

# PHILOSOPHY COURSE OFFERINGS

## – FALL 2026 –

### *200-level Courses (Tier Two)*

#### **PHIL 272** Metaphysics | *Andrew Cutrofello* (*Mind and Science*)

Metaphysical questions are questions about what there is. For example, what is an object? Are all objects physical? Are there non-physical objects, such as souls? Are there abstract objects, such as numbers? Are there possible but non-actual objects, such as Hamlet? What are space and time? What is causation? Do we have free will? Is there a God? Why is there something rather than nothing? These are the sorts of questions we will address in this course.

#### **PHIL 274** Logic | *Arnold vander Nat*

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

#### **PHIL 277W** Aesthetics (WI) | *Dimitris Apostolopoulos* (*Existence, Meaning, and Culture; Writing Intensive*)

This class introduces students to a selection of core topics in philosophical aesthetics, drawing on a mix of contemporary and historical readings from analytic and continental sources. The class aims to give students an appreciation for the rich variety and complexity of aesthetic experience. In addition to focusing on specific issues pertaining to painting, photography, music, and dance, the following questions, among others, will be of particular interest: What are the distinctive features of the aesthetic? Are there objective or universal standards in aesthetic appreciation? Can aesthetic properties or value be found in nature, everyday practices, or non-aesthetic contexts? To what degree should artistic intention constrain aesthetic appreciation? Is aesthetic experience a distinctive kind, and if so, what distinguishes it from other varieties of experience? Is aesthetic representation permeated by ideological commitments that can support or challenge our institutions, practices, or beliefs? Can science shed light on aesthetic creation or appreciation? How, if at all, does art and aesthetic experience teach us about reality?

#### **PHIL 279** Judgment and Decision-Making | *Marcella Linn* (*Ethics & Values; Mind and Science*)

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

Throughout this course, we will read both philosophical and psychological literature on decision making, focusing on how philosophical accounts can or cannot accommodate the various ways we are prone to err in our reasoning as well as the way in which unconscious factors often bypass our reasoning and affect our behavior. We will further examine the ethical implications of this picture of human psychology that arises from empirical research. Along the way, we will consider the way human reasoning and AI reasoning differ.

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

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

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

Philosophy 284W is designed to provide you with an introduction to the philosophical approach to problems in health care ethics. You will be taught to recognize and critically apply Kant's ethics, utilitarianism, and the four principles of biomedical ethics (justice, autonomy, beneficence, and non-maleficence) with a view to solving moral problems in a rationally defensible manner. We will then consider more recent moral approaches offered by feminist, disability, queer, and Black bioethicists. A number of problematic issues in health care will be addressed relating to beginning of life (abortion, prenatal genetic testing, assisted reproductive technology, genetic enhancement), end of life care (medical aid in dying, brain death), and the patient/provider relationship.

**PHIL 284** Health Care Ethics | *Joseph Vukov*  
(*Ethics and Values*)

This course will introduce students to health care ethics using two primary frameworks: principlism and Catholic bioethics. We will also cover several contemporary issues in health care ethics, focusing especially on issues in new and emerging technologies.

**PHIL 286W** Ethics and Education | *Amy Shuffelton*  
(*Ethics and Values; Law, Society, & Social Justice; Writing Intensive*)

This course explores ethical questions raised by education, inside and outside of schools. The course takes a case-based approach, beginning with actual controversies in school policies and practices and exploring ethical questions at the core of those controversies. It begins with recent controversies about speech and identity, including policies regarding students' speech rights, invited speakers on university campuses, new restrictions on how social studies classes teach about race, and "don't say gay" laws. In exploring these and other issues in education, we will read a variety of philosophical texts that illuminate the ethical dimensions

of speech, identity, and democratic community. In the later part of the course, we address the ethics of educational controversies that students select for our attention.

**PHIL 287** Environmental Ethics | *Katherine Valde*  
(*Ethics and Values; Law, Society, & Social Justice*)

This course introduces students to ethical reasoning and to various topics in environmental ethics.

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

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

**PHIL 288** Culture and Civilization: Music and Philosophy | *Avery Smith*  
(*Existence, Meaning, and Culture*)

In this course, we will explore how human beings have used music as an instrument by which to develop and transmit knowledge and wisdom. We will look at both the musicality of a piece as well as the lyrics to evaluate the philosophical significance of a musical piece. Because music is experiential rather than purely theoretical, we will also tap into the disciplines of phenomenology and hermeneutics to ensure that we are methodical and consistent in evaluating our experiences of the music.

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

### **PHIL 304** History of Ancient Philosophy | *Freya Möbus* (*Ethics and Values; Existence, Meaning, and Culture*)

What does it mean to live well? We are surrounded by experts for many areas of life: if I want to learn how to exercise well, I can turn to a personal trainer. If I am worried about wasting money, I can consult a financial planner. But whom should I turn to if I want to learn how to live well and avoid wasting my life? Ancient Greek philosophers believed this was precisely their expertise!

This class introduces students to ancient Greek philosophy by exploring its bold and practical ambitions. After careful reading and analysis of our texts, we will put the ancient theories into practice and ask whether they are still useful today. What can we learn about freedom from Diogenes the Cynic, who slept in a barrel and masturbated in public, or from Aristippus, who reportedly found pleasure in every moment—even when he was spat in the face? And what about Epictetus' advice that true freedom comes from caring only about what is within our control—so that when your iPhone breaks or a friend lies to you, you tell yourself, “This is nothing to me”?

We will read Plato's *Gorgias*, Epictetus' *Encheiridion*, Sextus Empiricus' *Outlines of Scepticism*, Epicurus' *Letter to Menoecus* as well as Cyrenaic and Cynic fragments. Note that this is a discussion-based, writing-intensive, and reading-heavy class.

### **PHIL 308** Islamic Philosophy | *Seyed Mousavian* (*Existence, Meaning, and Culture*)

We will study three main figures in the history of classical Islamic philosophy: Avicenna, Al-Ghazali, and Averroes. Thematically, the course is centered around three philosophically thoughtful, theologically controversial, and historically significant issues in the Islamic tradition: (Q1) Is the world eternal? (Q2) Does God know particulars (as particulars)? And (Q3) is the human soul immortal?

We will start by reading parts of *Remarks and Admonitions* and *The Book of the Healing* (by Avicenna) which set the stage by replying in the affirmative to (Q1) and (Q3), and in the negative to (Q2). We will go through Avicenna's arguments in detail and explore possible ways in which his answers to (Q1)-(Q3) can lead to profound doctrinal disagreements within Islamic theology. In weeks 1-6, We will review Avicenna's ontology, particularly his conception of existence, existence-essence distinction, modal argument for the existence of God, his theory of causation and its theological applications. We will discuss the problem of God's knowledge of particulars in detail and then consider Avicenna's philosophy of mind, his view on nonhuman souls, and argument for the immateriality of the human intellect.

Then, in weeks 7-11, we move to *The Incoherence of Philosophers* (by Al-Ghazali), which provides a series of detailed criticisms of Avicenna's position and arguments on (Q1)-(Q3). Al-Ghazali's systematic and principled analysis and rejection of Avicenna's reasoning had a long-lasting effect on the Islamic intellectual tradition. We will go through Al-Ghazali's criticisms of the arguments for the eternity of the world, his defense of God's absolute knowledge, including God's knowledge of the particular fact that you are now reading this sentence, the connection between Al-Ghazali's conception of God and his arguments regarding the origin of the world, his account of causation, immaterial substances, and particularly the ontological status of the human soul.

Finally, we will study parts of *The Incoherence of the Incoherence* (by Averroes), in which Averroes critically examines Avicenna's and Al-Ghazali's arguments on (Q1)-(Q3), attempts to show where they both depart from truth, and defends Aristotle, as he interprets. The three main issues, again, will be the eternity of the world, God's knowledge of particulars, and the nature of the human soul. We will end by assessing Averroes's project, that is, to provide a 'truly Aristotelian' reply to the questions under discussion and a new framework for reconsidering the relationship between philosophical reasoning and religious faith.

**PHIL 309W** Classical Modern Philosophy | (WI) | *Kristen Irwin*  
(*Existence, Meaning, and Culture; Writing Intensive*)

Studying the classical modern philosophers doesn't tell the entire story of Western philosophical thought in the 17th & 18th centuries. While we will cover the canonical thinkers in this course primarily via secondary sources, we will spend time in primary texts by noncanonical philosophers, which may include figures such as Elisabeth of Bohemia, Damaris Masham, Mary Astell, Anne Conway, Nicolas Malebranche, Pierre Bayle, Margaret Cavendish, Catherine Trotter Cockburn, and Mary Shepherd.

**PHIL 328** Human Rights | *Joy Gordon*  
(*Ethics and Values; Law, Society, and Social Justice*)

This course addresses a variety of topics within human rights. We'll start with some texts that point to different approaches in conceptualizing human rights, as well as an overview of the major human rights instruments in international law and global governance. We'll look at such questions as the concept of rights, and their empirical and Marxist critics; the shifts in how torture has been viewed; the different ways that gender comes into play within human rights; the thorny problem of how to determine intent in cases of genocide; and what happens when countries claim the right to prosecute human rights violations that took place in other parts of the world.

**PHIL 355** Neuroethics | *Joseph Vukov*  
(*Ethics and Values; Mind and Science*)

Neuroethics encompasses two fields of study: the ethics of neuroscience and the neuroscience of ethics. In this course, we will consider both fields, but will focus on the former. More specifically, we will consider ethical questions that are emerging from new neuroscientific discoveries and technologies. Throughout the semester, we will be considering several issues in the ethics of neuroscience, including the following:

- To what extent is it morally permissible to engage in neurocognitive enhancement?
- What is the relationship between death and brain death?
- What are our obligations to patients with disorders of consciousness?
- How does the picture of human nature painted by neuroscience affect the way we should understand ourselves as persons?
- What (if anything) can neuroscience teach us about ourselves as moral beings?

Students who complete the course will be expected to familiarize themselves with the conversations that have arisen in response to these and similar questions.

## **PHIL 360** Contemporary European Philosophy | *Dimitris Apostolopoulos*

Readings and discussion drawn from contemporary French and German philosophers, such as Merleau-Ponty, Sartre, Heidegger, Derrida, Foucault.

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

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

## **PHIL 389W** Contemporary Issues: Critical Philosophy of Race (WI) | *Jacqueline Scott* (*Ethics and Values; Existence, Meaning, and Culture; Law, Society, and Social Justice; Writing Intensive*)

In this class, we will investigate the social construction of race in the United States, and how these modes of construction have affected social and political rights as well as the existential well-being of members of racially constructed groups. In this course we will examine several contemporary arguments within the field of Critical Philosophy of Race. The three major questions we will consider are:

1. How does race function in our society?
2. What values do and/or should we assign to race in our society?
3. How might we re(conceive) of race to end or reduce racism in our society?

In this course we will use our responses to the above three questions, in order to have more interesting and thoughtful discussions (and policies) about race, and the political and ethical issues it affects.

## **PHIL 399** Capstone Seminar: Analytic Philosophy | *Matthew Dunch* (*Mind and Science; Existence, Meaning, and Culture*)

Does language model reality? This seminar traces various answers to this question in the history of analytic philosophy, from Frege and Russell's projects for a logically rigorous language through Wittgenstein's embrace then deconstruction of such language to Kripke's realism. Students will engage with a variety of major thinkers including Quine, Austin, and Anscombe. As a seminar, sessions will be framed by student presentations engaging with the various positions. The seminar culminates in students presenting their own response to the question informed by the relevant philosophical literature.