

SUBJECT: Philosophy

PHIL 105 Identity and Social Ethics in United States (4)

This course provides a theoretical and practical consideration of the concept of “identity,” and how we might understand diverse racial, ethnic, and gender identities in the contemporary United States. We will critique various classic philosophies alongside contemporary works that challenge our cultural presuppositions. The emphasis will be on the idea of selfhood within a democratic framework of constructive relations.

PHIL 115 Philosophical Perspectives on Identity (4)

Who am I? What makes me me? Who gets to say who I am? How do personal qualities, relations with others, and social categories like race, gender, gender identity, ethnicity and class come together to form my personal and social identity? How does who I am inform what I know and don't know? Does who I am give me specific responsibilities? If so, what are they? This course invites you to explore multiple dimensions of who you are using philosophical ideas and tools.

PHIL 121 Great Issues in Philosophy (4)

An introduction to philosophical questioning through a study of perennial issues in philosophy. Questions that might be treated: freedom and responsibility, God, love, being, knowledge, death. Topics in this course may be treated in the context of the great philosophers of the past or through a study of more contemporary thinkers.

PHIL 123 Philosophy of Human Nature (4)

An introduction to philosophical questioning through a study of what it means to be human. Questions that might be treated: body and soul; immortality; meaning of person and personality; determinism and freedom; reason and imagination; emotion and will; individuality and group; relationship to others and to God; language; labor; temporality.

PHIL 125 Social Philosophy (4)

An introduction to philosophical questioning through a study of the human in society. Questions that might be treated: the meaning of society; individual and society; society and law; economy and society; work as social phenomenon; society and freedom; world of culture and society; violence and nonviolence; philosophy of power; philosophy of conflict in community; political philosophy.

PHIL 150 Philosophy in Literature (4)

An introduction to philosophical questioning through a study of major themes of novels, plays and/or poetry. Readings will serve as an avenue for treating aesthetic or psychological or ethical concerns.

PHIL 150A Philosophy in Literature I (2)

An introduction to philosophical questioning through a study of major themes of novels, plays and/or poetry. Readings will serve as an avenue for treating aesthetic or psychological or ethical concerns.

PHIL 150C Philosophy in Literature II (2)

An introduction to philosophical questioning through a study of major themes of novels, plays and/or poetry. Readings will serve as an avenue for treating aesthetic or psychological or ethical concerns.

PHIL 155 Philosophy of Race and Ethnicity (4)

This course explores philosophical questions surrounding race and ethnicity with special attention on how race and ethnicity relates to questions of citizenship in the United States. The course will examine both the historical evolution of racial concepts and contemporary debates around topics like racial disparities in wealth, immigration policies, and barriers to political participation. Questions to be explored might include: Is race biological or is it a social construct? What does it mean to have a racial identity? How has race and ethnicity influenced how we understand citizenship in the United States? What moral obligations might we have to rectify past wrongs?

PHIL 156 Buddhist Philosophy and Benedictine Spiritual Practice (4)

How does one gain authentic insight into one's own true nature, into the true nature of the world we inhabit, and the relation between the two? This course will explore these questions by studying early sutras from the Theravada Buddhist tradition, the Taoist classic known as the Tao Te Ching, Mahayana Buddhist teachings, Zen Buddhism, the Rule of Benedict and, finally, a wonderful book conceived, written and on the campus of St. John's University – Benedict's Dharma, which explores the wisdom and practical insights shared by the Buddhist and Benedictine traditions.

Class participants will learn that there are striking affinities in the contemplative goals and practices endorsed by Benedictines and Buddhists. Students will also discover remarkable similarities in the Buddhist and Benedictine diagnoses of the challenges and difficulties faced by practitioners of a contemplative Way.

Course requirements will include regular journaling, contemplative practice (meditation, Qigong, and prayer), and reflective essays.

PHIL 234 Modern Philosophy (4)

A new turn in philosophy begins with the writings of Rene Descartes and ends with the Critiques of Immanuel Kant. This course will seek to highlight at least three thinkers or schools from that era. Fall.

PHIL 271 Individual Learning Project (1-4)

Supervised reading or research at the lower-division level. Permission of department chair required. Consult department for applicability towards major requirements. Not available to first-year students.

PHIL 279B Logic (4)

This course is an introduction to formal symbolic logic. It focuses on the development of a symbolic language to capture the structure of natural-language arguments, in order to evaluate the validity of those arguments. Topics include truth functions, truth tables, natural deduction, and how logic relates to arguments in regular life.

PHIL 318 Readings in Philosophy (0-1)

Reading and discussion of philosophic works, moderated by a member of the Philosophy Department. Interested faculty and staff in other areas are welcome to participate as well. Each section of this course is typically devoted to a single work, but occasionally a group of smaller works by a single author may be selected. S/U grading only. May be repeated for credit.

PHIL 321 Moral Philosophy (4)

Introduction to philosophical thought about morality. Topics include major ethical theories (e.g. virtue ethics, consequentialism, deontology, care ethics), as well as big concepts such as rights and responsibilities, values and obligations, good and evil, right and wrong. Fall and/or spring.

PHIL 321A Moral Philosophy (4)

The meaning of rights and responsibilities, virtues and vices, values and obligations. Questions of good and evil, right and wrong, freedom and determinism. Natural law, utilitarianism and other systematic theories of morally right behavior. Fall and/or spring.

PHIL 322 Environmental Ethics (4)

This course investigates a variety of ethical issues that arise from consideration of the relation between humans and the non-human natural world (i.e., the environment, animals, land, ecosystems, wilderness areas). This course will introduce students to the basic concepts of environmental ethics, to specific ethical issues associated with environmental policy, and to philosophical theorizing about the environment.

PHIL 323 Biomedical Ethics (4)

An examination of ethical questions raised by health-care practice and recent advances in medical technology. Both ethical theory and ethical decision-making will be addressed. Possible topics include: confidentiality, informed

consent, genetic engineering, reproductive technology and death and dying issues.

PHIL 324 Business Ethics (4)

This course will examine ethical and social issues associated with contemporary American business. Responsibilities of businesses to employees, consumers and the society at large will be considered. Questions of individual moral responsibility and questions of social justice and public policy will be addressed. Students will examine these issues from the point of view of a variety of stakeholders: business management, employees, investors, consumers, and citizens. Prerequisite: students are strongly encouraged to have taken at least one previous course in management, accounting, philosophy, or economics. Note: normally offered as ETHS 390, not as PHIL 324.

PHIL 325 Feminist Ethics (4)

This course will examine how women's experiences and philosophical reflection on those experiences offer important and necessary perspectives in the field of moral and ethical thinking. Topics may include the nature of feminism, freedom and oppression; the role of care, trust, autonomy, reason and emotion in the moral life, and a consideration of how feminism has come to challenge basic premises and conceptual tools of traditional, western approaches to ethics and moral reasoning. The course will also explore social/ethical issues stemming from the intersection of gender with race, ethnicity, culture, class, and/or sexuality.

PHIL 326 Liberty, Equality & Race in American Political Thought (4)

This course first examines historical links between the philosophical principles and foundational documents for the United States, slavery, and European colonization. It then engages with the work of contemporary African American authors who address this legacy of slavery and white supremacy as part of their inquiry into policies and practices aiming to establish racial justice in the United States. A guiding theme for the class will be the difficulty of striking a reasonable balance between liberty and equality in the pursuit of racial equity. The selection of contemporary African American authors will ensure that both liberal-progressive and conservative-libertarian points of view will be represented.

PHIL 327 Existential Ethics (4)

Existentialism, a 20th century philosophy with roots in the 19th century and various developments in post-modern thought, rejects all foundational givens except the raw fact of existence. This means that it rejects ethical traditions grounded in religion, in reason, in "virtues," in particular theories of human nature, and in cultural tradition. Nevertheless, existentialist thinkers have often emerged as powerful ethical thinkers, precisely because they refuse to embrace any traditional foundations for ethics and thus keep ethical questions open for debate. We will examine existentialism's radical critique of traditional philosophical foundations using readings from such thinkers as Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Sartre and Beauvoir. As we proceed, we will explore the ethical implications of these existential currents of thought by reflecting on short pieces of literature and narratives illustrative of ethical dilemmas of modern and contemporary life.

PHIL 331 Ancient Philosophy (4)

Raphael's famous fresco *The School of Athens* accurately depicts the world of Ancient Philosophy studied in this course. The painting features a multitude of ancient philosophers and writers, mathematicians and scientists, thinkers and students, almost all of them involved in conversation, argumentation, writing or meditation in a beautiful public space. The foundation and focal point of the painting is the two central figures of Plato and Aristotle, who will also serve as the foundation and focal points for this course, which aims to help students become knowledgeable participants in the conversations about truth, reality, virtue and the good that shaped the beginnings of Western philosophy and continue to shape philosophical discourse today.

PHIL 333 Medieval Philosophy (4)

Philosophy in the West did not take a long nap after the ancient era. This course in medieval philosophy will investigate the period which began with Augustine and reached its culmination in 13th- and 14th-century Scholasticism, especially with Thomas Aquinas. It will investigate at least three major philosophers or schools of philosophy of that era. Note: This course can be taken for Theology Upper-Division credit (TU), but normally cannot double-count as both; exceptions must be pre-approved by the department chair.

PHIL 336 19th Century Philosophy (4)

Philosophy on the European continent followed no one pattern in the 19th century. G.W.F. Hegel, Karl Marx, and Friedrich Nietzsche make this century one of the most varied in the history of philosophy. This course will focus on one or more thinkers to explore European thought of that epoch. This course can be repeated for credit, with the approval of the department chair, when content varies. Alternate years.

PHIL 338 American Philosophy (4)

Though American thinkers have been heavily influenced by European philosophers, an indigenous philosophy began to develop in North America in the 19th century and continued into the 20th century. Philosophers that may be discussed include Charles Sanders Peirce, Josiah Royce, William James, John Dewey and Alfred North Whitehead. This course can be repeated for credit, with the approval of the department chair, when content varies. Alternate years.

PHIL 339 Chinese Philosophy (4)

An introduction to the Chinese philosophical tradition through selected foundational texts like the Tao Te Ching, the Chuang Tzu, the Analects of Confucius, the Mencius, the Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch and selections from the writings of Chu Hsi. Students will also study early Chinese philosophical teachings concerning the nature of male and female and their appropriate social roles, contemporary analyses of the role Confucian teachings played in constructing these gender categories and institutions, and philosophical discussions of the compatibility of Confucian teachings with contemporary (Western) egalitarian gender sensibilities.

PHIL 341 20th-Century Continental Philosophers (4)

Starting in the 20th century, a series of philosophies with the same kind of method but with different content has grown from the methodology of the philosopher and mathematician Edmund Husserl. People such as Martin Heidegger, Hannah Arendt, Jean Paul Sartre, Emmanuel Levinas, Paul Ricoeur, Jacques Derrida, and Michael Foucault have applied the method of Husserl to very different problems. This course will choose from these and other contemporary continental thinkers. This course can be repeated for credit, with the approval of the department chair, when content varies. Alternate years.

PHIL 341A 20th-Century Continental Philosophers (4)

Starting in the 20th century, a series of philosophies with the same kind of method but with different content has grown from the methodology of the philosopher and mathematician Edmund Husserl. People such as Martin Heidegger, Hannah Arendt, Jean Paul Sartre, Emmanuel Levinas, Paul Ricoeur, Jacques Derrida, and Michael Foucault have applied the method of Husserl to very different problems. This course will choose from these and other contemporary continental thinkers. This course can be repeated for credit, with the approval of the department chair, when content varies.

PHIL 346 Philosophy of Religion (4)

While philosophy sometimes seems opposed to religious faith, their relation has often been friendly, as "faith seeking understanding." Philosophical reflection on religious belief critically examines the claims of faith as well as attempts to discredit or dismiss the claims of faith. This course will explore this tradition through one or more lenses: philosophical reflection on: a) the validity of religious experience, b) the reasonableness of belief in God, c) the problem of evil or reconciling the experience of evil and suffering with religious belief, or d) other historical or emerging themes in the philosophy of religion. The course will consider also the perspective of theology in responding to philosophical reflection. Alternate years. Note: This course can be taken for Theology Upper-Division credit (TU), but normally cannot double-count as both; exceptions must be pre-approved by the department chair.

PHIL 355 Philosophies of Violence/Nonviolence (4)

This course looks at the way that the search for security and the claim to possession of absolute truth can lead to violence. The way of thinking involved in technology easily structures the world so that whatever does not fit into that framework is discounted and ignored and treated violently, as the philosopher Martin Heidegger shows. How does such an attitude lead to violence? Finally, the course will look at the nonviolent ethical response which the philosopher Emmanuel Levinas demands from the person who hears the call of the poor and the oppressed when they cry out against their oppression and poverty. Alternate years.

PHIL 358 Philosophy of Law (4)

This course will consider some of the central conceptual and normative issues in the area of jurisprudence. Concepts such as legal responsibility, negligence, causality, cruel and unusual punishment, etc., will be considered. Frameworks for legal decision-making will be developed and applied.

PHIL 363 Souls, Selves and Science (4)

What am I? This question will be explored through the study of the three periods marked by a change in scientific paradigms; the scientific revolution of the sixteenth and seventeenth century, the publication of Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species* in the nineteenth century, and the rise of cognitive science in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. We'll read philosophers, scientists, historians, and novelists, as well as explore pieces by performance and visual artists. By the end of the course, you should have a basic understanding of different metaphysical views about human nature from the claim that humans are fundamentally autonomous and independent to the view that human nature derives from the unique social bonds we form. We will have studied various accounts of the relationship between the mind and body, especially dualism and materialism, and how these theories are shaped by various philosophical and scientific commitments. You will have a deeper understanding of the changing relationships humans have with the natural world and with each other. In studying these topics, you will learn to recognize in past debates a reflection of contemporary struggles over human nature and our place in the natural world and vice versa. No prerequisites.

PHIL 364 Theories of Knowledge (4)

What is meant by saying a sentence is true? What are the criteria to be followed in order to arrive at truth? Is it possible to reach definitive truth? Theories of knowledge and truth from Empiricist to Rationalist to Realist. Alternate years.

PHIL 367 Philosophy of Mind (4)

This course explores a number of issues of interest to contemporary philosophers of mind and cognitive scientists. These include: the nature of consciousness and how we should study it, the relationship between the mind, the body, and the world, psychopathology and what it can teach us about how we think, the problem of personal identity, the relevance for language to thought and the implications for how we should understand animal minds, and, finally, how to determine whether a machine can think. In addition to being a general introduction to these topics, this course is designed with a particular interdisciplinary aim: to examine how the empirical work of cognitive scientists inform the theories of contemporary philosophers.

PHIL 368 Special Topics (4)

Offered by faculty members in areas of their special interest. Offered as schedule allows.

PHIL 368B Economics, Philosophy & Method (4)

An inquiry into the philosophy of social science and the methodology of economics. A survey of philosophical debates concerning what makes a "good" explanation in natural science and social science, and an examination of the debates within the history of economics concerning the requirements for good explanations of economic events. Prerequisite: Two courses in economics or two courses in philosophy

PHIL 368K The Moral of the Story: Literature & the Moral Imagination (4)

Western philosophy has not traditionally depended upon literature and stories for philosophical insights. Philosophers like Plato have used literary forms, but most western philosophers (including Plato) have not seen literature as a special source for ethical wisdom. More recently, some philosophers have suggested that literature may indeed have special powers when it comes to thinking about the most basic ethical questions, "How should I live?" and "What sort of person should I be?" In this course we shall examine the general philosophical case for whether literature might have any such powers. We shall also put this general question to the specific test by appealing to some great literature to see what ethical wisdom the stories might have to offer. [Technically, this course was last taught in 2004. Essentially, I have been teaching this course as an Ethics course called Reading for Life every year for the last 20 years. The philosophy version, *The Moral of the Story*, differed primarily in taking a more self-conscious approach to how a stories-approach diverges from traditional philosophy. The

literature/stories element was virtually identical. Rather than apply to convert Reading for Life, converting The Moral of the Story makes more sense as an upper-level philosophy course.

PHIL 368L Vulnerable Lives (4)

Who can deny that human lives and character are fragile? Even a quick glance at victims of rape, genocide, war, oppression, betrayal, and tragic loss suggests that ultimately we are all vulnerable. Yet, down through human history various lines of thought have suggested that this need not be so. For instance, various Eastern religions have held out the promise of relief from suffering through enlightenment. The Judeo-Christian tradition has often pointed to faith and divine grace as a balm for suffering and a shield against the same. Some Roman and Greek schools of thought have aimed at forms of detachment and serenity that could render human beings invulnerable. Using sources from psychology, memoir, philosophy, fiction and film, we shall consider some ways in which human lives and character can be compromised and disintegrated. We shall also consider strategies designed to render us less vulnerable or even invulnerable. And finally, we shall consider whether such strategies hold out any promise and whether they might carry their own price for beings like us.

PHIL 368M Flourishing: Aristotle in Contemporary Perspectives (4)

Aristotle's ideas regarding friendship, virtue, community, and the roles each play in human flourishing have been remarkably enduring. Contemporary scholars in philosophy and psychology are still mining his major works for insights into how to live a fulfilling and happy life. But Aristotle also argued that some people are natural born slaves and that women are naturally inferior to men, ideas that had real-world effects.

In this era in which many figures and institutions are being "cancelled", it's important to consider: How do we make sense of this complex intellectual inheritance by one of the founding figures of western thought? In this course we will explore how Aristotle's ideas have moved across time and disciplines. After situating Aristotle's Ethics within the context of his Politics and biology, we will examine contemporary perspectives on Aristotle in virtue theory, empirical psychology, and feminist/ race theory. We'll grapple with understanding both the promise and potential of Aristotle's views for living well in our contemporary situation and the more unsavory aspects of his philosophy.

PHIL 371 Individual Learning Project (1-4)

Supervised reading or research at the upper-division level. Permission of department chair and completion and/or concurrent registration of 12 credits within the department required. Consult department for applicability towards major requirements. Not available to first-year students.

PHIL 377 Philosophical Topics in Justice (4)

A philosophical treatment of justice and related concepts. What does it mean to live justly? What are the effects of injustice? The course explores the concepts of justice and injustice, as well as their implications for how we live and act in the world. Specific topics vary.

PHIL 377A Feminist Ethics (4)

This course will introduce students to competing feminist conceptions of justice that envision a world free of systems of privilege, power, and oppression and in which the dignity and value of all persons is upheld. We will also examine feminist critiques of justice theory which argue that feminist conceptions of justice must be supplemented by alternate moral frames (e.g. care ethics, embodied feminism, an explicit grappling with intersectionality) if we are to inadequately to secure the flourishing of self and human and nonhuman others.

PHIL 377B Liberty, Equality & Race in American Political Thought (4)

This course examines the relation between moral and political values and goods. Consideration of such questions as whether politics can be neutral among competing conceptions of morality, the nature, justification, and limits of political authority and whether politicians should be held to different moral standards from the rest of us.

PHIL 378 THEMATIC FOCUS: MOVEMENT (0)

NO COURSE DESCRIPTION

PHIL 379 THEMATIC FOCUS: TRUTH (0)

NO COURSE DESCRIPTION

PHIL 379A Modern Philosophy's Quest for Truth (4)

Modern Philosophy is not "modern" in the everyday sense, but studies the 17th and 18th century shift in European thought away from the influence that classical thinkers had come to have, especially as their works were reinterpreted and incorporated into the religious dominion that Judeo-Christian and Islamic paradigms exercised over philosophical thought. This shift involved a radical re-appraisal of the human subject as thinker and knower. Even those thinkers skeptical of the human capacity to grasp absolute truths upheld the authority of human reason to understand its own limits and to assert itself as the ultimate judge of where and how "truth" could be claimed—though they disagreed significantly on these limits. These philosophers asserted an independence and autonomy for human reason that paved the way for later declarations of political freedoms. Thinkers studied include Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz, Locke, Berkeley, and Kant.

PHIL 379B Theories of Knowledge (4)

Epistemology, or the study of knowledge, is the philosophical discipline which studies the nature of knowledge and how it is acquired. This course will focus on feminist epistemology and the ways in which gender influences our conceptions of knowledge, knowers, and our practices of knowledge acquisition and justification, with a special emphasis on the sciences. Central to the topics of the course will be an examination of epistemic questions around racial and gender oppression.

PHIL 388 Philosophy Capstone (4)

Required for senior philosophy majors for graduation with the philosophy major. Topics vary, but the course centers around an integrative philosophical experience that calls for independent research, writing, and presentations. Spring.

PHIL 397 Internship (1-16)

Approved Application for Internship Form REQUIRED. See Internship Office Web Page.