

**DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY  
UNDERGRADUATE COURSE DESCRIPTIONS**

**Fall Semester August 26 – December 9, 2024**

**PHI 101 LAW Introduction to Philosophy**

**Dr. James Lawler**

M W F, 11:00 AM – 11:50 AM

Class #: 21937

The course will provide a general description of the basic philosophies of major civilizations evolving in world history. The background history to the development of these world philosophies will first be presented to provide context for understanding the differences in distinctly philosophical positions. Philosophies provide general meanings to human life in reflective form with rational justifications, rather than in the form of religion with its appeal to emotion and its dependence on authority and tradition. The first worldviews that evolve into philosophical theories are the early religions of the world, beginning with the animistic outlook of hunter-gatherers in which human beings understand themselves in a spiritual/emotional connection with the surrounding natural world. The major philosophies of India and China, the philosophies of the East, provide philosophical reflective meanings that are continuous with this animistic background, while the philosophies of the West, beginning with Greek philosophy, break from such animistic unity with the surrounding world.

After providing this general framework, the course first examines the major philosophical concepts of India, China, and ancient Greece in the context of distinctive characteristics of these three civilizations, so as to show the connection between their philosophical orientations and these historically specific characteristics. The course then examines the development of philosophy in Western Europe in the context of the rise of modern science—as both a development and transformation of ancient Greek philosophy under the impulse of the new sciences and the new historical experiences. The course examines philosophies of the Renaissance and early modern Enlightenment of Hobbes, Locke, Berkeley, and Hume, in the British tradition, and Descartes and Leibniz in continental Europe.

**PATHWAYS: PHI 101 Introduction to Philosophy satisfies the following pathways:  
Humanity and Global Reflections.**

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

T, Th 9:30 AM – 10:50 AM

Class #: 14691

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:  
Humanity and Global Reflections.**

**PHI 103 GRA Introducing Philosophy, Politics & Economics****Dr. David Gray**

M W F, 10:00 AM – 10:50 AM

Class #: 23740

Whether you're destined for the boardroom, the campaign trail, or simply want to be a more informed citizen, Philosophy, Politics, and Economics (PPE) will equip you with the tools to navigate the complexities of our ever-changing world. In this exploratory, hands-on course, you will discover how to apply key concepts, theories, and ideas of PPE to better understand and approach social problems while working with others to solve them. You will also meet guest speakers from Buffalo and Western New York and hear how PPE influences their work in improving our own communities.

**PHI 105 LON Contemporary Moral Problems****Dr. Duane Long**

ONLINE

Class #: 18466

The first third of the class will address issues of racial injustice in contemporary America and the ethics of proposed societal responses to historical and present-day racism. The second third of the class will address ethical concerns regarding economic class, including income and wealth inequality, wealth-based political disenfranchisement, and economic exploitation, as well as more and less radical possible responses to economic injustice. The final third of the class will center on the ethics of obeying the law, including whether there is a general obligation to obey the law, and if so, under what circumstances one is justified in breaking the law. We will also consider different kinds of ethically-motivated lawbreaking and the boundaries on what kind of illegal activism can be morally justified.

**PATHWAYS: PHI 105 Contemporary Moral Problems satisfies the following pathways: Health, Humanity, Innovation, Justice.**

**PHI 107 GRA Ethics**

**Dr. David Gray**

ONLINE

Class #: 18467

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 Ethics satisfies the following pathways: Environment, Health, Humanity, and Innovation.**

**PHI 115 BEE Critical Thinking**

**Dr. James Beebe**

T Th, 12:30 PM – 1:50 PM

Class #: 18483

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 #: 18484

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 DON UB Seminar: Philosophy in Literature****Dr. Maureen Donnelly**

T Th, 11:00 AM – 12:20 PM

Class #: 20807

Literary works often deal with philosophical issues such as how we should live, what counts as a good life, and whether (and to what extent) we are free to direct our own lives. In this class, we will consider these sorts of philosophical issues through both philosophical and literary works. Grades will be based on homework assignments, class participation, tests, and a short final paper.

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 VIN UB Seminar: Morality, Reality & Meaning****Dr. Sarah Vincent**

T Th, 9:30 AM – 10:50 AM

Class #: 15891

This section of PHI 199 centers on philosophical 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 210 HUR Introduction to Applied Ontology**

**Dr. Regina Hurley**

M W F, 9:00 AM – 9:50 AM

Class #: 23739

Applied ontology is a sub-discipline of knowledge representation that develops resources that make the meaning of terms accessible to computers to improve interoperability of data and to support reasoning with digital knowledge bases. This course introduces students to the fundamentals of applied ontology and its role in biomedical informatics. Students will learn what ontologies are, how they differ from similar resources, and how to build, evaluate and query ontologies. Students will also gain familiarity with a variety of different ontologies and their application in biomedical informatics.

### **PHI 215 DON Symbolic Logic**

**Dr. Maureen Donnelly**

T Th, 9:30 AM – 10:50 AM

Class #: 23733

The purpose of this course is to study the rules of correct reasoning. Symbolic logic uses symbols to focus on the general structure of reasoning rules, so we can develop standards of good reasoning that apply to any kind of subject matter (e.g. politics, business, science, engineering, medicine, and so on). We will practice putting arguments into symbols and using our symbolic logic to evaluate them. We will also get familiar with the rules themselves by practicing argument derivations and by learning special strategies of argumentation like the *conditional proof* or the *reductio ad absurdum*. This course will introduce students to both propositional logic and predicate logic.

**PHI 234 HUR Environmental Ethics**  
**Staff**

M W F, 2:00 PM – 2:50 PM  
Class #: 23943

This class will investigate the philosophical and ethical relation(s) between humans and human interests on the one hand and non-human parts of the natural world on the other.

**PATHWAYS: PHI 234 Environmental Ethics satisfies the following pathways:  
Environment, Humanity, and Justice.**

**PHI 234 LON Environmental Ethics**  
**Dr. Duane Long**

ONLINE  
Class #: 17112

This class will investigate the philosophical and ethical relation(s) between humans and human interests on the one hand and non-human parts of the natural world on the other.

**PATHWAYS: PHI 234 Environmental Ethics satisfies the following pathways:  
Environment, Humanity, and Justice.**

**PHI 237 HOV Medical Ethics: Social & Ethical Values in Medicine**  
**Dr. David Hershenov**

M W F, 9:00 AM – 9:50 AM  
Class #: 16318

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 about 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, defining death, organ donation and organ sales, conscientious refusal to provide some legal medical procedures, patient autonomy, informed consent, decision making for the incompetent, and enhancing humans.

The readings will provide arguments for both sides of each issue. 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 philosophical essays. All the required readings will be made available through UB Learns.

**PATHWAYS: PHI 237 Medical Ethics satisfies the following pathways: Health and Justice.**

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

**Dr. Regina Hurley**

ONLINE

Class #: 24057

This course is a study of moral and political problems related to medicine and biotechnology, with special attention to problems arising during the COVID-19 pandemic. In the first part of the course, we will study the physician-patient relationship. We will consider what values ought to govern that relationship, how those values may conflict, and how such conflicts are best resolved. We will pay special attention to ethical problems related to cultural differences and to the application of Western medical ethical principles in global clinical and research settings. In the second part of the course, we will turn to some specific ethical challenges related to biotechnology, including abortion, genetic manipulation, and physician-assisted death. We will close the course by surveying the burgeoning field of public health ethics, with particular attention to ethical issues related to global pandemic preparedness and response.

**PATHWAYS: PHI 237 Medical Ethics satisfies the following pathways: Health and Justice.**

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

**Dr. Duane Long**

ONLINE

Class #: 17759

We will examine major topics in the ethics of medicine/medical treatment at the beginning and end of life.

**PATHWAYS: PHI 237 Medical Ethics satisfies the following pathways: Health and Justice.**

**PHI 320 VIN Philosophy of Mind**

**Dr. Sarah Vincent**

T Th, 2:00 PM – 3:20 PM

Class #: 21939

How should we understand minds? Are minds and mental states physical or non-physical? Is the mind identical to the brain, or is it somehow more than that? Our consideration of questions like these will be facilitated by discussions of basic problems in the philosophy of mind, such as “the mind-body problem” and “the problem of other minds,” as well as several theories like dualism, behaviorism, materialism, functionalism, connectionism, and embodied cognition. With this foundation in place, we will transition into talking about more

specialized areas of philosophy of mind, including the philosophy of psychiatry and the philosophy of animal cognition.

Pre-requisites: One prior PHI course.

**PHI 323 BRU Decision Theory**

**Dr. Justin Bruner**

M W F, 10:00 AM – 10:50 AM

Class #: 23734

In this course, we will explore formal approaches to individual and group decision making, while assessing their philosophical significance and practical applications. First, we explore rational choice theory by considering the relationship between instrumental rationality and formal utility theory, different conceptions of preference and utility, and objections to the standard assumptions of rational choice. Following that, we have a brief interlude with game theory by addressing the prisoner's dilemma, Nash equilibrium, and backward induction. Finally, we connect the formal theory of rational choice to issues in social and political philosophy with a focus on social choice theory and its applications to democracy. Throughout, you will learn basic concepts and techniques essential for approaching and analyzing issues in the interdisciplinary field of philosophy, politics, and economics.

**PHI 341 PHI Social Philosophy**

**Dr. Alexander Schaefer**

M W F, 12:00 PM – 12:50 PM

Class #: 18485

In this course, we investigate the relationship between morality, justification, and social norms. The core question of the course is: When are we justified in curtailing the freedoms of others by demanding that they follow certain rules or behavioral standards? Through investigating this question, we will also confront several others, such as: What is social justice? How does it relate to notions of equality and freedom? And how does injustice or inequality become imbedded within our basic social structures? We will read a variety of classic and contemporary sources, including Cristina Bicchieri, Edna Ullmann-Margalit, John Stuart Mill, John Locke, and Gerald Gaus, among others.

**PATHWAYS: PHI 341 Social Philosophy satisfies the following pathway: Justice.**

**PHI 343 OPR Global Justice**

**Dr. Alexandra Oprea**

M W F, 3:00 PM – 3:50 PM

Class #: 23738

Around 767 million people (or about 10.7% of the global population) live in extreme poverty. These people frequently lack effective access to proper nutrition, adequate shelter, safe drinking water, and sanitation. As a result, they also bear the greatest burdens of famine



and epidemic disease, and they also frequently face social and political conditions of unrest and systematic oppression.

In this course, we will pursue the questions of what, if anything, we in technologically and economically developed nations owe to the global poor. We will therefore focus considerable attention on competing theories of global justice, as well as the interrelationships between poverty, health, and human rights. We will critically examine different strategies for international development that emphasize one or more of these three things, and we will consider how information about their complex interactions should be factored into the development process.

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

**Dr. Sarah Vincent**

M W F, 2:00 PM – 2:50 PM

Class #: 15894

What makes something ‘art’? Is everyone’s interpretation of an artwork’s meaning equally plausible, or is expertise important? Why do some of us appreciate a particular work of art, but others don’t connect to it? Can art have ethical value? Throughout this course, we’ll consider questions like these, bringing major philosophical figures as well as more contemporary philosophical theories into conversation with various artworks.

**PATHWAYS: PHI 345 Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art satisfies the following pathways: Humanity, Innovation, and Global Reflections.**

### **PHI 353 GRA Negotiation and Dispute Resolution**

**Dr. David Gray**

M W F, 1:00 PM – 1:50 PM

Class #: 19820

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 Negotiation and Dispute Resolution satisfies the following pathway: Justice.**

**PHI 356 BIT Special Topics: Introduction to Mereotopology****Dr. Thomas Bittner**

M W F, 2:00 PM – 2:50 PM

Class #: 23994

In this course we start with 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, holes, and environments. The course should be regarded as an exercise in the use of computational and logical methods for philosophical purposes.

**PHI 366 DUN Medieval Philosophy****Dr. Stewart Duncan**

T Th, 9:30 AM – 10:50 AM

Class #: 23736

The medieval period in the history of philosophy is 1,000 years long. Rather than trying somehow to survey everything (which is impossible) we will concentrate on three significant works. These focus on ethics and politics, but touch on many other philosophical issues. We will begin with Boethius' sixth-century *Consolation of Philosophy*. This book discussing the good, happiness, and indeed God was widely read during the medieval period. Our second book will be Thomas Aquinas' thirteenth-century *Treatise on Happiness* and *Treatise on Human Acts*, parts of his *Summa theologiae*. Here Aquinas addresses some basic ethical questions about what happiness is and how it can be achieved, and others about our actions and what makes them good or bad. We will finish by looking at Francisco de Vitoria's sixteenth-century lectures on political philosophy. These discuss big questions of political philosophy, and issues of the time such as the Spanish empire in the Americas, using a philosophical approach influenced by Aquinas.

**PHI 370 POW Early Modern Philosophy****Dr. Lewis Powell**

T Th, 3:30 PM – 4:50 PM

Class #: 16319

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: Humanity and Global Reflections.**

**PHI 380 LAW Nineteenth Century Philosophy**

**Dr. James Lawler**

M W F, 1:00 PM – 1:50 PM

Class #: 23735

In his systematic philosophical works, Kant attempts to resolve the contradictions in early modern philosophy between materialist empiricism and idealist rationalism. In his conception of appearance and reality, Kant seeks to reconcile the antinomies of matter and spirit, determinism and free will, self-interest and morality, secular science, and a religion indicated by reason itself.

If Kant's philosophy culminated one stage in the history of Western philosophy that began with Descartes, it started a second stage, in which Kant's ideas were put to the test in various ways. Hegel, followed by Marx, argues that an expanded conception of reason can resolve the oppositions generated by Kant's abstract conceptual analysis. More impressed by Kant's stress on the limits of reason, Nietzsche argues that ultimate reality can be accessed self-overcoming, which he calls the super-human. William James takes Kant's limits of reason as a basis for an alternative to materialist science that justifies belief in human immortality.

Such philosophical perspectives were generally linked to the central questions of social life. Kant establishes moral limits to the freedom of the market of Adam Smith's laissez-faire capitalism. Hegel provides grounds for what is now called welfare-state capitalism. Marx argues that human freedom and democracy require the egalitarian economics of socialism. By contrast Nietzsche draws from the Darwinian struggle for survival grounds for transcending humanity itself, for the creation of the Superhuman. William James returns to Kant in his essay for a pragmatic spiritualism as an alternative to materialism.

**PATHWAYS: PHI 380 Nineteenth Century Philosophy satisfies the following pathways: Humanity, Innovation and Justice.**

**PHI 410 SCH Social Norms**

**Dr. Alexander Schaefer**

M W F, 10:00 AM – 10:50 AM

Class #: 23819

This course focuses on the nature of norms, that is, patterns of behavior, often supported by moralistic attitudes and punishment mechanisms, that establish mutual expectations. The first part of the course draws on work by Edna Ullmann-Margalit and Cristina Bicchieri to provide definitions and classifications of different kinds of norms. The second part studies how such norms emerge through cultural evolutionary processes. Part three of the

course explores how we can measure, evaluate, and modify norms. And part four studies how norms interact with other social and political institutions.

**PHI 489 BEV Special Topics: Intelligence Analysis**

**Dr. John Beverley**

T Th, 11:00 AM – 12:20 PM

Class #: 23818

In this seminar, we will focus on applying ontology engineering strategies to intelligence analysis methods for data extraction, gathering, curation, and use. We will delve into the philosophical and ontological underpinnings of contemporary intelligence paradigms, and grapple with questions concerning knowledge, truth, ethics, and decision-making within the intelligence sphere. Given the nature of intelligence analysis, discussions will be anchored in real-world challenges of and opportunities emerging from intelligence operations. For example, we will critically examine a spectrum of topics from the digital battlegrounds of future wars to the ontology of terrorism and the ethical implications of artificial intelligence in espionage. Engaging with both applied ontology literature and cutting-edge intelligence research, students will develop competency in evaluating and innovating within the field of intelligence analysis.

Undergraduate Tutorial Sections:

PHI 498 Philosophy Undergraduate Tutorials

PHI 499 Philosophy Undergraduate Tutorials

*Meeting days and times as arranged with professors.*