

Philosophy Department Fall 2021 Course Descriptions

PHIL 101: Introduction to Philosophy (Mendola)

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

The principal text is Stephen Cahn (ed.), *Classics of Western Philosophy*, 8th edition, 2012. The course requirements include two exams and a paper.

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

PHIL 101: Introduction to Philosophy (Hayaki)

We will examine a range of important topics that have been discussed by philosophers through the ages: the existence or non-existence of God and the rationality of religious belief; the concept of knowledge, and whether we have any knowledge of the world around us; the nature of the mind and its relationship to the body, and how the two are related to the self; determinism, free will, and moral responsibility; the relationship between morality and rationality, and conflicting accounts of what makes an action right or wrong. These topics cover a lot of ground, but they are united by a couple of broad themes: Who are we, and how do we fit into the world?

This course is certified for both ACE 5 (Humanities) and ACE 8 (Ethics). You will be able to choose which one of these two requirements you want this course to count for.

Textbook: Gideon Rosen, Alex Byrne, Joshua Cohen, Elizabeth Harman, and Seana Shiffrin (eds.), *The Norton Introduction to Philosophy*, 2nd ed. (W. W. Norton & Co., 2018).

Major assignments: two exams and a paper. Additional smaller assignments, to be determined.

PHIL 105 The Philosophy of Food (McLear)

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 can be used to satisfy either Ace 5 (Humanities) or Ace 8 (Ethics)

PHIL 106 Philosophy and Current Issues (Brunero)

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

Philosophy Department Fall 2021 Course Descriptions

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 106 Philosophy and Current Issues (White)

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 topics in which figuring out what one should do, and why, is anything but easy. Imagine you are about to spend \$20 on a nice meal. Should you 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? What about 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 everyday lives. Students in this writing intensive course will grow as creative and independent thinkers, with heavy emphasis placed on developing students' argumentative writing and developing the skills to read and unpack the arguments and ideas of others.

PHIL 106 Philosophy and Current Issues (van Roojen)

The class will focus on a number of ethical topics of current interest, most likely four of the following world hunger, war, economic inequality, rights to sexual privacy, 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

Philosophy Department Fall 2021 Course Descriptions

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 will satisfy either ACE 8 (Ethics) and ACE 9 (Global Awareness/Knowledge of Human Diversity)

PHIL 110: Introduction to Logic and Critical Thinking (A. Casullo)

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 and nine quizzes. Textbooks: P. Hurley & L. Watson, A Concise Introduction to Logic, 13th edition. Assignments on Canvas. This class is certified for ACE 3 (Math/Stat/Reasoning), and satisfies the logic requirement for the philosophy major.

PHIL 208: Business Ethics (Thompson)

This course aims to develop students' mature reasoning about complex moral issues in business contexts. Students will critically explore, envision, evaluate, and strategically create understanding toward that goal.

Major Assignments: Three opportunities to create a progress journal. Progress journals are composed of three types of assignments—briefly, work we do during class, work we do outside of class, and a final report. Students shape their learning experience by choosing which type of outside work to do and which type of final report to complete. Each assignment focuses on practical choice-making and moral reasoning in a manner that illuminates the normative contours of things like trust-destroying, business-centered atrocities, the nature of work in relation to life and death, and virtues integral to integrity in business.

This course can be used to satisfy ACE 8 (Ethics).

PHIL 213: Medical Ethics (Thompson)

This course aims to develop students' mature reasoning about complex moral issues in health care contexts. Students will critically explore, envision, evaluate, and strategically create understanding toward that goal.

Major Assignments: Three opportunities to create a progress journal. Progress journals are composed of three types of assignments—briefly, work we do during class, work we do outside of class, and a final report. Students shape their learning experience by choosing which type of outside work to do and which type of final report to complete. Each assignment focuses on practical choice-making and moral reasoning in a manner that illuminates the normative contours of things like trust-destroying, medical atrocities, the nature of life and death, and virtues integral to medical integrity.

Philosophy Department Fall 2021 Course Descriptions

This course can be used to satisfy ACE 8 (Ethics).

PHIL 213 Medical Ethics (Bronfman)

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 a weekly small-group videoconference.

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

PHIL 221 Political Philosophy (Cahan)

An historical as well as analytical survey of classics of political thought, from Plato's *Republic* to twentieth century writings on democracy, such as Rawls' *A Theory of Justice* (excerpts). The course will emphasize close readings of texts and short writing exercises, along with engaging class discussion.

PHIL 231 History of Philosophy (Ancient) (Ide)

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 argumentative essays (in two versions each)
- (b) a series of short assignments to improve student skills at writing argumentative essays.
- (c) either short essays or 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 301 Theory of Knowledge (A. Casullo)

This course introduces some major problems of epistemology, with an emphasis on understanding the problems and evaluating proposed solutions to them. It has two primary

Philosophy Department Fall 2021 Course Descriptions

goals: (1) to provide an understanding of some central issues in contemporary epistemology and their historical backgrounds; and (2) to develop the following skills: reading analytically primary philosophical texts, evaluating critically philosophical positions and arguments, and writing coherent philosophical essays and papers. The topics to be addressed 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 Requirements (tentative): Two or three essay exams, one paper, and an oral presentation. This course is certified for ACE 5 (Humanities), and satisfies the metaphysics and epistemology requirement for the philosophy major.

PHIL 302 Introduction to Metaphysics (Mendola)

This class will be an introduction to some of the main problems and concepts of the traditional part of philosophy called ‘metaphysics’. It focuses on the general nature of being and existence, and on various questions involving the properties, relations, and identity of different categories of entities: persons and bodies, causes and effects, universals and particulars.

The principal assignments for this course will be two exams and a paper. The principal texts will be Berkeley, *Three Dialogues*, Campbell, *Body and Mind*, 2nd edition, Armstrong, *Nominalism and Realism*, and Perry, *Personal Identity*, 2nd edition. The course may be used to satisfy ACE 5 (Humanities).

PHIL 315 Personal Identity and Persistence (White)

You have changed. Consider yourself as a young child—you were shorter, you may have believed in Santa Clause, and you probably thought that if the teacher said so, it must be true. But despite all these differences, that child was still you; the student reading this description and that child are one and the same person. Granted, many of your properties have changed—your psychology and most of the matter that makes you up is totally different, but those are all changes that were underwent by a single, persisting person: you. This is course about the persistence of objects through time. We will begin by considering people: in virtue of what is that child identical to you? Is it because of certain psychological connection? Some physical continuity, like having the same brain cells? Or something else entirely? We will then turn from people to the more general question: what is it for objects to persist. Do objects like you, me, and this piece of paper, in some sense, *move* through time, like a boat moves down a stream? Or are objects *extended through* time in more or less the same way they are extended through space? The course will conclude with a brief unit on time itself, with questions like: do all times exist? Or does only the present exist? And if all times do exist, is what time is “now” sort of like what place is “here”—just a matter of perspective? Or is the present moment in some way *special*? 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 and developing the skills to read and unpack the arguments and ideas of others.

Philosophy Department Fall 2021 Course Descriptions

PHIL 327: Aesthetics (Bronfman)

Critical exposition of the main classical and contemporary theories of art: Expressionist, Formalist, and Representationalist. Theories considered in definition of art, of aesthetic judgment, of art criticism, and of aesthetic value. Examples drawn from painting, literature, music, and movies.

This course may be used to satisfy either ACE 5 (Humanities) or ACE 7 (Arts).

PHIL 333 History of Philosophy (19th Century) (Cahan)

A survey of some of the great works of nineteenth-century European philosophy, including selections from Kierkegaard, Hegel, Marx, Nietzsche and Mill. Students will be encouraged to participate in analysis and discussion of the texts in class. One end-of-term research paper, about 10pp in length will be required, and a few smaller writing assignments.

PHIL 400 Undergraduate Seminar in Philosophy (Ide)

This course satisfies the ACE 10 requirement, and also a requirement for the Philosophy Major.

Topic: I will give students a choice among several topics. The possible topics will include studying a classical or medieval philosophical text, and will probably also include non-historical topics. If you're interested in a topic, let me know!

Assignments: The main assignment will be a paper. Other assignments will probably include presentations, and perhaps comments on other student papers or short assignments working toward a paper (depending on which topic we choose).

423/823 Advanced Ethics (van Roojen)

The class will concern itself with two broad areas within ethics, metaethics and normative ethics. Metaethics explores what we are doing or talking about when we do ethics. Normative ethics is doing the thing metaethics takes as its subject matter - investigating what sorts of actions are right and wrong and why. In each we will get to know major theoretical options and get a sense of the overall landscape.

Major assignments apart from the reading will likely be one take home exam and one final longer paper.

Philosophy Department Fall 2021 Course Descriptions

PHIL 4/880 Kant (McLear)

A survey of “Classical” German Idealism, starting with Kant’s publication of the *Critique of Pure Reason* in 1781 and concluding with the first part of Hegel’s *Science of Logic* in 1812. Figures discussed include Kant, Jacobi, Reinhold, Schulze, Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel. The focus is on four lines of thought prominent in German Idealism—namely, Spinozism, skepticism, self-consciousness, and the relationship between the senses and the intellect—as these lines of thought relate to the possibility of metaphysics as a science.

PHIL 915: Advanced Metaphysics (McKittrick)

Social Ontology: Sex, Gender, and Race

Human beings are classified in a number of different, often complex and overlapping ways. These classificatory practices reflect and create different kinds of social individuals. This seminar will explore the different theories about the nature of these social categories. Are they tracking some important, pre-social features of humans? Are they socially constructed? What are the meanings and implications of such claims? Graded assignments include a research presentation and a research paper.

Reading list:

- *Categories We Live By: The Construction of Sex, Gender, Race, and Other Social Categories*, by Ásta
- *Resisting Reality: Social Construction and Social Critique*, by Sally Haslanger
- *What Is Race? Four Philosophical Views*, by Joshua Glasgow, Sally Haslanger, Chike Jeffers, and Quayshawn Spencer
- *The Construction of Human Kinds*, by Ron Mallon
- Bernstein, S. “The metaphysics of intersectionality” *Philos Stud* 177, 321–335 (2020).

PHIL 920 Ethical Theory (Brunero)

The seminar will explore the relationship between rationality and normativity. Is it always the case that we ought (or, more weakly, have a reason) to do as rationality requires? Are the requirements of rationality like the requirements of fashion, where we may find ourselves with no reason to comply with them, or are they like the requirements of morality, which are usually thought to be such that we have a reason to comply with them? Readings from Kolodny, Bratman, Broome, Worsnip, Kiesewetter, and others.

PHIL 921 Aesthetics (Hayaki)

The topic of the seminar will be **truth in fiction**. We will consider competing analyses of the schema “It is true according to fiction *F* that *p*.” Readings will be drawn from aesthetics, philosophy of language, and their intersection. For purposes of distribution requirements, this course will count as an M&E seminar (and not as a value theory seminar).