

# PHILOSOPHY COURSE OFFERINGS

## – SPRING 2026 –

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

**PHIL 272W** Metaphysics (WI) | *Seyed Mousavian*  
(*Mind and Science; Existence, Meaning, and Culture; Writing Intensive*)

“To be is to be perceived or perceive something”, “I am not fictional in any sense”, “I have a specific gender independently of what other people think”, and “Sherlock Holmes does not exist”. These claims may seem obvious. This course will challenge these “obvious” claims. Metaphysics is the study of the most general features of reality: for example, existence, identity, modality (necessity or contingency). The course is divided into three parts. First, we will review the most fundamental concepts: Quine and Carnap and their disagreement on how to formulate a metaphysical question. We will introduce Meinongianism, a notorious view according to which “there are objects of which it is true that there are no such objects” and then converse about realism vs. nominalism and the dispute over the nature of ontology. Second, we move to the metaphysics of gender and sex. We attempt to apply some of the methods, ideas, and tools, e.g., ontological commitment, naturalization, internal vs. external ontological questions, and grounding, introduced in the first part, to the metaphysical issues associated with gender and sex. Third, we will move to the metaphysics of fiction. We will discuss different views regarding the nature of fictional entities, “truth in fiction”, and our emotions about fiction. We will end by exploring some aesthetic, moral and legal issues raised by fiction.

**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 | *Jennifer Parks*  
(*Ethics and Values*)

Philosophy 284 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 that problematize the traditional approaches. 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: bioethics 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 287E** Environmental Ethics (E) | *Michael Paradiso-Michau*  
(*Ethics and Values; Law, Society, & Social Justice; Engaged Learning*)

This Engaged Learning course in Environmental Ethics introduces students to ethical reasoning and to various topics in environmental ethics. Topics include climate change, animal rights, environmental justice, and natural resources. We will cover various philosophical and ethical views on the relationship between humans, non-human animals, and the natural world. Students will develop critical thinking skills and gain knowledge in the areas of philosophy and ethics while engaging in service projects that demonstrate their ethical commitments. As a service-learning course, students will have opportunities to analyze, evaluate, work as team members, and engage with the community on environmental topics and so will be able to engage in civic and leadership activities.

**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: Philosophy and Film | *Thomas Derdak*  
(*Existence, Meaning, and Culture*)

This course is designed to investigate issues in the field of aesthetics through the medium of film. We will analyze and discuss topics such as what makes a good critic; the relationship between the images on screen, symbolic content, and meaning; the director's perspective and the creative process; the appropriateness of adaptation from short story, novel, or play to film; the criteria used to determine a good from a bad film, and others. Each of the films viewed will have a corresponding reading. Some of the films that the course will focus on include: *Rashomon*, *Throne of Blood*, *Platoon*, *Paths of Glory*, *The Man who Shot Liberty Valance*, *Room with a View*, *Barbie*, *Perfect Days*, and more.

**PHIL 288** Culture and Civilization: Catholic Social Teaching | *Jeffrey Fisher*  
(*Ethics and Values; Law, Society, and Social Justice*)

In this course students will learn the political and philosophical perspective put forward within Catholic Social Teaching. In fulfilling this general purpose, the course will 1) give students a systematic understanding of Catholic Social Teaching, and 2) demonstrate the viability of the political and philosophical perspective provided by Catholic Social Teaching—a perspective which is a plausible, intriguing, and attractive alternative to the political perspectives characteristic of contemporary political culture. Readings will be drawn primarily from Aristotle, Aquinas, papal encyclicals, and church documents.

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

**PHIL 304W** History of Ancient Philosophy (WI) | *Joshua Mendelsohn*  
(*Ethics and Values; Existence, Meaning, and Culture; Writing Intensive*)

In this course, we will trace the development of philosophy in Greece from the earliest thinkers of record until Aristotle. Our guiding thread will be the relationship of Greek philosophy to the two major cultural practices it had to work to distinguish itself from: Sophistry and myth. The first part of the course tracks the early development of Greek philosophy in its dialogue with epic poetry. We will see how the earliest Greek philosophers appropriated the conventions of epic myth but challenged traditional theism and showed a new interest in the origin of the universe and the natural world. The second and third parts of the course focus on Socrates and Plato respectively. We will encounter both philosophers through Plato's dialogues, and see how Socrates challenged, and appropriated, the practices of sophistry while Plato engaged those of Greek myth, and extended Socrates's ideas into a political philosophy and a theory of reality. Finally, we will turn to Aristotle, and examine how he pioneers the study of nature and develops and transforms Plato's ideas about the good life, the ideal city, the soul and the nature of being.

As well as studying the history of Greek philosophy, we will explore its relevance to our own lives and our political situation. Reflecting on the life of Socrates and on Plato's ideal city, we will ask questions such as: Can censorship be justified for good political ends? Does Plato's critique of sophistry have anything to tell us about so-called artificial intelligence? On the basis of Aristotle's engagement with Plato, we will think about the value of love and its proper object, and the nature of scientific knowledge.

**PHIL 309** Classical Modern Philosophy | *Blake Dutton*  
(*Existence, Meaning, and Culture*)

This course covers major developments in European philosophy in the 17th and 18th centuries. Our focus will be on topics in metaphysics and epistemology – including knowledge, skepticism, the origin of ideas, substance, matter, mind and body, causation, and God – but we will also examine the larger scientific, religious, and political background of philosophy in this period. In addition, we will give some attention to the ways in which classical modern philosophy builds on and reacts to the philosophical traditions of the ancient and medieval worlds. We will not attempt to cover all major figures of the period but will focus on the following seven: Galileo Galilei (1564- 1642), René Descartes (1596-1650), Elizabeth of Bohemia (1618-1680), Benedict Spinoza (1632- 1677), Anne Viscountess Conway (1631-1679), David Hume (1711-1776), and Immanuel Kant (1724-1804).

**PHIL 327** Topics in Political Philosophy: Democracy in Theory and Practice | *David Ingram*  
(*Ethics and Values; Law, Society, and Social Justice*)

Our class will focus on a topic that is on everyone's mind these days: the crisis of democracy. This crisis reflects:

- existential challenges (climate change, economic inequality and cutbacks in social services, shocks to cultural identity, threats to geopolitical stability, widespread anxiety, and disenchantment with what are perceived to nonresponsive and ineffective institutions);

- technological changes in mass communication (polarized coverage in mainstream news media, dissemination of mis- and disinformation on social media, and fragmentation of the public sphere);
- demographic shifts (mass migrations overstressing resources and internal displacements reflecting political sorting);
- populist transformations of political parties (the capture of parties by self-funded media stars).

We begin by examining foundational philosophers of democracy (Rousseau and Madison) and then turn our attention to specific themes that circle around our contemporary democratic crisis: the role of constitutional legal order, uncivil protest, and civil disobedience in democratic life; the tension between religion/ideology and democratic constitutional civility; the arguments for and against securing visual representation of minorities and women in legislative bodies; the negative and positive relationship between global capitalism and democracy. The last half of our course will be devoted to discussing David Runciman’s highly engaging, controversial book, *How Democracy Ends*. Among the topics we will address are: coups, populism, states of emergency as grounds for authoritarian rule, transformations in communication and the political public sphere, epistocratic and technocratic alternatives to democracy, and the extension of democracy to the workplace.

**PHIL 329** International Ethics | *Joy Gordon*  
*(Ethics and Values; Law, Society, and Social Justice)*

This course is intended to give students an overview of the theoretical frameworks for thinking about ethical questions within the international arena, as well as some of the critical issues in this field. Some would argue that ethics is simply irrelevant in international affairs—that states and non-state actors simply pursue their interests, and that’s all that can be expected of them. But even in war, there has long been a set of articulated principles about constraints on warfare, and what moral duties are owed even to an enemy in combat.

The twentieth century saw the emergence of institutions of global governance, which addressed ethical violations in warfare, as well as human rights; and which also established means for enforcing international law against states and individuals. But many have raised questions about their focus and adequacy: are there ways in which international law reflects a gender bias? Why are economic rights treated as secondary, when the human damage from poverty can be far greater than the destruction that is done in warfare? Should there be measures of accountability that are binding on institutions of global governance themselves?

**PHIL 342W** Topics in the Catholic Philosophical Tradition: Ethics and Virtue in Modernity (WI) | *Richard Kim*  
*(Ethics and Values; Existence, Meaning, and Culture; Writing Intensive)*

This course explores ethics and modernity from a broadly Catholic perspective, focusing on the work of Alasdair MacIntyre, one of the most influential Catholic philosophers of the 20th and 21st century.

Our central text will be MacIntyre’s landmark book *After Virtue*, which offers both a sweeping history of ethics and a penetrating critique of modern moral philosophy. MacIntyre also develops an account of virtues, practices, and traditions inspired by Aristotle. As preparation, we will read Elizabeth Anscombe’s seminal 1958 essay, “Modern Moral Philosophy,” which is widely regarded as having sparked the contemporary virtue ethics movement.

The Catholic worldview offers a distinctive vantage point for understanding and evaluating the values and systems at the heart of modernity such as liberalism, capitalism, Marxism, relativism, and scientism. Because most ethics courses in philosophy are taught from a secular perspective, students often lack exposure to the rich critiques of modernity advanced by thinkers such as MacIntyre, Anscombe, and Charles Taylor, as well as Catholic social teaching and papal encyclicals. The Catholic tradition offers a comprehensive framework for making sense of ourselves and the world—a vision rooted in the belief that creation is marked by intelligibility, beauty, and goodness because it comes from God.

**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 389** Contemporary Issues: Philosophy of Love and Sex | *Eyo Ewara*  
(*Ethics and Values; Law, Society, and Social Justice; Existence, Meaning, and Culture*)

For better or worse, questions of love and sex shape our lives. Desire, attraction, romance, friendship, intimacy, or the lack of these things, all orient our experience of ourselves, others, and the world around us. Love and sex weave through and connect our personal lives and political positions, what we buy, who we respect, and how we view human nature and history. That said, love and sex are by no means uncomplicated. What, exactly, is love? Why is it so important to us? Should it be? Are all loves the same? What is, or counts as, sex? How should we navigate our relationships to it, or to sexual identity, dating, marriage, or hookup culture? How is sex affected by, and does sex affect, our ethics, politics, or what we know? In this course we'll explore these and other philosophical questions around love and sex, blending contemporary issues with the perspectives of philosophers past and present.

**PHIL 389** John Grant Seminar: Science Fiction and Bioethics | *Joseph Vukov*  
(*Ethics and Values*)

This course will use science fiction novels, stories, TV shows, and movies to explore topics in contemporary bioethics.

**PHIL 399** Capstone Seminar: Philosophies of Revolution | *Jennifer Gaffney*  
(*Law, Society, and Social Justice*)

This course will focus on issues in social and political philosophy concerning revolution. Though we often use the word “revolution” uncritically, this concept operates at the very limits of the political and raises a number of important questions and puzzles about the stability and legitimacy of the state. Central to this course will be the questions of whether revolution can be justified, when certain forms of oppression and exclusion necessitate violence against the state, what it means to organize collectively in the name of revolution, and why it is that some revolutions are remembered while others are forgotten. To engage these

questions, the course will include readings from figures such as John Locke, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Karl Marx, Hannah Arendt, C.L.R. James, and Frantz Fanon, each of whom offer distinct perspectives on the role of revolution in the modern state. The course will consider the relevance of these perspectives not only for understanding revolutions of the past but also for understanding the scope and limits of calls for revolution in contemporary political life.