

Philosophy Courses – Fall 2020

PH 101: Introduction to Philosophy

3 Cr.

This course introduces students to the study and the practice of philosophy. Through the analysis of historical and contemporary texts, class discussions and lectures students gain an understanding of philosophy both as a discipline and as a way of asking – and attempting to answer – fundamental questions about ourselves and the world. The emphasis is both on learning about philosophy and on doing philosophy.

Open to first- and second-year students or by permission of instructor.

Fulfills humanistic inquiry requirement.

PH 101-001 T/TH 2:10 – 3:30

S. Carli

PH 101-002 M/W 2:30 – 3:50

S. Carli

PH 101-003 T/TH 9:40 – 11:00

P. Murray

PH 203: Ancient Greek Philosophy

4 Cr.

Ancient Greek thinkers engaged in a continuous dialogue about core philosophical questions, such as: What is the nature of the cosmos and what place do human beings have in it? How do we attain knowledge about ourselves? What kinds of political communities provide the best opportunities to lead good lives? What is happiness and how do love and friendship contribute to it?

It will be our task to enter into that conversation and consider its relevance for our own lives. Special attention will be given to Socrates', Plato's and Aristotle's approaches to these questions.

Fulfills humanistic inquiry requirement.

T/TH 11:10 – 12:30

M 11:15 – 12:10

S. Carli

PH 204: Modern Philosophy from Descartes to Kant

4 Cr.

An introduction to major thinkers and themes of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europe. The dynamics of the Scientific Revolution - the collection of new discoveries and inventions and the evolving experimental methods in the early modern period - led philosophers to a profound reappraisal of fundamental issues such as the sources and limits of knowledge, the relation between mind and body, theories of human freedom and personal identity, and the apparently competing desires to explain the surrounding world in both natural and religious terms. Students will investigate how these philosophical developments led to distinctively modern ways of thinking about nature and the self. Primary documents will be read throughout.

Fulfills humanistic inquiry requirement.

T/TH 2:10 – 3:30

M 1:25 – 2:20

L. Jorgensen

PH 207: Introduction to Logic**4 Cr.**

An introduction to the basic concepts and methods of modern symbolic logic, with a focus on their application to proper reasoning. Students learn how to represent sentences in logical notation, to reconstruct arguments in that notation, to assess arguments for validity and soundness, and to prove conclusions from premises using a system of natural deduction. Students also learn to recognize common argument forms and common mistakes in reasoning (fallacies), are introduced to philosophical issues related to logic, and learn how symbolic logic is the basis for the digital computer.

Fulfills QR2 requirement (except for class of 2024 and beyond)

T/TH 3:40 – 5:30

P. Murray

PH 211: Ethics**3 Cr.**

A critical examination of the nature and principles of some of the major ethical theories proposed in the history of Western thought. Theories studied may include virtue ethics, natural law, deontological ethics, social contract, and utilitarianism. The course may also include some consideration of the application of the theories studied to selected contemporary moral issues.

Fulfills humanistic inquiry requirement.

T/TH 12:40 – 2:00

S. Blake

PHDS 217: Film Truth**3 Cr.**

What is the real? Can we faithfully represent the world? Is reality truth? Is there such a thing as objectivity? If so, how do we achieve it?

Using various films from the history of documentary as examples, this class will attempt to answer such questions. To do so, it will examine the history of documentary practice as well as the history of thinking about documentary film. The course will include units on mimetic theory, narrative realism, scientific truth, juridical truth, institutional truth, film truth, direct cinema, self-reflexive cinema, and constructivism.

As envisioned, this class will integrate methods and insights from philosophy, aesthetics, and film studies. In addition to being an interdisciplinary inquiry into the relationship among image, truth, and reality, this is a course about knowing, particularly about ways to come to knowledge, as well as how to present this knowledge truthfully.

Fulfills humanistic inquiry requirement; counts towards Documentary Studies and Media Studies.

T/TH 9:40 – 11:00

W. Lewis

PH 230D-001: Confucianism, Daoism & Others**4 Cr.**

This course will focus on texts from the golden age of philosophy in China, the period that began before Confucius and ended with the rise of the Qin Dynasty. We will discuss not only the more familiar Confucianism and Daoism, but also 'Legalism', Mohism, and the School of Names. Discussion will range over a number of topics, from ethics and political philosophy to the nature of the world, the self, and language – What is a good life like? What is the foundation for our ethical judgments? What is our relationship to nature? What does it mean to be human? How do words get meaning?

Fulfills humanistic inquiry requirement. Counts toward Asian Studies.

M/W 2:30 – 4:20

S. Blake

PH 306: Nineteenth Century Philosophy**4 Cr.****State, Science, Subjects**

By the end of the 18th Century, all but the most reactionary philosophers believed that humans (or at least propertied white men) were equal and that legitimate government rested upon such person's explicit consent. Believing this was one thing but the actual history of revolts on behalf of such egalitarianism and especially the French Revolution when the guillotine enacted "the coldest, shallowest of deaths, with no more significance than cleaving a cabbage" made many rethink these convictions. If monarchy was untenable and democratic self-governance resulted in terror, then where to go? This seminar examines the diverse history of answers to this question and does so by focusing on how 19th-century European and American philosophy began with the metaphysical, epistemological, and political problems and methods set for it in the modern period but then radically transformed these problems and their solutions under the pressures of empire, industrialization, urbanization, and scientific progress.

Fulfills the 300-level history of philosophy requirement.

Prerequisites: PH 204 or permission of instructor.

W/F 10:10 – 11:30

W. Lewis

PH 330D-001: Disagreement and Culpable Ignorance**4 Cr.**

This course discusses topics in social epistemology, particularly disagreement, white ignorance, and epistemic injustice. We will focus on philosophical theory, but will also have some time to discuss insights from sociology and psychology.

Prerequisites: One course in Philosophy or permission of the instructor

M 9:05 – 12:00

S. Blake

Artificial intelligence (AI) is seemingly everywhere now, and each day brings news of further advances in AI technology and further discussion of its promises and perils. Many of these discussions focus on Terminator-style apocalyptic scenarios in which super-intelligent machines rise up and exterminate humanity. However, the fact that computers will soon be – or already are – piloting our cars, trucks, and planes, helping to make our medical, financial, and legal decisions, tending our children and elderly, and even fighting our wars raises difficult philosophical questions that are closer to hand than such existentially gripping science fiction.

The questions that we will investigate in this seminar include: What ethical principles should we program into AI-piloted vehicles to handle “forced choice” situations in which someone or other will die or be injured and the AI has the ability to influence who that is? Is ethical decision-making even amenable to algorithmic implementation? Who should be morally or legally responsible for AI systems and their actions? More generally, what is “intelligence”, and what makes an AI “artificially” intelligent? What is the relation between intelligence and the other aspects of psychology that intelligent beings typically have, e.g., sensations, emotions, moods, beliefs, desires, etc.? Could something be intelligent without having any of those other characteristics? And if not, do we need to create “artificial sensations,” etc. to create artificial intelligence? And if we are talking about sensations, we are presumably talking about bodies, but now we appear to be talking about needing to create artificial life in order to create artificial intelligence, which raises a further host of ethical and metaphysical questions. For example, could an AI system come to have ethical duties and commensurate rights? Could the decision to turn an AI system on or off become as ethically laden an issue as whether to bring a child into the world or to end a human being’s life? Or will an AI always be just a tool?

Prerequisites: one course in philosophy or permission of instructor.

W/F 12:20 – 2:10

P. Murray