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4/9/2013
PL 160 01    Challenge of Justice
TH 160 01

Matthew Mullane     T TH 3*

Level 1 – Undergraduate Elective

Description:

This course introduces the student to the principal understandings of justice that have developed in the Western philosophical and theological traditions. Care is taken to relate the theories to concrete, practical and political problems, and to develop good reasons for choosing one way of justice rather than another. The relationship of justice to the complementary notion of peace will also be examined. Special attention is paid to the contribution of Catholic theology in the contemporary public conversation about justice and peace. Select problems may include human rights, poverty and development in Third World, environmental and ecological justice, just war and just peace issues.
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PL 233 01     Values in Social Services and Health Care

David Manzo     TH 4:30-6:50

Level 1 – Undergraduate Elective

Description:

"But you know, there are no children here. They've seen too much to be children."

LaJoe Rivers, *There Are No Children Here*

"Homelessness in America begins at home."

Kathleen Hirsch, *Songs From The Alley*

"We can degrade people by caring for them; and we can degrade people by not caring for them."

Steven Marcus, *Doing Good*

Through readings, lectures, discussions, field placements and written work, we will pursue some of the questions raised by the facts, philosophies, and statements listed above. We hope to do more, too. Among the objectives for Values in Social Services and Health Care are: (1) communicate an understanding of the social services and health care delivery systems and introduce you to experts who work in these fields; (2) explore ethical problems of allocations of limited resources; (3) discuss topics that include, violence prevention, gangs, homelessness, mental illness, innovative nursing initiatives, economic inequality, community wealth ventures, and the law; (4) consider possibilities for positive changes in the social service and health care system.

Students may take this course with 2 grading options. Option A includes an 8-hour per week field placement with PULSE. Option B includes a 4-hour per week placement with 4Boston or a similar commitment.
Perspectives on War and Aggression

Matthew Mullane

Level 1 – Undergraduate Elective

Description:

The Faith, Peace, and Justice Program sponsors this course as an introduction to the field of Peace Studies. The course is organized along multidisciplinary lines with faculty members from various departments responsible for each topic of discussion. This interdisciplinary approach demonstrates the varied and complex perspectives on the causes of war and conflict. The course then develops, out of the resources of these respective disciplines, comprehensive, intelligent insights into the resolution of conflicts and the development of creative alternatives to war. Topics may include: the complex causes of violence and war, use and abuse of political violence, humanitarian intervention, ethics of war and peace, conflict resolution, restorative justice post-bellum, religion and violence, and theories of non-violence.

Requirements:

Book Review, Mid-Term and Final Exam, Research Paper.

Reading:

PL 261 01  Telling Truths: Writing for the Cause of Justice

Kathleen Hirsch  W 3 – 4 50

Level 1 – Undergraduate Elective

Description:

This PULSE elective will explore writing as a tool for social change. Students will read and experiment with a variety of written forms – memoir, creative non-fiction, opinion and essay – to tell the “truth” as they experience it in their own encounters with social injustice. This workshop is intended to provide a comprehensive introduction to the range of strategies that social prophets and witnesses have used, and are using today, to promote the cause of justice.

Requirements:

A PULSE, 4-Boston or other voluntary involvement required.

Readings:

Selected works of contemporary fiction, urban poetry, rap music, oral history, memoir, and non-fiction.
PL 264 03                        Logic
Department                        M W F 12
Level – Undergraduate

Description:

Requirements:

Readings:
Description:

This course aims to promote reasoning skills, especially the ability to distinguish valid and invalid reasoning. We will study informal fallacies, basic inductive reasoning, basic propositional logic, and syllogistic logic. We'll use these to analyze hundreds of arguments, many on philosophical topics like morality, the existence of God, free will, and scientific method. Special emphasis will be placed on practice, both in and outside the classroom.

Requirements:

There will be homework every week, three tests, corresponding to the major sections covered in the course (informal and inductive, propositional, and syllogistic) plus a cumulative final test.

Readings:

Harry J. Gensler, *Introduction to Logic*, 2nd edition
LogiCola program – available free, at http://www.jcu.edu/philosophy/gensler/lc/
Various supplementary materials that will be handed out in class
PL 293 01     Cultural and Social Structure I

David McMenamin                 T 4:30-6:20

Level 1 – Undergraduate Elective

Prerequisites: Limited to members of the PULSE Council

Description:

This course is one in the four semester cycle of courses designed for members of the Boston College PULSE Council. In this course we attempt to lay a foundation for understanding contemporary ways in which people choose to structure -- literally and figuratively -- the way they live together. Our study centers on questions about how our cultural and social structures are the concrete expression of what we value, of the things we consider meaningful and important.

The texts we have chosen to guide us in this pursuit will lead us to raise these questions in a way that will direct our focus somewhat to western, particularly North American ways of creating these cultural and social structures.

As the late Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, that distinguished Boston College alumnus whose name adorns our library, Thomas P. O'Neill was fond of saying: "All politics is local." No doubt he derived that from his reading of Aristotle’s Ethics. Understanding that as a sort of underlying theme of all four semesters of this course, we hope to look closely at the origins and development of some of the guiding themes and ideas that ground those local politics: the structuring of the culture in which we find ourselves today.

Accordingly, we have selected texts from what might appear to be a broad range of disciplines. As usual for this seminar, some may initially appear to have little to do with what you think of when you hear the word "philosophy." They all, however, have a great deal to do with what you might need to think about when trying to answer such questions as: "Is there a philosophy behind what it means to be a citizen of a particular country?" or "What does it mean to be a member of a particular society?"

Readings:

PL 314 01  Mind and Body
Ronald Tacelli, S.J.  M W F 11

Level 1 – Undergraduate Elective

Description:

What does it mean to be a person? Am I the same as my brain? Is there a spiritual dimension to life beyond the capacities of matter? These are some of the questions this course will explore.
Description:

This course is organized around the central philosophical questions asked and answered, in various ways, by philosophers in the ancient Greek-speaking world. We will consider pre-Socratics, Plato, Aristotle, and, more briefly, some Hellenistic, middle Platonic and neo-Platonic author(s) such as Epictetus, Plutarch, or Plotinus. The course covers questions in epistemology, metaphysics, and ethics, with the greatest attention being paid to the former two. Some specific topics are change and causality, the existence of God, the immortality of the human soul, the criterion of truth, theories of perception and cognition, and the criterion of ethics.
PL 406 01  Modern Philosophy
Jean-Luc Solere  T TH 12*

Level 1 – Undergraduate Elective

Description:

We will study the main philosophies that, from Descartes to Kant, have punctuated the rise of the modern mind. From the scientific revolution to the triumph of Enlightenment, the 17th and 18th centuries progressively asserted the autonomy of reason, but also reflected on its limits. The metaphysical, epistemological, ethical and political aspects of modern thought will be thoroughly considered, especially in relation with the development of scientific knowledge and the transformations of Western societies.

We will analyze representative texts, pay attention to their argumentative structures and highlight the logical development of problems and answers they deal with. The course will provide you with the essential historical knowledge and the central concepts of modern thought, so as to understand the bases of what is our today understanding of the world and of ourselves. Also, studying the texts, class discussions and writing assignments are designed for developing rigorous argumentation and expression skills.

Syllabus on http://www2.bc.edu/~solere/pl406.html

Requirements:

3 synthesis papers: 2 midterms and 1 final

Readings:


E. Kant, *Groundings of the Metaphysics of Morals*, Hackett, Indianapolis
PL 423 01        Spanish American Philosophy
Gary Gurtler, S.J.               T TH 4:30-6:20

Level 1 – Undergraduate Elective

Satisfies the Cultural Diversity Core Requirement

Description:

The course is designed to give the student an opportunity to look at some fundamental philosophical issues regarding human nature and the origins and development of human thought from a fresh perspective. Unamuno’s *Tragic Sense of Life* presents a critique of the rationalism of modern European thought by focusing on human life as dream, theater and struggle. His work forms part of the existentialism current in Europe at the turn of the last century, but with the tragic sense that derives from the Spanish character going back to Cervantes’ *Don Quixote*. Octavio Paz, in *The Labyrinth of Solitude*, explores the meaning of human existence through the lens, or perhaps the mask, of the Mexican quest for identity at the end of the present century. Here is a dual task in addressing Mexico’s colonial and Indian past as well as the challenge of the Anglo-Saxon culture to its north. Paz works these out through the mask of dissimulation, the day of the dead and solitude of self and others. Xavier Zubiri, finally, will present a Spanish version of Twentieth Century phenomenology. Zubiri traces human knowing as sentient thinking to primordial apprehension, which expands to the field through logos and to the world through thought.

Requirements:

Class summaries, class presentation, 10-15 page paper, midterm and final exam.

Reading:


Excerpts from Zubiri’s *Inteligencia Sentiente* will be provided in translation.
PL 429 01     Freud and Philosophy
Vanessa Rumble     T TH 1:30*

Level 1 - Undergraduate Elective

Description:

The first half of the semester will be dedicated to a chronological reading of Freudian texts. We will examine (1) Freud's and Breuer's first formulation of the nature and etiology of hysteria (Studies on Hysteria), (2) Freud's groundbreaking work in dream interpretation and the nature of unconscious processes (The Interpretation of Dreams and Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis), (3) Freud's attempt to apply his novel theory of unconscious mechanisms to cultural anthropology as well as individual psychology (Totem and Taboo), and (4) the implications of the ongoing revisions in Freud's classification of the instincts (The Ego and the Id, Beyond the Pleasure Principle, Civilization and Its Discontents).

In the second half of the semester, we will survey the developments which have taken place in psychoanalytic theory and practice since Freud's day, including some of the more creative and philosophically fruitful readings of Freud. We will work with primary sources selected from the following: Anna Freud, Melanie Klein, David Winnicott, Herbert Marcuse, Paul Ricoeur, Jacques Lacan, Rene Girard, and Julia Kristeva.

Requirements:

Mid-term examination; five reflection papers--two pages, typed; final exam

Reading:

Sigmund Freud, selections from Studies on Hysteria, "Screen Memories" "The Psychical Mechanism of Forgetfulness," selections from Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis; Totem and Taboo; Mourning and Melancholia; Beyond the Pleasure Principle; Civilization and Its Discontents; Mass Psychology

Anna Freud, The Ego and The Mechanisms of Defense; articles, essays, or chapters by Klein, Winnicott, Marcuse, Lacan, and Girard
PL 440 01    Historical Introduction to Western Moral Theory

Jorge Garcia    M W  12-1:15

Level 1 – Undergraduate Elective

Description:

The course introduces, contextualizes, explains, and critiques representative writings by such Western philosophical thinkers as Plato, Aristotle, Epicurus, Epictetus, Aquinas, T. Hobbes, D. Hume, I. Kant, J. Bentham, J.S. Mill, K. Marx, F. Nietzsche, and F.H. Bradley.

Requirements:

Two in-class written examinations, comprising both short answers & essays

Readings:

Texts include selections from:

Epicurus’ Principal Doctrines, Epictetus’ Handbook, Aquinas’ longer Summa, Marx’s Paris Manuscripts, Nietzsche’s Genealogy of Morals
PL 448 01/TH 548 01  Buddhist Thought and Practice

John Makransky  TH 4:30-6:50

Level 3 – Undergraduate / Graduate

Description:

A study of philosophy in early Buddhism, Southeast Asian Buddhism, Zen, and Pure Land traditions of East Asia, noting how Buddhist philosophical concepts inform and are informed by practices of meditation, mindfulness, ethical trainings, and ritual. Students will be instructed in mindfulness exercises (observation of states of mind) to inform our studies, with daily mindfulness practice required. Relevance of Buddhist philosophy today will be considered throughout.

Requirements:

Weekly writing, midterm, final papers.
PL 456 01 Holocaust: A Moral History

James Bernauer, S.J. T TH 3*

Level 1 – Undergraduate Elective

Description:

The purpose of this course is to explore the issues of good and evil and how human beings succeed or fail to meet the challenge such issues pose. The Holocaust, the tragic series of events which ruptured modern western morality, will be examined from a variety of perspectives (literary, cinematic, philosophical, theological, and political). We shall study the testimony of both its victims and its perpetrators. The special emphasis of the course will be devoted to a consideration of the intellectual and moral factors which motivated resistance or excused indifference. This consideration will be performed by a cooperative investigation into the ethical life-histories of representative individuals from this period. What part of themselves did they think of as primarily concerned with moral conduct? What form of obligation did they think of as specifically ethical? To what training did they commit themselves in order to develop as ethical beings? Why did they desire to be moral or why did they find it untroubling to be immoral? We shall conclude the course with an interpretation of the Holocaust for contemporary morality and of its theological significance for Christians and Jews.

Requirements:

The first major requirement of the course will be one's work on the analysis of the ethical formation and viewpoint of a selected figure who will serve as a paradigm of a specific group (German or Jew, Nazi or resister, intellectual or laborer, morally outraged or indifferent, etc.). Projects will be determined near the beginning of the semester and the materials for the investigations identified (court cases, memoirs, interviews, etc.) This will be submitted as a paper and amount to 50% of the grade. The second major requirement of the course will be the keeping of a journal in which the student will consider the readings and the classroom discussions as well as the documentaries treated in the course.

Readings:

1. S. Friedlander, Nazi Germany and the Jews 1933-1945 (Abridged Edition)
2. C. Browning, Ordinary Men
3. C. Lanzmann, Shoah.
4. H. Arendt, The Portable Hannah Arendt
5. M. Mayer, They Thought They Were Free
6. C. Browning, Ordinary Men
7. G. Sereny, Into That Darkness
PL 469 01  What Can We Know About God?
TH 469 01  Exploring the Answers of Christian Antiquity

Margaret Schatkin  TH 2–4:20

Level 3 – Undergraduate/Graduate

Description:

Exploration of the knowledge of God in Eastern Christian antiquity. Study of the development of the concept of God in Cappadocia and Antioch (then parts of the Eastern Roman Empire, now Turkey) through ancient Christian writings. Syncretism and the Silk Road: Teachings of Mani and relations with Buddha, Zoroaster. Rigorous engagement with the foundational texts of Basil, Gregory of Nazianzus, Gregory of Nyssa, and John Chrysostom. We shall read English translations, but try to develop a theological vocabulary of Greek Patristic terms (cf. Pelikan, “Glossary,” pp. 327-33). Our goals include:
1. To read carefully and accurately selected writings of Christian antiquity on the knowledge of God and the ways in which such knowledge was conceived and expressed in different cultural contexts.
2. To introduce students to the “Cappadocians,” and St. John Chrysostom and show their unique contribution to the knowledge and revelation of God.
3. To promote critical thinking, within a historical framework, about whether and how we can know God from the perspective of these major theologians of Christian antiquity.

Requirements:

There are no prerequisites except interest in the subject and the willingness to read and to think. Regular attendance and participation; final exam; oral and written reports; term paper for graduate students

Readings:

All textbooks are on reserve in O’Neill Library and some are available in Boston College Bookstore. Also, the Nicene and Post-Nicene volumes are available on-line (www.ccel.org). There is also a course-pack which will be supplied on line for most of the readings.


Bioethics: Ethical Issues in Healthcare

Marius Stan

M W F 2

Level 1 – Undergraduate Elective

Description:

Should doctors ever be allowed to help their patients die? How much healthcare are we entitled to receive? What, if anything, is wrong with cloning human beings? Is abortion morally wrong? May parents be allowed “designer babies”? What moral obligations do doctors have toward disadvantaged populations? In this course, we will examine some philosophical answers to these pressing questions of modern societies. Topics include justice and health-care, stem-cell research, euthanasia, human cloning, abortion, ethics and medical research in underdeveloped countries.
PL 500 01/LL 669 01  Philosophy of Law
Jonathan Trejo-Mathys  T TH 1 30*

Level 3 – Undergraduate/Graduate Elective

Description:

The course aims to provide a broad overview of some central problems of contemporary philosophy of law. We will explore the complex interrelationship of the issues of legal validity and the normativity of law, that is, the answers to the questions, ‘What is law?’ and ‘Is there (ever) a duty to obey the law (and if so when)?’ Beyond these two general philosophical questions, we will focus more specifically on issues pertinent to constitutionalism, including the nature of constitutions and constitutional law, constitutional interpretation, the rule of law, the separation of powers, rights (including bills of rights), and the nature and legitimacy of judicial review.

Requirements:

Undergraduates: Eight random, unannounced reading quizzes (8%), mid-term exam (45%), and final paper (47%).

Graduates (incl. law students): A research paper, the topic of which is to be determined by mutual agreement between the student and the instructor.

Students are expected to have read the materials required before class in order to participate in the class discussion. Also, bring the appropriate texts to class.

Readings:

Ronald Dworkin. Law’s Empire. Harvard UP.
Bruce Ackerman. We the People. Harvard UP.
A.J. Simmons and C. Wellman. Is There a Duty to Obey the Law? Cambridge UP.
PL 512 01  Philosophy of Existence

Richard Kearney  T TH 3*

Level 3 – Undergraduate/Graduate

Description:

An introduction to the main questions of existentialist philosophy from Kierkegaard and Nietzsche to Heidegger, Sartre and Camus. The major issues dealt with include freedom and determinism, desire and death, anxiety and the search for the absolute.

Requirements:

final paper, oral exam

Reading:

to be provided in class
PL 527 01  Philosophy of Language

Eileen Sweeney  T TH 1 30*

Level 3 – Undergraduate/Graduate

Description:

This course will consider major texts and movements in 20th century philosophy of language in both the analytic and continental traditions, reading the work of Russell, Wittgenstein, J. L. Austin, Quine and Davidson as well as Ricoeur and Derrida. Our goal will be to bring together these very different approaches to what has been a central concern of philosophy in the 20th century.

Requirements:

2 exams
1 6-8 page paper
Final exam

Readings:

Russell, *The Philosophy of Logical Atomism*
Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*
Austin, *How to do Things with Words*
Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*
Derrida, *Limited Inc*
Quine, “Two Dogmas of Empiricism,” “On What There Is” and other essays
Davidson, selected essays
PL 529 01    Metaphysics
Gary Gurtler, S.J.    T TH 10 30*

Level 3 – Undergraduate/Graduate

Description:

The course begins with classical modern philosophers. Their problems concern the relation of mind and body, the possibility of objective knowledge, and cause and effect. Their method is that of science, combining both empirical and logical elements. After these modern thinkers, giving our cultural assumptions, we turn to Ancient and Medieval philosophers. Their problems concern the relation of spirit and matter, the analogy of being and truth, and causal explanation. Their method is one of dialogue. With this different set of problems and method, we will be able to evaluate the relative strengths of these different philosophical positions.

Requirements:

There will be short review papers on each philosopher and a final review exam. Class attendance and participation are an integral part of the course.

Readings:

Descartes, *Discourse on Method and Meditations on First Philosophy*, tr. Cress (Hackett)
Kant, *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics* (Hackett)
Plato, *Phaedrus* (tr. Hackforth; Cambridge)
Aristotle, *Metaphysics* (tr. Richard Hope; Ann Arbor Pbk)
Aquinas, *On Being and Essence* (PIMS)
PL 537 01  Contemporary Metaethics
Jorge Garcia  M W 3*

Level 3 – Undergraduate/Graduate

Description:
This course examines work in ethical constructivism, anti-realism, projectivism, quasi-realism, scientific reductionism, definism, neo-expressivism by considering writings selected from those of J.L. Mackie, S. Blackburn, Darwall, P. Pettit, F. Jackson, J. Rawls, T.M. Scanlon, and/or other (mostly Anglophone) philosophers. Students will write two take-home examinations and give oral presentations in class.

Requirements:
Two take-home examinations & one in-class oral report

Readings include selections indicated.
Capstone: Building a Life

David McMenamin

Level 1 – Undergraduate Elective

Prerequisites: PULSE: Person and Social Responsibility I & II
Seniors Only

Description:

This Capstone course is designed for seniors who have taken PULSE. Using an approach based in It invites students to explore the ways that they might integrate their PULSE service and learning experiences into their post graduate choices.

Sample Readings:

Christian Norberg-Schulz, selections from Genius Loci; The Concept of Dwelling
Martin Heidegger, Discourse on Thinking
Lorraine Hansberry, Raisin in the Sun
Andrew Delbanco, The Real American Dream
Tracy Kidder, House
William Shore, Cathedral Within

Requirements:

Seminar leadership: Each week's seminar will be led by two of the students, working together to prepare, based on the question of how the reading for that week can be understood in relation to the theme of the course.

Four papers, including final exam.

Brief weekly writing assignments on the readings
PL 577 01  Symbolic Logic
David Lang  T TH 3*

Level 3 – Undergraduate/Graduate

Description:

The study of the validity of deductive arguments via two formal approaches to the notion of “necessary consequence”: semantic entailment and syntactic entailment. The arenas of technical application will be Classical Syllogistic Logic, the Sentential (or Propositional) Calculus, First Order Predicate (or Quantifier) Logic, and (time permitting) an introduction to Modal Logic. The meta-theory of symbolic logic will also be briefly discussed (in particular, the completeness and incompleteness theorems of Kurt Gödel).

Requirements:

Assigned homework problems nearly every class to be turned in for grading (the point total being weighted as 40% of course grade), an in-class midterm exam on syllogistic and sentential logic (weighted as 25% of course grade), and a written final exam (during the registrar-scheduled exam week) on quantifier logic and the Gödel incompleteness theorems (weighted as 30% of course grade). Since consistent attendance is crucial in a quasi-mathematical subject such as symbolic logic, this minimal class participation counts as 5% of the course grade.

Readings:

PL 584 01     C.S. Lewis

Peter J. Kreeft    T TH 3*

Level – Undergraduate/Graduate

Description:

Lewis wrote poetry, literary criticism, science fiction, fantasy, philosophy, theology, religion, literary history, epics, children's stories, historical novels, short stories, psychology, and politics. He was a rationalist and a romanticist, a classicist and an existentialist, a conservative and a radical, a pagan and a Christian. No writer of our century had more strings to his bow, and no one excels him at once in clarity, in moral force, and in imagination: the true, the good, and the beautiful. We will consider a sampling of Lewis' fiction and non-fiction.

Let me begin on a personal note: I have learned more from C.S. Lewis than from any other writer. In reading everything I could get my hands on (some 30-40 published titles) I came to appreciate both his value as an author and the value of a course that studies a single such commodious mind in depth (a thing 'survey' courses miss).

But why Lewis? Why do so many, like me, find him valuable and fascinating? (1) Because of his unique variety: a master of essays, poetry, theology, autobiography, science fiction, fantasy, philosophy, practical psychology, children's stories, literary criticism, literary history, religious psychology, apologetics, historical novel, debate, educational philosophy, and many other unclassifiable things; (2) because of his unique blend of "the true, the good and the beautiful," "rationalism, religion, and romanticism" (all three labels subtly misleading), clarity, faith and imagination, the ability to move the intellect, will and emotions--no one excels him in all three departments at once; (3) because for so many people he makes New Testament Christianity intellectually respectable, daily livable and above all imaginatively attractive and interesting; (4) and most of all for an almost indefinable quality about everything he wrote: a combination of wonder, joy, surprise, the shock of recognition, the sharp, bracing challenge of waking up, and the demand for simple, uncompromising honesty with a delightful yet uncomfortable absence of vagueness and abstraction.

We will read a sampling from his many works, emphasizing the fiction, the philosophy, and the religion. Opportunity to branch out into his literary criticism and other areas will be offered on an individual basis.

Requirements: mid-semester and final; optional extra-credit essays or papers.

Since the dawn of scientific and mathematical speculation in ancient Greece, scientific practices and ideas have posed a variety of challenges to human reflection and the career of philosophy. Scientific knowing has always been viewed as quite different from and even "odd" from the point of view of ordinary, common sense knowing. Among the greatest problems posed is that of defining exactly what it is that deserves to be called "science." This is the challenge of "philosophy of science."

Historically, there have been a variety of philosophical views of the nature of science; each has been greatly influenced by scientific innovations of its day. We will briefly consider some of these views, and then turn to the topics currently being debated among philosophers of science, especially those stemming from Thomas Kuhn's highly influential book, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions. These debates touch upon such issues as the relation between theories, observations, experimental equipment and motivations for scientific research. They cut to the very heart of the scientific enterprise itself--whether science is the only true form of knowledge or whether there are other kinds; whether there is only one kind of scientific knowing or whether there are several; whether science is knowledge of something real or merely a social construct; whether science is rational or merely ideological.

Requirements:

(1) Each student will be expected to give a short (10-minute) class presentation, relating some event in the history of scientific research to the theme from the readings (20%); (2) midterm exam (25%); (3) a term paper (of 10-15 pages) (30%). (4) Final Exam, (25%).

Reading:

Curd & Cover, The Philosophy of Science; Kuhn, Structure of Scientific Revolutions; Fox Keller, A Feeling for the Organism; and short selections from: Aristotle, Galileo, Hacking, Hanson, Hempel, Lakatos, Lonergan, Popper, Reichenbach.
This course is inspired by Socrates' imperative and dictum: “Know thy self.” Yet what exactly does it mean? A human being is more than a rational animal. In fact we are symbolic beings with a polymorphic consciousness, have language, and a relational existence to others, the cosmos, and transcendence. In order to flesh out more thoroughly what exactly it means to “know thy self” we will focus primarily on the thought of Bernard Lonergan S.J.. Through our encounter with Lonergan’s thought we will begin to formulate a partial answer to the question “what does it mean to know thyself.” In other words, from Lonergan’s perspectives, to know thy self is to personally appropriate yourself as someone who is a knower, chooser, and lover.

Requirements:

Mid-term
Final paper: topic to be determined.

Readings:

The readings will be both primary texts and secondary texts dealing with the thought of Bernard Lonergan
PL 670 01/MI 267 01  Technology & Culture

William Griffith

W 4:30 - 6:50

Level 3 – Undergraduate / Graduate

Description:

This interdisciplinary course will first investigate the social, political, psychological, ethical and spiritual aspects of Western cultural development with a special emphasis on scientific and technological metaphors and narratives. We will then focus on the contemporary world, examining the impact of our various technological creations on cultural directions, democratic process, the world of work, quality of life, and especially on the emergent meanings for the terms “citizen” and “ethics” in contemporary society. Students will explore technologies in four broad and interrelated domains: (1) Computer, Media, Communications and Information Technologies, (2) Biotechnology, (3) Globalization, and (4) Environmental Issues.

Requirements:

Reading and class participation, weekly reading repots, and critical review essay
PL 707 01/LL 707 01  Habermas: Law and Politics

David Rasmussen  TH 4:30-6:50

Level – Graduate

Description:

Between Facts and Norms, the extraordinary recent work by Jürgen Habermas, is thought by some to be one of the most comprehensive works in political philosophy and law in recent decades. The book with its original thesis about the co-relation between private and public autonomy can be read in the great tradition of the philosophy of law inaugurated by Kant and continued by Fichte, Hegel and Weber. In recent times Habermas has written essays on religion and politics, globalization and human rights, cosmopolitanism and international law. In this seminar we will read key chapters of Between Facts and Norms and explore the significant more recent writings of Habermas on law and politics.

Requirements:

A research paper on a topic relevant to the course and selected with the approval of the professor will be due at the end of the semester. Course attendance is mandatory. Class participation is expected. Presentations will be possible.

Readings:

PL 712 01  Medieval Metaphysics
Jean-Luc Solère       TH 3-5:30
Level - Graduate

Description:

We will study how Neo-Platonism and Aristotelism dialogued, argued, merged, parted in medieval metaphysics, especially in Aquinas’, Scotus’ and Ockham’s thought, during the 13th and 14th centuries. The opportunity will thus be offered to work on fundamental concepts such as participation, causality, creation, being, essence and existence, form and matter, substance and accident, etc. The class is especially designed for giving graduate students a strong and in-depth presentation of medieval thought, an essential moment of the development of western philosophy.

See syllabus on www2.bc.edu/~solere/docs/Syllabus_PL706_S11.pdf

Requirements:

intermediate synthesis papers; final research paper.

Readings:

Among others: Avicenna and Averroes, selections; Aquinas, On Being and Essence; Henry of Ghent, Duns Scotus and Ockham, selections.
An intensive seminar examining Aquinas' arguments for the existence and nature of God--as found in the *Summa Contra Gentiles* and the *Summa Theologiae*.
Consequentialism and Its Critics

Micah Lott

T TH 3*

Level – Graduate

Description:

This course examines utilitarian and, more broadly, consequentialist approaches to ethics. Our goals will be: (1) to understand the structure and appeal of consequentialist theories (2) to articulate the strongest possible version of consequentialism and (3) to consider the most serious objections to consequentialism. We will begin with two classical texts: Mill's Utilitarianism and Moore's Principia Ethica. We will also examine contemporary re-formulations of consequentialism, including Brad Hooker's Ideal Code, Real World: A rule-consequentialist theory of morality. In addition, we will read essays by various critics of consequentialism, including Bernard Williams, Philippa Foot, David Lyons, and Anselm Mueller.
Description:

In this class we will examine Husserl's groundbreaking work Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and a Phenomenological Philosophy primarily from a systematic perspective. An effort will be made to connect Husserl's phenomenology with the broader tradition of transcendental philosophy. The goal of the class is to learn Husserl's phenomenological method and to understand key notions of phenomenology such as reduction, intentionality, pure consciousness, noesis-noema.

Requirements:

Knowledge of Kant's theoretical philosophy is required to take this seminar.

Readings:

Edmund Husserl, Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy. First Book: General Introduction to a Pure Phenomenology, Collected Works II (Dordrecht Kluwer.1982)

PL 734 01 The Idea of Community
John Sallis TH 4:30-6:50

Level – Graduate

Description:
This course examines the origin and development of the concept of community in the history of philosophy in relation to the renewed discussions of community in recent French philosophy (e.g., J.-L. Nancy, M. Blanchot). The primary question to be addressed is whether community is possible in a post-metaphysical context and, if so, what form it must take.

Requirements:
Papers on the topic.

Readings:
Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*
Maurice Blanchot, *The Unavowable Community*
plus several classical texts
Global Justice and Obligation

Jonathan Trejo-Mathys

W 1 – 3:25

Level – Graduate

[Note: Advanced or highly motivated undergraduates are also strongly encouraged to request permission to take the course.]

Description:

It has become clear to all informed observers that we are in an age of rapid change in the global order, evident in phenomena such as the Arab Spring, the rise of China, the EU crisis, and talk of a "post-American" or "multi-polar" world, to name only a few. We will explore the question, "What, if any, specifically political obligations do individuals have and how is this impacted by these global transformations?," through a close, critical reading of four important recent works by noted political philosophers and theorists. We will also discuss the relationship between this notion of political obligation and the justification and legitimacy of political authorities and the issue of global justice.

Also open to upper-level undergraduates (who are highly encouraged to contact the professor if interested in enrolling).

Readings:


Requirements:

Participation (15%).
Short critical paper (25%).
Research paper (60%).
Level – Graduate

Description:

This seminar will bring these two thinkers into conversation on such major themes as power, ethics, war and violence and philosophical spirituality.

Requirements:

After consultation with the faculty member, a research paper or other creative project.

Readings:

A variety of major works by each of the authors as well as biographies of each Young-Bruehl, Hannah Arendt: For Love of the World and D. Macey, The Lives of Michel Foucault.
Reason and religion converge in the question of how we relate to the true Infinite. We will examine how the problem of the Infinite arises in our consciousness according to these authors, how we try to resolve it immanently, and how it has to give way to a solution of absolute transcendence. We shall explore not only how these three authors converge around the question of the Infinite but also how they diverge radically in handling the question as it affects the relation between reason and religion.

Requirements:

class presentation on author of choice
research term paper
final oral examination

Readings:

Hegel:  
*Faith and Knowledge*
*Phenomenology of Spirit* (selected parts)

Kierkegaard:  
*Fear and Trembling*
*Concluding Unscientific Postscript* (selected parts)

Blondel:  
*Action (1893)* (selected parts)
*Letter on Apologetics & History and Dogma*
PL 833 01  Carnal Hermeneutics

Richard Kearney  TH 6:30 – 8:50

Level – Graduate

Description:

Graduate and advanced Undergraduate Students

This course will explore how a phenomenology of the flesh may offer new ways of interpreting our senses. Particular attention will be paid to the primary senses of taste, smell and touch with a view to showing how these neglected senses of western philosophy (which privileged sight and hearing) may be rehabilitated in a new hermeneutics of embodiment. Readings will include key texts on the senses from Aristotle to Merleau-Ponty.

Requirements:

Class participation and final research paper

Readings:

select readings from Aristotle, Husserl, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, Levinas, Ricoeur, Kristeva and Nancy.
PL 848 01  Plato’s Dialogues
John Sallis  T 4:30 – 6:50

Level – Graduate

Description:

This course is devoted to an in-depth study of Plato’s *Phaedo*.

Requirements:

Term paper

Readings:

Plato, *Phaedo*