Department of Philosophy

Spring 2026 Undergraduate Course Descriptions

101 Logic, Reasoning, & Persuasion

Kalef, sections 01, 02

A central aim of philosophical training is to help students develop habits of mind that will allow them to form reasonable beliefs, and to have just as much confidence in them as is warranted. Unfortunately, even many intelligent people tend to accept or reject beliefs on the basis of whether their peers agree with them, often after having heard only one side of the issue. They then use their intelligence to come up with rationalizations for whatever they've already chosen to believe, rather than patiently and fairly trying to discover the truth. In this course, I will aim to teach you good habits of mind that will allow you to form reasonable conclusions – and to understand when you do not have enough support to reach any strong conclusion – on the issues of today and tomorrow. By the end of the course, you will probably discover that you know fewer things than you now think you do – but you will be wiser for knowing that.

Hutchens, section 04

This course is a general introduction to the basic mechanics of critical thinking, understood to mean the systematic evaluation and formulation of beliefs by rational standards. We will learn about the important roles critical thinking plays in formulating viable study habits and in evaluating problems one encounters outside the classroom. We will master an understanding of deductions, in respect of their soundness and validity, as well as inductions, in terms of their cogency, strength and general role in empirical experience and scientific experimentation. Some time will be spent addressing the difference between formal and informal fallacies.

A great deal of the semester will be spent working with propositional logic (translation, truth tabling, and enthymemes) and categorical logic (translation, squares of opposition, Venn diagramming).

Derstine, section 05, 06

Development of skills in reasoning. Consideration of what an argument is, how arguments go wrong, and what makes an argument valid. Application of techniques for clarifying meaning; evaluating and constructing arguments.

Skolits, section 90

This course aims to make you a more virtuous thinker. Toward this end, you shall learn the basics of formal logic and informal fallacies, how to identify and develop the intellectual virtues (open-mindedness, intellectual fairness, etc.), and finally, how to evaluate arguments encountered in academic philosophy and in everyday life.

TBD, section 91

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103 Introduction to Philosophy

Piven, section 01

Phil 103: Introduction to Philosophy

For herein is the evil of ignorance,
that he who is neither good nor wise is nevertheless satisfied with himself: he has no desire for that of which he feels no want.

Know thyself!

-Plato

Philosophy is the love of wisdom. Over the eons great minds have contemplated the nature of the soul, the genesis of good and evil, the existence of God, the workings of the universe, and the way we perceive reality. How does one know good from evil? Are we really social animals? Can one prove or disprove the existence of God? Is there a soul distinct from the body? Does one truly have free will? This course introduces students to some of the great ideas in world philosophy, exploring the metaphysics and ethics of the Greeks, the skepticism of Descartes, the transcendental philosophy of Kant, the atheism of Nietzsche, and the existentialism of Sartre.

Baldino, section 02

Philosophy begins in a sense of wonder – a wonder about the very world itself and our own conspicuous existence in it. This class is an introduction to the field of inquiry that arises out of this sense of wonder, and it is an invitation to the student to convert that sense of wonder into specific questions and ways of addressing those questions.

The questions we will consider focus on the possibility of truth and value, the existence of God, ethics, metaphysics, epistemology, and theory of mind. Questions like*: How is knowledge possible and what justifies our beliefs? Is there a God? Do we have free will? What is the nature of the mind and how does it differ from matter? How should we treat one another, what is of value, and how should we live our lives?* The ways of addressing these questions will be through reading original works of philosophy, discussing openly and impartially these works with one another, critically examining the ideas presented, and (if all goes well) developing our own thoughts about the issues under discussion.

This introduction to philosophy will have been a success if, by the end of the course, you are able to think of yourself as a philosopher – as someone open to thinking philosophically and about philosophical questions, and connecting ideas from philosophy to the things you encounter, experience, think about, and hope for in your everyday life.

Hutchens, section 03, 04

This course will survey some basic areas of philosophy: metaphysics, especially ancient Greek thought from the pre-Socratics to Aristotle; epistemology, mainly Descartes through Kant; and ethics, with a focus on virtue and normative ethics, including deontology and consequentialism.

Arana Segura, section 05

Examination of fundamental philosophical issues such as the meaning and basis of moral judgments, free will and determinism, theism and atheism, knowledge and skepticism, and consciousness and the brain. Note: This course is a three-credit course certified to satisfy Core Curriculum goal AHo, but NOT certified for writing goals WCd and WCr. (Philosophy 104 is a four-credit writing intensive course certified for writing goals.)

Woodward, section 06

Examination of fundamental philosophical issues such as the meaning and basis of moral judgments, free will and determinism, theism and atheism, knowledge and skepticism, and

consciousness and the brain. Note: This course is a three-credit course certified to satisfy Core Curriculum goal AHo, but NOT certified for writing goals WCd and WCr. (Philosophy 104 is a four-credit writing intensive course certified for writing goals.)

Kaspar, section 07

Philosophy examines the most general features of reality. But what is reality? Can we know reality? And what exactly are we? More directly, what is a human person? This course introduces students to ways of addressing these perennial human questions. Our focus in this course is on the philosophical issues that are most pressing for you: What kind of being are you? How do you fit into the vast scheme of things? Our guides through these difficult and perplexing matters are some of the greatest philosophers in Western thought: Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, and Locke.

Rotolo, section 90

This course introduces the major topics, problems, and methods of philosophy and surveys the writings of major historical figures in the field. Topics of discussion include the nature of philosophy; the nature and limits of human knowledge; the scope and limits of human freedom; the differences between right and wrong conduct; the nature of the good life; and the meaning and value of human existence.

105 Current Moral & Social Issues

Fonth, section 01

In this course, we will critically examine several contemporary issues in moral and social philosophy. Towards that end, we will investigate issues in reproductive, racial, and AI ethics. Some questions we will consider are: Is abortion immoral? Can institutions be racist? Is AI-generated art morally problematic? We will also examine the nature of social construction more broadly, making sense of what it means to say that a group or category is socially constructed as well as investigating whether the social world is as real as the natural world.

Sartorio, section 02

This class covers classical problems in moral philosophy as well as moral and social issues that are of particular interest to today's college students. The main goal is to help you think more clearly and reflectively about these issues, and most of the readings are by contemporary philosophers. We will discuss a sample of specific topics in applied ethics such as our obligations to others, the ethics of abortion, environmental ethics, the ethics of new technologies, and well-being and the meaning of life.

McCrossin, section 03

Overview:

How we think is not just mildly interesting, not just a subject of intellectual debate, but a matter of life and death. — Howard Zinn, Declarations of Independence According to the Course Catalog, we are to "[a]ppl[y] of moral theory to selected contemporary issues[, …] includ[ing] abortion, infanticide, euthanasia, punishment, equality, sexism, racism, affirmative action, privacy, obligations to the world's needy, treatment of animals, drug use, and the meaning of life." One strategic approach would to develop or simply adopt this or that moral theory, or array of moral theories, and then apply it to the issues at hand. In an effort to resist losing the forest for the trees, however, one might instead focus more immediately on the issue at hand, with only the most basic commonsense "moral theory," as, for example, the variety of moral virtues we have at our disposal in managing our common challenge, which is to balance individual rights and the common good, not only lawfully, but with morally-grounded lawfulness? In this spirit, we will imagine ourselves as, "Current Social as Moral Issues."

We want to resist four additional pitfalls as well. It is not uncommon, on the one hand, to conflate the question of what is or isn't moral with the question of what is or is not legal, hindering us in both arenas. Even once we distinguish them, on the other hand, we may still forget that we strive to resolve moral issues in order to resolve legal ones, in that order. In addition, even once we recognize this, we may still address moral issues in isolation, one by one, rather than as coalescing helpfully into overlapping arcs. Finally, even if we resist all of this, we may still neglect the richness of popular culture, as it addresses, deliberately or otherwise, with varying degrees of subtlety, a wide variety of moral issues.

This is the landscape we will explore, hope to clarify, in as cooperative, conversational a way as possible. In addition to anticipating being actively involved in a semester-long conversation, participants should anticipate periodic writing.

Sorensen, section 90

Application of moral theory to selected contemporary issues. Possible topics include abortion, infanticide, euthanasia, punishment, equality, sexism, racism, affirmative action, privacy, obligations to the world's needy, treatment of animals, drug use, and the meaning of life.

107 Introduction to Ethics

Piven, section 01

Ethics is the attempt to understand moral concepts and justify moral principles. What should I do? How do I determine what's right and wrong? Is moral good in the intention or the consequence of my actions? Everyone disagrees on what people should do. Is it all personal opinion? Cultural values? Is it all relative? Should I question what I've been told? In this course we'll survey readings in ethics and moral philosophy to understand different perspectives on how moral decisions can be made. We'll investigate such topics as virtue ethics, deontology, constructivism, objectivism, relativism, consequentialism, free will, and determinism.

Kaspar, section 02

Ethics is the study of human conduct. Its aim is not to study how humans actually conduct themselves. Instead it studies how humans ought to act. Modern ethics focuses on how we ought to morally act. In this course we'll study prominent modern moral theories, as well as contemporary moral issues such as abortion and poverty. Near the end of the semester we'll discuss how to bring whole-life issues into moral inquiry. Lastly, we'll examine a set of difficult contemporary moral cases and use all of our ethics tools to solve them.

Goldman, section 03

What's the right thing to do? What makes an action right or wrong? And why think there really is any right or wrong, anyway? In this course we'll look at some of the most important and interesting philosophical attempts to answer these questions. The philosophers we will read answer these questions very differently.

You might notice that these three questions are quite different. The first is a question about what moral principles we should in fact follow; the other two are questions about the status or grounding of those moral principles. The first seems more immediately and practically relevant: you might walk out the door and, right away, apply one of the moral principles we learn in class.

I hope to convince you that the second and third questions are of equal practical importance: it matters whether morality has a good foundation or not, and it matters what that foundation is.

TBD, section 90

Exploration of basic issues in ethical theory and metaethics. Topics may include consequentialism, deontology, virtue theory, constructivism, value relativism, the objectivity of values, value skepticism, free will, and the nature of the values and practical reasons.

109 Introduction to Formal Reasoning & Decision Making

Bialek, section 01, 02

Resolving differences of opinion isn't always impossible. Figuring out what you should believe isn't just a matter of checking what's true. Deciding what you should do doesn't have to be left up to your whim. Formal tools have been (and continue to be) developed that enable us to talk very precisely about the strength of arguments and of evidence, the rationality of beliefs we have, and the value of choices we make. This course will introduce students to some of those formal tools—specifically: logic, probability, and decision theory—focusing on their application, but also looking at the limits to their application and their potential for expansion and sophistication. Assessment in the course will be based on a mixture of exams, reading/discussion assignments, and quizzes.

Comesana, section 03

This course will introduce students to some of the formal tools used to model reasoning and decision making. We will cover the basics of propositional logic and probability, and apply them to reasoning and decision making under uncertainty. Emphasis will be placed on foundational and philosophical issues related to these topics.

Burgis, section 91

This course aims to introduce students to the fundamentals of logical, probabilistic, and statistical thinking, and the basic principles of rational decision-making. It will provide basic principles for reasoning their way through the sorts of data & rhetoric encountered daily. Elementary principles of deductive logic & inference; fundamentals of inductive inference, probability, and statistics; and some basic rules for rational decision- making will be discussed & implemented.

150 Special Introductory Topics in Philosophy: Reason, Religion, and the Copernican Revolution

Lange, section 01

The reasoning by which Galileo and his contemporaries defended the Copernican model of the solar system (the "heliocentric" model – that is, with the Earth orbiting the Sun rather than the Sun orbiting the Earth) can puzzle us even today. Here are a few of the questions that we could ask about the reasoning given by Copernicus, Galileo, and their contemporaries.

- Did Copernicus's arguments in 1543 support the heliocentric model strongly enough to justify believing it true?
- Or was it unjustified until Galileo in 1609 amassed telescopic evidence for it?
- Or was it unjustified until even later – when Newtonian physics was developed by 1687? Or did it remain unjustified until even later – when various mechanical and optical discoveries were made in the nineteenth century?
- Was the Catholic Church justified at the time of Galileo in regarding Copernicus's theory as just one among many fairly successful techniques for predicting the night sky's appearance? Did Galileo bring his sentence of hersy (at his famous – and notorious – trial) on himself?
- Could Galileo argue persuasively for his telescope's reliability?
- Could Galileo use mere "thought-experiments" (as opposed to actual experiments) to defend Copernicanism?

In this course, we will grapple with these and related questions in order to arrive at a more nuanced understanding of the logic by which scientific theories in general are tested and, ultimately, justified. We will also try to use this historical episode to understand better how political, social, and cultural factors can influence the reception of a scientific theory – even today! We will learn some of the means by which the biases and presuppositions introduced by these factors were overcome (eventually) in the Copernican Revolution, and we will apply some of these lessons to current science.

Why study this: Copernicus's theory was one of the earliest examples (perhaps the earliest) of science overturning "common sense" (that the Earth is at rest and the Sun rises and sets). Everyone should understand how such a thing can happen and, more generally, how scientific theories get supported by evidence and argument. As we all know these days, citizens in a democracy need to be familiar enough with the nature of scientific reasoning to be educated consumers of scientific results—and to be able to evaluate arguments that aim to question those results. The Copernican Revolution and the Trial of Galileo remain cultural touchstones that all educated people should understand.

201 Introduction to Logic

Baldino, section 01

Logic is considered a branch of philosophy because it is part of the essence of philosophy that we try to ensure that the conclusions we draw follow from the premises we give. Logic functions in a similar way in mathematics, where the premises we state are mathematical assumptions and the conclusions we draw are theorems, and in computer science, where the premises are about states of computational systems and the conclusions are the consequences of such states. In fact, ensuring that conclusions follow from assumptions or premises is essential to all reasoning, whether in an academic setting or in everyday life.

In this introduction to logic, we will focus on describing a language for formally representing assumptions and conclusions and on determining whether the arguments constructed with these formally represented propositions are examples of acceptable reasoning. By doing so, we will be developing tools that will be of use in all our activities as rational agents.

Kalkus, section 02

Introduction to formal logic, covering truth, functional propositional logic, and quantification theory. Emphasis on developing symbolic techniques for representing and evaluating arguments.

Skiles, section 03

This course will introduce you to the basics of modern formal deductive logic and some of its applications to everyday reasoning, to philosophy, and to the numerous theoretical and practical disciplines that draw upon it (e.g. mathematics, computer science, and linguistics). Topics to be covered include: basic notions in formal logic such as validity, soundness, the logical modalities, ambiguity, and the use vs. mention distinction; truth-functional connectives; using a formal language to represent patterns of deductive reasoning in natural language; the syntax, semantics, and basic metatheory of truth-functional logic and first-order logic; constructing proofs in Fitch-style natural deduction systems; and rudimentary set theory.

Y. Kang, section 04, 05

Introduction to formal logic, covering truth, functional propositional logic, and quantification theory. Emphasis on developing symbolic techniques for representing and evaluating arguments.

Caouette, section 90

Introduction to formal logic, covering truth, functional propositional logic, and quantification theory. Emphasis on developing symbolic techniques for representing and evaluating arguments.

210 Introduction to Philosophy of Language

Pietroski, section 01

Course Description
What is a language? Is English *a* language, or is there a family of English languages? Why are children so good at acquiring languages like English, Japanese, and ASL? Do other animals—perhaps even bees—have languages of their own? Do languages have to be used for communication? Are there languages of thought? What are words, sentences, and meanings? How do we know what sentences mean (and what they don't mean), even if we haven't previously heard or read them? How can we use language to convey information, ask questions, make requests, tell jokes, and so on? How is it possible to communicate "indirectly", as when we speak sarcastically, or criticize by using "faint praise"? What's a metaphor? Unsurprisingly, the course will not provide definitive answers. But one goal is to provide an introduction to the topic and some relevant literature, in a way that will help you understand the questions well enough to appreciate some potential answers that have been offered—and then pursue the issues further if you are so inclined. Another goal is to focus on what some philosophers have said about language as a case study of how the intellectual tools of philosophy can be useful in the study of human nature, while recognizing that an interdisciplinary toolkit is required.

220 Theory of Knowledge

Hoskins, section 01

What is knowledge? What separates knowledge from mere opinion, or even from true belief? What does it mean to be justified in believing something? These are just a few of a host of problems that have framed the study of knowledge – or "epistemology" – at least since Classical Antiquity. This course will provide a broad survey of several key topics in epistemology, both offering a historical foundation for the study of knowledge through thinkers like Plato, Descartes, and Hume, as well as introducing essential topics in contemporary epistemology such as the Gettier Problem, theories of justification, skepticism, testimonial knowledge, and selected issues in social epistemology.

225 Introduction to the Philosophy of Science

Lange, section 01

The discoveries that natural scientists make and the methods by which they make them raise a host of interesting philosophical questions, some of which we will explore in this course. These questions include:

· Are natural scientific theories distinguished from pseudoscience by being testable against our observations? If so, how is this distinction to be drawn explicitly?

· By what logic do our observations of the natural world support or disconfirm various scientific theories? Can we prove our best scientific theories to be true? Or are they "merely theories"? (Or is this a false choice?)

· Are we justified in making predictions about the future on the basis of observations drawn exclusively from the past? If so, how and why?

· What does it mean for one event (for instance, the collision of the Earth with some large rocky body millions of years ago) to be responsible for causing the occurrence of another event (such as the extinction of the dinosaurs) and for explaining why it occurred?

· What difference does it make that a given regular pattern that we might notice (such as the fact that every piece of copper is electrically conductive) is not a giant coincidence, but instead is a law of nature?

· Do the revolutions in natural scientific thought that have occasionally occurred (such as the Copernican Revolution in astronomy) amount to rational and inevitable responses to overwhelming evidence concerning the natural world? If not, were they nevertheless reasonable changes in scientific opinion?

We will look at these and other questions, settling a few of them and trying to make some progress on the others.

Why study this: Philosophical questions about what science discovers and how science makes those discoveries are fascinating in themselves. They are also important because science is one of humanity's great achievements—and because in a democracy, citizens need to be familiar enough with the nature of science to be educated consumers of scientific results—and to be able to evaluate arguments that aim to question those results.

249 Bioethics

Derstine, section 01

Exploration of moral issues in medicine and medical research. Course will typically focus on issues raised by the creation and termination of life and include topics such as abortion, stem cell research, cloning, prenatal screening for disability, right to medical care, human experimentation, genetic enhancement and eugenics, animal experimentation, the diagnosis of death, and euthanasia. May require some thinking about issues in metaphysics, such as the nature of personal identity.

253 Human Nature & Diversity

Quilty-Dunn, sections 01- 08

We are so alike and yet so different from each other. This course will explore the push-and-pull between the idea that there is an invariant human nature that binds us together and the idea that diversity distinguishes us and presents a challenge to simplistic, unified theories of our species. We will read widely on the nature of topics such as: evolution, culture, perception, belief, development, bias, consciousness, religion, and race. All these topics will be explored from a scientifically informed philosophical perspective. We will have frequent visits from world-class researchers, mostly over Zoom, who will share their cutting-edge work on these topics with us.

263 Philosophy & the Arts

Karlsson, section 01

This course explores philosophical questions about a wide range of art forms, including painting, literature, film, and music. These questions are clustered around three core themes. The first theme concerns the **nature of art** and includes questions about art in general as well as about particular kinds of art. Do all works of art share some common feature that makes them count as art? How do purely instrumental musical works express emotion, if they do? How can we explain the distinction between fact and fiction? The second theme focuses on **art criticism** – how we evaluate and interpret works of art. Does an artwork's originality make it better? And should we consider the author's intentions when interpreting the meaning of their work? The third theme examines the relationship between **art and morality.** Does engaging with art make us morally better or worse people? Can morally flawed artists produce great art? And what, if anything, is wrong with artistic forgery?

The aim of the course is not only to think about these philosophical questions, but also to think *philosophically* about them. To this end, we will practice using general philosophical tools and concepts that enable us to think clearly and critically about these issues.

302 Plato & Aristotle

Skiles, section 01

This course introduces some of the main elements in the thought of Plato and Aristotle, perhaps the two most influential philosophers in the Western tradition. The goal of the course is twofold. One goal is to compare, contrast, and critically evaluate their views on some core topics in metaphysics, epistemology, the philosophy of mind and language, the philosophy of religion, and normative theory. The other goal is to understand how their views continue to influence Western philosophy in profound ways up through the present day.

308 Hume, Kant, & the 18th Century

Sharpe, section 01

The Early Modern philosophical project within Western philosophy culminates in the 18th century, as thinkers like Bishop George Berkeley, David Hume, Immanuel Kant, and Mary Shepherd (and others) capitalize on and undermine fundamental insights about the world—and what we can know about it—that began surfacing in the 1600's. In this course we will look at key philosophical texts from these thinkers (and maybe a few others besides) on topics like: what we know, how we think, the nature of causation, and the value of philosophy itself. This course is reading-intensive and emphasizes philosophical writing, so you will be expected to write regularly and well.

315 Applied Symbolic Logic

Sider, section 01

To be able to understand contemporary philosophy, it helps to be "logically literate": to be fluent in various logical languages, and to understand what logic is all about. In this course we will study the basic techniques of logic, including syntax, semantics, proof theory, and metalogic; we will discuss some philosophy of logic; and we will study a number of logical languages, including some that go beyond intro logic and which are important in philosophy, such as three-valued logic, modal logic, and counterfactuals.

329 Minds, Machines, & Persons

Maurer, section 01

In this course we will explore a host of philosophical issues concerning the nature of minds and persons and their relation to machines. We will begin by looking at competing theories in the philosophy of mind—theories that attempt to explain, for example, what consciousness is and how it fits into our physical world. We will then consider the possibility of machine consciousness, asking what it would take—and what it would mean—for an artificially constructed machine to be capable not only of problem solving and intelligent behavior, but *experiencing*. From there we will move on to a discussion of the nature of personhood, which will lead us into a consideration of some pressing moral issues relating to artificially intelligent machines.

Sorensen, section 02, 04

In this course, we will study and discuss competing philosophical theories about the nature of the human mind and the possibility of creating machines that are intelligent. We will also consider the ethical implications of creating machines with minds like ours. The course will be broken into three sections. The first section will focus on philosophy of mind, the second on the foundations of cognitive science and artificial intelligence research, and in the third section, we will discuss the philosophical and ethical issues surrounding the possibility of mind uploading and robot rights.

Lennon, section 03

This course will introduce students to basic issues in the philosophy of mind, with a particular focus on whether machines might ever be said to have minds. We'll introduce the mind-body problem, and the two 'marks of the mental', intentionality and consciousness. We'll then look at a particularly promising theory of intentionality which says that cognition is a matter of computation. We'll then consider recent proposals that some artificial intelligence (AI) systems, large language models, have both folk psychological states, like beliefs and desires, and consciousness. Finally, we'll consider whether we might one day have moral duties to AI systems in light of their supposed mentality.

Rotolo, section 05

Throughout history, metaphors drawn from technology have been proposed to understand how the mind works. Locke likened the newborn's mind to a blank slate, Freud compared the mind to

hydraulic and electro-magnetic systems; more recently, Turing's proposed that the mind is a computer. Why is this idea attractive? Why do we keep on comparing technological artifacts to our minds? Is it at all plausible that the cells of your brain work like an inorganic machinic being? Could a machine ever really have a mind, beliefs, emotions and conscious experiences? And what are these mysterious things anyway? Could a machine ever count as a person and make choices based on its own free will? What does it even mean to be a person? These are the main themes that we will explore during the semester.

Perrine, section 06

A thousand years ago machines were clunky and inelegant, composed of pounded metal and wood. The differences between what a machine and a person could do was bright as day. No longer. The last few decades have seen massive developments in machines, thanks in no small part due to computers. Modern machines are not only ubiquitous in modern society, but necessary to successfully navigate it. Further, modern machines—in the form of computers and generative AI—can produce works of art that rival trained human persons. The line between person and machine has become blurred. In this course, we'll examine these issues in three parts. In the first part, we'll explore ways in which human persons are similar to machines. In the second part, we'll explore ways in which machines—specifically, computers and AI—are similar to persons. And in the third, we'll explore the ethical significance of the blurring of the line between person and machine.

Felder, section 90

In this class, we will explore the range of ideas implicit in the following questions. What are the essential features of the mental? What is the relationship between mental states and physical ("brain") states? Between mind and behavioral and more general causal patterns? What conditions need to be satisfied in order to justify the attribution of thought, belief, consciousness, and personhood to something? What does it mean for something to realize a computational process, and is the classification of something as a machine or exclusively computational process consistent with its identification as a mind or person? Under what conditions, and to what extent, can the artificer determine the properties of her artifact? What characteristics constitute personal identity, specifically, what does it mean to be the same person over time? What if any robust conceptions of Free Will are compatible with a comprehensively "mechanistic" account of the world?

King, sections 91, 92

Comparison of the nature of the human mind and that of complex machines. Consequences for questions about the personhood of robots.

341 Ethics Through History

Sharpe, section 01

Over the centuries, different human groups have thought about their obligations in different ways. Different thinkers within those groups have understood our moral and social obligations to each other through various extraordinarily different lenses. This course takes up those different perspectives and seeks to understand the underlying moral thinking behind each of them, probing their similarities and their differences. This course usually examines philosophers from: ancient Greece and Rome, antiquity on the Indian subcontinent, classical China, feudal Japan, and modern Europe. This course is reading-intensive and centers philosophical writing, so you will be expected to write regularly and well.

345 Philosophy & the Law

Walen, section 01

This course examines normative problems in law. Topics change from semester to semester, but the course focuses on philosophically interesting questions about substantive areas of the law, and it asks the two-part question: (1) How should we understand these topics? And (2) how well does the law track our best understanding? A course like this could focus on issues in torts, property law, contract law, etc. But my particular area of interest is in the criminal law, and so we will focus on the substantive issues that sit at the core of criminal law, including the justification for punishment, the nature of excuses, the significance of mens rea, and the interplay of societal injustice with the legitimacy of the law.

347 Philosophical Issues in Feminism

Piven, section 01

This course will be exploring the philosophy and fiction of Simone de Beauvoir, one of the 20th centuries most audacious and innovative thinkers. Playwright Lorraine Hansberry wrote that Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* "may well be the most important work of this century." Beauvoir's work is an expansive analysis of culture, history, myth, and religion, offering incendiary psychological interpretations of the unacknowledged fears and desires driving the caustic diminution, coercion, and brutalization of women through the millennia. Beauvoir also contributed incisive work on the existential philosophy of ideologies and social movements, delving into the motivation to immerse oneself in groups and relinquish personal autonomy. Finally, Beauvoir's fiction depicted the existential struggles with freedom, authenticity, deception, death, and loss. This course engages students with close readings of her philosophical

and literary texts, and explores how they continue to offer radical insight into the social and political crises of the contemporary world.

348 Topics in Medical Ethics: Medical Ethics and Health Policy

Barchi, section 01

Students will examine the origins of contemporary research ethics, discuss paradigm studies that contributed to modern day rules and regulations, and participate in case-based discussions of more than thirty real and fictional cases with their peers. Particular attention is given to ethical issues arising in research involving vulnerable populations and research in international settings.

359 Art & the Mind Brain

Jenkin, section 01

How does the human mind experience, interpret, and understand art? This course investigates these questions from the perspectives of philosophy and cognitive science. These questions have long been studied in philosophy, but recent growth in the cognitive science of art gives us new tools for deepening and refining our answers. Studying the ways our minds respond to art also sheds light on the fundamental workings of the mind and brain. This course considers questions such as: What is aesthetic experience? Why do different observers see the same work of art differently? What determines our enjoyment of art? Can art help cultivate our emotions? What qualifies a good critic? How should we adjudicate aesthetic disagreements? We will discuss these questions in the context of various art forms, including modern art, horror films, tragic literature, street art, breakup songs, and more.

367 American Philosophy

McCrossin, section 01

Overview:

*Why should not we also enjoy an original relation to the universe? Why should not we have a poetry and philosophy of insight and not of tradition, and a religion by revelation to us, and not the history of their*s? — Emerson, Nature According to the Course Catalog, ours is a "[s]tudy[,] in its historical setting[,] of inquiry into the nature of experience, truth, goodness, and society by American philosophers including [the lkes of] James, Peirce, Dewey, Royce, Lewis, and Whitehead."

In the process, we will want to distinguish "American Philosophy" from "Philosophy in America," historically and philosophically. The latter begins in colonial times, unsurprisingly, and persists throughout the eighteenth century as a provocative, but nonetheless not overly distant variant of British and European philosophies—what is sometimes referred to as the "Enlightenment in America." This changes early in the nineteenth century, when the former begins in earnest, with the advent of American Transcendentalism, succeeded toward the middle

of the century, bringing American Philosophy all the more distinctly into view, by Pragmatism, now dubbed Classical Pragmatism, as distinguished from its twentieth-century counterpart, Neo-Pragmatism. We will work together to develop a systematic sense of this trajectory, and an answer, however provisional, to a nagging question: Has American Philosophy, having arisen in reaction to Philosophy in America, returned to its less distinctive origins, and if so, does this matter?

In addition to active participation, participants should anticipate periodic writing.

372 The God Debate

Leftow, section 01

Is there a God? No question in philosophy is bigger. Phil 265 introduces the basics of the debate over this, but much that is significantly new and genuinely important has been published over the last few decades. This course will introduce students to this work, bringing their understanding of the debate right up to the present.

397 Junior Advanced Seminar

Sharpe, section 01

An intensive course reserved for the majors and minors in the department who have shown talent for philosophy, the purpose of this course is to demonstrate what original philosophical research is, how it is done, and how to succeed at it. This involves consuming philosophy both by reading it and by observing presentations by working philosophers. It involves producing philosophy by writing it and presenting it to others. Finally, it involves assessing philosophy, both by reflecting on the value and consequence of individual works and also through critical reflection on the practices involved in academic philosophy more generally. The course is meant to prepare students for further, subsequent philosophical research in, e.g., a senior thesis, though it is valuable for any student wishing to engage in original philosophical thinking. Admission is at the permission of the instructor.

405 Kant

McCrossin, section 01

Overview:

Two things fill the mind with ever new and increasing admiration and awe, the more often and steadily we reflect on them: the starry heavens above and the moral law within. — Kant, Critique of Practical Reason According to the Course Catalog, we're to engage in a "[c]ritical examination of Kant's Critique of Pure Reason; emphasis on metaphysical and epistemological views." In light of the course's considerably broader title, we will take the liberty of adopting a more expansive mandate, in recognition of the fact that there is considerably more to this admittedly watershed book than its metaphysics and epistemology, and considerably more to Kant's work generally, which includes equally watershed perspectives regarding, for example, the nature of morality, politics, history, and religion.

In addition to active participation, participants should anticipate periodic writing.

413 Social Epistemology

Egan, section 01

One respect in which epistemology – the study of knowledge – is social is that a lot of our knowledge is the result of social processes. Most obviously, we get a lot – really, really a lot – of our beliefs (and therefore of our knowledge) from *testimony*. Very, very many of our beliefs are formed on the basis of reading things, hearing things, asking people questions about things, doing google searches for things, etc. Some of those beliefs – hopefully a large proportion of them - count as knowledge. One question we'll look at is: how do people gain knowledge from testimony? How does rational belief formation on the basis of testimony work? Another respect in which epistemology is social is that a lot of the infrastructure that supports our knowledge is social: Scientific research, for example, is a collective, social endeavor. We'll also look at questions here, about what kinds of social arrangements make for effective production and dissemination of knowledge. This will lead us to some questions about *epistemic injustice* – different kinds of social arrangements might advantage and disadvantage particular people or groups in distinctively epistemic ways, and also to questions around the nature and origin of political polarization, echo chambers, and the fragmentation of epistemic communities, in which different groups within a society diverge radically in their beliefs in both politically and epistemically troublemaking ways.

415 Metaphysics

Schaffer, section 01

We will discuss central metaphysical questions about the nature of objects, properties, times, and possibilities, and about the prospects for metaphysical inquiry itself.

418 Philosophy of Mind

McLaughlin, section 01

The class will focus on the hard problem of consciousness, arguably the most difficult part of the many-faceted mind-body problem. Broadly speaking, the hard problem is the problem of locating the place of subjective experiences in the natural world. Subjective experiences are experiences such that it is like something, from a first-person point of view, to have them. Subjective experiences include sensory experiences (visual experiences, auditory experiences, olfactory experiences, and so on), bodily sensations (aches, pains, itches, tickles, etc.), mental imagery (visual, auditory, etc.), emotional feelings (feeling anger, fear, etc.), and cognitive feelings (feelings of familiarity and of unfamiliarity, of understanding and of not understanding, of trust and of mistrust, to name a few.). Some neuroscientists are engaged in the project of finding the neural substrates of our subjective experiences. The hard problem of consciousness would remain, however, even if they succeed; for we would still have to explain why there are the correlations in question. Thus, suppose neuro-scientists discover a system of strict correlations between certain neuro-scientific states and the types of subjective experiences we humans have, a system that entails, for each type of human subjective experience E, that there is some type of neuroscientific state N such that a human being has a E if and only if the human being is in N. The question would remain: Why are instances of N accompanied by instances of E, rather than some other type of subjective experience E*, or by no subjective experience at all? The would-be answers include: (1) because instances of N are necessary and sufficient causes of instances of E (at least in humans); (2) because N constitutes E; (3) because N realizes E (perhaps relative to an environment); (4) because E ontologically emerges from N; (5) because N is related to E as determinant to determinable; and (5) because N is identical with E. These would-be answers are pairwise incompatible: No two of them can be correct. Each faces formidable challenges. We'll try to determine which answer is the most plausible.

426 Philosophy of Physics

North, section 01

There is no question that quantum mechanics is empirically successful. What the theory says about the world, however, remains controversial. In this course we will look at several different theories of quantum mechanics and examine a range of philosophical issues that arise for them, in a way that does not presuppose any background in the physics. In the first few weeks, we will review the basic formalism and postulates of the standard theory, and then we will turn to alternatives. Topics include: the measurement problem; entanglement and nonlocality; the fundamental physical ontology of different theories; the ontological status of the wavefunction; the nature of probability; the compatibility of quantum mechanics with relativity; the direction of time; scientific realism.

445 Topics in Social and Political Philosophy: Libertarianism, liberalism and egalitarianism

Otsuka, section 01

A close reading and critical scrutiny of some contemporary and historical classics in political philosophy which are also extraordinary works of philosophy. The main themes will encompass libertarian versus liberal egalitarian perspectives on the justice of inequalities in wealth, income and opportunities and the limits of legitimate political authority. Key texts will include Nozick's *Anarchy, State and Utopia*, Locke's *Second Treatise of Government*, Mill's *On Liberty*, Rawls's *Justice as Fairness*, and work on equality and priority for the worse off by Dworkin, Cohen, Anderson, Frankfurt, and Parfit. Writings by the course instructor will also be considered. We will ponder most if not all of the following questions: Is it justifiable to violate to rights of some to prevent the violation of the rights of others? Is redistributive taxation of earnings from labor on a par with forced labor? Does equality conflict with one's ownership of oneself? Is private property in land justified? Are people entitled to reparations for injustices committed against their ancestors? Should laws lapse every twenty years, to prevent the dead from ruling the living? Is it more important to benefit someone, the less well-off that person is? May the state prohibit an activity only on the grounds that it is harmful to others, and not on the grounds that it is offensive to others, or morally wicked, or harmful to oneself? Are principles of justice those that would be endorsed under fair conditions in which people are deprived of knowledge of whether they are rich or poor, talented or unskilled? What sort of equality of opportunity for jobs and university places does justice require? Are inequalities justified only insofar as they maximally benefit the least well off?