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11/11/2015
PHIL881801 Early Modern Ethics and Psychology

Jean-Luc Solere
Level – Graduate

Description:
In studying 17th and 18th moral philosophies, from Descartes to Hume, the thread we will follow is the role of pleasure in psychology and ethics. Neo-Epicurism and Neo-Augustinism paradoxically agreed on the fact that human beings, guided by self-love, act only in view of what is pleasurable and is their own interest. As a response, another type of pleasure can be pointed out: the disinterested esthetic pleasure, which became a paradigm for reconciling pleasure with altruism. This topic involves also religious and political issues.

Requirements:
Research paper; class participation.

Readings:


AY 2015-2016 Spring
Description:

Kierkegaard's early pseudonymous writings (Fear and Trembling, Repetition, Concept of Anxiety, Philosophical Fragments) will be read in light of the Schelling's and Schleiermacher's conception of nature, freedom, and fall.
Description:

This course will examine some key philosophies of film from the works of Roland Barthes and Gilles Deleuze to Stanley Cavell and Stephen Mulhall. Readings will include Image, Music, Text by Barthes, Image-Movement and Image-Time by Deleuze, Pursuits of Happiness: The Hollywood Comedy of Remarriage by Cavell and On Film by Mulhall. The seminar will discuss the different methodological approaches to cinematic fiction in the Continental and Anglo-American traditions and examine central philosophical themes of identity, time, desire and modernity.
PHIL778201

Eileen Sweeney

Level – 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.
PHIL778001  Readings in Theory
FREN778001  T 4:30-6:50
ENGL778001

Kevin Newmark  
Level – Graduate

Description:
Conducted in English
Open to undergraduates with permission of instructor only

Fulfills a Ph.D. requirement in Romance Languages and Literatures

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:

Saussure, Lévi-Strauss, Jakobson, Barthes, Lacan, Ricoeur, Geertz, Austin, Derrida, and de Man, among others.
PHIL774501

Patrick Byrne
Level – Graduate

Description:

Alasdair MacIntyre is a severe critic of the liberal capitalist world of the Modern West as without any genuine moral sense, and as unable to foster any meaningful sense of purpose or genuine community for its members. His book, *After Virtue* had a dramatic impact on the direction of ethical thinking. It situated ethics within communities, histories, and practices, thereby challenging long-held rationalistic and individualistic approaches. His subsequent works explore more deeply the possibilities for genuine human living on the basis of such practices.

Bernard Lonergan’s ethical and value theory synthesized the intellectual and emotional dimensions of human living, like MacIntyre situated human living and ethics within historical communities. This course explores the ethical thought of these two thinkers, both in their challenges to mainstream ethical thinking, and in comparison with one another.

Requirements:

Class Participation

Term Paper

Oral Final Exam

Readings: **SELECTIONS** from the following books:

Alasdair MacIntyre, *A Short History of Ethics* (Routledge Classics)
Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*
Alasdair MacIntyre, *Three Rival Versions of Moral Inquiry*
Alasdair MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals*

Alasdair MacIntyre & Kelvin Knight, *The MacIntyre Reader*

Bernard Lonergan, *Insight*
Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*

AY 2015-2016 Spring
The purpose of this course is twofold: to explore Platonic considerations of perception and memory in the *Theaetetus* and of vision and hearing in the *Timaeus*; and to investigate what Plotinus does with this Platonic inheritance in his major study of the soul and its ways of knowing (IV 3-5[27-29]). Plato’s difficulty is establishing the possibility of discourse (logos), given its exclusion under either Parmenides’ One or the many of the natural philosophers. The *Theaetetus* provides a general account of perception, while the *Timaeus* focuses on vision and hearing. Logos is also central for Plotinus’ account of the nature of souls and the various powers for sensing and knowing. Thus, both philosophers show the role of perception in understanding the Platonic project as a whole, especially the possibilities and limits of human knowledge.

**Requirements:**

Requirements: class summaries, term paper on one of the philosophers, midterm and final review. Class attendance and participation are an integral part of the course.

**Readings:**

ISBN 978-1-58510-101-

Plato’s *Timaeus*
https://archive.org/details/platonostimaiost00platuoft

ISBN 9781930972896

ISBN 9781930972698
Description:

Ethics has become once again a central concern for the understanding of human life. Before After Virtue thee was Virtue. For "Legitimation Theory" thee has to be Law. This course will study Aquinas' systematic approach to ethics in the framework of the Summa Theologiae. After a discussion of the structure of the Summa, it will focus on the concepts of "Virtue and Law" in Part II.1 and on the "Particular Virtues" as elaborated in Part II.2.
PHIL771601

Kant’s First Critique

Marius Stan

M 12-2:20

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.
Scholars increasingly appreciate the profound connections between Aristotle's philosophical positions in works such as the Ethics, De Anima, and Metaphysics and his theory of scientific knowledge, its conditions and methods. Knowledge may be logical, ethical, or physical; it may be practical, productive, or theoretical; it may be mathematical, physical, or theological; and while some things are more knowable to us, others are more knowable in themselves. Whether in psychology, metaphysics, ethics, or natural science, Aristotle's epistemological and methodological commitments determine his starting points, shape the exposition, and decisively influence the outcome of his investigations.
Paul Ricouer on Human Being

Timo Helenius
Level – Undergraduate/Graduate Elective

Description:

The course focuses on the question of human being as explored by Paul Ricoeur (1913-2005), a French philosopher who has been characterized as “one of the giants” of contemporary continental philosophy as well as one of the most enduring and wide-ranging thinkers in the twentieth century. Ricoeur attested that the anthropological question of being able and not able (puissance et impuissance) is the ultimate purpose and goal of his philosophical explorations.

The main aim of this course is to clarify Ricoeur’s claim that a certain positive human capability can be indirectly shown in the necessarily limited activity of human life. In spite of being bound to “fallibility” or “fallenness,” the human self is nevertheless “capable de faillir,” or capable of manifesting itself through practical action that leads the interpretative self to have a notion of itself. We will read texts from Ricoeur’s early phase that ground his later explorations.

Requirements:

Some exposure to Kant’s critical works and phenomenological/hermeneutic philosophy strongly recommended.

Readings:


Recommended additional texts:


AY 2015-2016 Spring
PHIL667001  Technology and Culture
William Griffith  T 4:30-6:50
Level – Undergraduate/Graduate Elective

Description:

Satisfies Computer Science Requirement, CSOM Computer Science Concentration Requirement, and CSOM Information Systems Concentration Requirement.

This interdisciplinary course will first investigate the social, political, psychological, ethical, and spiritual aspects of the 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.

AY 2015-2016 Spring
PHIL662401          Philosophy of Religion

Peter Kreeft        T TH 1:30*

Level—Graduate Elective

Description:
The purposes of this course are (a) to familiarize students with religious data: the
teaching of each of the world’s major religions; (b) to understand, empathize with, and
appreciate them; (c) to appreciate one’s own religion (or lack of one) better by
comparison—like appreciating one’s native language through studying a foreign
language; (d) to philosophize critically and rationally about a subject that is not itself
critical and rational; (e) to question and search for a universal nature or core of religion if
possible; (f) to raise and explore the question of religious truth: do religions make truth-
claims? If so, do they contradict each other? Can all be true? How does one decide
which to believe? (g) to explore difference and similarities among world religions,
especially between Eastern and Western religions; to try to find common patterns; (h) to
foster dialogue, especially between Christianity and other world religions; (i) to examine
key concepts like “pluralism”, “equality”, and “uniqueness” in trying to compare world
religions; (j) to find and evaluate alternative possible answers to the question of
comparative religions such as “exclusivism”, “inclusivism”, and mediating positions; (k)
to explore the relation between religion and morality, religion and life in different
cultures; (l) to focus on religion’s cultural role as offering an overall meaning and
purpose to human life and everything in it, rather than being a specialized “area” of life.

Requirements:
Mid-semester exam, final exam, and original paper

Readings:
Huston Smith, The Religions of Man; Hermann Hesse, Siddhartha; Tucker Calloway,
Zen Way, Jesus Way; Lao Tzu, Tao Te Ching; assorted articles and excerpts from
scriptures; Peter Kreeft, Between Heaven and Hell; Peter Kreeft, Between Allah and
Jesus.

AY 2015-2016 Spring
PHIL660901  St. Paul and Philosophy
Jeffrey Bloechl  TTH 1:30*

Level 3 – Undergraduate/Graduate Elective

Description:
This course will study the philosophical interest of Pauline thinking in relation to some recent interpreters (Agamben, Breton, Heidegger, Taubes) and in its own right. We will consider a reading of Paul as philosopher that resists and perhaps even provides basis for critique of his contemporary readers. Themes will includes faith and reason, Christianity and philosophy, flesh, law and spirit, and community.

Requirements:
Core and at least one philosophy elective completed.

AY 2015-2016 Spring
Level 3 – Undergraduate/Graduate Elective

Description:

"What is truth?" Pontius Pilate asks Jesus. If Jesus were a pragmatist, he would have replied that truth is the fated end of inquiry, or what would be believed after a sufficiently long and rigorous process of inquiry, or maybe he would reply that truth is what your colleagues will let you get away with. This course examines classical and contemporary versions of the pragmatic theory of truth, beginning with Charles S. Peirce and William James and then moving to Richard Rorty, Cheryl Misak, and Huw Price, among others.
PHIL556302                        Ethics, Religion, & International Politics
INTL556302                              T TH 1:30*
THEO556302

Hiroshi Nakazato

Level—Graduate Elective

Description:

An examination of the role of religion in international politics and of ethical approaches to international affairs. Special emphasis will be given to religion as a source of conflict, religious communities as transnational agents for justice, protection of human rights, and peace; the historical development and contemporary formulations of ethical norms for the use of force; and ethical and religious contributions to reconciliation and solidarity.

AY 2015-2016 Spring
PHIL556301  Ethics, Religion, & International Politics
INTL556301  M W 3*
THEO556301

Aspen Brinton

Level—Graduate Elective

Description:

An examination of ethical approaches to international affairs and the role of religion in international politics. The class will explore diverse religious and secular models for relating ethics to international affairs as well as specific areas of international politics where ethical questions are likely to arise, including sovereignty, terrorism, peacemaking, human rights, globalization, economic justice, and the use of force in war or humanitarian interventions.
Description:

Is it rational to believe that God exists? Rational beliefs normally are supported by reasons or evidence. But, what if there is no evidence or argumentative proof to support belief in God? Can it be rational to believe in God in the absence of strong evidence? What is the relationship between faith and reason? Can there be value in a form of belief that is not rational? In this course, we will examine both historical and contemporary texts to consider the rationality of belief in God, and the role of faith in a rational belief system.
PHIL555301 Capstone: Poets, Philosophers, and Mapmakers
Fr. Paul McNellis, SJ TH 3-5:20

Level—Seniors only, by permission of instructor

Prerequisite: Philosophy and Theology core already fulfilled. Instructor permission required. Capstone classes may not be taken Pass/Fail, and you may take only one Capstone class before graduation.

Description:

We go through life with mental maps of reality, in various degrees implicit or explicit. A Liberal Arts education presupposes such a map of the intelligible world. Is it accurate? What does you “map” or reality look like? How has it changed since freshman year?

The goal of the seminar is to help you see what kind of map you implicitly have now and to begin to ask what you want the map to look like ten years after graduation. In other words, how do you develop an “open” rather than a “closed” map? How do you plan on continuing your education on your own after graduation?

There must be both poetry and prose in every life. What is the balance between the two in your life? (Poetry here is broadly understood, as Plato would have it; i.e., it includes theology.)

We will reread some classic texts you read as freshman to see if you read them any differently as seniors. Such texts will include works by Aristotle, Plato, and Pascal.

Requirements:

We will follow a seminar format, with the professor as facilitator and students taking turns leading the discussion. A short reflection paper is due each week and two longer papers will be assigned throughout the semester.

Readings

1. Benedict XVI, Deus Caritas Est, or Spe Salvi.
2. E.F. Schumacher, Guide for the Perplexed
3. Aristotle, Nichomachean Ethics
4. Blaise Pascal, Pensees
5. Owen Gingerich, God's Universe
6. P.D. James, The Children of Men
7. A Workbook with further readings

AY 2015-2016 Spring
PHIL555201 God, Ethics and Neuroscience
Stephen Pope T TH 3*
Patrick Byrne

Level 3 – Undergraduate/Graduate Elective

Description:
This course examines some important questions regarding relationships among belief in God and scientific approaches to the natural world and human ethical behavior. We explore both the arguments for the incompatibility between science and theism, as well as constructive ways of understanding their potential relationships. We will examine the points of agreement and disagreement between Darwinian, neuroscientific, and theistic claims about the origins and purposes of ethical principles, sentiments, rationalizations and sanctions. Questions will focus on forms of naturalism, reductionism, and evolution. Other course topics include the ethical significance of neuroscience and evolutionary psychology, particularly concerning the relation between brain and mind, the meaning of responsibility, and the natural basis of moral decision-making.

Requirements:

Midterm examination (for undergraduate students)

Final research paper

Discussion group for graduate students

Readings:

- Dawkins, *The God Delusion*
- Crysdale & Ormerod, *Creator God, Evolving World*
- Owen Flanagan, *The Really Hard Problem: Meaning in a Material World*
- John Paul II: “Message to the Pontifical Academy of Sciences: On Evolution”
- Timothy O’Connor, “Conscious Willing and the Emerging Sciences of Brain Behavior”
- Greene, J.D. “From Neural “Is” to Moral “Ought”: What are the Moral Implications of Neuroscientific Moral Psychology?”

AY 2015-2016 Spring
Description:

Environmentalism is in many ways a byproduct of the industrial revolution. Over the second half of the 20th century, the pollution, damaging and destruction of natural habitats, including plant, animal, and human communities, has led many philosophers, politicians, scientists, and activists to call for and formulate an ethics of the environment. In this course, we study the major areas of environmental ethics, including biocentrism, ecocentrism, and animal welfare, in connection with more traditional moral frameworks such as utilitarianism, deontology, and virtue ethics. We address questions such as the following: Do animals have rights? Do living things have intrinsic value? What are the different species of value? What is humanity’s proper place in nature? Is the clash between economic growth and ecological health a zero-sum game? In addition to these questions, we explore the social, political, and economic dimensions of environmental problems such as climate change, pollution, and energy production and use. Our animating question for the course will be: how can we reconcile humanist and environmentalist intuitions?
PHIL552801  Skepticism/Stoicism/Neo-Platonism
Sarah Byers  TH 3-5:25
Level 3 – Undergraduate/Graduate Elective

Description:
Ancient philosophy is the period following Aristotle and stretching into the third century A.D., Hellenistic and Roman Philosophy. A number of philosophical schools flourished: Stoicism, Epicureanism, Skepticism, Middle-Platonism, Neo-Platonism. Some had sophisticated answers to questions in epistemology, ethics, and metaphysics: Does the human mind use mental language? Are we responsible for our thoughts? Is pleasure the goal of life? What kinds of emotions does the wise person have? Can Plato’s account of the Forms be enriched by Aristotle’s account of God? What is the metaphysical status of Socrates’ “daimon”? The primary emphases of the course are Stoicism and the Platonisms.
PHIL552301
Nietzsche

Thomas Miles
T TH 1:30*

Level 3 – Undergraduate/Graduate Elective

Description:

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 idea 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.
Description:

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.

Readings:

- Course Packet.
PHIL551201 Philosophy of Existence
Richard Kearney T TH 3*
Level—Undergraduate/Graduate Elective

Description:
An introduction to the main questions of existential philosophy from Kierkegaard and Nietzsche to Heidegger, Sartre, Camus, and De Beauvoir. The major issues dealt with include freedom and determinism, desire and death, self-identity, anxiety, and the search for the absolute.

Requirements:
Final paper, oral exam

Readings
Gordon, Marino, Basic Writings of Existentialism (The Modern Library, New York, 2004)
Other texts to be provided in class

AY 2015-2016 Spring
PHIL550001

Philosophy of Law

Paul Van Rooy

T TH 3*

Level 3 – Undergraduate/Graduate Elective

Description:

This course aims to provide a broad overview of a number of central debates in contemporary philosophy of law. The primary concern will be to examine the relation between legal validity and the moral normativity of the law, that is, answers to the questions ‘What is the law?’ and ‘Is there a (moral) duty to obey the law?’ In addition to these more general questions, we will focus on several more specific questions pertaining to constitutionalism, including ‘What is the relationship between constitutions and the rule of law?’, ‘What is the ground of judicial review?’ and ‘What is the connection between questions of legal theory and broader debates in contemporary political philosophy?’

Requirements:

Undergraduates: 2 - 3 page critical summaries of two of the major readings, midterm and final.

Graduates and Law Students:

One 20 minute presentation of research, and 10 – 15 page paper.

Required Texts:


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.

Copies of additional readings will be provided.

AY 2015-2016 Spring
PHIL447701  Ethical Principles

Joseph You Guo Jiang  T TH 1:30*

Level— Undergraduate Elective

Satisfies Cultural Diversity Core Requirement

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, 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 Canvas (average: 5-10 pages per week).

AY 2015-2016 Spring
PHIL447201 Buddhist Ethics
TMCE447201 T 2-4:25
THEO447201

John Makransky

Level 3 – Undergraduate/Graduate Elective

Requirements:
For undergrads, at least one prior course in philosophy or theology, and a B+ or higher average in prior humanities (non-science) courses.

Description:
Topics include connections between Buddhist ethical principles and diverse practices of Indian, Southeast Asian and Tibetan Buddhism, contemporary Buddhist ethical reflections and practices, and recent Buddhist analyses of war and peace, economics, ecology, and justice. Daily mindfulness practice, based on class instruction, is required. Weekly writing, active participation, and three concise papers.

AY 2015-2016 Spring
James Bernauer
Level—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 challenges 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. G. Sereny, *Into That Darkness*
7. Resisting Genocide: The Multiple Forms of Rescue, edited by Jacques Semelin

AY 2015-2016 Spring
PHIL440801  
19th & 20th Century Philosophy

Peter Kreeft  
T TH 10:30*

Level 1 – Undergraduate Elective

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.
PHIL440701 Medieval Philosophy
Jean Luc Solere T TH 12*
Level—Undergraduate Elective

Description:
Far from being monolithic and repetitive, the Middle Ages were a creative period during which multiple solutions were tried to make sense of the world and of human life. The legacy of Antiquity, the philosophic and ‘scientific’ knowledge of the time, and religious views were combined in original syntheses. The aim of the course is to provide a picture of this diversity, through a study of the main problems that a wide range of authors (Christian thinkers from St. Augustine to Ockham, but also Islamic and Jewish philosophers) faced.

Medieval philosophy was an important step in the development of human thought. Discovering it will be essential to your philosophical education. This course will especially highlight the ideas, in metaphysics, theory of knowledge, and ethics, which medieval thinkers created and transmitted to modern philosophy.

In addition, analysis of texts, debates, and writing assignments will help you to develop rigorous argumentation and expression skills.

Requirements:
Four papers, each counting for 25% of the final grade. Class participation: bonus added to the average resulting from the papers (4 pts. maximum).

Readings


AY 2015-2016 Spring
PHIL229701  Community and Culture I
David McMenamin  TH 3-5 20

Level 1 – Undergraduate Elective

Description:

This course will explore the nature of community in the context of American culture. Students will examine some of the philosophical, historical, cultural, political and religious forces, which have shaped both contemporary American community and the American understanding of community.

Readings:

Beginning with John Locke and Jean Jacques Rousseau, then moving to Alexis de Tocqueville, the course’s starting points will be in two thinkers whose political philosophies were part of the intellectual climate in which this nation was born, then in the observations of an early 19th Century visitor of what had emerged in early America. Subsequent readings will raise the question of American culture and community from modern legal, cultural, political and religious perspectives.

Requirements:

Seminar leadership: Each week’s seminar will be led by two or more 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.

Brief weekly writing assignments on the readings
PHIL229401
Cultural and Social Structures II
Meghan Sweeney
Level 1 – Undergraduate Elective

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 (or perhaps better, symbolically) -- the way they live together. Our study centers on questions about how our culture and its social structures are the concrete expression of what we value, and of the things we consider meaningful and important. Readings will be drawn from philosophy and theology, as well as other disciplines. While this course is a continuation of fall semester’s Cultural and Social Structures I, it is not required that a student was enrolled in that course.

Requirements:
By permission only.
Description:

Prerequisite: some human experience

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 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.
PHIL2264 02 & 03  Logic
Miles Rind  MWF 2 & MWF 3
Level 1 – Undergraduate Elective

Description:
This course is an introduction to the systematic study of the norms of reasoning. Our attention will be given mainly to formal logic, which is the study of reasoning within a formal system, though also to informal logic, which is the study of how norms of reasoning apply in actual discourse. Topics to be studied include the identification, classification, and analysis of arguments; the formal analysis of categorical statements, syllogisms, complex propositions, predicates, relations, quantifiers, and identity; the identification of fallacies in argumentation; and, time permitting, the norms of analogical and scientific reasoning.

Readings: Paul Herrick, Introduction to Logic (Oxford University Press, 2013)

AY 2015-2016 Spring
PHIL226401  Logic
David Ellis  MWF 12

Level 1 – Undergraduate Elective

Description:

This class is an introduction to logic in three distinct but related ways. One, this course approaches logic in a mechanical way. This part of the course intends to develop the student’s rational faculties. The focus is on developing one’s ability to engage in procedural, cognitive operations. Two, this course approaches logic in a historical way. This part of the course explores the various types of logic and their origins. Logic has not fallen into our laps as a ready-made discipline. It arose from human beings involved in inquiry about how things are, how we come to know things, and how we communicate that knowledge. As in any human inquiry, people have and continue to disagree. So, three, this course approaches logic in an inquiring way. This part of the course presents logic as an open and not a closed area of inquiry. Students will learn about some of the ancient and contemporary impasses in the philosophy of logic. In presenting logic as an ongoing inquiry, students have the opportunity to reexamine their own understanding of logic. In short, this course intends to help students develop their ability not only to think logically but to think about logic.

First, we will study the basic concepts of implication, inference, and validity. Then, we will study categorical propositions and the categorical syllogism. Next, we will study how to translate arguments into a formal language as well as how to use decision procedures and natural deduction to assess argument forms. Finally, we will read essays in the philosophy of logic.

Requirements:

Although there are no requirements, it will help to have taken an introductory philosophy course.

Readings:

The instructor will provide a reading packet from the following works:

- An Introduction to Logic and Scientific Method by Morris R. Cohen and Ernest Nagel
- Deduction: Introduction to Symbolic Logic by Daniel Bonevac
- Thinking About Logic edited by Steven M. Cahn, Robert B. Talisse, and Scott F. Aikin
- Gödel’s Proof by Ernest Nagel and James R. Newman

AY 2015-2016 Spring
PHIL26201 Telling Truths II
Kathleen Hirsch W 3-4:50

Level—Undergraduate Elective

Description:

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 that will become the basis for a multi-media public story telling project of their own. Class time will be spent in discussion, and in sharing placement stories, learning how organizations create public narrative campaigns, 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.
PHIL221601 Boston: Urban Analysis
David Manzo TH 3-5:30

Level— Undergraduate Elective

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 it 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 session #4, class meetings in the first half of the semester will meet on campus. (Class #4 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.

As a PULSE Elective, this course is open to ALL students, whether or not you’ve taken previous PULSE Courses.

Readings:


AY 2015-2016 Spring
PHIL170101  
Aspen Brinton  

Power, Justice, War

M W F 1  
TH 6-8

Level – Undergraduate Elective

Core Renewal Course: Enduring Questions

Description:

This course will explore the enduring questions of power, justice and war by examining a series of modern political thinkers addressing questions of how to use power justly, how to balance concerns about justice in the midst of war, and how to govern the world through different modalities of power. Each text will be read to investigate the differences between normative and empirical thinking about war and justice. Discussions and papers will ask students to think deeply about what happens when notions of the ideal and the real influence political thinking and generate conflict.

AY 2015-2016 Spring
PHIL116001 The Challenge of Justice
THEO216001 T TH 1:30*

M. Shawn Copeland
Level – Undergraduate Elective

Description:
The pursuit of the meaning and practice of justice well may be as old as philosophy itself. The questions, 'What is justice?' and 'What is a just polis?' motivate Plato's Republic. In this ancient dialogue, Socrates and certain of his companions discuss and weigh responses to these questions, teasing out the relation between the nature of a polis (or city-state) and the persons (citizens) who constitute it. Although the Republic along with Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics have had a decisive impact on the way in which Western peoples think about and enact justice, there may be as many understandings of justice as there are persons and communities. This course considers several principle alternative understandings of justice that have developed in Western philosophical and theological traditions. The course highlights what is at stake when we choose one understanding of justice rather than another and develops reasonable grounds to guide our choice of a 'just way of life.' Special attention is accorded to the contributions of Christian theology in the contemporary conversation about justice/peace.

Requirements:
1. Class Participation will be heavily weighted as it reflects preparation of and engagement with the readings assignments
2. Weekly Reading Quizzes
3. Two (2) examinations—one of which may be oral
4. Participation in, at least, one (1) relevant lecture on campus

Readings:


Other written texts will be made available

AY 2015-2016 Spring