

## Spring 2024 Electives - Description List

**Course:** Philosophical Perspectives on Science II (PHIL 2151)

**Professor:** Marius Stan

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

**Description:** Continued Course. Part II. 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 explore major breakthroughs by Archimedes, Newton, Darwin, and Einstein. Open to science and pre-med majors.

**Level:** Undergrad Elective

**Prereqs:** Must have taken Perspectives I (Perspectives on Western Culture) or Permission of Department

**Coreqs:** none

**Course:** Boston: An Urban Analysis (PHIL 2216)

**Professor:** David Manzo

**Time:** TH 3:00-5:30

**Description:** This is a PULSE elective course open to all students who are willing to investigate, analyze, and understand the history, problems, and prospects of Boston's neighborhoods. Classes meet both on campus and in the neighborhoods of Boston. You must be willing to travel to different parts of the city. You will see first-hand how cities change and develop. A four-hour per week (plus travel time) service commitment is a requirement for this course.

**Level:** Undergrad Elective

**Prereqs:** none

**Coreqs:** none

**Course:** Mass Incarceration: Philosophical and Theological Perspectives (PHIL 2230)

**Professor:** Marina McCoy

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

**Description:** This course will explore problems of justice in relation to incarceration in the United States with particular attention to attention to race, social class, gender, and immigration status. Students will read authors writing on the philosophy of race, gender, and class in relation to incarceration, the phenomenology of solitary confinement and the concept of "social death," church documents and theological works on incarceration, and works on restorative justice and other models of justice that serves the common good. Catholic Social Justice teachings and discussion will also be a part of the course. The course will also address interconnections between immigration and incarceration.

**Level:** Undergrad Elective

**Prereqs:** Permission of department

**Coreqs:** none

**Course:** The Great Conversation (PHIL 2247)

**Professor:** Peter Kreeft

**Time:** TTH 12:00-1:15

**Description:** A one-semester crash course in the history of philosophy covering the 100 greatest philosophers both historically and systematically (logically), emphasizing the ongoing story of issues and arguments among them.

**Level:** Undergrad Elective

**Prereqs:** none

**Coreqs:** none

**Course:** Telling Truths II: Depth Writing as Service (PHIL 2262)

**Professor:** Alexis Rizzuto

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

**Description:** This PULSE elective will focus on the power of story-telling to achieve justice and social liberation. We will read theoretical and narrative accounts of the role of story, examine the use of story-telling among marginal populations as a means of participating in their own solutions. We will explore the benefits and liabilities of social media in emerging change movements. Students will engage in story gathering, telling, and analysis, through their PULSE placements and class discussion, producing a collection of original writings. A four-hour per week (plus travel time) service commitment is a requirement for this course.

**Level:** Undergrad Elective

**Prereqs:** none

**Coreqs:** none

**Course:** Logic (PHIL 2264)

**Professor:** Anna Boessenkool, Jared Highlen, Daniel Maryanovich

**Time:** MWF 10:00-10:50, MWF 11:00-11:50, MWF 3:00-3:50

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

**Level:** Undergrad Elective

**Prereqs:** none

**Coreqs:** none

**Course:** The Idea of America (PHIL 3140)

**Professor:** Gregory Fried

**Time:** TTH 12:00 - 1:15

**Description:** A systematic exploration of thinking about America, in both its actual history and its possible futures, including traditions of thought that reflect upon the founding principles and the unfolding American experiment. The Declaration of Independence and the Constitution will be studied with an eye to their philosophical content and sources. The course will also examine works of philosophers, artists, writers, and other thinkers who address conflicts over the meaning of founding principles in the course of the nation's history, from the struggle over slavery to America's contemporary role in the world. Because this course intends to apply theoretical understanding to actual events, students will be expected to read contemporary

journalism on a regular basis and assess the controversies of today in the light of the nation's philosophical and historical currents.

**Level:** Undergrad Elective

**Prereqs:** Perspectives, Philosophy of the Person, PULSE or a survey course in Ethics, history of Philosophy or Political philosophy

**Coreqs:** none

**Course:** Truth and Beauty Through a Russian Prism: Chekhov and Philosophy (PHIL 3522)

**Professor:** Thomas Epstein

**Time:** TTH 12:30-1:45

**Description:** While an academic philosophical tradition, which this course will survey, exists in Russia, the heart of Russian philosophy is most frequently encountered in political theory, theology, and literature. To many observers, this last category can be summed up in the word Tolstoevsky. However, as this course will demonstrate, Chekhov too was a deeply philosophical writer. This course will explore Chekhov's chief philosophical concerns, the image of the philosopher and philosophy in his work, and his place as precursor to philosophical approaches of the 20th and 21st centuries.

**Level:** Undergrad Elective

**Prereqs:** none

**Coreqs:** none

**Course:** Feminisms and Philosophies of Difference (PHIL 4001)

**Professor:** Cherie McGill

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

**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

**Prereqs:** none

**Coreqs:** none

**Course:** Hegel, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche: Art, Religion, and the Question of Meaning (PHIL 4211)

**Professor:** Vanessa Rumble

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

**Description:** The aim of this course is to explore G. W. F. Hegels, Sren Kierkegaards and Friedrich Nietzsche's accounts of the human condition. All three philosophers grapple with human temporality and human limitations in singular ways. While Descartes and Kant bequeathed to them (and to us) a human subject divorced from itself and from knowledge of what is ultimately real, Hegel, Kierkegaard, and Nietzsche offer this alienated subject a panoply

of provocative perspectives and therapies. In addition, each thinker takes up timeless questions regarding the meaning of suffering, the nature of beauty, and the significance of human history, culture and religiosity. In the concluding weeks of the semester, we read Heidegger's *The Question Concerning Technology* as a way to both contextualize the work of Hegel, Kierkegaard and Nietzsche and to get a glimpse of his own remarkable reframing of human subjectivity. Above all, we look forward to working with philosophers who were determined, above all else, to keep it real.

**Level:** Undergrad Elective

**Prereqs:** Core and some Kant

**Coreqs:** none

**Course:** The Ethics of Accompaniment: East Africa

**Professor:** Jeffrey Bloechl

**Time:** W 2:00-4:30

**Description:** This course will explore the complicated and urgent problem of refugees and forced migration, in the specific context of East Africa. Our approach will have three dimensions: attention to the social, political and environmental conditions; theoretical analysis from philosophy, theology, and social theory; and active accompaniment of refugees in the form work with them and for them as facilitated by the Jesuit Refugee Services in East Africa. Our central aim will be to generate and practice the mode of responsibility defined by what the Society of Jesus calls accompaniment. Students will be expected to read and discuss a variety of texts, attend invited lectures and workshops, and participate in an overnight retreat prior to the immersion experience in East Africa. There will be examination on the academic materials prior to departure from the United States, organized reflection while in East Africa, and a reflection paper grounded in scholarly research will be due some weeks after our return. We will be in Uganda for one month, beginning in early June.

**Level:** Undergrad Elective

**Prereqs:** Students must have completed the PHIL core

**Coreqs:** none

**Course:** Spanish-American Philosophy (PHIL 4423)

**Professor:** Gary Gurtler, S.J.

**Time:** TTH 12:00-1:15

**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

**Prereqs:** none

**Coreqs:** none

**Course:** Unheard Voices: Philosophy at the Crossroads of Identity (PHIL 4454)

**Professor:** Cherie McGill

**Time:** MW 12:30-1:45

**Description:** What is a just society? What responsibility does each of us have to contribute to a common good? This course starts from the idea that answering these questions requires hearing the voices of those typically unheard, and recognizing the interlocking systems that construct our world. We will attempt to hear voices typically not heard, identify the forces that converge to make voices heard or unheard, and understand the roles that each of us play as silenced and silencer. We will attempt to discern a way forward to a more just society — a way forward that begins from where we are.

**Level:** Undergrad Elective

**Prereqs:** none

**Coreqs:** none

**Course:** Classical Chinese Philosophy (PHIL 4476)

**Professor:** You Jiang, S.J.

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

**Description:** This course is an introduction to Classical Chinese Philosophy and designed to introduce students to the major philosophical schools of classical China, including the Confucian, Mohist, Daoist, and Buddhist schools. Through lectures, discussions, and reading of select primary and secondary sources, we will explore the formulations and subsequent transformations of key beliefs, doctrines, practices, and institutions that characterized specific cultural, educational, spiritual and philosophical traditions.

**Level:** Undergrad Elective

**Prereqs:** none

**Coreqs:** none

**Course:** The Nature of Science (PHIL 4512)

**Professor:** Marius Stan

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

**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 role of models in research and theorizing; the nature of scientific explanations; and the place of values in science. Open to advanced undergraduates.

**Level:** Undergrad Elective

**Prereqs:** none

**Coreqs:** none

**Course:** Happiness and Utopia: Thinking about the Ideal Life

**Professor:** Micha Lott

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

**Description:** This course examines the notion of an ideal human life, understood as living well in ideal circumstances. This notion is at once familiar and puzzling. On the one hand, we all have some conception of living well - i.e., happiness, flourishing, the good life. And we

recognize some circumstances as inimical to human flourishing, such as conditions of famine, poverty, oppression, and exploitation. Moreover, we seem to operate with some idea of good circumstances whenever we wish good fortune for our loved ones, or whenever we work to make our societies more supportive of human well-being. But on closer inspection, the notion of ideal circumstances raises a number of questions. What would human life look like in utopian conditions? Would humans still work and labor, or would we pass our lives entirely in leisure? Could our lives still have meaning and purpose, if there were nothing in our circumstances to struggle against? Would we still need virtues like courage and perseverance, with nothing to fear or overcome? And what about death: is it the ultimate non-ideal circumstance that might be overcome in some future utopia? This course considers such questions in relation to the notion of an ideal human life. We will read a range of philosophical texts, from Aristotle to Thomas More to contemporary thinkers. We will also examine film and works of imaginative literature by writers such as H.G. Wells.

**Level:** Undergrad Elective

**Prereqs:** Philosophy core

**Coreqs:** none

**Course:** Lonergan's Critical Realism: Insight and Beyond (PHIL5001)

**Professor:** Gregory Floyd

**Time:** MW 10:30-11:45

**Description:** Bernard Lonergan (1904-1984) was a philosophical and religious thinker deeply concerned about the philosophical, ethical, social, and religious situation of the twentieth century. That situation was defined by confusion over whether knowledge was possible, what it consisted in, and how to judge between rival accounts. His proposal was to make a beginning by asking what precisely it is to understand. His cognitional theory and its social, metaphysical, ethical, and religious implications are elaborated in his major philosophical work *Insight*.

This course will examine Lonergan's account of human knowing in *Insight*, an account he calls self-appropriation or making one's self one's own through the discovery and deliberate participation in the structured relations among the activities of one's own consciousness. Topics include: critical and naive realism, commonsense and scientific forms of knowledge, bias and error, ethics, and philosophical considerations of religious transcendence. The course will also engage important philosophical writings after *Insight*.

**Level:** Undergrad/Graduate

**Prereqs:** none

**Coreqs:** none

**Course:** Medieval Philosophy (PHIL5005)

**Professor:** Jean-Luc Solere

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

**Description:** Far from being monolithic and repetitive, the Middle Ages were a creative period during which multiple solutions were tried to make sense of the world and of human life. The legacy of Antiquity, the philosophic and scientific knowledge of the time, and religious views were combined in original syntheses. The aim of the course is to provide a picture of this

diversity, through a study of the main problems that a wide range of authors (Christian thinkers from St. Augustine to Ockham, but also Islamic and Jewish philosophers) faced.

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

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

**Level:** Undergrad/Grad

**Prereqs:** none

**Coreqs:** none

**Course:** Hermeneutics of Film (PHIL5009)

**Professor:** Richard Kearney

**Time:** W 6:00-8:45pm

**Description:** The course will consist of a number of philosophical readings of classic and contemporary films. Beginning with the work of Stanley Cavell and Gilles Deleuze the seminar will discuss various phenomenological and hermeneutic interpretations of the art of moving images. We will have specific seminars devoted to different genres of film such as Comedies of Romance, film noir, Monstermovies, Sci-fi and Anime, holocaust documentaries and dramas. Each student will be asked to present on a film of their choice

**Level:** Graduate, undergraduate by permission

**Prereqs:** none

**Coreqs:** none

**Course:** The Aristotelian Ethics (PHIL 5505)

**Professor:** Gary Gurtler SJ

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

**Description:** For students interested in Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics, this course is for you! It consists of a close reading of the whole of the Nicomachean Ethics beginning with ethical virtue (Books II-IX) and ending with happiness (Books I & X). I have found that a student's understanding of Aristotle's ethical concepts is enhanced when he/she considers those concepts in relation to leading figures in Ancient Greek literature. Thus, occasionally we will discuss some of Homer's Iliad and Sophocles' Oedipus Tyrannus to consider how some of the following issues relate to Achilles, Hektor, Paris, Oedipus, and Jocasta. What does it mean to have an ethical virtue (or vice), to engage in involuntary actions, to be responsible, courageous, good-tempered, truthful, temperate, continent, incontinent, and happy? Since the course will be run seminar style, students are expected to participate generously in classroom discussions.

**Level:** Undergrad/Grad Elective

**Prereqs:** Philosophy core

**Coreqs:** none

**Course:** Philosophy of Imagination (PHIL5518)

**Professor:** Richard Kearney

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

**Description:** Readings in the philosophy of imagination from ancient myth to post-modernity. Beginning with Biblical and Greek accounts of images and image-making, this course will explore three main paradigm shifts in the western history of imagination: (1) the ancient paradigm of the Mirror (Plato to Augustine); (2) the modern paradigm of the Lamp (Kant to Sartre); and (3) the postmodern paradigm of the circular Looking Glass (Lacan to Derrida). The course will conclude with a critical evaluation of the political and ethical functions of imagination in our contemporary civilization of cyber fantasy, simulation, and spectacle.

**Level:** Graduate

**Prereqs:** none

**Coreqs:** none

**Course:** Skepticism, Stoicism, and Neoplatonism (PHIL5528)

**Professor:** Sarah Byers

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

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

**Level:** Graduate

**Prereqs:** none

**Coreqs:** none

**Course:** Kant's Critique of Pure Reason: The Doctrine of Method (PHIL5566)

**Professor:** Giovanni Pietro Basile SJ

**Time:** M 4:30-6:50

**Description:** Immanuel Kant's Critique of Pure Reason (CPR) represents one of the most significant texts in the history of philosophy. Kant himself defines it as a "treatise of method" (CPR, B XXII). The second part of the work --The Transcendental Doctrine of the Method-- particularly insists on this aspect. It consists of four sections. The first is The discipline of pure reason that deals with the distinction between the method of the mathematics (construction of concepts) and the method of the logic (analysis of concepts). It also treats of the two main forms of theoretical philosophy: the mere opinion (Meinen) and the knowledge (Wissen). The topic of the second section --The canon of pure reason -- is the elucidation of a specific method (Glauben) for the practical use of reason. How a unified whole of metaphysics can be built up as a system from the connection of the theoretical and the practical use of reason is the theme of third section - The Architectonic of Pure Reason ---, the "art of systems" (KrV A 832/B



860). The last section --The History of Pure Reason --can be seen as the "temporal" counterpart of the "spatial" consideration of the system of pure reason in the Architectonic. In addition, some pre-critical writings that prepared the development of The Transcendental Doctrine of Method will also be considered in the course.

**Level:** Graduate

**Prereqs:** none

**Coreqs:** none

**Course:** Symbolic Logic (PHIL5577)

**Professor:** Richard Atkins

**Time:** TTH 12:00-1:15

**Description:** An introduction to the powerful ways the logical forms woven into deductive reasoning and language can be analyzed using abstract symbolic structures. The study of these structures is not only relevant for understanding effective reasoning, but also for exploring the Anglo-American analytic philosophical tradition and foundations of mathematics, computer science, and linguistics. Philosophically interesting properties about logical systems will be explored, including the task of proving whether a logical system is complete and consistent. A number of interesting topics of twentieth-century logic will be briefly considered, such as set theory, Russell's paradox, and Goedel's theorems.

**Level:** Graduate

**Prereqs:** none

**Coreqs:** none

**Course:** Platonic Dialogues (PHIL5586)

**Professor:** Marina McCoy

**Time:** THT 1:30-2:45

**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 either 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, myth narrative, and ethics.

**Level:** Graduate

**Prereqs:** none

**Coreqs:** none

**Course:** Varieties of Feeling (PHIL5588)

**Professor:** Martin Cohen

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

**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:** Graduate and Undergraduate

**Prereqs:** Cannot have already taken PHIL 3521

**Coreqs:** none

**Course:** Law and Interpretation (PHIL 5650)

**Professor:** Charles Fried

**Time:** TTH 3-4:15

**Description:** This course will examine theories of interpretation (hermeneutics) and the practice of interpretation in law. We will address interpretation as a fundamental feature of human understanding, using religious and literary texts, and then specific schools of legal interpretation, including originalism, strict construction, and the so-called living constitutional approach, using both American constitutional cases (Second Amendment, same-sex marriage, and others) and disputes in scriptural interpretation, such as the debate over the ordination of women. A particular focus will be the question of law at the limit, such as instances of executive law-breaking. Authors will include Aristotle, Aquinas, Gadamer, and Schmitt, as well as Dworkin, Scalia, and Breyer.

**Level:** Graduate

**Prereqs:** none

**Coreqs:** none

**Course:** The Medieval Mind (PHIL 5665)

**Professor:** Peter Kreeft

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

**Description:** Although this course includes short works by typically medieval philosophers (Boethius, Anselm, and a little of Aquinas) it also uncovers the more general world and life view common to the culture of the only age in history ever called "Christendom." in an illuminating contrast to our own in its philosophy, theology, art, architecture, science, language, poetry, and

psychology. We appreciate everything best by contrast, so this course is not only about our remote ancestors but also about ourselves.

**Level:** Graduate

**Prereqs:** none

**Coreqs:** none

**Course:** Alienation as a Philosophical Problem (PHIL5888)

**Professor:** Elisa Magri

**Time:** MW 12:00-1:15

**Description:**

Alienation is a concept that refers to both social ills (like fetishism and objectification) and subjective experiences of estrangement and depersonalization. While the concept of alienation in Western philosophy is historically connected to Hegel's and Marx's theories, the phenomenon of alienation plays a larger role in ethics and contemporary social and phenomenological philosophy. After introducing the origins of the concept of alienation in Hegel and Marx, this seminar will center on the phenomenology of alienation in relation to gender, race, technology, and migration.

**Level:** Graduate

**Prereqs:** none

**Coreqs:** none

**Course:** Augustine (PHIL6605)

**Professor:** Sarah Byers

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

**Description:**

In this course we examine questions in epistemology, ethics and metaphysics using major works of Augustine (354-430 AD/CE), supplemented by works of contemporary philosophers on related themes (Kretzmann, Matthews, MacDonald, VanInwagen). We will aim at depth of understanding and breadth of knowledge, contextualizing Augustine as a philosopher of late antiquity in dialogue with the Hellenistic schools (Stoicism, Skepticism, Neo-Platonism) whose philosophy is still of interest today. Topics include the nature of faith, skepticism, the problem of evil, the nature of God, moral development and conversion, the origin and characteristics of the natural world, including the human soul and body.

**Level:** Graduate

**Prereqs:** none

**Coreqs:** none

**Course:** Phenomenology as Preparation for Theology (PHIL 7544)

**Professor:** Jeffery Bloechl and Jean-Luc Marion

**Time:** TTH 4:30-6:45

**Description:**

This course will study the principles of phenomenological work both in themselves and with regard to their use for theology. The starting point will come from J.-L. Marion, *InExcess. Studies of Saturated Phenomena* (Fordham University Press, 2002).

**Level:** Graduate

**Prereqs:** none

**Coreqs:** none

**Course:** Ethics and the Pleasure Principle in Modern Philosophy (PHIL 7771)

**Professor:** Jean-Luc Solere

**Time:** TTH 12:00-1:15

**Description:**

To the exception of Epicurus, ancient and medieval thinkers generally agreed that pleasure is not the highest good; but that the highest good, which must be sought for itself, does in addition provide the highest pleasure, happiness. However, at the beginning of the modern period (16th -17th centuries), Neo-Epicureans and Augustinians paradoxically came to agree on the fact that human beings, prompted by self-love, act only in view of what is pleasurable to them.

This view became widespread, and gave rise to heated controversies. Are we incapable of disinterested feelings and actions, of pure love? Virtues might well be the expression of disguised self-interest. This issue affects not only ethics and religious thought, but political philosophy as well. Vices were usually viewed as detrimental to the common good and virtue as a disinterested service to the commonwealth. However, the proponents of the pleasure principle maintained that extreme selfishness is compatible with well-organized societies. As a result of this line of thinking, Mandeville's *Fable of the Bees*, at the beginning of the 18th century, contended that private vices are beneficial to public prosperity.

As a response to that cynical description of humans motivations, Hutcheson highlighted a different type of pleasure, which, he thought, proved that we are capable of non-greedy feelings: aesthetic pleasure. The enjoyment of beauty became, in the 18th century, the object of a new discipline, aesthetics, which culminated in Kant's analysis of this disinterested pleasure. At the same time, aesthetic pleasure provided a paradigm for exploring the complex realm of sentiments in which pleasure is reconcilable with altruism, as in Hume's ethics.

This class will not be only a course on ethics properly speaking, but also an inquiry on the nature of pleasure in itself and its role in psychological life broadly construed (with questions such as: Is there a notion of pleasure encompassing all the pleasures, physical and intellectual? Can we establish qualitative and/or quantitative distinctions between pleasures? Is there a universal standard of pleasure, or is pleasure indefinitely variable according to the individuals? Does happiness consists in continuous pleasures, in a sum of pleasures, in a maximum of pleasure, in a variety of pleasures?, etc.).

**Level:** Graduate

**Prereqs:** none **Coreqs:** none