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PL 116 01 Medieval Religion & Thought

Stephen Brown M W F 2

Level – Undergraduate

Description: The medieval world of philosophy and theology was a multicultural world: Muslim, Jews, and Christian thinkers from the three great religions traditions adopted, adapted, and shared the philosophical riches of the classical world and the religious resources of the biblical heritage. This course introduces students to the great Arab thinkers: Alfarabi, Avicenna, Algazali and Averroes; the respected Jewish authors: Saadiah Gaon, Ibn Gabirol, Moses Maimonides, and Gersonides; and the famous Christian writers: Abelard, Anselm, Bonaventure, and Thomas Aquinas and the intellectual challenges from the Greek intellectual world that they met and faced in the Middle Ages.

Requirements: Core courses in Philosophy and Theology are presupposed. One paper one each of the three religious traditions must be submitted.

Readings: Primary readings found in Philosophy in the Middle Ages, edd. A. Hyman and J.J. Walsjrh (3rd edition, 2010)
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 171 03 History and Thought in Early China

David Mozina M W F 1

Level – Undergraduate

Description: The world of early China—from the 8th century BCE through the 3rd century CE—was a place teeming with political upheaval and religious innovation. Great thinkers like Confucius, Mencius, Xunzi, Han Feizi, Laozi, and Zhuangzi labored to prescribe political and ethical visions that could correctly situate human beings and society within a larger world filled with warfare, natural forces, and supernatural beings. This course, team taught by an expert in Chinese history and an expert in Chinese religion, will closely read primary texts in historical context to tease out the debates that combined political, ethical, and cultic patterns to form the foundations of imperial China.
PL 216 01  Boston: An Urban Analysis

David Manzo  TH 3 - 5:30

Level – Undergraduate

Description:

“Intuition alone is never enough to explain what you see. One must not only learn to trust intuition but also to pursue its leads: to follow hints from peripheral vision but always to dig beyond first impressions; to see through a scene and its many processes, but also to see through it in time to understand how it came to be, and to guess more skillfully at what I might become.”
– Grady Clay, How to Read the American City

“In our American cities, we need all kinds of diversity.”
- Jane Jacobs, Death and Life of American Cities

This course is intended for PULSE students who are willing to investigate, analyze, and understand the history, problems, and prospects of Boston neighborhoods. The above quotes by Grady Clay and Jane Jacobs frame our method of investigation. Assignments will require that you spend time observing, researching, and writing about the neighborhood in which your PULSE placement is located.

With the exception of the third session, class meetings in the first half of the semester will meet on campus. (Class # 3 will meet in the Prudential Center).

For the second half of the semester, as snow banks give way to slush and sun and blossoms, we will meet in the South End of Boston for a firsthand study of a most intriguing and changing inner-city neighborhood.
This PULSE elective will focus on the power of story-telling to create the foundation for individual and corporate justice, and social liberation. We will read both theoretical and narrative accounts of the role of story in changing the dynamics of oppression, from the time of Jesus through the Civil Rights movement to the present. We will also examine the effective use of story-telling among marginal populations as a means of setting goals and participating in their own “solutions.” Finally, we will explore the benefits and liabilities of social media and “citizen journalism” in emerging social and political movements.

Students will identify stories they wish to pursue in their own service placements. Class time will be spent in discussion, and in sharing our own placement stories, getting feedback from one another, and discussing the special ethical, research, and editing challenges such work entails. (Telling Truths I is not a prerequisite.)

Requirements: A PULSE, 4-Boston or other voluntary service work (four hours a week) is required. No prerequisites.

Readings: Works by contemporary nonfiction writers engaged in social justice writing.
PL264 03 Logic

James Oldfield M W F 12

Level – Undergraduate

Description:

This course is an introduction to the basic principles and techniques of modern logic. Its aims are to present the standard manner in which philosophers and logicians have interpreted the phenomenon of implication, and to teach a rigorous method of evaluating inferences. The habits of mind developed by studying and practicing this method will help students analyze everyday arguments more effectively. Those interested in pursuing philosophy, law, computer science, or other analytical disciplines will be especially well served by this.

The course has two main parts. To begin with we will focus on informal logic. We will talk about what arguments are and what makes them good or bad. Later we will study formal logic. Here we will learn how to translate arguments into a formal language, and to manipulate and assess that language.

Requirements:

Regular homework is assigned, in addition to four in class exams.

Readings:

PL 264 01/02  Logic
Elisabeta Sarca  M W F 1 / M W F 2

Level – Undergraduate

Description:

This course aims to promote reasoning skills, especially the ability to distinguish valid and invalid reasoning. We will study syllogistic logic, propositional logic, informal fallacies, and basic inductive reasoning. 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 three tests and one cumulative final exam, homework every week, attendance and participation are expected, plus the use of provided software for practice and homework.

Readings:

Human existence or selfhood is a matter of fact that calls for critical reflection on what it is to be a human being or a self in the world and on how we have to act as human beings. Philosophy as a scientific discipline is such a critical reflection in two parts, one theoretical, on what it is to be a human being in the world, and one practical, on how we are to act as human beings in the world.

In this course we undertake reflection in the practical part of this critical reflection, starting from what we call our conscience and from our sense of responsibility to others with regard to the human good in history. We go on to reflect on the necessity of reasoning from the good in deliberating about what to do as human beings, and on the necessity of justice and friendship in our dealings with one another. We reflect also on the necessity of authority and law in determining what is called for by justice and friendship in a community of selves, and on the necessity for every individual self to develop character, or courage, and temperance in one’s emotional drives in keeping with the requirements of the good that is at once personal and communal good. Our aim as philosophers is not just to learn about the philosophy of virtue and law, but rather to develop our own philosophy of human ethical existence in keeping with our desire for the true good of human existence in history, which is a superabundance of world peace.

We will begin from where we stand in our own culture, and we will try to show how the four cardinal virtues of prudence, justice, courage and temperance must come into play in our deliberations about what to do with ourselves and with other selves for the good of all.

Requirements:

4 or 5 reflection papers, term paper, final exam.

Readings:

Workbook and individual selection for personal research.
PL 294 01  Culture and Social Structures II: Philosophy of PULSE

David McMenamin  T 4:30-6:20

Level 1 – Undergraduate Elective

Prerequisite: Membership on PULSE Council

Description:

This course is a continuation of the themes developed in Culture and Social Structures I, with the focus on American culture in particular and on more specifically contemporary issues.
Description: The nature of the bodhisattva—a wise and compassionate being dedicated to the salvation of all sentient beings—is perhaps the subject debated by the major schools of Mahāyāna thought in East Asia (China, Japan, Korea, and Vietnam). These philosophical debates in turn shaped, and were shaped by, the distinctive modes of practice that developed within these schools. This course will explore the sophisticated interplay between the philosophical and cultic dimensions of various Buddhist traditions in East Asia—Tiantai (Tendai), Chan (Zen), Pure Land, and Esoteric (Shingon). Close readings of texts and images will challenge Western assumptions about ultimate reality, ethical norms, and ritual forms.
PL 403 01          Does God Exist?
Ronald Tacelli, S.J.         M W 3*

Level 1 – Undergraduate Elective

Description:
This course aims to be a serious examination, for capable undergraduates, of arguments for and against the existence of God.

Requirements:
Short Papers
Oral Exams on papers

Readings:
Various
PL 407 01  Medieval Philosophy

Peter Kreeft  T TH 12

Level 1 – Undergraduate Elective

Prerequisites: Ancient Greek philosophy strongly recommended. Philosophy of the Person or Logic are acceptable alternatives.

Description:

By reading complete short works of four great medieval thinkers (Augustine, Boethius, Anselm, and Aquinas) we will explore such questions as: What is God? What is happiness? Why is there evil? Can faith and reason ever conflict? Can we be rationally certain God exists? What morality is unchanging? Where is Truth?

Requirements: Mid-semester and final; original essays optional (extra credit)

Readings: St. Augustine, Confessions; Boethius, The Consolation of Philosophy; St. Anselm, Proslogion; St. Thomas Aquinas, Summa of the Summa (ed. Peter Kreeft)
PL 408 01 19th&20th Century Philosophy

Andrea Staiti T TH 10:30*

Level – Undergraduate

Description:

*Prerequisite:* Some background in Kant, although not mandatory, is strongly recommended

This class will be devoted to some of the most important issues in philosophy in the past two centuries. In particular, we will study the development of Kantian transcendental philosophy in German Idealism, Neokantianism and Husserlian Phenomenology.
PL 414 01  Race and Philosophy
Jorge Garcia  M W 12:30*
Level 1 – Undergraduate Elective

Description:

This course employs methods of recent Anglophone philosophy to examine such topics as the bases and justification of racial solidarity; racial identity; racial (dis)loyalty; and the nature, preconditions, loci, subjects, and targets of racism.

Requirements:

Three in-class examinations

Readings:

Works by recent writers, including Randall Kennedy, Tommie Shelby, Ronald Sandstrom, and others
Kant's transcendental idealism has been charged with divorcing the subject of understanding from the subject of moral experience. We shall examine the basis of this claim, as well as the attempts by Romantic writers and German Idealists to provide a fresh account of the integrity of human experience. We begin examining Kant's attempt, in The Critique of Judgment, to bridge the moral and natural realms through aesthetics. We then trace the progressive emancipation of the imagination in the later development of German Idealism and Romanticism.

**Requirements:**

four 5-page essays, midterm exam, final exam

**Readings:**

Kant, *The Critique of Judgment*

Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*

J.G. Fichte, *Two Introductions to the Wissenschaftslehre*

Schleiermacher, *On Religion*

F.W.J. Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations into the Nature of Human Freedom*

Goethe, *Faust*

E.T.A. Hoffman, *Tales of E.T.A. Hoffman*

Heinrich von Kleist, *The Marquise of O and Other Essays*
PL 447 01  After World War I: Spiritual Recovery in Fascism or Personalism

James Bernauer, S.J.  T TH 3*

Level 1 – Undergraduate Elective

Description:

World War I, which broke out a century ago in 1914, inflicted an atrocious wound on Western culture. Although most of the war's physical destruction has been repaired, it's psychic injury still festers. This course's study is a corner stone in the spiritual history of the 20th Century. We will examine the two major routes for recovery from the injuries of World War I: Fascism, which advocated permanent struggle as the meaning of life, and Personalism which embraced intense human encounter as the road to healing.

Requirements:

1) A journal will be kept throughout the course and will be submitted to the professor three times during the semester. The journal will articulate the student's understanding of the spiritual crisis which gives rise to Fascism and Personalism and his/her assessments of their strengths and weaknesses. 2) There will be a paper, to be determined with the professor, on some dimension of these movements.

Readings:

Arendt, H.  THE PORTABLE HANNAH ARENDT
Buber, M.  I AND THOU
Foucault, M.  THE HISTORY OF SEXUALITY I: AN INTRODUCTION
MacMurray, John.  PERSONS IN RELATION
Payne, Stanley,  A HISTORY OF FASCISM
Schnapps, Jeffrey (ed) A PRIMER OF ITALIAN FASCISM
Weirs, Eric,  WEIMAR GERMANY
Gandhi is well known as a freedom fighter for India’s independence. But his deep concern regarding the impact of ‘modern civilization’ on the social fabric and fundamental philosophical reasons underlying his use of nonviolent methods are perhaps not as well known. Moreover, his analysis of importance of social justice was not provincial—limited to what is sometimes called “the third world”—but was universal. In this course, we will examine Gandhian thought through his own writings, and explicate their relevance to the contemporary society. We will examine certain selections from the classical as well as contemporary philosophical literature. This will help us to understand fully Gandhi’s integrated vision of the citizen not only as a reflective but also as an active individual.

Requirements: Two papers, and a final written examination.

Readings:

1. *An Autobiography: My Experiments with Truth*
   Gandhi, Mohandas K. [With a Forward by Sissela Bok]
   Boston: Beacon Press, 1993

2. *Mahatma Gandhi: Selected Political Writings*
   Edited by Dennis Dalton
   Hackett Publishing Company, Inc.
   Indianapolis, Indiana, 1996

3. *Satyagraha in South Africa*
   Gandhi, Mohandas K
   Navajivan Publishers, Ahmedabad, India
Description:

This course is an introduction to East Asian philosophy. It examines the three streams of thought that make up the core of this tradition: Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism. The wisdom literature of these three Ways contains significant philosophical content insofar as we find there the critical articulation of views about the nature of reality and about how one ought to live. An important theme common to all three teachings in this regard is the emphasis on learning as a process of self-transformation through self-effort in ordinary existence, so that the activities performed in daily life take on great spiritual significance. This is an art of living which leads to the inner illumination of self-knowledge, and an achievement, finally, which is not aimed at merely for one’s own sake, but also for the sake of the others to whom one is always related.

Requirements:

**Presentation** (20% of final grade) Each student will be required to make an in-class presentation of their final paper topic. This will include a presentation of the thesis and the general elements of the overall argument you wish to make, as well as an overview of the research you have done in preparation for the paper, summarizing essential points and claims in the relevant secondary literature (including both articles and books). This need not be (and will likely not be) a complete précis of your final paper. Instead this is an opportunity to demonstrate what you have discovered in the course of your research, raise questions and issues that have still not been resolved, and receive feedback from both the professor and other students. All students not presenting are asked to participate by offering reactions, questions, and advice to the presenter.

**Final Paper** (80% of final grade) A research paper of 15-20 pages consisting of a study of the thought of at least one of the authors read in this course will be due on the last day of class. This paper should be written following either Chicago or MLA style guidelines.

PL 47701  Ethical Principles in Comparative Perspectives

Joseph You Guo Jiang  T. Th 1:30-2:45pm

Description:

The course will explore the major concepts of and current trends in Eastern and Western ethical principles, values, beliefs, and practices. It will also illustrate the diversity of their social, cultural, ethical and philosophical life by means of a cross-cultural perspective in order to communicate to students the importance of global changes, dialogue and exchanges. This course will qualify for cultural diversity requirement.

Requirements:

three (3) take-home essay exams, participation in class discussions, and a group presentation

Readings:

(Available on Reserve at O'Neill Library, since text-books are very expensive, students are not required to purchase all of these books. You may wish to purchase one or two of them via Amazon (used books).

Ethics, values and civil society, by Stephen Cohen; Michael Schwartz, 2012.
The moral circle and the self : Chinese and Western approaches by Kim Chong Chong; Sor-hoon Tan; 1965-; C. L Ten, 2003

In addition to required readings listed in this syllabus, please read articles assigned for each week on Blackboard Vista (average: 5-10 pages per week).
Spiritual Exercises: Philosophy and Theology

Brian Robinette

TH 1 30*

Level – Undergraduate/Graduate

Description:
The purpose of this course is to introduce students to a variety of “spiritual exercises” (or askeses) that have helped shape the philosophical and theological traditions of the West, and which allow us better to appreciate how philosophical and theological practice is not just a conceptual enterprise but a “way of life.” As important as theory is and remains in these disciplines, the course will explore the ascetical and contemplative roots of theory (theoria) by detailing those practices of perceptual, emotional, and cognitive transformation that contribute to “the good life.” Such exercises include: cultivating attention, concentrating upon the present moment, negative visualization, meditating upon death, becoming indifferent to indifferent things, meditative reading, the art of dialogue, systematizing the passions, curtailing possessive desires, observing states of mind, methods of discernment, examining conscience, and non-discursive meditation. In addition to exploring these (and other) exercises in several classic texts in philosophy and theology, both ancient and contemporary, the course will investigate the historical context of these writings in order to appreciate their shared characteristics and distinctive contributions. Beginning with the Platonic and Stoic traditions of philosophy, the course will trace their influences and transformations in early Christian ascetical movements, or what many early Christian authors simply called “philosophy,” as well as their continuing influence in representative medieval, counter-Reformation, and contemporary texts. The course is therefore designed to deepen students’ understanding of key (and frequently overlapping) motifs within philosophy and theology, as well as to provide students opportunities for engaging ancient and contemporary voices of wisdom in the effort to imagine and fashion “the good life.”

Requirements:
Observational-Experiential Journal: Students will maintain an Observational- Experiential Journal (“OEJ”) throughout the semester. The purpose of the OEJ is two-fold: a) to allow students to become more active readers of texts through the creation of a reading log, and b) to give students opportunities for experimenting with several of the spiritual exercises we’ll be studying throughout the semester. The OEJ will include diverse assignments, including an E-media fast (see below), reflections upon specific readings, the composition of a Stoic letter of wisdom, and reflections upon experiences related to the implementation of specific exercises.

E-Media Fast: As part of the OEJ project, students will take undertake an “e-media fast” for the period of 48 hours. Guidelines and questions for reflection upon the fast will be provided.

Essays: Students will write two major essays based upon the assigned texts (6-7 pages each). Guidelines for the essays will be distributed in class.

Readings:
Hadot, Pierre. Selections from Philosophy as Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault.
Plato. Phaedo.
Seneca. On the Shortness of Life.
Basil the Great. On the Human Condition.
Augustine of Hippo. Selections from The Confessions.
Hillesum, Etty. An Interrupted Life and Letters from Westerbork.
Dante’s *Divine Comedy* in Translation

Level 3 – Undergraduate/Graduate Elective

Description:

A prisoner at Auschwitz, Primo Levi unexpectedly recalled to mind *Inferno* 26, when Ulysses exhorts his tired crew: “Consider well your seed: / You were not born to live as a mere brute does, / But for the pursuit of knowledge and the good.” It was, writes Levi, “as if I also was hearing it for the first time: like the blast of a trumpet, like the voice of God. For a moment I forget who I am and where I am.”

The *Divine Comedy* may be read from many perspectives: it offers an almost encyclopedic presentation of medieval ethics, philosophy and theology, a strong political vision, and some of the most imaginative, stirring and beautiful poetry ever written. The poem redefined literature and language in Italy, and perhaps throughout Europe. But how does the *Divine Comedy* engage us today both intellectually and spiritually?

The course will ponder the power of literature to give meaning to our lives across centuries and cultures, as well as the case that Dante carefully constructs for the exceptional meaning of his own life, which allows him to journey through the eternal realms.

Each class will be divided into two parts: the first part will be devoted to a lecture on a specific canto or group of cantos. The second part is an open discussion of your questions and responses to the fundamental issues at stake in the assigned cantos.

Our reading will be based on the Durling translation.
Tibetan Buddhist Philosophy and Practice

John Makransky TH 4:30-6:50

Level – 3

Description:

Philosophical ideas and meditative and ritual practices of the Tantric Buddhism of Tibet (Vajrayana). Includes early Buddhist and Mahayana philosophical foundations of Tantric Buddhism, connections between philosophy and sacred story, nature of mind and the transformative potential of the human being, visionary practices, meditation theory, inner yogas, unities of wisdom and means, and the feminine divine in cultural context. We explore Tibetan philosophy and praxis through writings of modern Buddhist studies scholars and Tibetan lamas.

Prerequisite: at least one prior course in philosophy or theology completed with a grade of B+ or higher.

Requirements:

Weekly writing, midterm and final papers.
An exploration of core issues in contemporary theory of knowledge emphasizing questions about the justification and rationality of belief. Topics to be considered include: the analysis of knowledge, skepticism and the sources of knowledge, theories of justification, rationality, and evidence. Our treatment of the reliability of perception, common sense realism, fallibilism, varieties of ampliative inference (such as inference to the best explanation, induction, and the use of probabilistic reasoning in decision theory), naturalized epistemology, recent trends in social epistemology, and the scope and limits of science will attend to intersections between epistemology, philosophy of science, and philosophy of mind.

Reading:

- Course Packet.
This class will explore the central ideas of Friedrich Nietzsche, especially his ethical thinking. We will consider his notorious attacks on traditional ethics, but pay special attention to the positive ethical ideal Nietzsche advocates instead: the “free spirit,” Übermensch, or “sovereign individual.” This will involve a detailed discussion of Nietzsche’s alternative conceptions of conscience, freedom, responsibility, and autonomy. We will also consider how philosophy is important here, exploring Nietzsche’s critiques of traditional forms of philosophy and his hopes for a new “philosophy of the future,” including the character traits of thinkers and their thinking that he believes constitute philosophical excellence.

Readings:

Class readings will include Nietzsche’s *Untimely Meditation* "Schopenhauer as Educator," *Beyond Good and Evil*, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, *Twilight of the Idols*, *The Anti-christ*, and *Ecce Homo*. 
PL 534 01       Environmental Ethics

Holly Vandewall       M W F 2

Level – Undergraduate/Graduate

Description:

This course will examine major themes in and approaches to environmental philosophy with a particular focus on the idea of nature as it developed in the United States and how current approaches (such as deep ecology and ecofeminism) challenge existing normative attitudes toward the domain of non-human beings. The course will consider some classic texts in the history of American nature writing by Thoreau, John Muir, and Rachael Carson before turning to topics-based discussions on such issues as environmental justice and animal rights.
Description:

As historical beings, our lives constitute a story that unfolds in time. Our lives narrate a journey from sin to salvation, despair to faith, sickness to health, death to life, darkness to light and ignorance to knowledge. this is a journey to selfhood. We are sojourners struggling to understand more deeply who we are as this self and what is my place in the world.

This seminar will explore the four fundamental capstone issues of spirituality, citizenship, relationships and work in terms of this notion of our life as narrative, a journey to self-hood.
PL 541 01  Philosophy of Health Science: East and West

Pramod Thaker  T TH 12*

Level – Undergraduate/Graduate

Satisfies Cultural Diversity Core Requirement

Description:

This course will explore the philosophical assumptions of health care practice and show the influence of philosophical perspective on the practice of medicine. We will examine certain key events in the history and philosophy of medicine—from the Hippocratic regimen to the contemporary medical practice—to understand the close-knit relationship between philosophy and medicine. As a counterpoint, ancient Indian medical tradition of Āyurveda will be studied. We will examine how the physicians and philosophers of such diverse schools approach philosophical and ethical problems inherent in medical practice. In the concluding sessions, we will discuss some of the specific ethical problems that are encountered by the clinicians in their practice today. These case studies will be undertaken not with an aim of resolving the difficult ethical dilemma once for all, but to demonstrate the necessity of first recognizing and then explicating the philosophical subtext of any ethical decision-making process.

Requirements:

Two papers and a final written examination.

Reading:

1. A course-pack of selected literature to be purchased from the BC Bookstore.
2. The 'text-handout' material given in the class.
3. Selected books on the reserve list in the library.
This course will be co-taught by Patrick Byrne
Daniel McKaughan

Level – Undergraduate/Graduate

Description:

The rise of modern science has raised and continues to raise a wide range of questions for religious belief. These include the proper authority regarding statements about the natural world, the nature of humanity, the existence of God, the meaning of sacred writings (especially the Bible), and the ideas of creation, free will, and evil. We will explore the implications of that modern physics and evolutionary biology have for Jewish and Christian understandings of origins, that evolution and genetics have for human freedom, the questions of reductionism and emergence, and the questions about whether or not our understandings of God and what is ethical are completely determined by the differing genetic and neurophysiological structures different people, or whether knowledge and belief in these matters has an emergent autonomy relative to our biological and neural makeup.

Requirements:
Undergraduates: 5 page take home midterm paper and a final 15 page paper.
Graduate students: 25 page term paper

Readings:

- Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion*
- Jerome Langford, *Galileo, Science and the Church*
- Alvin Plantinga, *Where the Conflict Really Lies*
- Arthur Peacocke, *Theology for a Scientific Age*
- Justin L. Barrett, *Why Would Anyone Believe in God?*
- Course Readings on Blackboard with selections including items such as:
  - John Paul II: Addresses to Pontifical Academy of Science on Galileo and Evolution
  - Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I, 44-46 (creation); I,72 (Adam); I, 90-91 (soul & body); I-II, 94 (natural law)
  - Bernard Lonergan, “Faith and Beliefs” & *Insight* (selections)
  - Timothy O’Connor, “Conscious Willing and the Emerging Sciences of Brain and Behavior,” Theism and Ultimate Explanation
  - Pascal Boyer, *Religion Explained: The Evolutionary Origins of Religious Thought*
  - Recent work on neuroscience and our understanding of persons, free will, and ethics
PL 563 01 Logos and Beauty

Gary Gurtler, S.J. MW 3

Level 3 – Undergraduate/Graduate Elective

Description:

The road to reality in ancient philosophy makes three parallel ascents: intellectual (Truth), moral (Good), and aesthetic (Beauty). This course will wander up the aesthetic path, bringing a peculiar focus to the Greek understanding of reality and the capacity of the human mind to know it. This favors the Platonic tradition, but Aristotle and his followers are clearly not absent from the discussion. The understanding of logos in terms of beauty indicates how the Greeks found human knowledge and its expression in language to be both possible and paradoxical.

Requirements: class summaries, term paper (15-20 pp.), final exam.

PL 598 01/TH 598 01
Law, Medicine and Ethics

John J. Paris, S.J.
T TH 10:30*

Level – Undergraduate/Graduate

Description:

This course examines legal and ethical issues in medicine. It is designed so that students take an ethical position on difficult or emerging issues in medicine, such as appropriate care of seriously ill newborns, new forms of reproduction, and proposals for health care reform. The student is expected to provide a principled rationale for the position. The goal is to have the students think, be prepared to recognize inadequacies or difficulties in their position, modify it if necessary, and ultimately arrive at a thought-through and principled position. A Socratic method is used to achieve that goal.
Global Justice and Human Rights

David Rasmussen

Level 3 – Graduate/Undergraduate Elective

Description: Twenty percent of the world’s population live on a dollar a day and forty-five percent live on two dollars a day. How do we think about justice; not from a domestic or even Western perspective, but from the point of view of the world as such? Is it possible to think of global justice in relationship to the explosion of human rights discourse and law from World War II on? As students of philosophy we will consider the arguments for and against global justice. As philosophical interpreters we will examine the emerging narrative on human rights as it takes place in institutional developments and international law. We will examine the modern history of the idea of global justice from its formulation in social contract theory in Hobbes and Locke, through Kant’s idea of cosmopolitan justice; to its contemporary reconstruction in John Rawls, Charles Beitz, David Held, Jürgen Habermas, Thomas Pogge and others. In the context of examining the status of global justice we will consider the problem of world poverty, the rights of minorities, violence and how human rights can be defended in a global context.


Class Requirements: There will be an oral mid-term and a take home final. Also, students are asked to write a ten-page paper on some aspect of the course topic. You must choose your topic by the time of the midterm. You may choose from any of the issues in human rights global justice. Attendance is mandatory and class participation is required. In accord with the size of the class, class presentations are a possibility.

Required Tests:

PL 621 01 Anti-Moralism
Jorge Garcia M W 3*
Level – Undergraduate/Graduate

Description:

We explore some ways of rejecting morality as represented by Sextus Empiricus, K. Marx, F. Nietzsche, S. Freud, A. Rosenberg, and/or other thinkers.

Requirements: Students will write two take-home examinations and give oral presentations in class.

Readings: Selections from each of the following:

Outlines of Pyrrhanism, Sextus Empiricus
Mary, Justice, History; K. Marx, Selected Writings
Beyond Good & Evil, Genealogy of Morals, F. Nietzsche
Civilizations and Its Discontents, S. Freud
Future of an Illusion, S. Freud
Atheist’s Guide to Reality, A. Rosenberg
PL 622 01 Philosophy and Music
John Sallis T 4:30-6:50

Level – Undergraduate/Graduate

Description:

This course will explore the mutual relationships between philosophy and music. The first half of the course will address the bearing of philosophy on music, that is, the ways in which philosophers have understood the nature of music in general as well as the relation between words and music. The second half of the course will be devoted to the bearing of music on philosophy, that is, to the effect of musical experience (of melody, harmony, rhythm, etc.) on both the philosophical endeavor in general and the character of philosophical texts in particular. Among the philosophers to be discussed are Rousseau, Kant, Hegel, Nietzsche, and Jean-Luc Nancy. Music by various composers will be discussed, from the Baroque era through Wagner and beyond.
Description:

This course examines recent work in psychology and neuroscience to determine what relevance, if any, this work has for moral philosophy and practical thought. Over the semester, we will consider three concepts central to our understanding of human life and action: 1) character, 2) agency, and 2) responsibility. With respect to each of these concepts we will ask whether (and how) empirical studies require revision of traditional approaches to these concepts, or support one understanding of these concepts over another.

Thus we will address such questions as: Do empirical studies, such as Millgram’s obedience studies, undermine the idea of stable character traits? Can images of the brain tell us something important about moral decision making? Could neuroscience show that free will is an illusion? Can we hold people accountable for decisions that psychologists says are best explained by the presence of ambient smells or noise? Is it possible for empirical research to justify one normative theory over another? Might the empirical sciences one day replace traditional moral theorizing?

Readings:

We will read work by: Stanley Millgram, Jonathan Haidt, John Dorris, Christian Miller, and Michael Gazzaniga, among others.
PL 634 01  Cosmic City: Hellenistic & Early Christian Philosophy

Sarah Byers  M W F 1

Level 3 – Undergraduate/Graduate

Description:

A study of Hellenistic and early Christian theories of normativity and community. Focuses particularly upon: (1) Augustine's attempt to synthesize the Stoic theory of natural inclinations as normative (‘natural law theory’) with a Platonic (proximately Plotinian and Victorine) account of transcendent moral standards (‘eternal law theory’); and (2) the ways in which Augustine's account of the ‘two cosmic cities' is developed critically from the Stoic claim that the entire cosmos is one city (polis) and from middle- and neo-Platonic models of how the cosmos is structured and inhabited. Some comparisons/contrasts will be made with ostensibly similar contemporary theories.
PL 700 03          Anc/Medieval Theo/Passion
Sweeney       TH 2-4:25

Level – Graduate

**Description:** This course will examine the account of the passions from the ancients to the end of the Medieval period; we will consider Plato, Aristotle, the Stoics, Augustine, as well as Aquinas, Ockham, Suarez and consider two Renaissance humanists, Erasmus and Montaigne. We will be concerned with the nature of passion as cognitive or not, with the role of passion in moral action, and with the shifting lists and definitions of particular passions over this long period.

**Requirements:**

Mid-term and final research paper (10 and 25 pages, respectively)

**Readings:**

The readings will include Plato’s *Phaedrus* and *Symposium*, selections from Aristotle’s *Rhetoric* and *Nicomachean Ethics* and selections from Augustine’s *City of God* (and other works), Aquinas, the so-called *Treatise on the Passions* from the *Summa theologiae*, as well as readings from the Stoics, William of Ockham, Francisco Suarez, Erasmus and Montaigne.
Description:

The focus of this course is on ethics in the writings of Aristotle and Plotinus. Aristotle understands the ethical life in terms of activity, which is used to explain the nature of virtues and how they are acquired, and which is directed to happiness as the end. He needs to address other problems as part of this project, the responsibility of the agent as voluntary, an analysis of choice and deliberation, the place of ethical virtues in the context of virtues in general, and especially how intellectual and ethical virtues are unified in the life of the sage.

Plotinus assumes a Platonic perspective, but incorporates Aristotelian topics and interests into his own approach. The ethical life forms part of the ascent of the soul, where the soul discovers its own identity at the intelligible level and seeks union with the One. As in Aristotle, the human situation is uniquely open to ambiguity, ethically, aesthetically, and epistemologically. Where Aristotle sees virtue as bringing rational order to the soul, Plotinus emphasizes overcoming the alienation of the soul due to its presence in the world of becoming. Plotinus retrieves both Plato and Aristotle in a remarkably fruitful synthesis.

Requirements

Class summaries, exams, term paper (15-20 pages).

Reading:


Level – Graduate

This is a graduate level course on Plato’s Republic. We will do a close and intensive textual reading of the Republic, examining issues including Plato’s political philosophy, his virtue ethics, and the role of philosophy, poetry, and imagination in the dialogue. Class will be part lecture and part seminar style with student presentations and active discussion.

Requirements: one final paper, 15-20 pages

Required text: Plato, Republic (Allan Bloom trans.)

Optional text: Plato, Respublica (Oxford Classical Texts), ed Burnet. (Greek edition of the Republic)

The required text will be available in the BC Bookstore. The optional Greek text is widely available online and in some academic bookstores.
PL 716 03  
Kant’s First Critique

Marius Stan  
M 2-4:25

Level – Graduate

Description: This course will introduce students to Kant’s masterpiece, the Critique of Pure Reason. It is aimed at seniors majoring in philosophy and at master’s students.

Requirements: No previous knowledge of Kant’s theoretical philosophy is required, but a solid background in philosophy is expected.
Aquinas is usually represented as a proponent of natural law in ethics. That is not entirely true to the way he presented himself in his own ethical theory. Law was for him an extrinsic principle of good action, along with grace. The intrinsic principle of good action to the rational creature, or to human subjectivity, was for him virtue, both natural and supernatural. As an ethicist, he called attention much more to this intrinsic principle of virtue in human action that to the extrinsic principle of law.

In this seminar we shall examine how Aquinas comes to this theory of ethics as part of his Summa of Christian Theology, and how he develops his idea of a Christian Ethic along lines that are both rational and suprarational, both humanistic and theological, according to two sets of virtue, one natural and one supernatural, the cardinal virtues of prudence, justice, courage, and temperance, on the one hand, and the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity, on the other. Then we shall examine how he brings law into this ethic of virtue as an extrinsic principle of good action.

We shall study how he proceeds in Part One of Part Two (I-II) of the Summa Theologiae, the only place where he gives a complete elaboration of his own thinking on the virtues as a rational creature and as a Christian, and then we shall turn to a consideration of how he treats each one of the virtues in particular, both theological and human, in Part Two of Part Two (II-II).

While we shall work on I-II in common during class in the first part of the seminar, students will choose a particular virtue from Part II-II to work on, in view of making a presentation in class as well as writing a term paper.

Requirements: seminar presentation and term paper, final exam

Reading: Aquinas, Summa Theologiae; Treatise on Habits & on the Virtues; Treatise on Law; Treatise on Virtues in Particular
Description:
During the course, we will look at the classical phenomenological accounts of empathy that we find in Husserl, Stein and Scheler and then compare these accounts with some of the proposals that can be found in the cognitive science literature. One of the basic questions we will explore is whether the phenomenologists jointly offer a distinct account of empathy that differs from the standard options found in the scientific debate and if so whether such an account makes for an important and relevant contribution to the contemporary debate on social cognition.

Requirements:
Some background knowledge of phenomenology, although not mandatory, is highly recommended.

In class discussion and a final research paper (10-12 pages)

Readings:
PL 762 01  Soren Kierkegaard
Vanessa P. Rumble  T 2-4:25

Level – Graduate

Description:

This course will deal primarily with the early pseudonymous writings of Soren Kierkegaard. The following topics will be emphasized: (1) the function of irony and indirect communication in the pseudonymous works, (2) Kierkegaard's conception of freedom and subjectivity, and (3) the nature of the relationship which Kierkegaard posits between reason, autonomy, and faith.

Requirements:

Weekly reflection papers, 2 pages typed
Final paper, roughly 12-15 pages

Readings:

Søren Kierkegaard,  
_Fear and Trembling_ and _Repetition_  
_Concept of Anxiety_  
_Philosophical Fragments_  
_Two Ages_  
_Sickness Unto Death_
Description:

But we must not follow those who advise us, being humans, to think of human things, and, being mortal, of mortal things, but must, so far as we can, make ourselves immortal, and strain every nerve to live in accordance with the best thing in us; for even if it be small in bulk, much more does it in power and worth surpass everything.

Nicomachean Ethics x 7, 1177b31-1178a2 (trans. Ross)

What's th' matter, Pearl Baby?
Too much knowledge, Frankie, too much knowledge.

Pearl Bailey and Frank Sinatra, 1954

From the beginnings of their literature, Greek writers showed a constant concern and even preoccupation with what human beings may know and what may lie concealed from human knowing. The concern is readily apparent in the so-called Presocratic philosophers; but it figures prominently in the works of epic and tragic poets, as well. The course will be devoted to a careful examination of a range of texts relevant to the Greek problem of human knowledge. Seminar members will begin by studying the pre-Platonic phase of the issue, especially as it appears in Greek tragedy and in the fragments of Xenophanes and Heraclitus. We will then examine how the problem of human knowledge informs the works of Plato and Aristotle, as evident in the dialogues Apology and Timaeus, and in key passages of the Metaphysics and Ethics.

Requirements: In addition to regular seminar participation and weekly short position papers, students will submit one research paper. They will also be required to take a self-guided tour of Greek art at Boston’s Museum of Fine Arts.
PL 780 01  Readings In Theory
Cross Listed with EN 780/RL 780

Kevin Newmark  W 4:30-6:50

Level – Graduate
For graduate students; Open to undergraduates with permission of instructor only.
Conducted in English.

Description: This course is organized as an introduction to the reading of literary theory for graduate students in various disciplines. Its aim is to develop an awareness of and sensitivity to the specific means and consequences of interpreting literary and extra-literary language today. The course allows students to acquire a basic familiarity with some of the most formative linguistic, philosophical, and anthropological antecedents underpinning any attempt to understand and account for the special status reserved for rhetorical language in literature or beyond it. Readings from Saussure, Lévi-Strauss, Jakobson, Barthes, Lacan, Ricoeur, Geertz, Austin, Derrida, and de Man, among others.
Philosophy and the Church Fathers

Margaret Schatkin

MW 3:00-4:15 p.m.

Cross Listed with TH 794

Level 3 – Undergraduate/Graduate Elective

Description:

Introduction to the major Church Fathers and Christian schools of Antiquity and their varying engagements with philosophy. Elements of opposition between Christianity and classical philosophy which could not be reconciled. Areas of harmony between Greek and Christian ideals. The evolution of Greek philosophy and its fulfillment in Christianity. Special topics include: Lactantius’ teaching on the necessary union of philosophy and religion; Origen’s Platonic understanding of the Lord’s prayer; Chrysostom on true philosophy; Basil on how to draw benefit from Greek philosophy and literature.

Readings:


PL 825  Seminar on Law and Politics

David Rasmussen  T Th 1:30*

Description: Is it possible to interpret the global political order from a democratic point of view? This seminar will examine that question from two complimentary perspectives. First, we will consider the emerging domain of the political from contrasting realist and liberal points of view. From Carl Schmitt's perspective the issue is one of getting back to the ground of the political, i.e., the friend – enemy distinction upon which all politics should be based. The liberal view that develops from Hobbes on, given Leo Strauss’ interpretation of Hobbes as a liberal, attempts to construct a narrative that overcomes the war of all against all. Rawls’ interpretation of the emerging domain of the political provides the most recent example of this attempt. Second, we will consider the relatively new area of the constitutionalization of international law, which takes up the old problem of mixed constituent power and applies it to the international scene. This reconstruction of the idea of divided sovereignty has the potential for understanding international law beyond the nation state from a democratic point of view. The course will develop as follows:

I. The emerging domain of the political.

Carl Schmitt on *The Concept of the Political*.

John Rawls: From "Justice as Fairness: Political or Metaphysical" to the *Law of Peoples*.

Post-modern critiques of liberalism.

2. The Constitutionalization of International Law.

*Pouvoir Constituaunt Mixte*: James Madison and Emmanuel Sieyes

Jürgen Habermas and *The Crisis of the European Union*.

Frances Cheneval and *The Government of the Peoples*

Texts:

Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*.

John Rawls: Selections from *Collected Papers, Political Liberalism, and The Law of Peoples*.

Jürgen Habermas: *The Crisis of the European Union* and other essays on international law.

James Madison: *The Federalist Papers*

Emmanuel Sieyes: *The Third Estate*

Chantal Mouffe: *The Democratic Paradox*

Requirements: Seminar presentations and a final research paper.