

Fall 2023 Electives - Description List

Course: Puzzles and Paradoxes (PHIL1195)

Professor: Richard Atkins

Time: TTH 12:00-1:15PM

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: Philosophical Perspectives on Science (PHIL 2150)

Professor: Marius C 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 A Hirsch

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

Description: Telling Truths III is an elective course offered by the PULSE Program for Service Learning. As a PULSE elective, students enrolled in the course serve 4 hours per week (in addition to travel time) of in-person service. 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: Logic (PHIL2264)

Professor: Anna D Boessenkool

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 T Sweeney

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

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: The Vegetative Soul: The Hidden Life of Plants (PHIL2444)

Professor: Holly R Vandewall

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

Description: By weight, more than 80% percent of the living things on the earth are plants, and without them the earth's animals, including humans, would perish within weeks. But philosophy has spent a vanishingly small part of its efforts in considering this form of life, generally relegating plants to the status of minimally alive, but essentially uninteresting. As Michael Pollan notes, "plants are so unlike people that it's very difficult for us to appreciate fully their complexity and sophistication. Yet plants have been evolving much, much longer than we have, have been inventing new strategies for survival and perfecting their designs for so long that to say that one of us is the more 'advanced' really depends on how you define that term, and what 'advances' you value'." This class will consider how humans have historically regarded the plant kingdom, what we can learn from the challenging imaginary exercise of attempting to understand how they live, and how we might reconsider the world if we came to regard the plant kingdom not as passive subjects of human actions, but as powerful and vital actors in their own right.

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: Philosophical Hermeneutics on Race and Justice (PHIL4040)

Professor: Stanley Anozie

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

Description: Philosophical Hermeneutics on Race and Justice examines fundamental questions about the nature of justice, retribution, the relationship between justice and fairness, contemporary debates on issues of race, and how race is a factor in people's experience of injustice, inequality, discrimination, prejudice, structural violence, and various theoretical and practical issues of law, ethics and public policy. Hermeneutics as a philosophical discipline deals with interpretation and understanding of different perspectives on reality and human affairs. For instance, the idea of race and justice in private and public life, its significance in politics and domestic and international affairs, and its contentiousness and changeability over time. As an instrument of human liberation, the discourse on race and justice is rich for intellectual study, especially in using the tools of philosophical hermeneutics to arrive at inner and higher meanings. Students will explore enduring questions of race and justice, as well as contemporary debates over moral and legal responsibility, punishment, civil disobedience and revenge and their relation to race and justice. As part of the semester's work students will analyze theories of justice, theories of race, race as a social construct, racial prejudice, examine specific case studies in relation to race and justice/injustice, research topics of individual interest, evaluate arguments, and defend positions of their own through the fusion of horizons. Emphasis will be placed throughout the course on readings some texts by Hans-Georg Gadamer, Martin Heidegger, Tsenay Serequeberhan, Paulo Freire, Frantz Fanon, and other scholars; on lively discussions, careful research and writing, the formulation of well-reasoned stances on various hermeneutical and philosophical issues, and clarity in reasoning and argument.

Level: Undergrad Elective

Course: Greek Philosophy (PHIL4405)

Professor: Sarah C Byers

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

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: German Romanticism and Idealism (PHIL4442)

Professor: Vanessa P Rumble

Time: MW 1:00PM-2:15PM

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

Level: Undergrad Elective

Course: The Greeks and Their Gods (PHIL4445)

Professor: Deborah DeChiara-Quenzer

Time: MWF 1:00PM-1:50PM

Description: How did the Greeks view their gods? In this course, we will use Greek literature and philosophy to answer that question. We will read some of the more traditional mythological accounts in Greek literature presented in Hesiod's *Theogony*, Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, Euripides' *Bacchae*, and Aeschylus' *Eumenides*. We will then turn to the distinctive philosophical accounts of the gods given by Plato in works such as *Republic II*, the *Myth of the Charioteer* in the *Phaedrus*, the *Demiurge* in the *Timaeus*, and by Aristotle on their nature and contemplation in *Metaphysics XII* and *Nicomachean Ethics X*.

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 10:30AM-11:45AM

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: Two Existentialisms: Atheist & Theist (PHIL5393)

Professor: Peter J Kreeft

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

Description: Existentialism concretizes and personalizes philosophical questions that make a great difference to the totality of our lives, such as theism vs. atheism. Course will explore theist (Pascal, Marcel, Dostoyevski, Lewis) and atheist (Sartre, Camus, Beckett, Weisel) alternatives in philosophy, fiction, and autobiography. Quizzes on readings and take home final essay exam or term paper.

Level: Graduate Elective

Course: The Ethics of Peace and War (PHIL5423)

Professor: Charles G Fried

Time: TTH 12:00-1:15PM

Description: This course will explore historical, ethical, and political issues concerned with peace and war. We will examine the just war tradition, beginning in the medieval period, as well as recent developments in the field, such as topics in transitional justice. While the main emphasis will be on philosophical justifications for war and visions of just peace, we will also examine religious, historical, literary, and journalistic texts to focus the imagination on the philosophical issues and to connect theoretical frameworks to historical and contemporary events.

Level: Graduate Elective

Course: Philosophy of Law (PHIL5500)

Professor: Christopher D Berger

Time: MWF 12:00-12:50PM

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: Philosophy of Existence (PHIL5512)

Professor: Richard Kearney

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

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

Level: Graduate Elective

Course: Metaphysics (PHIL5529)

Professor: Gary Gurtler, SJ

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

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: Truth and Pragmatism (PHIL5582)

Professor: Richard Atkins

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

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.

Level: Graduate Elective

Course: C.S. Lewis (PHIL5584)

Professor: Peter J Kreeft

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

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: Varieties of Feeling (PHIL5588)

Professor: Martin Cohen

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

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: Undergraduate and Graduate Elective

Course: The Concept of the Tragic in 20th Century Philosophy (PHIL5899)

Professor: Giovanni Pietro Basile, SJ

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

Description: The course aims to explore the notion of the tragic as a philosophical concept. While ancient tragedy is characterized by the compassion aroused by the suffering of the tragic hero and the fear aroused by tragic theology, the idea of a wicked god disappears quite early. In contemporary philosophy, the notion of the tragic will be increasingly linked to the drama of freedom, the finitude and absurdity of the human condition, and the pessimistic worldview. The course will take place in the form of a seminar and will especially deal with the philosophy of the 20th Century. The following authors (and texts) will be read: Unamuno (The Tragic Sense of Life), Scheler (On the Tragic), Camus (On the Future of Tragedy, The Myth of Sisyphus and The Rebel), Benjamin (The Origin of German Tragic Drama), C. Schmitt (Hamlet or Hecuba: The Intrusion of Time into the Play), Jaspers (Tragedy is not enough), Ricur (The Wicked God and the Tragic Vision of Existence).

Level: Graduate Elective

Course: Hegel's Philosophy of Spirit (PHIL6250)

Professor: Elisa Magri

Time: MW 12:00-1:15PM

Description: This course is dedicated to Hegel's philosophy of Geist, which is often translated in English as "spirit," "mind," or "collective cultural mindset." However, the full meaning of Geist in Hegel's philosophy comprises a more fine-grained and richer development of affective, psychological, and practical elements. Drawing on Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit as well as on the sections on the Philosophy of Spirit of Hegel's Encyclopaedia, this course will explore the main philosophical questions that surround the dimension of Geist in both Hegel's philosophy and contemporary debates, including Hegel's departure from transcendental philosophy and the nature-spirit relation, the novelty of Hegel's philosophical anthropology, the problem of recognition, and the quest for absolute knowledge.

Level: Graduate Elective

Course: Philosophy of Space and Time (PHIL6618)

Professor: Marius C Stan

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

Description: An historical survey of metaphysical and epistemological problems of space and time from Aristotle to Husserl.

Level: Graduate Elective

Course: Freud's Civilization and Its Discontent (PHIL6643)

Professor: Jeffrey Bloechl

Time: MWF 2:00PM-2:50PM

Description: This course will develop a close reading of Freud's text, with attention to the therapeutic concerns and technical difficulties that frame it and the cultural critique that it proposes. We will also consider the question of Freud's legacy, as debated between ego psychology and the interpretation developed by Jacques Lacan.

Level: Graduate Elective

Course: Engaged Philosophy: Ethics, Law, Policy (PHIL7234)

Professor: Charles G Fried

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

Description: This course instructs students in combining philosophical inquiry with analysis of contemporary issues and policy questions at the intersections of ethics, political theory, law, and the social sciences. It combines the study of selected works in ethics and political philosophy from the ancient through the contemporary eras with the examination of current events and policy debates. Each semester, the instructor will choose several policy areas, such as prison reform or climate change or the relation of religion to government, to coordinate with the programming, guest lecturers from departments and schools at Boston College, and speaker events hosted by campus centers and institutes, such as the Clough Center for the Study of Constitutional Democracy and the Rappaport Center for Law and Public Policy, for students to attend as part of the course. Faculty members from various departments would be invited for guest lectures on specific topics covered in a given semester. The course will also provide

students with an overview of methodologies in philosophy and how these relate to interdisciplinary inquiry by examining how philosophical works raise questions and themes that persist in challenges facing both socio-political life and personal ethics.

Level: Graduate Elective

Course: Phenomenology of Dreams (PHIL7272)

Professor: Richard Kearney

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

Description: This course will offer a philosophical analysis of dreams based on both a phenomenological method of description (Husserl, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, Bachelard) and a psychoanalytic method of interpretation (Freud, Jung, Bosnak). The seminar will consist of close discussions of texts and an experimental exploration of dream material.

Level: Graduate Elective

Course: Time, Consciousness, and Being (PHIL7490)

Professor: Jean-Luc Solere

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

Description: The nature of time is one of the trickiest puzzles in philosophy. Is the distinction between present, past and future objective, or is it the result of a subjective perspective on reality? How can we say that time exists if only the present is real and if the present is just a fleeting instant? What is an instant? If time does exist and flow, how does it flow? Is it a continuum, or is it discrete? Would time be flowing if there was no change under way in the world? If there was nobody to observe that change? Is all of reality subjected to time, or only certain categories of being? Is eternity an endless stretch of time? We will examine the main answers to these questions in a wide range of philosophies, from Ancient thought to Arabic and Latin medieval theories to the Cartesian and the Newtonian revolutions, Leibniz, and Kant, and to Bergson and contemporary phenomenological and analytic approaches as well. This class will fulfill the coursework requirement regarding medieval and modern philosophy.

Level: Graduate Elective

Course: Kant's First Critique (PHIL7716)

Professor: John Sallis

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

Description: The course will consist of a close study of the Transcendental Aesthetic and the Transcendental Analytic of Kant's Critique of Pure Reason.

Level: Graduate Elective

Course: Theory of the Passions (PHIL7764)

Professor: Eileen C Sweeney

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

Description: This course will look at how philosophers from Aristotle to Kant have understood the emotions and appetites, their relationship to the body, to reason, and to the moral life. We will read the works of Aristotle, the Stoics, Aquinas, Montaigne, Descartes, Spinoza, Hobbes, Hume, and Kant with an eye both to the way their accounts of the emotions fit into their larger

philosophical views and tracing the transformation of the view of human emotional life from Ancient/Medieval period to Modernity.

Level: Graduate Elective

Course: Aristotle and Plotinus: On the Soul (PHIL7791)

Professor: Gary Gurtler, SJ

Time: T 1:00PM-3:30PM

Description: This course focuses on theories of sensation and knowledge found in the writings of Aristotle and Plotinus. Understanding Aristotle's position necessitates familiarity with the material in *Parva Naturalia* to supplement the more restricted discussion of the *De Anima*. While Plotinus assumes a Platonic soul, he imports much of Aristotle's structure, material from the Stoics, and the medical tradition of Galen and others. These resources allow him to give for the first time in the Western tradition a full theory of consciousness. Plotinus' achievement shows how the insights of his predecessors can be combined in a remarkably fruitful way.

Level: Graduate Elective