

Philosophy Department
University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Course Offerings
for
Spring Semester 2017
(1171)

Instructor: TBA

Class #3434, PHIL 101-101

Introduction to Philosophy

T 6:30-9:20 pm, OLDH 305

Historical-cultural introduction to philosophy. Considers a broad range of philosophical problems in relation to the major historical and cultural conditions which have influenced their formulations and proposed solutions.

Topics: the principles of rational inquiry; the nature of knowledge; the metaphysics of mind, world, and God; and the sources and authority of morality.

This course can be used to satisfy either ACE 5 (Humanities) or ACE 8 (Ethics).

Rachel Goodman

Class #3435, PHIL 101-150

Introduction to Philosophy

MW 9:30-10:20 am, BURN 115

This course is an introduction to philosophy, but it is not a survey course: that is, we will not attempt to cover all (or even most) of the philosophical subfields. Rather, the course will focus on some foundational questions in metaphysics, epistemology and philosophy of mind. Our starting point will be two key texts from the history of philosophy (Descartes' *Meditations* and Hume's *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*), but we will also read contemporary treatments (and other historical treatments) of the same questions addressed in these texts. One of our aims in moving between historical and contemporary texts will be to see how issues raised in the history of philosophy continue to be important in contemporary philosophy.

Seeing this will teach us something about what philosophy is. Philosophy is an activity whose aim is to address basic or foundational questions about a range of topics, by thinking clearly and carefully about them. These questions often do not yield easy answers. But, by thinking rigorously about them, philosophers hope to come to a better understanding of the questions themselves and of the world around us.

Some questions we will discuss:

- Do we have knowledge (of the external world, of ourselves, of God)?
- What are the means of acquiring knowledge and belief (for example, perception, testimony, reasoning)?
- What is a mind? How does the mind relate to the body, and the material world?
- Is there a self? What is the self?
- What makes a thing (say, a plant, an animal, a person, or an artifact) the same thing over time?
- Do we have evidence for our everyday beliefs? Is it permissible to form beliefs without evidence?
- What is the relation of philosophy to common sense?

This course can be used to satisfy either ACE 5 (Humanities) or ACE 8 (Ethics).

Harry Ide
Class #4341, PHIL 101-250
Introduction to Philosophy
TTH 11:00-11:50 am, OTHM 106

We'll consider some topics in ethics, theory of knowledge, and human nature. The course will focus on improving student skills, both with using examples in relation to the kinds of abstract theories philosophers typically deal with, and also with using more abstract arguments for and against those theories. Assignments (including weekly review questions, exams, and papers) will focus on using those skills.

This course can be used to satisfy either ACE 5 (Humanities) or ACE 8 (Ethics).

Colin McLear
Class #25947, PHIL 105-350
Philosophy of Food
TTH 11:00-11:50 am, HAH 102

Food is a central part of human life, both in its production and consumption. Food is closely tied to the values that we hold and the cultural identities that we endorse (e.g. the sorts of things that we eat vs. the sorts of things that they eat). Our choices about food, both as individuals and as a society, raise a variety of moral, political, social, and economic questions. In this course we'll investigate these questions using a variety of methods and sources.

Mark van Roojen
Class #3441, PHIL 106-150
Philosophy and Current Issues
TTH 9:30-10:20 am

The class will focus on a number of ethical topics of current interest, in particular world hunger, war, economic inequality, rights to sexual privacy, capital punishment, and incarceration. Each of these issues presents various choices between different and even conflicting individual and social policies. The class will focus on reasons for and against adopting various courses of action, and will explore the cogency of the reasons offered.

Students will work out their own positions and, hopefully, come to better understand opposing views. In the course of examining these reasons, we will become more familiar with a very general distinction between various forms of ethical justification - the distinction between consequentialist justifications and nonconsequentialist justifications. We will explore how various positions about the specific issues are amenable to either form of justification.

Readings for the class will encompass both classic texts and current articles from philosophy journals, but most of these will be available on line and on reserve so there will be very little if any reading to buy.

Major Assignments: Two tests; two papers; clicker participation.

This course can be used to satisfy either ACE 8 (Ethics) or ACE 9 (Global Awareness/Knowledge of Human Diversity).

John Brunero
Class #3446, PHIL 106-250
Philosophy and Current Issues
MW 11:30 am-12:20 pm, BESY 117

The course will introduce some of the important questions of moral philosophy: What is it for a life to go well? (Is the good life one of happiness, one in which you get what you want, or one in which you accomplish something of value?) What is it to act in a morally right way? (Is it to produce the best consequences possible? Is it to act in accordance with certain moral principles? If so, which principles?) Why should we act in a morally right way, especially when doing so often appears contrary to our self-interest? What is the relationship between morality and religion? Are there objective moral truths, or is ethical truth relative to cultures or individuals? We'll then consider the application of moral philosophy to some current ethical issues: Is it morally acceptable to kill and eat animals or use animals in experiments? Is abortion immoral? Is capital punishment unjust? Is torture ever permissible? What are our obligations to relieve world poverty? Is euthanasia ever morally permissible? Is there an obligation to obey the law? When is civil disobedience justified? Should the recreational use of drugs be illegal?

The course will consist of two lectures and one discussion section per week. Students are required to attend both the lectures and their assigned discussion section. There are no prerequisites for this course.

This course can be used to satisfy either ACE 8 (Ethics) or ACE 9 (Global Awareness/Knowledge of Human Diversity).

Instructor: TBA
Class #17246, PHIL 106-350
Philosophy and Current Issues
MW 11:30 am-12:20 pm, HAH 102

Critical survey of current issues and the role of philosophy in attempts to resolve them. Recent topics: sexual morality, pornography and the law, capital punishment, sexism and racism, extraordinary treatment for the terminally ill, abortion, church and state, and nuclear war and disarmament.

This course can be used to satisfy either ACE 8 (Ethics) or ACE 9 (Global Awareness/Knowledge of Human Diversity).

Instructor: TBA
Class #3455, PHIL 110-150
Introduction to Logic and Critical Thinking
TTH 9:30-10:20 am, HENZ 53

Introduction to the principles of correct reasoning and their application. Emphasis on improving skills of thinking and reading critically, analyzing and evaluating arguments objectively, and constructing sound arguments based on relevant evidence.

This class is certified for ACE 3 (Mathematical, Statistical, or Formal Reasoning).

Reina Hayaki
Class #9352, PHIL 211-001
Introduction to Modern Logic
TTH 11:00 am-12:15 pm, JH 249

PHIL 211 is an introduction to symbolic logic, covering sentential (propositional) logic, monadic predicate logic (with one-place predicates and simple quantifiers), and polyadic predicate logic (with relational predicates and nested quantifiers). At each stage, you will learn how to translate English sentences into the relevant logical language and vice versa; how to construct proofs of valid arguments using natural deduction; and how to test arguments for validity, as well as sets of sentences for consistency, using the tree method. This course is highly recommended for those planning to take the LSAT, GRE, or other standardized tests with an analytical component.

PHIL 211 has no prerequisites. It does not presuppose PHIL 110 (Introduction to Logic and Critical Thinking). There is a small amount of overlap between the last part of PHIL 110 and the first part of PHIL 211.

Textbook: Virginia Klenk, Understanding Symbolic Logic, 5th edition (Prentice-Hall, 2008).

Major assignments: two in-class exams and seven take-home problem sets.

This course is certified for ACE 3 (Mathematical, Statistical, or Formal Reasoning).

Aaron Bronfman
Class #4154, PHIL 213-001
Medical Ethics
TTH 9:30-10:45 am

This course covers a wide variety of moral issues in the ethics of medicine and the allocation of healthcare. These issues include the moral status of the embryo and fetus (abortion, stem cell research), the current or future ways in which parents seek to change their children's physical attributes or genetic makeup (cochlear implants, genetic enhancement, cloning), the limits in a medical context of what can be bought and sold (commercial surrogacy, organ sales), the role of rights and fairness in a healthcare system (rights to healthcare, allocation of scarce resources), and the proper extent of control over one's own body (amputation by choice, assisted suicide, euthanasia, advance directives).

The focus of the course is on assessing arguments for and against different positions on these moral issues, with background information provided as needed. The course requires a reading response for most weeks, two 4-page papers, and class participation.

This course can be used to satisfy either ACE 5 (Humanities) or ACE 8 (Ethics).

David Henderson

Class #4411, PHIL 216-001

Introduction to Psychology and Philosophy

TTH 2:00-3:15 pm, OLDH 205

This course will explore three topics to which both psychological research and philosophical reflection are relevant: moral psychology, evolution and norms, epistemology and the character of human cognitive processes.

A central concern in the class will be the respects in which recent work in psychology may have deep implications for both the methods and the theories of philosophy. We will pay close attention to competing understandings of philosophical methods and associated philosophical positions. What are the goals these assign to the philosopher? What are the products of philosophy to be like? What are the resources that they imagine philosophers to possess? A central motive for the class will then be to look at some recent work in psychology and cognitive science generally, and to ask what might be the implications of this work for philosophy. For example, for some understanding of philosophy and its methods, the empirical work may suggest that the philosophers lack the resources they have supposed they have. (Access to conceptual truths, for example.) For other understandings, work in psychology and cognitive science may itself provide materials which themselves are needed to for the philosopher's own work. (More naturalistic understandings of philosophical methods have grown in influence over the last 30 years.) Thus, with respect to one important humanities discipline, philosophy, the class will address the question: what knowledge, what perspectives, what forms of analysis, what standards of evaluation and evidence, are appropriate to it. And, more specifically, it will ask what information from psychology and cognitive sciences are important for it.

This course is certified for ACE 5 (Humanities)

Jennifer McKittrick

Class #9353, PHIL 218-001

Philosophy of Feminism

TTH 9:30-10:45 am, OLDH 203

This course will explore some of the fundamental assumptions and philosophical foundations of varieties of feminist thought. We will begin with a survey of “women’s” issues, such as work and family, sexual harassment, and abortion. It will go on to explore the nature of gender, gender identity, sex differences, and the role of science in defining sex and gender.

This course can be used to satisfy either ACE 5 (Humanities) or ACE 9 (Global Awareness/Knowledge of Human Diversity)

David Henderson

Class #3460, PHIL 225-001

Environmental Ethics

TTH 11:00 am-12:15 pm, RVB 124

This course begins with a reflective overview of general approaches in philosophical ethics. This is background. The bulk of the class then is a survey of approaches specific to environmental ethics. We will consider the central matter of what persons, groups, things, and systems are properly taken to have fundamental “moral considerability.” What things are properly the focus of one’s the fundamental—or nonderivative—moral valuing or obligations, and what things are derivatively valuable or matters of obligation? Various positions treat persons, perhaps just humans or sentient beings, as the objects of fundamental concern. Some suggest that the environment can have such status. After this tour of some philosophical positions we focus on applications of these positions in connection with two matters: food and global climate change.

This course can be used to satisfy either ACE 8 (Ethics) or ACE 9 (Global Awareness/Knowledge of Human Diversity)

Colin McLear
Class #3924, PHIL 232-001
History of Modern Philosophy
TTH 2:00-3:15 pm, OLDH 204

This course offers an introductory survey of some of the key figures in early modern (17th—18th century) European philosophy. These include: Descartes, Locke, Leibniz, Newton, and Hume. Our main focus will be on the enormously influential theories of René Descartes, specifically his theories of mind and nature, as well as subsequent reactions, criticisms, and (partial) defenses of his views in the writings of other prominent philosophers. Major themes include the nature of mind and matter, the structure of scientific explanation, causation and necessity, free will, and the existence of God.

Edward Becker
Class #4620, PHIL 265-001
Philosophy of Religion
TTH 9:30-10:45 am, BURN 103

This course treats some of the main traditional issues in the philosophy of religion, such as the existence of God, the immortality of the soul, and the relation between faith and reason. We also discuss the nature of religion itself, in the context of a comparative philosophical study of the world's great religions. Readings are from both classical and contemporary sources.

Requirements include an hour exam, a term paper, and a final exam.

This course can be used to satisfy either ACE 5 (Humanities) or ACE 9 (Global Awareness/Knowledge of Human Diversity)

Rachel Goodman
Class #9354, PHIL 314-001
Problems in the Philosophy of Mind
MW 2:30-3:45 pm, OLDH 204

In this course, we will focus on several central problems in the philosophy of mind, but with a particular focus on the relationship between philosophical questions about the mind and cognitive scientific study of the mind. Our aim will be to understand the mind as a reasoning, representing entity, but one that is part of the natural world. Some questions we will cover are the following: Is there a naturalistic understanding of mental 'aboutness'? What are concepts, and why should we think there are any? Are some of our mental abilities innate? What is the correct theory of mental imagery?

Aaron Bronfman

Class #4622, PHIL 320-001

Ethical Theory

TTH 12:30-1:45 pm, JH 251

This course is a survey of ethical theory, including general theories of right and wrong action and theories of the nature of morality, with readings primarily drawn from the past 50 years.

One half of the course is devoted to understanding the content of ethics and morality. Questions to be considered include: What experiences and accomplishments make for a valuable life? Is there a single principle of morality, or are there many particular obligations of different types? Do distinctions such as those between killing and letting die, or between intending and merely foreseeing, matter in morality? What is the connection between the rightness of an action and the goodness or badness of its consequences? What character traits count as virtues, and is it possible for human beings to be virtuous?

The other half of the course is devoted to more foundational questions about the nature of morality itself. These questions include: Are there moral facts, or are moral judgments simply expressions of emotion? Is morality objective, or always relative to particular societies? What similarities and differences are there between ethics and natural science? What connections exist between moral judgments, moral motivation, and reasons to act? Can people properly be held morally responsible for what they do?

The course text is "Ethical Theory: An Anthology" (2nd Ed.), by Russ Shafer-Landau. Requirements consist of a reading response for most weeks, two 6-page papers, and class participation.

This course can be used to satisfy either ACE 5 (Humanities) or ACE 8 (Ethics).

Jean Cahan

Class #4623, PHIL 332-001

Spinoza

TTH 12:30-1:45 pm, CBA 107

In this course we study both the principal philosophical text, the 'Ethics', and the renowned work of political theory, the 'Theological-Political Treatise'. The former lays out Spinoza's distinctive conception of the mind/body relation, freedom and determinism in human affairs, and the nature of God. The second work, the 'Treatise', contains his innovative thinking on the bases of government and the conditions of a liberal society. Spinoza was one of the founders of modern liberal political theory, and we consider how his idea emerged in the context of the civil unrest and wars of the 17th Century in Europe and Britain.

This course is certified for ACE 5 (Humanities)

Harry Ide
Class #9355, PHIL 338-001
Metaphysics: Ancient and Medieval
TTH 2:00-3:15 pm, BURN 102

Questions about human nature are among the historically central questions of metaphysics. We'll study some central Hellenistic, neoplatonic, and medieval answers to those questions.

Key issues will include these:

a) human nature

Do human beings have only material parts? Only immaterial? Both? (If both, how are they connected? How do they interact?)

b) synchronic unity

What makes a human being into a single thing (and not just a temporary conglomeration of parts)?

c) diachronic unity

What makes a human being the same human being at different times?

This course is certified for ACE 5 (Humanities)

Edward Becker
Class #9356, PHIL 405
Philosophy of Language
T 1:30-4:05, OLDH 1007

This course will be an introductory survey of the philosophy of language. Topics to be covered will include: reference, descriptions, names, demonstratives, truth, meaning, speech acts, and propositional attitudes. The authors whose writings we will study will include: Frege, Russell, Strawson, Mill, Kripke, Kaplan, Quine, Grice, Tarski, and Davidson. There will be a mid-term exam, a term paper, and a final exam. Students taking the class under the number 405 will be graded less stringently than students taking it under the number 805. There are no prerequisites, but some knowledge of quantificational logic would be helpful.

Jennifer McKittrick
Class #9358, PHIL 418
Metaphysics
TH 1:30-4:45 pm, OLDH 1007

This course will survey metaphysical topics such as: the problem of universals, the nature of particular objects, propositions, modality, the nature of time, and persistence.
