

Fall 2021 Electives - Description List

Course: Puzzles and Paradoxes (PHIL1195)

Professor: Richard Atkins

Time: TTH10:30AM-11:45AM

Description: We examine twelve valid philosophical arguments with extremely plausible premises but implausible conclusions and how the greatest minds in philosophy have grappled with them. Based on the professor's book and supplemented with classic and contemporary readings, this course will challenge your faith in reason while affirming your faith in its progress.

Level: Undergrad Elective

Course: The Art of Creativity: Crisis and Transformation (PHIL1709)

Professor: Richard Kearney

Time: TTH 1:30PM-2:45PM

Description: Core Renewal: Enduring Questions For Freshmen Only The course begins with three stories of creation in the biblical account of Genesis, Greek myths of art-making and the classic philosophies of imagination in Aristotle and Plato. It then explores the modern paradigm of the productive imagination in Kant and existentialism--engaging key questions of humanism and theism, authenticity and sincerity, anxiety and authority. The course concludes with the philosophical and ethical challenges posed by the electronic and digital revolutions of the third millennium, asking: What is the human imagination in our postmodern culture of social media and virtual simulation? How do we move from crisis to transformation?

Level: Undergrad Elective

Course: The Value of Work: A Philosophical Examination (PHIL1721)

Professor: Micah Lott

Time: TTH 10:30AM-11:45AM

Description: This is an Enduring Questions course and is open to FRESHMEN only. You must take ENGL1728 with this course. What role and significance does work have in flourishing lives and good societies? This course pair offers Boston College students the opportunity to reflect on the significance and meaning of the human activity of work, an activity that is likely to occupy a large portion of their lives. Around the globe, politicians promise good jobs, and scholars discuss automation and the future of work. But what is a good job? What form of value is most central to work as a part of a good life: financial reward? social purpose? personal fulfillment? How do individuals and communities understand and achieve justice and meaning at work?

Level: Undergrad Elective

Course: Philosophical Perspectives on Science (PHIL2150)

Professor: Marius Stan

Time: TTH 3:00PM-4:15PM

Description: This course is an examination of the scientific enterprise with the tools of modern analytic philosophy. Topics include: the structure of a scientific theory; evidence and knowledge in science; the nature of scientific explanations; and the role of values in science. As

paradigmatic examples, we will examine major breakthroughs by Archimedes, Newton, Darwin, and Einstein. Open to science and pre-med majors.

Level: Undergrad Elective

Course: Telling Truths III: The Narratives that Shape Our Lives (PHIL2215)

Professor: Kathleen Hirsch

Time: W 3:00PM-4:45PM

Description: As we encounter injustice, conflicting visions of "the good," and different moral scales of behavior, rights and responsibilities, it is essential that we become aware of our own foundational narratives. What "wisdom stories" shape the way you think about yourself in relation to others? What narratives do you carry into encounters with conditions, attitudes and beliefs that are different from yours? In this course, students will have a rare opportunity to bring their weekly experience of service into a time of reflection, and into relation to some of the core narratives of the great spiritual traditions. We will read modern mystics, parables, and creative theologians, including: Anne Lamott, Etty Hillesum, Kendrick Lamar, and Parker Palmer. The conversation will continue as we write in and read from our journals, sharing stories and questions. Several short writing assignments will occur through the course of the term; a final, longer piece of substantive "spiritual reflection" will give students the chance to synthesize the fruits of observation, reading, and reflection. The aim of the course is to expand students' familiarity with the great narratives of grace and forgiveness, suffering and hope, as they engage in service, and to provide a setting in which they can become intentional about adopting narratives that will shape their lives.

Level: Undergrad Elective

Course: Values in Social Services and HealthCare (PHIL2233)

Professor: David Manzo

Time: TH 4:30PM-6:50PM

Description: Through readings, lectures, discussions, field placements, and written work, we will attempt the following: to communicate an understanding of the social services and healthcare delivery systems and introduce you to experts who work in these fields; explore ethical problems of allocations of limited resources; discuss topics that include violence prevention, gangs, homelessness, mental illness, innovating nursing initiatives, economy inequality, community wealth ventures, and the law; and consider possibilities for positive changes in the social service and healthcare system.

Level: Undergrad Elective

Course: Logic (PHIL2264)

Professor: Elliot Risch

Time: MWF 10:00AM-10:50AM

Description: This course will consider the principles of correct reasoning together with their application to concrete cases.

Level: Undergrad Elective

Course: Cultural and Social Structures I (PHIL2293)

Professor: Meghan Sweeney

Time: T 4:30PM-7:15PM

Description: This course focuses on examining the cultural foundations that underlie the contemporary ways in which people choose to structure literally, figuratively, and symbolically the way they live together. Our study centers on questions about how our cultural and social structures are the concrete expression in politics, city planning, architecture, literature, etc., of what we value and of the things we consider meaningful and important.

Level: Undergrad Elective

Course: Playing God: Technology and the Human Condition (PHIL2350)

Professor: David Storey

Time: MWF 3:00PM-3:50PM

Description: When asked whether God exists, Google futurist and inventor Ray Kurzweil, widely regarded as the prophet-philosopher of Silicon Valley, replied, "Not yet." Conventional wisdom has it that we are in the midst of a "techlash"--a backlash against the powerful and pervasive digital technologies developed in the first two decades of the twenty-first century that is sowing unintended psychological, political, and economic consequences. In this course, you will survey the philosophy of technology, including canonical figures such as Aristotle, Bacon, Martin Heidegger, and Hans Jonas--and contemporary scholars such as Hubert Dreyfus and Shannon Vallor, as well as popular authors such as Sherry Turkle and Jaron Lanier. In particular, we will explore the moral dimensions and the psychological, political, and economic consequences of digital and emerging technologies, including the internet, smart phones, social media, big data, genetic engineering, life enhancement and extension, virtual reality, and artificial intelligence.

Level: Undergrad Elective

Course: Philosophies of Happiness (PHIL2450)

Professor: Anne Davenport

Time: TTH 1:30PM-2:45PM

Description: How do philosophers approach happiness? Is happiness defined by well-being, pleasure, emotional state, life satisfaction, or is it best approached through some kind of hybrid account? What are, moreover, the sources of happiness? We start with the challenge of human tragedy in Shakespeare's King Lear, drawing on Walter Kaufmann and on Stanley Cavell. We then compare and contrast Thomas More's utopian imagination with the skepticism of Michel de Montaigne. We return to utopian imagination with Francis Bacon and compare his views to Descartes (rationalist), Hobbes (materialist), and Pascal (pragmatist), raising the question of how faith and reason enter into happiness. We consider John Ray's influential argument for God by design. We read Voltaire's Candide and Emile du Châtelet's Discourse on Happiness. We examine Diderot's formulation of happiness and Rousseau's contrasting view. We look at the distinctive way in which Rousseau privileges beauty and we pursue the topic of aesthetics in John Ruskin and Jane Addams. We end with Freud and Jean-Louis Chrétien.

Level: Undergrad Elective

Course: Zen and Philosophy (PHIL3147)

Professor: David Johnson

Time: TTH 12:00-1:15PM

Description: This course focuses on the relation between Zen Buddhism and philosophy. It introduces the basic principles and tenets of Buddhism and provides an overview of the origins and historical development of the Zen school. Because the Neo-Daoist movement influenced the reception of Buddhism in China and shaped the distinctively Chinese form of Buddhism known as Chan (Zen), we will also examine Daoist discourse and practices as these emerge from the Daodejing and the Zhuangzi. In the latter half of the course we will look at the ways in which Zen has shaped Japanese philosophy by considering the doctrines of medieval thinkers such as Dogen as well as the views of the twentieth-century philosophers Nishida Kitaro and Kimura Bin.

Level: Undergrad Elective

Course: Inductive Logic (PHIL3150)

Professor: Richard Atkins

Time: TTH 9:00AM-10:15AM

Description: An inductive logic is a logic of evidential support. When inductive arguments are good, the premises provide a degree of support for the conclusion. In contrast, for valid deductive arguments, it is impossible for the premises to be true and yet for the conclusion to be false. Sometimes, deduction is characterized as necessary reasoning whereas induction is characterized as probable reasoning. In this course, we will examine what distinguishes deduction from induction, the varieties of inductive inference, and paradoxes that arise in inductive logic. Topics covered include inference to the best explanation, the probability calculus, Bayes's theorem, and paradoxes such as Goodman's riddle of induction and the paradox of the ravens.

Level: Undergrad Elective

Course: Varieties of Feeling (PHIL3521)

Professor: Martin Cohen

Time: MWF 4:00PM-4:50PM

Description: Philosophical, literary, artistic, and religious traditions are sources for descriptions and evocations of many kinds of profound and humanly compelling feelings that are not reducible to the labeled emotions. There are, for example, feelings of guidance and direction; feelings of discernment and heart-knowing; feelings of reverence and aesthetic contemplation; and feelings of communion. Feelings often play a role in ethical decision-making, as well as in love. Between the aridity of some forms of intellectualism, on the one side, and the facile advice to trust the gut and the immediacy of whatever intuition appears, on the other, there is a powerful realm of human feeling that calls out for rigorous inquiry. To ignore this realm is to overlook one way to cultivate depths of our humanity. Great literature is often a haven for acknowledging this differentiated realm of feeling that philosophy can benefit from considering. The ancient pillars of the Western discourse on Love, Plato's Symposium and the Biblical Song of Songs, suggest the vastness and potential goodness of feeling. The tripartite soul as conceived by Plato and Aristotle, in which the rational is assigned the task of supervising,

controlling or persuading the spirited and appetitive parts, will be respectfully fathomed as a prelude to considering many refinements, qualifications and challenges to this hierarchy granting dominance to rationality. The era of Shakespeare, Cervantes and Montaigne issues one challenge; the romanticism of Wordsworth, Keats and Blake another; and a burgeoning body of philosophical and literary materials on feeling in the 20th century extends the unfolding of this formidable ancient conception. As the plenitude and variety of feelings are acknowledged, how must ethics be reconceived?

Level: Undergrad Elective

Course: Feminisms and Philosophies of Difference (PHIL4001)

Professor: Cherie McGill

Time: MW 1:30PM-2:45PM

Description: What does it mean to call oneself (or someone else) a 'feminist'? In attempting an answer to this question, we will consider efforts to reveal, unravel, and remedy the conceptual, psychological, and economic dimensions of the oppression of women. We will discuss a variety of feminisms--liberal, existential, radical--and their differing approaches to such 'feminist' issues as marriage and domestic violence, reproduction and pregnancy, work and sexual harassment, and the science of gender and gender difference. We will examine the relationship of sexism to racism, heterosexism, and class exploitation, and investigate the role of the concept of difference in creating and maintaining structural inequalities.

Level: Undergrad Elective

Course: Philosophy of Mental Illness (PHIL4320)

Professor: Katharine Harster

Time: MWF 10:00AM-10:50AM

Description: This course explores historical and contemporary issues in philosophy and psychiatry. Topics include dimensional versus categorical diagnostic methods, what it is like to live with mental illness, the challenges faced by individuals in recovery, and issues of competence and consent. We will engage these topics through written and verbal discussion as well philosophical, scientific, and narrative literature.

Level: Undergrad Elective

Course: Greek Philosophy (PHIL4405)

Professor: Sarah C Byers

Time: MW 3:00PM-4:15PM

Description: This course is organized around the central philosophical questions asked and answered, in various ways, by philosophers in the ancient Greek-speaking world. We will consider the pre-Socratics, Plato, Aristotle, and, more briefly, some Hellenistic authors such as Plutarch, Epictetus, and Plotinus. Topics include theories of material bodies and of change; whether anything immaterial or immutable exists, and if so whether it is single or multiple and its relation to this changing world; the human soul; and the question of the criterion of truth, and the process by which humans may come to know; the question of the criterion of ethics.

Level: Undergrad Elective

Course: Spanish-American Philosophy (PHIL4423)

Professor: Gary Gurtler, SJ

Time: TTH 3:00PM-4:15PM

Description: This course is designed to give the student an opportunity to look at some fundamental philosophical issues regarding human nature and the origins and development of human thought from a fresh perspective. Unamuno's Tragic Sense of Life presents a critique of the rationalism of modern European thought by focusing on human life as dream, theater, and struggle. Octavio Paz, in The Labyrinth of Solitude, explores the meaning of human existence through the lens, or perhaps the mask, of the Mexican quest for identity at the end of the present century.

Level: Undergrad Elective

Course: Freud and Philosophy (PHIL4429)

Professor: Vanessa Rumble

Time: TTH 1:30PM-2:45PM

Description: The course is designed to acquaint students with the scope and evolution of Freud's thinking and with significant developments in psychoanalysis since his time. Students will study and assess Freud's and Breuer's first formulation of the nature of hysteria; Freud's groundbreaking work in dream interpretation and the nature of unconscious processes; Freud's attempt to apply his novel theory of unconscious mechanisms to cultural anthropology as well as individual psychology; and the implications of the ongoing revisions in Freud's classification of the drives. Above all, we'll focus on Freud's attempt, over the course of many years, to account for the origin of human morality and guilt, and his ongoing assessment of the role of Judaism in his life and in his culture.

Level: Undergrad Elective

Course: Moral Concepts (PHIL4444)

Professor: Jorge Garcia

Time: MW 12:00-1:15PM

Description: Approaching its topics through consideration of language, this course examines some recent debates about what it is for something to be good, virtuous, correct, right, or obligatory, or what ought to be, or what must be done. Principal texts: Normativity, by J.J. Thomson; additional chapters and articles to be assigned. Assignments: 3 blue-book examinations.

Level: Undergrad Elective

Course: Philosophy of World Religions (PHIL4470)

Professor: Peter Kreeft

Time: TTH 9:00AM-10:15AM

Description: The purpose of this course is as follows: (1) to familiarize students with the teachings of each of the world's major religions; (2) to understand, empathize with, and appreciate them; (3) to appreciate one's own religion (or lack of one) better by comparison; (4)

to philosophize critically and rationally about a subject that is not in itself critical and rational; and (5) to question and search for a universal nature of core of religion, if possible.

Level: Undergrad Elective

Course: Ethical Principles in Comparative Perspectives (PHIL4477)

Professor: You G Jiang, SJ

Time: MW 4:30PM-5:45PM

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

Level: Undergrad Elective

Course: Modern Philosophy (PHIL5295)

Professor: Jean-Luc Solere

Time: TTH 4:30PM-5:45PM

Description: From the early 17th to the end of the 18th century, reason asserted its autonomy and triumphed in the Age of Enlightenment, but at the same time reflected on its own limits. Through a series of themes and problems, the course presents the major philosophies (roughly, from Descartes to Kant) that have accompanied the development of scientific knowledge, the rise of the modern mind, and the transformation of Western societies. This comprehensive survey covers metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, and political philosophy, paying attention to the interconnection between ideas in these different domains (with for instance the centrality of the notion of law: laws of nature, political laws, moral law). It particularly highlights the logical development in the succession of questions and answers that characterize the evolution of philosophy in the modern times. The course will provide you with the central concepts of modern thought, so as to grasp the bases of today's understanding of the world and of ourselves. Analysis of representative texts, class discussions, and writing assignments are designed to develop rigorous argumentation and expression skills. (NB: This course was previously offered as PHIL 4406; you cannot take it if you took PHIL 4406)

Level: Graduate Elective

Course: Philosophy of Law (PHIL5500)

Professor: Paul Van Rooy

Time: MWF 11:00AM-11:50AM

Description: This course aims to provide an overview of a number of core 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 a constitution and the rule of law?', 'What is the ground of judicial review?' and 'What connection, if any, is there between questions of legal theory and broader debates in contemporary political philosophy?'

Level: Graduate Elective

Course: Politics of the Soul: Nietzsche, Leo Strauss, Carl Schmitt, the Good Life, and the Quest for Order (PHIL5501)

Professor: Brian Braman

Time: TTH 12:00-1:15PM

Description: There seems to be a permanent conflict between culture and politics. Should the organization of society serve the ends of politics (justice) or those of culture? Which type of polity is best able to promote culture and political life, that is the cultivation of greatness and true human excellence. In short, the political cannot be understood as one among other domains of culture. This course will explore this conflict between culture and politics by examining and close reading of the works of Nietzsche, Leo Strauss, and Carl Schmitt. In order to help structure our investigation of this conflict, we will read the above authors in light of the following questions: What does it mean to be human? What really is the good life? And what is the best regime?

Level: Graduate Elective

Course: How to Save the World: Ethics of Climate Change (PHIL5515)

Professor: David Storey

Time: MWF 12:00-12:50PM

Description: Climate change is arguably the defining issue of our time and the hardest problem humanity has ever faced. It raises an array of moral questions, e.g.: What values should guide global and national climate policies? What responsibilities do we have toward the poor, future generations, nonhuman species, and our planet? The course is an introduction to environmental ethics and the moral challenges posed by climate change. In particular, we examine the philosophical and ethical questions that underlie climate science, public policy, energy systems and policy, and economics. The goal is to cultivate an integral understanding of the climate problem through an interdisciplinary inquiry.

Level: Graduate Elective

Course: Metaphysics (PHIL5529)

Professor: Gary Gurtler, SJ

Time: TTH 12:00-1:15PM

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

Level: Graduate Elective

Course: God, Ethics and the Sciences (PHIL5552)

Professor: Stephen Pope, Patrick Byrne

Time: TTH 3:00PM-4:15PM

Description: This course examines some important questions regarding relationships between belief in God and scientific approaches to humanity and the natural world. 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 major historical contributors to the discussion including Aquinas, Galileo, and Darwin. Central methodological questions 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.

Level: Graduate Elective

Course: C.S. Lewis (PHIL5584)

Professor: Peter Kreeft

Time: TTH 10:30AM-11:45AM

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

Level: Graduate Elective

Course: Platonic Dialogues (PHIL5586)

Professor: Marina McCoy

Time: TTH 1:30PM-2:45PM

Description: In this fall's Platonic dialogues, we will focus on Plato's moral thought in a series of dialogues: Meno, Protagoras, and Gorgias. Each of these dialogues explores the nature of virtue as a whole. Our reading of the texts will be a slow and careful reading of these dialogues' arguments with a particular emphasis on the relationship between philosophical reasoning, narrative, and ethics.

Level: Graduate Elective

Course: 20th Century Phenomenologies of Spirit (PHIL5890)

Professor: Andrew Barrette

Time: TTH 9:00AM-10:15AM

Description: TBD

Level: Graduate Elective

Course: Anti-Moralism (PHIL6621)

Professor: Jorge Garcia

Time: MW 3:00PM-4:15PM

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

Level: Graduate Elective

Course: Medieval Christian Mystical Philosophy: Eriugena, Eckhart, Cusanus (PHIL7224)

Professor: Dermot Moran

Time: T 4:30PM-6:20PM

Description: In this course, I plan to read key texts in the Christian Neoplatonic mystical tradition, focusing in particular on Johannes Scottus Eriugena (c. 800-877), Meister Eckhart of Hochheim (1260-1328), and Nicholas of Cusa (1401-1464). The class will begin with readings from St. Augustine and Dionysius the Areopagite, the two most influential figures for medieval Christian Platonism. We shall then read sections of Eriugena's Periphyseon and Homily on the Prologue to St. John's Gospel, selections from Eckhart's sermons and tracts, and parts of Nicholas of Cusa's On Learned Ignorance and De li non aliud (On God as Not Other). The course will consider the Neoplatonic context, affirmative and negative theology, and the nature of the human being in the context of the dialectics of knowledge and ignorance, immanence, and transcendence.

Level: Graduate Elective

Course: Heidegger 1 (PHIL7230)

Professor: John Sallis

Time: W 3:00PM-5:45PM

Description: This course will consist of a close study of Heidegger's major work Being and Time. Attention will be given to the phenomenological background of Heidegger's thought and to his analyses of world, time, and death. Some consideration will also be given to the lecture courses that Heidegger presented during the period of Being and Time.

Level: Graduate Elective

Course: Philosophy and the Pedagogy of Service (PHIL7400)

Professor: Patrick Byrne, Charles Fried

Time: TH 4:30PM-7:15PM

Description: Graduate PULSE (3 credits per semester, two semester sequence): In this two-semester course, the student will learn both the theory and practice of teaching a Philosophy service-learning course. The student will attend an undergraduate section of PULSE, doing the same readings as the undergraduates and working in a service placement for four hours a week. The student will also attend a bi-weekly seminar with other graduate students in the course and the graduate PULSE instructor, doing readings in the pedagogy of service learning, philosophy of education, and related fields. In consultation with the section instructor, the student will also serve as a writing mentor to undergraduates in the class. Requirements will include short reflection and exploratory papers, similar to the undergraduates, and a final research paper each semester. The first semester will focus on philosophy of education and on the pedagogy of service-learning; the second semester will focus on applied philosophical issues raised by specific service placements, either in the ethics of engaged service work or on policy questions connected to the service. Enrollment requires the permission of the undergraduate section instructor, the instructor for the graduate course, and the Director of the PULSE Program.

Level: Graduate Elective

Course: Moral Responsibility in Mental Illness (PHIL7650)

Professor: Katherine Harster

Time: M 3:00PM-5:45PM

Description: This seminar focuses on current debates in ethics and psychiatry. We will examine contemporary accounts of moral responsibility and interdisciplinary texts on substance use, trauma, personality disorders, and mood disorders. Students will learn strategies for interpreting and synthesizing psychological research for philosophical argument. Students will discuss intuitions and evidence with clinicians and researchers in the Boston area. This course aims to build skills in research and writing in support of a thesis, oral presentation of diverse philosophical perspectives, and discussion of one's views on interdisciplinary issues.

Level: Graduate Elective

Course: Medieval Ontology (PHIL7721)

Professor: Jean-Luc Solere

Time: TH 1:30PM-4:15PM

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

Level: Graduate Elective

Course: Phenomenology of Religion (PHIL7820)

Professor: Richard Kearney

Time: W 6:00PM-8:30PM

Description: TBD

Level: Graduate Elective