

**DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY
GRADUATE COURSE DESCRIPTIONS**

Fall Session August 28-December 19, 2017

[PHI 579 Topics In Ethics](#)

Professor N. P. Bommarito

Monday, 1:00 PM - 3:40 PM

[Class #: 23427](#)

Title: Modesty & Humility

This seminar will cover a variety of topics related to modesty and humility. It will begin with modesty and humility in religious contexts, focusing on Christianity and Buddhism. Next we will examine modesty's status as a "monkish" virtue in Hume. We will cover the modern Analytic literature on modesty starting with Julia Driver's account of modesty as a virtue of ignorance and a variety of replies. Finally we will read empirical work on intellectual humility and topics in Epistemology related to self-confidence, particularly disagreement, anti-expertise, and open-mindedness.

[PHI 598 The Young Kant](#)

Professor James Lawler

Monday, 4:00 - 6:40 PM

[Class #: 23435](#)

Understanding Kant's "pre-critical" philosophy is central to appreciating his three critiques. Overshadowed by the critiques, the early work stands on its own as a central contribution to the development of the philosophy of its time. It not only prepares the way for the critiques, but constitutes a hidden background without which they cannot be adequately understood. Here we find Kant's great cosmology, which is what Kant later regarded as the "thing-in-itself," persisting in his notion of the noumenal, and of the intelligible world. Although he finally decided that his grand cosmological vision could not be demonstrated, what cannot be strictly known can still be conjectured, and justifiably believed. The same applies to the proofs for the existence of God, including the "only possible proof" that

remains implicit in the first critique. The only writer about whom Kant ever dedicated a major work, *Dreams of a Spirit-Seer Elucidated by Dreams of Metaphysics*, was Emanuel Swedenborg. Kant here explores a conjectural metaphysics of matter and spirit, and further formulates the meaning of “the intelligible world,” providing the ontological framework of his later ethics. If only one of Swedenborg’s spirit-seeings proved valid, how feeble must be the metaphysical dreams of philosophers!

Text: James Lawler, *The Intelligible World: Metaphysical Revolution in the Genesis of Kant’s Theory of Morality*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013.

PHI 634 Meta-Metaphysics

Professor Jorge Gracia

Tuesday, 4:00 - 6:40 PM

[Class #: 23434](#)

Is metaphysics dead? Here is a course that will show not only that metaphysics is alive and well, but that it is inevitable for any serious philosopher. Meta-Metaphysics has recently attracted some attention, but courses on it are rare. The seminar will take up this topic and see how it is related to many other central philosophical topics. We shall begin with an analysis of the questions and issues that are involved in this pursuit and proceed to examine the main positions that have been offered in the history of philosophy, from Aristotle to Strawson, including Aquinas, Kant, Meinong, Carnap, and others.

PHI 637 SMI, Advanced Biomedical Ontology

Professor Barry Smith

Wednesday 4:00 – 6:40

[Class #: 23944](#)

The course begins with a review of the theories underlying biomedical knowledge representation and ontology. The methods and tools of applied ontology as well as the management and maintenance of biomedical ontologies will be discussed in detail, including the principles of ontological realism and their implementation in the Basic Formal Ontology (BFO). Students will gain experience with the Web Ontology Language (OWL) and its limitations and with tools that can be used to query ontologies expressed in OWL. The students will learn how to use and evaluate classifiers and their role in subsumption. They will learn both the transitive and reflexive closure of subsumption and its applied use in ontology development, maintenance and use. This course also provides an in-depth review of current theories and research underlying the development of biomedical ontologies as well as a comparative critical analysis of the major current biomedical ontologies as well as the methods and tools for biomedical ontology development, use and evaluation.

Course prerequisites: BMI508 or PHI548 or PHI549 or PHI598.

Background reading: Building Ontologies with Basic Formal Ontology, MIT Press, 2015.

PHI 637 HRS, Life and Death

Professor David Hershenov

Wednesday, 3:00 - 5:50 PM

[Class #: 20152](#)

This seminar will look at attempts to provide definitions and criteria of "life" and "death" in order to help us discover when we human beings come into and go out of existence. We will examine a number of empirical, modal, and identity-based considerations that challenge the common sense claim that our lives began at fertilization. Once we are clearer about our actual origins, we will inquire into whether they are essential to us or we could have had very different origins than we did. We will next explore why even with a good account of life, we cannot define death as its loss. One reason is that the existence of cryptobiotic organisms suggests the possibility that we could exist in state of suspended animation, neither alive nor dead. We will consider adding some sort of irreversibility condition to the definition of death to distinguish the cessation of life processes that are fatal from those which are not. We next will investigate whether certain brain functions prevent the cessation of life or whether the brain death criterion is false. We will consider the possibility that the bodily integration characteristic of life can be accomplished without a functioning brain in adults as it was in early embryos. We will end the seminar with a foray into the terminator/anti-terminator debate about whether we cease to exist at death or persist as a corpse.

PHI 637 POW, First Year Writing Seminar

Professor Lewis Powell

Tuesday, 1:00 - 3:50 PM

[Class #: 23428](#)

The writing intensive seminar is designed to give students extensive opportunity to hone their core writing skills, early in the graduate program. The course involves more written work and focus on writing than a typical graduate seminar. This iteration will involve a number of writing exercises, each focused on different aspects of philosophical writing, some of which are particular to historical writing, but most of which are generally applicable to any philosophical writing. These include avoiding jargon, being concise while retaining clarity, engaging in charitable or sympathetic interpretation, recognizing the

philosophical motivations of the scholars you are discussing, formal reconstruction of arguments/disputes, reframing debates in contemporary terms, and appreciating the broader dialectic.

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. 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: book one. For Hume, this aspect of mind is termed “the understanding”, and its central activities are imagining, judging, and reasoning.

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 605 Supervised Teaching

PHI 701 MA Thesis Guidance Tutorials (Arranged with Professor)

PHI 703 Dissertation Guidance Tutorials (Arranged with Professor)