide, based on short articles that explore the relationships between seemingly unlikely pairs. Carnap's early critique of Heidegger brings into perspective the origins of 20th century thought in 19th century precedents, August Comte and Friedrich Nietzsche. Daniel Dennett argues for a phenomenology distinct from that of Edmund Husserl. Considering seemingly opposite positions of Quine and Heidegger on the role of logic in science brings out surprising compatibilities. Opposition to John Searle's defense of the correspondence theory of truth finds agreement on both sides of the divide on the part of Michel Foucault and Donald Davidson. But apparent compatibilities between Davidson and

Hans Gadamer on the interpretation of texts can conceal the recognition of deeper differences. And there is the issue of the evolution of analytic philosophy itself, with the phenomenon of “postanalytical” thinkers such as Richard Rorty.

Through detailed comparisons of exemplary figures the perception of an unbridgeable gulf between two opposing modes of philosophizing will be challenged even as the general outlines of the two orientations are constructively elaborated.

Text for course: C. G. Prado, *A House Divided: Comparing Analytic and Continental Philosophy*, Humanity Books, 2003.

There will be regular quizzes, student oral presentations, and a final essay exam.

PHI 420 SMI Topics in Philosophy of Science

Dr. Barry Smith

M, 1:00 PM – 3:40 PM

Class #: 23577

What are the essential features of a scientific discipline, and how are the different scientific disciplines related to each other? This course will provide an introduction to questions such as this, beginning with a treatment of the role of models in different types of science, and with an account of the truthmakers for different kinds of scientific proposition. We then attempt to create a synoptic and non-reductionist view of science in its entirety, aiming to do justice to each of the sciences from a realist point of view, and at the same time to throw light (1) on the interplay between the natural sciences and mathematics, and (2) on the interplay between the sciences in general and the world of common-sense experience.

PHI 489 BIT Special Topics: Mereology, Mereotopology, and Theories of Places

Dr. Thomas Bittner

W, 10:00 AM – 12:40 PM

Class #: 23934

In this course we start with a brief overview of basic categories of entities. We then perform a formal analysis of General Extensional Mereology (GEM). We will discuss the basic axioms and some theorems as well as their philosophical implications. We then extend GEM by adding further primitives. We discuss several strategies of extending mereology to mereotopology, to a theory of location, and places. The course can be regarded as an exercise in the use of logical methods for philosophical purposes.

Undergraduate Tutorial Sections:

PHI 498 Philosophy Undergraduate Tutorials

PHI 499 Philosophy Undergraduate Tutorials

Meeting days and times as arranged with professors.