

**DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY
UNDERGRADUATE COURSE DESCRIPTIONS**

Fall Semester August 26 - December 6, 2019

PHI 101 POW, Introduction to Philosophy

Dr. Lewis M. Powell

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

Class #: 18033

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

Joshua Merlo

M W F, 9:00 AM – 9:50 AM

Class #: 20812

This course will provide an introduction to philosophy by discussing three of its central topics: free will and determinism, the nature of minds and their relations to physical objects, and the existence and nature of God. Among the questions we will ask are the following: Do human beings have free will? Is free will compatible with scientific law? Are human beings purely physical things? Do human beings have souls? Is it possible for a human being to survive death? Does God exist? Are there good arguments for the existence of God? Is the existence of evil compatible with the existence of God? We will formulate several views on each of our three topics, and consider arguments for and against each view we formulate. Our goals will be to understand these views and evaluate the arguments for and against them.

PHI 105 PHI, Contemporary Moral Problems

Dr. H. Duane Long

T TH, 9:30 AM – 10:50 AM

Class #: 22580

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

T TH, 9:30 AM – 10:50 AM

Class #: 19342

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 107 KIN, Introduction to Ethics

Dr. Alexandra King

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

Class #: 24022

This course introduces students to three major areas of ethical thought: metaethics, normative ethics and applied ethics. Metaethics is concerned with the status of morality: whether or not it's objective, what moral language means and so on. Normative ethics asks about general theories of right and wrong-what is right for us to do, think and feel. Applied ethics addresses topics of particularly pressing concern, such as capital punishment, affirmative action or donating to charity. Readings will come from a textbook as well as some historical and contemporary thinkers.

PHI 199 BEE, UB Seminar - Science and Religion

Dr. James Beebe

T TH, 12:30 PM – 1:50 PM

Class #: 22088

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 – Critical Thinking

Dr. Thomas Bittner

M W F, 12:00 PM – 12:50 PM

Class #: 24023

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 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.

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PHI 199 DON, UB Seminar - Philosophy In Literature

Dr. Maureen Donnelly

T TH, 11:00 AM – 12:20 PM

Class #: 20005

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 BOM, UB Seminar – Living Well

Dr. Nicolas Bommarito

M W F, 10:00 AM – 10:50 AM

Class #: 24024

This course explores the question of what it means to live well and some of the obstacles to living well from a philosophical point of view. Students will become familiar with classic ideas of philosophers like Aristotle and Zhuangzi, but also more contemporary work. We will examine issues relevant to becoming a university student like procrastination and note-taking from a practical point of view with an eye to solving common obstacles to living well. We will also critically examine the underlying concepts. For example, considering how procrastination relates to theories of rationality and the ideas of memory and originality that are involved in academic writing.

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PHI 215 BRA, Symbolic Logic

Dr. David Braun

M W F, 9:00 AM – 9:50 AM

Class #: 24058

This course will be dedicated to distinguishing 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 '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 next 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 and three exams. The third exam will take place during finals week.

PHI 234 PHI, Environmental Ethics

Dr. H. Duane Long

T TH, 2:00 PM – 3:20 PM

Class #: 22581

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

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

Eric Merrell

T TH, 9:30 AM – 10:50AM

Class #: 24036

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 HER, Medical Ethics: Social & Ethical Values in Medicine

Dr. David Hershenov

T TH, 9:30 AM – 10:50 AM

Class #: 24721

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 HOV, Medical Ethics: Social & Ethical Values in Medicine

Dr. David Hershenov

T TH, 11:00 AM – 12:20 PM

Class #: 20824

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 PHI, Medical Ethics: Social & Ethical Values in Medicine

Dr. H. Duane Long

M W F; 10:00 AM – 10:50 AM

Class #: 24033

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

Alexander Anderson

ONLINE

Class #: 22239

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

Andrew Pfeuffer

ONLINE

Class #: 22240

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 320 BRA, Philosophy of Mind

Dr. David Braun

M W F, 11:00 AM – 11:50 AM

Class #: 24028

We will discuss some fundamental questions about the nature of minds and mental states, and what is sometimes known as the mind-body problem. Among the questions we will discuss are the following: Are minds and mental states physical or non-physical in nature? Are mental states just complex dispositions to behave in certain ways? Are mental states identical with certain kinds of brain states? In what respect (if any) is a mind like a computer? Could a purely physical object be conscious? How can a mental state represent something, or be *about* something? Could a physical state of a brain or computer do this? Our consideration of these questions will begin with arguments for and against several theories of the nature of minds and mental states, including dualism, materialism, behaviorism, and functionalism. The course will emphasize readings in contemporary philosophical literature.

Pre-requisite: one prior course in philosophy. Required work (tentative): Two online quizzes, three papers, and two exams. The second exam will occur during the final exam period.

PHI 333 BEE, Epistemology

Dr. James Beebe

T TH, 9:30 AM – 10:50 AM

Class #: 24029

This course will look at contemporary debates about the nature of knowledge, evidence, and rationally justified belief. Considers epistemology: The nature, sources, kind, scope, and certainty and validity of knowledge.

Pre-requisite: One prior course in philosophy.

PHI 345 KNG, Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art

Dr. Alexandra King

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

Class #: 20011

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.

PHI 370 POW, Early Modern Philosophy

Dr. Lewis M. Powell

T TH, 2:00 PM – 3:20 PM

Class #: 20825

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.