

**DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY  
UNDERGRADUATE COURSE DESCRIPTIONS**

**Fall Semester August 31 – December 11, 2020**

**PHI 101 POW Introduction to Philosophy  
Dr, Lewis Powell**

Delivery mode – online: recorded not real time  
Class #: 17574

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 105 LON Contemporary Moral Problems  
Dr. Duane Long**

Delivery mode – online: recorded not real time  
Class #: 24162

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 BOM Introduction to Ethics**

**Dr. Ariane Nomikos**

Delivery mode – online: recorded not real time

Class #: 24165

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.

**PHI 107 DON Introduction to Ethics**

**Dr. Maureen Donnelly**

Delivery mode – online: recorded not real time

Class #: 18784

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 PHI Introduction to Ethics**

**Dr. David Gray**

Delivery mode – online: recorded not real time

Class #: 24163

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.

### **PHI 115 BEE Critical Thinking**

**Dr. James Beebe**

Delivery mode – online: recorded not real time

Class #: 24203

This course will focus upon developing students' critical thinking skills through careful analysis, reasoned inference, and thoughtful evaluation of contemporary culture and ideas. Students will learn how to clarify ideas, analyze arguments, and evaluate inductive, deductive, comparative, ideological, and empirical reasoning.

### **PHI 185 MUL Model-Based Reasoning**

**Dr. Ryan Muldoon**

T, TH; 11:10 AM – 12:30 PM

Delivery mode – online: real time and recorded

Class #: 24204

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 BIT UB Seminar – Deductive Logic**

**Dr. Thomas Bittner**

Delivery mode – online: recorded not real time

Class #: 24169

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.

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.

**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* (13<sup>th</sup> edition) **electronic version**.

**PHI 199 DON UB Seminar - Philosophy In Literature**

**Dr. Maureen Donnelly**

T, TH; 11:10 AM – 12:30 PM

Delivery mode – online: real time and recorded

Class #: 19369

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 LAW UB Seminar – Morality, Reality & Meaning of Life in Popular Film & TV  
Dr. James Lawler**

M W F; 10:20 AM– 11:10 AM

Delivery mode – in person only

Class #: 24166

Contemporary popular culture, TV programs, and films often involve the same issues, questions, and probing reflections that philosophers have explored since the time of Plato: How do we know what is a morally right action? How do we know whether something is real or only an illusion or dream? Is there more to reality than what we can experience with our senses? Do individuals have a purpose or destiny arising from external conditions or supernatural forces, or is this a matter for individuals themselves to decide in freedom?

Bringing together pop culture and philosophy is beneficial to both sides. Stories told with skill and imagination in popular culture provide compelling illustrations of ideas treated abstractly and systematically by philosophers. Connecting popular culture with the concepts developed by philosophers makes the concepts seem less abstract, more real. At the same time, by seeing the presence of profound conceptual content in the works of pop culture, we will take these works more seriously – as more than mere entertainment. Sometimes, the best of pop culture provides explorations that take philosophical ideas to unexpected levels, and so occasions a fresh stimulus for deeper philosophical reflection.

And so, bringing together some of the most prominent works in contemporary popular culture with relevant classical texts from the history of philosophy is both entertaining and intellectually fruitful.

The course will examine episodes from the TV series, *The Simpsons* and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, as well as the films, *Crime and Misdemeanors* and *The Matrix*.

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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.

**Course materials:**

Course text: James Lawler, *The God Tube: The Hidden Spiritual Message in Pop Culture* (Chicago: Open Court Publishers, 2010).

**PHI 215 BRA Symbolic Logic**

**Dr. David Braun**

M W F; Delivery mode – online: recorded not real time

Class #: 22512

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. Duane Long**

M W F; Delivery mode – online: recorded not real time

Class #: 21372

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

**PHI 236 GRA Business Ethics**

**Dr. David Gray**

M W F, 1:50 PM – 2:40 PM

Delivery mode – online: real time

Class #: 24524

When we ask, "What is good business?" is it based solely upon economic values of profit maximization? Or do other values such as fairness, respect, and social responsibility play a role as well? What exactly is the proper role of business within society? How should businesses secure the legitimate cooperation of others needed to achieve their strategic goals? How does reflecting on the purpose of business help us answer all these questions?

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

**Dr. David Hershenov**

M W F, 11:30 AM – 12:20 PM

Delivery mode – online: real time and recorded

Class #: 20067

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 LON Medical Ethics: Social & Ethical Values in Medicine**

**Dr. Duane Long**

Delivery mode – online: recorded not real time

Class #: 24174

This course will explore issues with the beginning and end of human life and the roles of doctors, patients, family members, and other important figures in determining the legal and moral issues that these phases of life bring up.

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 PHI Medical Ethics: Social & Ethical Values in Medicine**

**Dr. Ariane Nomikos**

Delivery mode – online: recorded not real time

Class #: 22493

This course will explore issues with the beginning and end of human life and the roles of doctors, patients, family members, and other important figures in determining the legal and moral issues that these phases of life bring up.

**PHI 321 WIL Philosophy of Science**

**Dr. Neil Williams**

M W F, Delivery mode – online: recorded not real time

Class #: 24205

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**

Delivery mode – online: recorded not real time

Class #: 24206

Words and sentences in English and other languages are meaningful. So, it seems that words and sentences have meanings. But what are meanings? Are meanings entities of some sort? Are they physical objects? Mental objects? Abstract objects? What are the meanings of such words as 'Barack Obama,' 'dog,' 'red,' 'run,' 'and,' and 'the'? How are meaning, reference, truth, thought, and communication related? How do words and sentences get their meanings and referents? How do we use words to mean things that our words do not mean, and how do our hearers understand what we do mean? Why do some pairs of words, such as 'feces' and 'shit,' differ in their social acceptability? Why are some words so offensive that we hesitate even to quote people who use them? We will begin this course by considering several theories about the nature of meaning and reference. We will then consider the use of language in communication and other speech acts. We will end with special topics, such as language in the law, metaphor, and bad language.

Pre-requisite: 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 taken a course in symbolic logic. Tentative required work: two online quizzes, two exams, and three papers of three to four pages each.

### **PHI 333 BEE Epistemology**

**Dr. James Beebe**

Delivery mode – online: recorded not real time

Class #: 22491

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 341 PHI Social Philosophy**

**Dr. David Gray**

M W F, 10:20 AM – 11:10 AM

Delivery mode – online: real time

Class #: 24208

In this course, we investigate social phenomena with a focus on how individual behaviors influence informal social norms and institutions. 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?

### **PHI 345 KNG Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art**

**Dr. Ariane Nomikos**

Delivery mode – online: recorded not real time

Class #: 19372

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 Powell**

T Th, 2:20 PM – 3:40 PM

Delivery mode – online: real time and recorded

Class #: 20068

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 498 Philosophy Undergraduate Tutorials

PHI 499 Philosophy Undergraduate Tutorials

*Meeting days and times as arranged with professors.*