Philosophy Courses  
Spring 2021

Courses marked with * contribute to satisfying General Education Requirements

*PHIL 1000: Introduction to Philosophy
Credit will not be given for both this course and PHIL 1001.

Section 1: TTh 9:00-10:20 Blakley

Major works on such themes as appearance and reality, human nature, nature of knowledge, relation of mind and body, right and good, existence of God, and freedom and determinism.

Required Textbook


Section 2: MWF 10:30-11:20 Wells

This course provides an introduction to philosophy through the lens of the concept of “enlightenment.” What we call “the Enlightenment” was a period of intellectual and philosophical development in 17th and 18th century Europe. However, more broadly speaking but in the spirit of that movement, we can describe enlightenment as a series of commitments: Commitment to the idea that humans are by nature rational things, to the idea of truth and that such truth is discoverable through objective and rational inquiry, to the idea that individual liberty and individuality are paramount, and to the idea that the use of our reason is the engine for human progress. Our course traces these commitments through a survey of a number of figures in the history of philosophy. It does so in (roughly) three sections. First, we sketch an argument in defense of the concept and the project of enlightenment. Next, we consider some challenges to the foundations of this enlightenment project: Is what we call progress really progress? Are we really transparently rational selves? Are we really free? What if all of this is simply a story we tell to justify control and conformity? Finally, we take up the critical tools of enlightenment to examine our own context, specifically with an eye toward gender, race, disability, and oppression. Throughout this course, we will keep three connected questions in mind: What is a self? What is the relationship between this self and rationality? How do the answers to these first two questions inform how we ought to act, as individuals and as communities?

This class is a mix of synchronous (live) and asynchronous (pre-recorded) delivery. Primary course lectures will be asynchronous, and we will meet on Zoom once a week live (likely on Wednesdays).
Section 3: TTh 10:30-11:50 Blakley

Major works on such themes as appearance and reality, human nature, nature of knowledge, relation of mind and body, right and good, existence of God, and freedom and determinism.

Required Textbook


Section 4: MWF 11:30-12:20 Wells

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Section 5: MWF 12:30-1:20 Wells

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**Section 6: MWF 1:30-2:20** Blakley

Major works on such themes as appearance and reality, human nature, nature of knowledge, relation of mind and body, right and good, existence of God, and freedom and determinism.

**Required Textbook**


*PHIL 1021: Introduction to Logic  TTh 12:00-1:20  Roland

This course is an introduction to logic, formal and informal. We will begin with the most basic kind of formal logic, propositional logic. Learning propositional logic involves learning a simple formal language. We will learn such a language, translate statements of English into that language, and learn some techniques for discerning logical properties of statements and arguments translatable into that language. On the informal side we will learn how to identify and avoid some ways of reasoning that can be quite attractive, but which are nonetheless defective. Finally, time permitting, we will briefly consider legal and scientific reasoning.

*PHIL 2020: Ethics An honors course, PHIL 2050, is also available.

**Section 1: TTh 10:30-11:50** Sarkar

Like death and taxes, we cannot escape our moral obligations. What is it to be moral, anyway? And how is morality to be defined and distinguished from other things, such as art and economics? Philosophers have offered a plethora of theories to answer such questions and, in this course, we shall examine a few of those theories: virtue ethics (which emphasizes virtues, character, and emotions), utilitarianism (which emphasizes happiness and its maximization), and Kantianism (which emphasizes the importance of reason and human dignity). We shall also discuss some significant meta-ethical doctrines, for example, expressivism and error theory (relating to the content of moral theories) and subjectivism and objectivism (relating to ethical propositions). And all of this will be preceded by talking about the nature of moral reasons, moral deliberations, and moral motivations.
Required Textbooks


Section 2: TTh 1:30-2:50       Blakley

Classical and recent theories of obligation and value, including works of philosophers such as Plato, Aristotle, Kant, Hume, and Nietzsche; topics including freedom, rights, justification of moral judgments.

Required Textbook


Section 3: MWF 2:30-3:20       Wells

In this course we examine major positions in the history of ethical theory, as well as their applications and challenges to them. In the most basic sense, this course asks: What is right? How ought we act? How ought we live? In considering these primary questions, we will ask further: How ought we treat, and what do we owe, each other? Where do these obligations and responsibilities come from, i.e., what are their foundations? Our aim will be not only to understand these questions in theory, but to grapple with how they challenge us to live our lives, give us meaning, and determine what we value. Our task is to consider who we are and who we want to (or, perhaps, who we ought to) become. In pursuing this task, we will consider virtue ethics, stoic ethics, Kantian ethics, utilitarianism, and care ethics. We will also consider critiques of morality. In the final portion of the course we will examine the concept of oppression and its relation to ethics.

This class is a mix of synchronous (live) and asynchronous (pre-recorded) delivery. Primary course lectures will be asynchronous, and we will meet on Zoom once a week live (likely on Wednesdays).

Section 4: TTh 3:00-4:20       Blakley

Classical and recent theories of obligation and value, including works of philosophers such as Plato, Aristotle, Kant, Hume, and Nietzsche; topics including freedom, rights, justification of moral judgments.

Required Textbook

In this course we examine major positions in the history of ethical theory, as well as their applications and challenges to them. In the most basic sense, this course asks: What is right? How ought we act? How ought we live? In considering these primary questions, we will ask further: How ought we treat, and what do we owe, each other? Where do these obligations and responsibilities come from, i.e., what are their foundations? Our aim will be not only to understand these questions in theory, but to grapple with how they challenge us to live our lives, give us meaning, and determine what we value. Our task is to consider who we are and who we want to (or, perhaps, who we ought to) become. In pursuing this task, we will consider virtue ethics, stoic ethics, Kantian ethics, utilitarianism, and care ethics. We will also consider critiques of morality. In the final portion of the course we will examine the concept of oppression and its relation to ethics.

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PHIL 2025: Bioethics  TTh 1:30-2:50  Giavotella
Defining health and disease; deciding on rights, duties, and obligations in the patient-physician relationship; abortion and the concept of a person; defining and determining death; euthanasia and the dignity of death; allocation of medical resources, both large-scale and small-scale; experimentation with fetuses, children, prisoners, and animals; genetic testing, screening, and interference.

*PHIL 2035 History of Modern Philosophy  TTh 12:00-1:20  Protevi
An honors course, PHIL 2036, is also available.

Introduction to philosophy through a study of some of the main writings of modern philosophy (1492-1804). This semester’s theme will be “Freedom: Metaphysical and Political.” Readings from Montaigne, Descartes, Hobbes, Locke, Spinoza, Kant, Wollstonecraft, and Cugoano.

2036 HONORS: Tutorial in Modern Philosophy (1) To be taken concurrently with PHIL 2035. 1 hr. of tutorial instruction per week for honors students.

PHIL 4786: Special Topics: Deleuze and Guattari  TTh 4:30-6:00  Protevi
Intensive study of Anti-Oedipus and A Thousand Plateaus, with special reference to Nietzschean and Spinozist themes therein.

PHIL 4914: Philosophy of Language  TTh 3:00-4:20  Roland
Prereq.: one logic course or consent of instructor. Also offered as LING 4914.

Our focus will be primarily on theories of reference.

PHIL 4940: Aesthetics  MWF 11:30-12:20  Schufreider
A study of the development of German aesthetics from Kant to Heidegger.
PHIL 4952: Topics in Metaphysics  
TTh 12:00-1:20  Cogburn

We will focus on the object-oriented ontology of Graham Harman, evaluating it in light of classic and contemporary debates in analytic metaphysics and the philosophy of art.

PHIL 7910: Seminar in Value Theory: Virtue Ethics  
MW 3:00-4:20  Sarkar

With the publication in January 1958 of G. E. M. Anscombe’s “Modern Moral Philosophy,” virtue ethics arose from the ashes. In sixty plus years following, virtue ethics has become one of the most powerful ethical doctrines to challenge the hegemony of deontology and consequentialism. In the beginning, there was Philippa Foot. Then two remarkable philosophers – Julia Annas and Rosalind Hursthouse – took over, dominated, and enriched this tradition. They proposed novel, intriguing answers to old, familiar questions, such as, ‘What is a right action?’ ‘Are there virtue rules (so-called v-rules)?’ ‘Is there a unity among virtues?’ ‘Can virtue be taught?’ ‘Who is a virtuous person, a moral exemplar?’ ‘How, if at all, is virtue related to happiness?’ ‘What is a moral conflict and how is it to be distinguished from a moral dilemma, and how should these be resolved?’ ‘What is naturalism and how, exactly, does the doctrine of virtue ethics dovetail with it to produce ethical naturalism?’ ‘What is the role of reason in virtue ethics?’ and, last but, assuredly, not the least, ‘What is moral nihilism and can virtue ethics offer us an exit from it?’ The last issue, of course, is profoundly connected to the question, ‘What is the meaning of life?’

This course will examine, in meticulous detail, the respective virtue ethical systems of Annas and Hursthouse. I shall argue that the very core of virtue ethics – exemplified in the works of these two philosophers (with an occasional nod and glance at Foot) – is, quite simply, untenable.

Required Textbooks


Course outside the Philosophy department

WGS TBA  
TBA  Goldgaber