

**DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY  
UNDERGRADUATE COURSE DESCRIPTIONS**

**Winter Session January 4 – January 22, 2021**

<http://www.buffalo.edu/cas/philosophy/undergrad-study/ug-courses.html>

**PHI 101 Introduction to Philosophy**

Online Instructor: Shane Hemmer

Online Class #: 10122

Examines general topics in various areas of philosophy showing different sides of issues; develops critical thought and philosophical method. This is an online course. At NO time will the course require students to be on campus.

This course will introduce students to some of the central questions and debates in philosophy. What (if anything) can we know about the world we inhabit, and how? What does it mean to have knowledge? How do minds relate to bodies? What is consciousness? Is freedom necessary for moral responsibility? Do we have reasons to be good? How should we live and interact with the world around us? What is the extent of our ethical responsibilities to human and non-human animals? Under what conditions could a society be properly described as just? Is a just society even possible? Philosophers have grappled with questions of this sort for centuries, and so will we. By examining various historical and contemporary approaches to such questions, the importance of philosophical reflection for everyday life should become evident.

**PHI 105 Contemporary Moral Problems**

Online Instructor: Austin Liebers

Online Class #: 10165

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. This is an online course. At NO time will this course require students to be on campus.

This course aims to introduce students to important ethical theories and their application to real problems in the world today. We will focus on questions like “Is abortion permissible?”; “Is it permissible to eat meat?”; “Do we have a moral right to immigrate?” and “Should organs be for sale?” among others.

**Because this is a condensed course, we will be covering material very quickly.** The coursework will include reading philosophical texts and responding in writing assignments and quizzes. Assignments will be geared toward developing critical thinking, reading, and writing skills, as well as introducing students to the field of ethics.

### **PHI 107 Introduction to Ethics**

Online Instructor: Alec Sculley

Online Class #: 10099

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. This is an online course. At NO time will this course require students to be on campus.

Does morality depend on the person, situation, or culture? Even if an action feels right, is there a systematic way to avoid personal biases in my assessment? What kind of person should I be? This course introduces the ongoing discussion of the nature of morality, what might be the best criteria for assessing right and wrong, and what factors are relevant in difficult ethical situations. The course is structured in two parts: first discusses what morality is and surveys the most influential ethical theories; the second applies these theories to practical circumstances and controversial policies, including abortion, euthanasia, treatment of animals, etc. The course does not require familiarity with philosophy or ethical theory.

### **PHI 115 Critical Thinking**

Online Instructor: Finn Wilson

Online Class #: 10457

Examines techniques of problem solving, decision making, and evaluating pros and cons of an issue; organizing data; forming strategies and giving reasons; perceptual, cultural, emotional, intellectual, and expressive blocks to thinking; and simple inductive reasoning and statistical fallacies. Students will also learn the basics of inductive, deductive, categorical, and propositional logic.

### **PHI 237 Medical Ethics: Values in Medicine**

Online Instructor: Sean Kermath

Online Class #: 10135

Examines current ethical positions and their application to ethical and social questions in medicine. This is an online course. At NO time will this course require students to be on campus.

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.