

PHILOSOPHY COURSE OFFERINGS

– SPRING 2025 –

200-level Courses (Tier Two)

PHIL 272W : Metaphysics (WI) | *Seyed Mousavian*
(*Existence, Meaning, and Culture; Writing Intensive*)

“To be is to be perceived or perceive something”, “I am not fictional in any sense”, “I have a specific gender independently of what other people think”, and “Sherlock Holmes does not exist”. These claims may seem obvious. This course will challenge these “obvious” claims. Metaphysics is the study of the most general features of reality: for example, existence, identity, modality (necessity or contingency). This course is divided into three parts. First, we will review the most fundamental concepts: idealism, realism, nominalism, internal questions vs. external questions, ontological commitment, and Meinongianism, the view that there are things that do not exist! Second, we will move to the metaphysics of gender and sex. We will attempt to apply some of the methods, ideas, and tools, e.g., ontological commitment, naturalization, internal vs. external ontological questions, and grounding, introduced in the first part, to the metaphysical issues associated with gender and sex. Third, we will move to the metaphysics of fiction and storytelling. We will discuss different views regarding the nature of fictional characters, the sense in which fiction can convey “truth”, and how our emotions regarding fiction should be understood. We will end by exploring some aesthetic, moral and legal issues raised by fiction.

PHIL 274: Logic | *Arnold vander Nat*

This course is a detailed study of the methods and principles of correct reasoning, focused on deductive techniques from both traditional logic and modern logic. Central to this study are not only the precise analysis of the logical structure of the sentences that we use in our arguments but also the logical consequences that sentences have. The laws of logic themselves are extensively studied, and they are rigorously applied in the solution of concrete problems of argumentation. This course may also study the types of common errors in reasoning, known as logical fallacies.

PHIL 275: Theory of Knowledge | *Blake Dutton*
(*Mind and Science*)

This course examines both the nature and the reliability of human knowledge.

PHIL 277: Aesthetics | *TBC*
(*Existence, Meaning, and Culture*)

This course will explore one or more of the following philosophical questions in aesthetics: What is art? What is good art (art evaluation or critical theory)? What is beauty? What is it about human nature that allows us to experience beauty?

PHIL 279: Judgment and Decision-Making (Online) | *Marvella Linn*
(*Mind and Science*)

Our everyday conceptions of the way we think, make choices, and act often assume we exercise significant control and awareness. Many philosophical accounts of action and character make similar assumptions. But, current work in social psychology suggests we are prone to many cognitive biases and that our behavior is often influenced by minor situational factors rather than our conscious choices or character. These findings raise important questions pertaining to human agency as well as moral responsibility for action and character.

PHIL 284W: Health Care Ethics (WI) | *Jennifer Parks*
(*Ethics and Values; Writing Intensive*)

Philosophy 284 is designed to provide you with an introduction to the philosophical approach to problems in health care ethics. You will be taught to recognize and critically apply various ethical theories and principles with a view to solving moral problems in a rationally defensible manner. We will consider different ethical theories such as utilitarianism, Kantian ethics, Catholic bioethics, and the four principles of healthcare ethics (justice, autonomy, beneficence, and non-maleficence). We will then address more recent approaches offered by feminist, disability, queer, and Black bioethicists. A number of problematic issues in health care will be covered, including abortion, end of life care, social media and medicine, and the doctor/patient relationship.

PHIL 284: Health Care Ethics | *Elizabeth Hoppe*
(*Ethics and Values*)

This ethics course emphasizes the importance of using philosophical tools (concepts, values, theories, forms of argumentation, and so on) that illuminate, analyze, and evaluate the practice and domain of health care. The course aims to enable students to become better moral reasoners; that is, to improve one's ability to recognize, think through, assess, and articulate moral views as well as to understand, contribute to, and critique the views of others. The first part examines some of the key ethical theories that will be applied to the health care industry: Aristotelian ethics, Kantian deontology, and utilitarianism. In part two, we will investigate moral foundations such as moral norms, character, and status. The third and fourth parts address four principles that form a framework for medical ethics: autonomy, nonmaleficence, beneficence, and justice. The required textbook is: *Principles of Biomedical Ethics* by Tom L. Beauchamp and James F. Childress, 7th edition, Oxford University Press.

PHIL 287: Environmental Ethics | *Paul Ott*
(*Ethics and Values*)

Environmental ethics is the study of questions surrounding the moral value of non-human nature. Its central question is whether nonhuman nature has moral significance and if so, what aspects of it (ecosystems, animals, plants) have value and for what reason. The major conceptual distinctions that address these questions are between anthropocentrism and non-anthropocentrism and instrumental and intrinsic value. A central question is whether human beings have distinct moral responsibilities to non-human nature (non-anthropocentrism) or whether our responsibilities are limited to humans only (anthropocentrism)? Do nature, animals, plants have intrinsic value or are they all merely of instrumental value to humans? In this class, we will explore these questions first by looking at the history of how nature became a problem for Western humans, culminating in the American conservation and preservation movements. We then read

Aldo Leopold's *A Sand County Almanac*, one of the major inspirations for the development of environmental ethics as a philosophical field. From here we turn to Native American views of nature and our ethical relations to it as a contrast to the dominant positions in the Western tradition. Then, we read core essays in environmental ethics that address a number of topics, such as moral considerability, animal ethics, environmental ethics, ecofeminism, and the politics of human-animal relations.

PHIL 287: Environmental Ethics | *Michael Paradiso-Michau*
(*Ethics and Values*)

This course introduces students to ethical reasoning and to various topics in environmental ethics. Topics include pollution, animal rights, and natural resources. The course will look at various philosophical and ethical views on the relationship between humans and the natural world. Students will develop critical thinking skills and gain knowledge in the areas of philosophy and ethics. Students will have opportunities to analyze, evaluate, work as team members, and engage with the community on environmental topics and so will be able to engage civic and leadership activities.

PHIL 288: Culture and Civilization: Catholic Social Teaching | *Jeffrey Fisher*
(*Ethics and Values; Law, Society, and Social Justice*)

In this course students will learn the political and philosophical perspective put forward within Catholic Social Teaching. In fulfilling this general purpose, the course will 1) give students a systematic understanding of Catholic Social Teaching, and 2) demonstrate the viability of the political and philosophical perspective provided by Catholic Social Teaching—a perspective which is a plausible, intriguing, and attractive alternative to the political perspectives characteristic of contemporary political culture. Readings will be drawn primarily from Aristotle, Aquinas, papal encyclicals, and church documents.

PHIL 288: Culture and Civilization: Philosophy and Film | *Thomas Derdak*
(*Existence, Meaning, and Culture*)

This course is designed to investigate issues in the field of aesthetics through the medium of film. We will analyze and discuss topics such as what makes a good critic; the relationship between the images on screen, symbolic content, and meaning; the director's perspective and the creative process; the appropriateness of adaptation from short story, novel, or play to film; the criteria used to determine a good from a bad film, and others. Each of the films viewed will have a corresponding reading. Some of the films that the course will focus on include: *Rashomon*, *Throne of Blood*, *Platoon*, *Paths of Glory*, *The Man who Shot Liberty Valance*, *Room with a View*, *Barbie*, *Perfect Days*, and more.

PHIL 288: Culture and Civilization: Friendship, Romance, and Technology | *Peter Bergeron*
(*Ethics and Values; Law, Society, and Social Justice*)

We are deeply social creatures. The link between vibrant interpersonal relationships and a rich, flourishing human life was explored by the Greek philosopher Aristotle centuries ago. He claimed that even if we had all the goods that the world could offer, none of us would choose to have those at the expense of having friends. The importance of relationships continues to dominate the research of scholars in many fields. Our culture is profoundly technological. This has been true for decades and is not merely the result of the development of new forms of social media such as the smartphone. This culture shapes us in many ways, including the way we engage relationships with others. The Jesuit scholar John Culkin writes, “We become what we behold. We shape our tools and then our tools shape us.” The effects of these tools on our

relationships with others are being widely researched and hotly contested. It is clear that these new tools are shaping us. This course will explore two kinds of relationships, friendship and romantic partnerships, and the ways in which our technological culture both enhances and diminishes our capacity to connect well with others.

300-level Courses (Upper-Division Courses for Philosophy Majors and Minors)

PHIL 304W: History of Ancient Philosophy (WI) | *Freya Möbus*
(*Ethics and Values; Existence, Meaning, and Culture; Writing Intensive*)

What does it mean to live well? We are surrounded by plenty of experts for various areas of life: if I want to know how to exercise well, I can turn to a personal trainer. If I am worried about wasting money, I can consult a financial planner. But whom to turn to if I want to learn how to live well and avoid wasting my life? This class introduces students to ancient Greek philosophy by highlighting its practical ambitions. According to our ancient thinkers, many of us live poorly and waste our lives, despite our greatest efforts, because we pursue the wrong goals or pursue them in the wrong way. Philosophy can help, or so they think.

We will read Plato's *Gorgias*, Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, Epictetus' *Encheiridion*, Sextus Empiricus' *Outlines of Scepticism*, and Epicurus' *Letter to Menoecus*. After a close reading and careful analysis of these texts, we will put our ancient theories into practice and discuss whether they are still beneficial for us today. Note that this is a writing-intensive, discussion-based, and reading-heavy class. Students will be assessed in all three of these areas.

PHIL 309: Classical Modern Philosophy | *Blake Dutton*

This course covers major developments in European philosophy in the 17th and 18th centuries. Our focus will be on topics in metaphysics and epistemology – including knowledge, skepticism, the origin of ideas, substance, matter, mind and body, causation, and God – but we will also examine the larger scientific, religious, and political background of philosophy in this period. In addition, we will give some attention to the ways in which classical modern philosophy builds on and reacts to the philosophical traditions of the ancient and medieval worlds. We will not attempt to cover all major figures of the period but will focus on the following seven: Galileo Galilei (1564- 1642), René Descartes (1596-1650), Elizabeth of Bohemia (1618-1680), Benedict Spinoza (1632- 1677), Anne Viscountess Conway (1631-1679), David Hume (1711-1776), and Immanuel Kant (1724-1804).

PHIL 311: Philosophy of Artificial Intelligence and Computation | *Matthew Dunch*
(*Mind and Science; Existence, Meaning, and Culture*)

This course tries to answer the question: What is computation? In so doing, the course also tries to answer two related questions: Is computation the same as intelligence? If so, how does artificial, or computational, intelligence relate to human intelligence? The course is divided into two parts. The first part surveys philosophical approaches to computation beginning with Aristotle and tracing threads of logic and mechanization through Blaise Pascal, Gottfried Leibniz, Charles Babbage, Ada Lovelace, Alan Turing, Kurt Gödel, Ludwig Wittgenstein, John von Neumann, Norbert Wiener, and Marvin Minsky. The second part explores recent philosophical responses to artificial intelligence including Nick Bostrom, Raymond Kurtzweil, Shannon Vallor, and Jaron Lanier.

PHIL 322: Philosophical Perspectives on Women: Identities and Solidarities | *Amy Shuffelton*
(*Ethics and Values; Law, Society, and Social Justice*)

This course provides an overview of feminist philosophy beginning with Enlightenment liberal feminism and addressing a variety of topics feminist philosophy has explored up through the present. It will focus on the complicated place of "women" in what we now call "identity politics." What those words in quotes even mean is unsettled and worth exploring philosophically, and we'll do that. How have sex and gender been created and defined as social, economic, and political constructions? How is that construction complicated by race, social class and other contested constructions? What difference do bodies make? How are women's (contested, plural) identities as women potentially sources of liberation, oppression, solidarity and/or antagonism?

PHIL 323/459*: Philosophy of Law | *Vincent Samar*
(*Law, Society, and Social Justice*)

Welcome to Philosophy of Law (Phil. 323-001). This course will be cross-listed with Phil. 459-001, a graduate course in Philosophy of Laws. Although most of the content will be the same, the requirements for undergraduate student completion are quite different and will be spelled out in the syllabus. The course will examine the principles that establish and justify societies' laws, especially those attempting to afford answers to such questions as: what law is, must law be related to morality, are there any human rights, and what are the rights and responsibilities of a society in relation to its own members. Among the latter issues will be discussions about how courts decide cases, what is international law, how to respond to terrorism and is torture ever justified. Additionally, the course will tackle concerns over the protection of free speech, equality, constitutional privacy, distributive justice (including marriage equality and protections for LGBTQ+ communities) and what kinds of affirmative action may still be allowed. We will also devote part of the second half of the course to private law matters including what role corrective justice plays in addressing tort liability; does promising provide a complete foundation for contract law; how are utilitarian and rights-based justifications implicated in property law; and what justifies punishment in the criminal law along with whether capital punishment is ever justified. While much of the course after the Midterm will focus on American legal doctrines, the doctrines themselves should be considered in the broader context of serving human rights generally. As such, the course offers a basis for critiquing legal systems generally and the American legal system in particular. Expect that you will be doing a fair amount of reading throughout the course and that undergrads will be completing an online midterm and submitting a seven-page final seminar paper, details about the paper and course participation to be spelled out in the syllabus. **This course is a split 300/400-level course. Please contact the instructor for more information.*

PHIL 342W: Platonism and Christianity (WI) | *Alberto Bertozzi*
(*Mind and Science; Existence, Meaning, and Culture; Writing Intensive*)

The course is an introduction to the interaction between Platonism and the Catholic tradition. The selection of texts we will study, ranging from Plato to twenty-first century philosophers, aims to show how ancient Platonism both influenced and was creatively transformed and partially integrated within Christianity. Thematically, the course focuses on the respective metaphysics and anthropology of the two traditions; more precisely, their multi-layered and hierarchically ordered metaphysics and anthropology. Both in the Platonic and in the Christian worldview, neither reality as a whole nor the human being are unqualifiedly simple entities but rather complex networks of hierarchically organized and mutually irreducible aspects or levels, which simultaneously spring from a transcendent source and are directed to the same source as their fulfillment. Our main goal is to understand how Catholic thinkers from the early centuries to the present

have employed Platonic concepts and strategies to provide a rational foundation to what they take as the metaphysical and anthropological presuppositions of the Christian message. *The course is cross-listed as PHIL 342W/CATH 303W.*

PHIL 369W: Philosophy of Medicine (WI) | *Elizabeth Hoppe*
(Mind and Science; Writing Intensive)

This writing intensive course, divided into three parts, investigates the meaning and practice of medicine. It begins with the metaphysical question: What is Medicine? and attempts to answer it by examining medical debates that developed in ancient Greece and continued through the Roman era. This part will cover writings by Plato, Hippocrates, and Galen. The second component concerns human health and suffering. Here we will examine a variety of texts including medieval medical accounts by Ibn Sina (Avicenna) and St. Hildegard von Bingen, followed by mindfulness in medicine which traces its origin to Buddhism, and finally a contemporary account of decolonizing medicine. The third and final part will critically examine current medical practices, beginning with Evidence-Based Medicine and ending with the Cuban healthcare system.

PHIL 398: Grant Capstone Seminar: Decolonizing Medicine | *Elizabeth Hoppe*
(Ethics and Values)

This upper division philosophy seminar considers major debates in bioethics in light of recent scholarship, drawing on a variety of perspectives concerning medicine and medical practices. In analyzing philosophical, moral, and political debates that shape current discourse, this course invites students to approach complex moral issues through the lens of decolonizing medicine. Using current research that explores this issue, we will critically examine medicine with these questions in mind: What are arguments in favor of current medical practice in the US? What are its ethical and socio-political shortcomings? What does it mean to decolonize medicine? What are the benefits of alternative forms of medicine, such as those based on indigenous knowledges? Does the decolonization of medicine provide an appealing alternative to modern medicine?

PHIL 399: Capstone Seminar: Marx | *Johanna Oksala*
(Law, Society, and Social Justice; Existence, Meaning, and Culture)

The course introduces students to Karl Marx's thought, and to 20th century and contemporary Marxist theory. In the first half of the course, we will focus on Marx's own writings, primarily on *Capital*, vol. I. In the second half, we will investigate how Marx's thought is developed by 20th century and contemporary Marxist thinkers. These include theorists from the traditions of Marxist-feminism, Black Marxism, and Eco-Marxism.

PHIL 399: Capstone Seminar: The Moral Emotions | *Mario Attie-Picker*
(Ethics and Values; Existence, Meaning, and Culture)

The seminar is about the emotions, in particular those emotions that lie at the center of our interpersonal relationships. We will investigate the nature of emotions such as guilt, shame, love, and grief, as well as the role they play in the moral life. In addition to contemporary philosophy, the course will draw from a variety of sources. We will engage with works of art (especially film and literature), psychology, political science, and memoirs.