

**Department of Philosophy**  
**Course Descriptions for Fall 2020**  
**(term code 1208)**

**PHIL 101-150: Introduction to Philosophy**

**H. Ide**

MonWed 11:30 am – 12:20 pm

**COURSE GOALS**

After taking this course (including preparing for each class, participating in each class, reviewing after each class, doing the assignments, and reviewing the comments on assignments), students will ...

- (1) be better able to give and use examples, in particular
  - (a) when applying a general theory to a specific situation,
  - (b) when arguing from examples to a general theory,
  - (c) when raising counter-examples to a theory,
  - (d) when using hypothetical (even wildly hypothetical counter-examples) to evaluate a theory
  - (e) understanding the difference between using examples to prove specific claims (or disprove general claims), on the one hand, and using examples to support general claims (or refute specific claims), on the other hand
- (2) be better able to write coherent argumentative essays
  - (a) with an explicit, clear, thesis (that is, conclusion, not simply a topic)
  - (b) with a clear structure that emphasizes the student's key ideas supporting the thesis
  - (c) with paragraphs with paragraph thesis sentences that tie the claims in the paragraph into a single coherent whole, and make clear how that helps establish the thesis
  - (d) with evidence in favor of the thesis (including giving evidence for empirical claims)
  - (e) with references as required (including whenever the paper claims someone says or believes something, and for all quoted words and borrowed ideas)
- (3) understand some philosophical theories in epistemology, ethics, and metaphysics

**ASSIGNMENTS**

Assignments will probably be three argumentative essays, three open-book exams (each consisting of six short-answer (roughly one paragraph) questions), weekly review questions, and weekly writing assignments

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

**PHIL 101-250: Introduction to Philosophy**

**J. Mendola**

TuesThurs 9:30 am – 10:20 am

This is an historical introduction to philosophy. We will consider a broad range of philosophical issues, including the nature of ethical truth, the relationship between the mind and the body, and the existence of God. We read a wide range of famous philosophers.

The principle text is Stephen Cahn (ed.), *Classics of Western Philosophy, 8th Edition, 2012.*

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

**PHIL 105-150: Philosophy of Food****C. McLear**

TuesThurs 11:00 am – 11:50 am

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, but with an eye to their philosophical importance.

This course may be used to satisfy either Ace 5 (Humanities) or Ace 8 (Ethics)

**PHIL 106-150: Philosophy and Current Issues****P. Q. White**

MonWed 11:30 am – 12:20 pm

Sometimes it's easy to know what one should do: study hard, brush your teeth, eat healthy meals, be kind to your friends, don't steal. This class considers four topics in which figuring out what one should do, and why, is anything but easy. Suppose you know that if you tell the truth about some sensitive matter, your friend will be crushed. Should you lie to protect his feelings? If not, why not? Why should we tell the truth? And when, if ever, should we conceal it? Or imagine you are about to spend \$20 on a nice meal. Should spend that money on yourself when that same \$20 could pay for the deworming of 60 school children in the developing world—one of the best ways to increase school completion rates? In general, our time, effort, money and attention can do tremendous good if it is directed towards the very needy instead of to ourselves or our friends and family; should we give our money, time or even our careers to helping those in need? Is it immoral not to? Having considered these questions about how we should treat human beings, we will turn to the topic of non-human animals. Can we eat them? Use them for scientific experimentation? Why or why not? And what, if anything, are our obligations towards them? Lastly, we will turn to the topic of race and racism: what is race? What is racism? How do they shape us? And how should racism be addressed?

This class does not offer simple answers; it equips students with the philosophical tools necessary for clear, systematic, and rigorous thought about these and other topics in ethics that we encounter in our every day lives. Students in this writing intensive course will grow as creative and independent thinkers, with heavy emphasis placed on developing students' argumentative writing.

This course may be used to satisfy either ACE 8 (Ethics) or ACE 9 (Global/Diversity).

**PHIL 106-250: Philosophy and Current Issues****M. van Roojen**

MonWed 9:30 am – 10:20 am

The class will focus on a number of ethical topics of current interest, in particular world hunger, war, economic inequality, and racial justice. 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 may be used to satisfy either ACE 8 (Ethics) or ACE 9 (Global/Diversity)

**PHIL 106-350: Philosophy and Current Issues****J. Brunero**

TuesThurs 9:30 am – 10:20 am

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 quiz section per week. Students are required to attend both the lectures and their assigned quiz section. There are no prerequisites for this course.

This course may be used to satisfy either ACE 8 (Ethics) or ACE 9 (Global/Diversity).

**PHIL 110-150: Introduction to Logic and Critical Thinking****A. Casullo**

TuesThurs 9:30 am – 10:20 am

This course provides an introduction to the principles of formal reasoning and their application, with an emphasis on improving skills of critical thinking, analyzing and evaluating arguments objectively, and constructing sound arguments based on relevant evidence.

Requirements: Four examinations. Exam 1 (30 points) covers the basic concepts of logic. Exam 2 (80 points) covers the principles of syllogistic logic. Exam 3 (60 points) and Exam 4 (80 points) cover the principles of propositional logic. Nine quizzes, based on the weekly homework assignments, will be given in the Friday quiz sections. Each quiz is worth 10 points. Your lowest quiz score will be dropped, resulting in a combined quiz total of 80 points.

Textbooks: P. Hurley & L. Watson, *A Concise Introduction to Logic*, 13<sup>th</sup> edition. Assignments on Canvas.

This class is certified for ACE 3 (Math/Stat/Reasoning), and satisfies the logic requirement for the philosophy major.

**PHIL 213-101: Medical Ethics****Staff**

Wednesday 6:30 pm – 9:20 pm

Philosophical study of moral problems in modern medicine, exploring such issues as the allocation of scarce medical resources, patients' rights, research on human subjects, abortion, the care of seriously impaired newborns, and socialized medicine and the right to health care.

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

**PHIL 213-150: Medical Ethics****Staff**

TuesThurs 11:00 am – 11:50 am

Philosophical study of moral problems in modern medicine, exploring such issues as the allocation of scarce medical resources, patients' rights, research on human subjects, abortion, the care of seriously impaired newborns, and socialized medicine and the right to health care.

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

**PHIL 213-700: Medical Ethics****Bronfman**

Online Distance Class

This online 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, genetic enhancement), the role of information (confidentiality, informed consent, scientific research), 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 (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 participation in weekly small-group videoconferences.

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

**PHIL 221-001: Political Philosophy****A. Thompson**

TuesThurs 12:30 pm – 1:45 pm

A discussion of the basic concepts and problems of political theory. Particular attention will be paid to freedom, equality, democracy, justice, and the relation of the individual to the state. Readings will be selected from both classical and contemporary sources. Some consideration will be given to current political issues.

Written work for the course will include one hour-exam, a paper, and a final exam at the end of the semester.

This course is certified for ACE 8 (Ethics).

**PHIL 225-001: Environmental Ethics****D. Henderson**

TuesThurs 9:30 am – 10:45 am

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 may be used to satisfy either ACE 8 (Ethics) or ACE 9 (Global/Diversity).

**PHIL 230-001: Philosophy of Law****J. Brunero**

TuesThurs 2:00 pm – 3:15 pm

This course is divided into three parts. In the first part, we’ll discuss various issues concerning the relationship between law and morality. In the second part, we’ll consider several important legal and moral concepts, including liberty, privacy, justice, and equality. In the third part, we’ll consider issues related to punishment and responsibility. We’ll read essays by philosophers and lawyers, as well as the judicial opinions in several important US Supreme Court cases. The course does not presuppose any background in philosophy or in law.

Here are some of the questions we’ll consider in this course: Are unjust laws legally valid? Is there a moral obligation to obey the law? Which standards should we employ when we attempt to interpret the law and the Constitution? Why is liberty important and to what extent should people be left free to do as they choose? What are the proper limits to free speech and expression? What are the Constitutional and moral grounds for personal privacy and autonomy? What does it mean to treat people justly and equally? Why, and to what extent, should we punish criminals? Is capital punishment morally permissible? Should we punish unsuccessful attempts at murder less severely than successful attempts, and, if so, why? Should people be held legally responsible for their omissions as well as their actions? When are people excused from responsibility for their acts?

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

**PHIL 231-001: History of Philosophy (Ancient)****H. Ide**

MonWedFri 9:00 am – 10:20 am

Western philosophy began in ancient Greece when people started to think systematically about the world and themselves. We'll look at some of their most interesting and influential questions and answers, concentrating on the two greatest Greek philosophers, Plato and Aristotle. We'll discuss three questions. What is moral, and why should anyone care about morality? What gives us good reason for believing something? What is there in the world? (For example, are humans simply matter arranged in various ways?)

The required written work will probably be:

- (a) two short argumentative essays (in two versions each)
- (b) a series of short assignments to improve student skills at writing argumentative essays.
- (c) open-book exams (which may be short answer questions about the views we discuss in class)

This course is certified for ACE 5 (Humanities), and also meets the Arts and Sciences college degree requirement C.

**PHIL 265-001: Philosophy of Religion****A. Thompson**

TuesThurs 9:30 am – 10:45 am

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 is certified for ACE 9 (Global/Diversity).

**PHIL 301-001: Theory of Knowledge****A. Casullo**

TuesThurs 2:00 pm – 3:15 pm

This course provides an Introduction to some major problems of epistemology, with emphasis on the understanding and evaluation of the problems, rather than what various philosophers have said about them.

Course topics (tentative) include scepticism, the concept of knowledge, the concept of justification, the sources of human knowledge, knowledge of the external world, and a priori knowledge.

Course goals: To provide an understanding of some central issues in contemporary epistemology and their historical backgrounds. To develop the following skills: read analytically primary philosophical texts, evaluate critically philosophical positions and arguments, write sustained, coherent philosophical essays and papers, and conduct philosophical research.

Course Requirements (tentative): Two or three essay exams, Library Research Project and Research Paper, and oral presentation.

This course is certified for ACE 5 (Humanities), and satisfies the metaphysics and epistemology requirement for the philosophy major.

**PHIL 302-001: Introduction to Metaphysics**

**J. McKittrick**

TuesThurs 9:30 am – 10:45 am

Question the fundamental nature of reality! Topics include:

- Objects and their Properties
- Space and Time
- Causation
- Change and Persistence

Degree requirements: Meets ACE 5 or the College of Arts & Sciences degree requirement C (Humanities) and satisfies the metaphysics and epistemology requirement for the philosophy major.

**PHIL 323-001: Topics in Applied Ethics**

**M. van Roojen**

MonWed 3:30 pm – 4:45 pm

This class will focus on environmental ethics and especially climate change, covering both practical ethical issues about how to respond to various considerations and to the reality of climate change, but also branching out into theoretical issues that come up in thinking about the nature of environmental value, obligations not to harm future generations, dealing with risk and the distribution of burdens in decision-making and so on.

The main course work will be two short and one longer paper and some form of discussion, either on line or in class.

This course is certified for ACE 5 (Humanities), and satisfies the value theory requirement for the philosophy major.

**PHIL 417-001 / 817-001: Philosophy of Science**

**J. Mendola**

Wednesdays 3:30 pm – 6:05 pm

Prerequisite: 3 hours of PHIL or graduate standing

Intensive study of some main problems in the philosophy of science: explanation and prediction in the sciences, the nature of scientific laws, functional explanations in the sciences, the structure of scientific theories, the ontological status of theoretical entities, the reduction of scientific theories, and the confirmation of scientific hypotheses, with special attention to philosophy of physics.

**PHIL 424-001 / 824-001: Philosophy of Action**

**A. Bronfman**

Thursdays 3:30 pm – 6:05 pm

Prerequisite: 9 hours of PHIL or graduate standing

Foundational issues in human action, including the nature of intentional action, practical reasoning, moral responsibility, group agency, and various forms of irrationality.

**PHIL 913:001: Advanced Epistemology**

**D. Henderson**

Tuesday 4:00 pm – 6:05 pm

Topic: Social Epistemology

The course will be built around two recent books, supplemented by associated pieces in the philosophical literature.

Goldberg, S. (2018). *To the Best of Our Knowledge: Social Expectations and Epistemic Normativity*.  
Oxford: Oxford University Press

Hannon, M. (2019). *What's the Point of Knowledge: A Function First Epistemology*.  
New York: Oxford University Press

**PHIL 920-001: Ethical Theory**

**P. Q. White**

Mondays 3:30 pm – 5:35 pm

What is love? What, if any reasons, do we have to love others? And what is the connection (or tension) between love, on the one hand, and morality on the other. This course will focus on contemporary work on the topic.

**PHIL 971-001: Kant**

**C. McLear**

Tuesdays 1:30 pm – 3:35 pm

Kant famously considers moral agency to consist in acting from a grasp of rational principles as such. But what is a rational principle and what is it to act from such a principle? In this seminar we'll look at how Kant answers these questions, and evaluate the theory of rational agency that results. We'll also look at the reception of Kant's position in contemporary Anglophone philosophy, particularly in the work of Frankfurt, Korsgaard, Velleman, Reath, and Herman. Some related questions we'll be trying to find answers to include:

- How does Kant conceive of the connection between rational action and free action?
- What kind of metaphysical commitments does Kant build into his conception of rational action? Do any of these commitments seem plausible today?
- What is the importance of the capacity for self-consciousness with respect to being rational?