To engage in philosophy is to ask a variety of questions about the world and our place in it—questions that we confront in our everyday lives or that underlie our ordinary practices. What is a good, meaningful, or happy human life (ethics and politics)? What do we owe non-human species and future generations (applied ethics/practical philosophy)? Does god exist? (metaphysics)? What can we know, and what makes a belief or statement true (epistemology)? Are there objective standards for judging works of art? Thus, philosophers also address questions relevant to many disciplines.

The program in philosophy is designed to aid students in thinking about such questions, by acquainting them with influential work in the field, past and present, and by giving them tools to grapple with these issues themselves. The program emphasizes training in clear, critical thinking and in effective writing. Most of our courses are offered as small seminars or tutorials in which students have multiple opportunities to develop skills in reasoning and writing interpretive and critical essays.

MAJOR

The Philosophy major consists of nine semester courses: three required courses and six electives. The required courses are: any 100-level philosophy course, Philosophy 201 (History of Ancient Greek Philosophy) or Philosophy 202 (History of Modern Philosophy), and Philosophy 401 (Senior Seminar). The six electives are structured by a distribution requirement. Students must take at least one course in each of three areas: Contemporary Metaphysics and Epistemology [M&E], Contemporary Value Theory [V], and History [H]. These requirements apply to majors in the Class of 2018 and after.

Courses taught in other departments at Williams or at other institutions will not count toward the distribution requirement (Williams-Exeter tutorials may count, however, with the approval of the Department Chair). Up to two cross-listed courses taught in other departments may count as electives toward the major. No more than one 100-level course may count toward the major (and one 100-level course is required for the major—no exceptions).

We recommend the following trajectory through the major:

By the end of the first year, take a 100-level philosophy course (this is typically the first step in the major) and one other philosophy course.

By the end of the second year, complete a 100-level philosophy course, Phil 201 or Phil 202, and at least one other philosophy course. (If you will be away for the whole of your junior year, you should complete at least five courses by the end of the second year, preferably six.)

By the end of the junior year, complete a 100-level philosophy course, Phil 201 or Phil 202, and at least four other philosophy courses.

Other recommendations: take at least one tutorial; distribute your six electives evenly across the three distribution baskets; take a logic course; and take both PHIL 201 and PHIL 202.

The Degree with Honors in Philosophy

The degree with honors in Philosophy is awarded to the student who has demonstrated outstanding achievement in a program of study that extends beyond the requirements of the major. The extension beyond major requirements may take the form either of independent work culminating in a senior essay or thesis (the independent-study route) or of additional course work (the directed-study route). Candidates must have GPAs of 3.6 or higher in their courses in philosophy at the end of the junior and senior years. The independent-study route to honors requires the completion and defense of either a senior essay produced in the fall semester plus winter study period (maximum 40 pages) or a year-long senior thesis (maximum 75 pages). Plans for either essay or thesis (including a brief proposal and bibliography, worked out in consultation with an advisor) must be submitted to
the department in mid-March (before spring break) of the junior year. The directed-study route to honors requires the completion of two courses in philosophy in addition to the nine required for the major. Candidates taking this route must also submit to the department revised copies of two term papers (15 pages or longer) written for philosophy courses they have taken. Students should register for a directed study over their senior year winter study and work with an advisor on the paper revisions. A recommendation for graduation with honors will be made on the basis of the thoroughness, independence, and originality of the student's work.

STUDY AWAY

The Williams-Exeter Programme at Oxford (WEPO): the first full Oxford philosophy tutorial will count as the equivalent of two full-semester philosophy courses at Williams; the second full Oxford philosophy tutorial will count as the equivalent of one full-semester philosophy course at Williams, for a total of three Williams philosophy courses. Courses must be pre-approved by the Chair of the Philosophy Department, who will also determine which, if any, courses will count toward the philosophy major distribution requirements.

Courses taken in other Study Away programs: Students may petition the Philosophy Department for credit for philosophy courses taken at their Study Away institution. They should consult with the department Chair before they commit to a program. Final determinations will be made on the basis of the course syllabus and the quality of the student’s written work for the course. Typically, courses taken while studying away will not fulfill distribution requirements for the philosophy major at Williams.

PHILOSOPHY RELATED COURSES

The following courses offered in other departments, while not cross-listed with Philosophy, may be of interest to philosophy students:

ARTH 541 Aesthetics After Evolutionary Biology: Darwin, Nietzsche, Freud
  Taught by: Emmelyn Butterfield-Rosen
  Catalog details
  ENGL 324 / ENVI 323(F) World's End: Literary Ecologies of the Limit
  Taught by: Christopher Pye
  Catalog details
  ENGL 456 / COMP 456 Topics in Critical Theory: Hegel and the Dialectic
  Taught by: Christian Thorne
  Catalog details
  HIST 301 Approaching the Past: Other People's History
  Taught by: Alexander Bevilacqua
  Catalog details
  HIST 331 European Intellectual History from Aquinas to Kant
  Taught by: Alexander Bevilacqua
  Catalog details
  HIST 485 T / PSYC 158(S) Freud: A Tutorial
  Taught by: Thomas Kohut
  Catalog details
  PSCI 203(F, S) Introduction to Political Theory
  Taught by: Mark Reinhardt, Laura Ephraim
  Catalog details
  PSCI 235 / ENVI 235 Survival and Resistance: Environmental Political Theory
  Taught by: TBA
  Catalog details
  PSCI 273 / ENVI 273 / STS 273 Politics without Humans?
  Taught by: Laura Ephraim
  Catalog details
  PSCI 312 T / LEAD 312(S) American Political Thought
  Taught by: Justin Crowe
  Catalog details
  PSCI 334 Theorizing Global Justice
  Taught by: Nimu Njoya
  Catalog details
  PSCI 339 T / JWST 339 Politics in Dark Times: Hannah Arendt
  Taught by: Laura Ephraim
  Catalog details
  REL 238(S) Faith and Rationality in Islam: Skepticism and the Quest for Certainty
  Taught by: Zaid Adhami
  Catalog details
  REL 250 / ASST 250 Scholars, Saints and Immortals: Virtue Ethics in East Asia
  Taught by: Jason Josephson Storm
  Catalog details
  REL 255 / ANTH 255 Buddhism: Ideas and Practices
  Taught by: Georges Dreyfus
PHIL 104 (S) Philosophy and Tragedy

Tragedy and philosophy were two of the finest achievements of classical Athenian civilization, and each attempts to reveal to the reader something fundamental about our shared human condition. The worldview that underlies classical tragedy, however, seems markedly different from the one that we find in classical philosophy. While Plato and Aristotle differ on many points, they share the belief that the cosmos and the human place within it can be understood by rational means. Furthermore, they share the conviction that the most important components of a successful life are within the control of the individual human being. The picture that we find in the works of the tragedians, Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides is markedly different. The tragedians emphasize the ways in which the cosmos and our role in it resists any attempt to be understood, and emphasize the ways in which the success or failure of our lives often turns on things completely beyond our control. The view of the tragedians can lead to a thoroughgoing nihilism according to which --the best thing of all [for a human being] is never to have born--but the next best thing is to die soon (Aristotle's *Eudemus* as quoted in Nietzsche's *Birth of Tragedy*; see also Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus*)." Despite these rather grim pronouncements, tragic drama has continued to fascinate and educate generations. Furthermore, philosophers have continued to revisit the existential questions vividly raised by Greek tragedy. In this course, we will examine a number of Greek tragedies and philosophical writing on tragedy and the tragic. We will read the *Oresteia* and *Prometheus Bound* by Aeschylus, Sophocles' *Theban Cycle*, and the *Hippolytus, Bacchae and Philoctetes* by Euripides. As we read through these plays, we will also examine a number of philosophical works about tragedy. We will begin with Aristotle's *Poetics* and will continue with Hume's *Of Tragedy*, Hegel's various writings on tragedy, and Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy*. If possible, we will arrange to see a live performance of a Greek tragedy.

Requirements/Evaluation: five papers, five responses and a final paper in multiple drafts; each week one student will write a paper responding to the week's readings and the other student will write a response to that paper

Prerequisites: none; this tutorial is an appropriate first course in PHIL

Enrollment Limit: 10

Enrollment Preferences: first-year students

Expected Class Size: 10

Grading: no pass/fail option, no fifth course option

Distributions: (D2)

Not offered current academic year

PHIL 109 (F) Skepticism and Relativism (WS)

Intellectually, we are ready skeptics and relativists. We doubt, we point out that no one can be certain in what she believes, and we are suspicious of declarations of transcendent reason or truth (unless they are our own). Emboldened by our confidence in skeptical arguments, we claim that knowledge is inevitably limited, that it depends on one's perspective, and that everything one believes is relative to context or culture. No domain of inquiry is immune to this destructive skepticism and confident relativism. Science is only "true" for some people, agnosticism is the only alternative to foolish superstition, and moral relativism and, consequently, nihilism are obvious. But is the best conclusion we can come to with respect to our intellectual endeavors that skepticism always carries the day and that nothing at all is true? In this tutorial, we will investigate the nature of skepticism and the varieties of relativism it encourages. Our readings will come primarily from philosophy, but will be supplemented with material from
anthropology, physics, psychology, and linguistics. We will look at relativism with respect to reason and truth in general as well as with respect to science, religion, and morality. Along the way, we will need to come to grips with the following surprising fact. With few exceptions, thoroughgoing skepticism and relativism have not been the prevailing views of the greatest minds in the history of philosophy. Were they simply too unsophisticated and confused to understand what is for us the irresistible power of skepticism and relativism? Or might it be that our skepticism and relativism are the result of our own laziness and failure? Of course, this question cannot really be answered, nor is there any value in trying to answer it, and any "answer" will only be "true" for you. Right?

Class Format: This tutorial will convene remotely via Zoom video according to a fixed weekly schedule agreed upon by the instructor and the two tutorial participants at the beginning of the semester.

Requirements/Evaluation: participants will present substantial written work in the tutorial every other week, and will be responsible for commenting on their tutorial partner's work.

Prerequisites: none; this tutorial is an appropriate first course in PHIL.

Enrollment Limit: 8

Enrollment Preferences: first-year students; there is no need to write to the instructor indicating a special interest in the tutorial. If oversubscribed, students will be selected randomly.

Expected Class Size: 8

Grading: no pass/fail option, no fifth course option

Unit Notes: meets 100-level PHIL major requirement

Distributions: (D2) (WS)

Writing Skills Notes: Students will write a tutorial essay every other week and will receive written feedback on composition and structure. Essays later in the semester will reflect the writing lessons of earlier in the semester.

Fall 2020

TUT Section: RT1 TBA Joseph L. Cruz

PHIL 114 (F) Freedom and Society

Freedom is one of our fundamental values as Americans. It is emphasized in our founding documents, and it occupies a central place in our contemporary political discourse. But do we ask: What is freedom? and Why do we value it? In the first unit of this course, we will consider the relationship between freedom and social order. Do society's laws limit our freedom in order to make us safe? Or do laws somehow enhance or enable our freedom? We will read Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau in seeking answers to these questions. We will then turn to some specific social forms in the second unit. We will ask whether they promote or preclude our freedom. We will read Adam Smith and Karl Marx on capitalism, and Simone de Beauvoir on gender.

Requirements/Evaluation: weekly reading response papers; take-home midterm and final exams

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 19

Enrollment Preferences: first-years and sophomores

Expected Class Size: 19

Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

Unit Notes: meets 100-level PHIL major requirement

Distributions: (D2)

Attributes: JLST Interdepartmental Electives

Not offered current academic year

PHIL 115 (S) Personal Identity (WS)

Through lectures, discussions, close readings and assigned writings, we will consider a variety of philosophical questions about the nature of persons, and personal identity through time. Persons are subjects of experiences, have thoughts and feelings, motivation and agency; a person is thought of as continuous over time, and as related to, recognized and respected by other persons. Thus, the concept of person plays a significant role in most branches of philosophy, e.g. metaphysics, epistemology, moral and political philosophy, philosophy of mind. Conceptions of person are equally
important in science (especially in psychology), law, and the arts. Questions about persons are of central importance for a myriad of our theories and practices, and for the ways in which we live our lives. The aim of this course is to explore and evaluate a number of rival conceptions of persons and personal identity over time. Some of the questions which we will discuss are: What is a person? How do I know that I am one? What constitutes my knowledge of myself as a person, and does that knowledge differ in any significant respect from my knowledge of physical objects and of other people? What makes me the particular person that I am, and how is my identity as this individual person preserved over time? The course will place special emphasis on developing students' intellectual skills in close, analytical reading; reconstructing and evaluating claims and reasons that support them; producing original ideas and arguments, orally and in writing; responding to the claims and arguments presented in texts and in class; and writing clear, polished, well-argued papers.

Class Format: discussion

Requirements/Evaluation: class attendance, preparedness and participation; small group weekly meetings; frequent short writing assignments.

Prerequisites: none; open to first year students

Enrollment Limit: 12

Enrollment Preferences: freshmen, sophomores, and philosophy majors who need a 100 level course to satisfy requirement for the major

Expected Class Size: 12

Grading: no pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

Unit Notes: meets 100-level PHIL major requirement

Distributions: (D2) (WS)

Writing Skills Notes: Students will write eight short papers (800-1000 words each), and revise two of them. All papers will receive detailed comments on substance as well as on writing skills and strategies.

Spring 2021
SEM Section: 01 TBA Bojana Mladenovic

PHIL 116 (S) Perception and Reality (WS)
This course is an introduction to philosophy through four major themes: The nature of the universe, the existence of gods, thought itself, and the mind/body problem. Throughout, we will appeal to reason and evidence in forming our best beliefs. Our discussions will range over historical and contemporary works in the Western tradition.

Requirements/Evaluation: active participation; four (5-6 page) essays

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 19

Enrollment Preferences: first-years and sophomores; there is no need to email the professor in advance to indicate interest in the course

Expected Class Size: 19

Grading: yes pass/fail option, no fifth course option

Unit Notes: meets 100-level PHIL major requirement

Distributions: (D2) (WS)

Writing Skills Notes: Students will craft 4 six page essays, each with extensive comments on structure and composition with an eye toward developing their skills in philosophical writing.

Spring 2021
SEM Section: 01 TBA Joseph L. Cruz

PHIL 119 (S) Justice, Democracy and Freedom: Plato with Footnotes (WS)
This course addresses a central question in both ethics and political philosophy: How should we live? The question has two parts: What is the best life for individuals? And what social and political arrangements make such a life possible? In attempting to answer these questions we also engage related theoretical questions concerning what is real and how we have access to it. We begin with readings from Plato's Republic, a seminal work in the history of philosophy that has exerted a powerful influence on nearly every subsequent attempt to answer these questions in the context of the Western philosophical tradition. After reading from early Platonic dialogues and the Republic, we also consider some of the best of these attempts in
the Western philosophical canon ("footnotes on Plato") and the challenges they present to Plato's conclusions. Our principal focus will be on issues that continue to be of paramount importance in the world today, namely, democracy, justice and the meaning of freedom.

Requirements/Evaluation: eight 2-page response papers based on readings (first three are pass/fail), two five-page papers, and class participation

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 19

Enrollment Preferences: none, open to all students

Expected Class Size: 19

Grading: no pass/fail option, no fifth course option

Unit Notes: meets 100-level PHIL major requirement

Distributions: (D2) (WS)

Writing Skills Notes: Professor will provide detailed comments on short and long writing responses; facilitate peer review of short papers in class; and discuss frequent types of errors, writing in philosophy, writing approach and process, drafting, and the importance of using writing tutors. Handouts will be provided on both informal fallacies and numerous writing tips. Students will be encouraged, but are not required, to make appointments to discuss ideas and drafts.

Attributes: JLST Interdepartmental Electives LEAD Ethical Issues of Leadership

Not offered current academic year

PHIL 121 (F)(S) Truth, Goodness, and Beauty (WS)

In our everyday lives, we routinely assume that our clocks can tell us the truth about what time it is, that committing murder is wrong, and that there are people, landscapes, and works of art that are beautiful. But we are also aware that people can and often do disagree about what is true, what is good or right, and what is beautiful. Should the fact of such disagreement lead us to conclude that truth, goodness, and beauty are in some basic sense relative to human beings, perhaps as individuals, perhaps as members of societies or cultures? Some philosophers defend such conclusions, but others argue that truth, goodness, and beauty are "objective," in some important sense, despite the fact that people disagree about them. This introductory course addresses these and related issues.

Class Format: Virtual

Requirements/Evaluation: Attendance, participation in class discussions, comments added to essays during class discussion.

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 12

Enrollment Preferences: first-year students and potential Philosophy majors

Expected Class Size: 12

Grading: no pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

Unit Notes: meets 100-level PHIL major requirement

Distributions: (D2) (WS)

Writing Skills Notes: Students write 1-page papers on assigned topics for most classes. I will grade and comment on 18 and a teaching assistant will comment on but not grade another 13. Comments will aim to enable students to improve their writing skills.

Fall 2020

SEM Section: H1 MWF 10:40 am - 11:30 am Alan White

Spring 2021

SEM Section: 01 TBA Alan White

PHIL 122 (F) Philosophical Approaches to Contemporary Moral Issues (WS)

In this tutorial we will examine a number of prominent and controversial social issues, using our study of them both as an opportunity to better understand the moral dimensions of those issues in and of themselves, and to consider the ways in which selected classical and contemporary moral theories characterize and address those moral dimensions. Topics will depend to some extent on student interest, but are likely to include concerns that fall under such headings as euthanasia, conscientious eating, abortion, capital punishment, and the ethics of protest. The course will use a
case-based approach to examine these issues, and so in most weeks we will (1) read philosophical articles focused on a key concept or set of arguments central to the issue, and (2) consider in detail one morally complex case in which the concept or arguments have special application or relevance. In addition, we will devote several class meetings interspersed throughout the semester to reading foundational sources in ethical theory.

Requirements/Evaluation: bi-weekly tutorial papers, oral commentaries, and tutorial discussion
Prerequisites: none; this course is suitable for first-year students
Enrollment Limit: 10
Enrollment Preferences: first-year students, then sophomores, then Philosophy majors
Expected Class Size: 10
Grading: no pass/fail option, no fifth course option
Distributions: (D2) (WS)
Writing Skills Notes: Students will write five tutorial papers of 5-7 pages in length, one of which they will revise and submit at the end of the term. In each of the tutorial papers students will describe and evaluate arguments that appear in the assigned readings, and will develop arguments in support of their own ethical positions. Students will receive written and oral feedback, concentrated particularly in the first half of the semester, to improve their ability to present clear and effective written arguments.

Not offered current academic year

PHIL 123 (S) Objectivity in Ethics (WS)
Is morality simply a matter of opinion? In this course we'll examine several influential attempts to provide a rational foundation for morality, along with Nietzsche's wholesale rejection of these efforts. Readings will include work by Plato, Hobbes, Kant, Mill, Nietzsche, and contemporary authors.

Requirements/Evaluation: participation in discussion; short response papers; four 5-page papers, evenly spaced throughout the semester
Prerequisites: none
Enrollment Limit: 19
Enrollment Preferences: first-years and sophomores and students who need to fulfill their 100-level requirement for the philosophy major
Expected Class Size: 19
Grading: no pass/fail option, no fifth course option
Unit Notes: meets 100-level PHIL major requirement
Distributions: (D2) (WS)
Writing Skills Notes: Four 5-page papers, evenly spaced throughout the semester. Students will receive from the instructor timely comments on their writing skills, with suggestions for improvement.

Not offered current academic year

PHIL 125 (F) Introduction to the Philosophy of Law (WS)
This tutorial, designed especially for first year students, is a philosophy course, not a prelaw course. We will examine basic questions in the philosophy of law: What is the relationship between law and morality? Why should one obey the law (if one should)? When, if ever, is paternalistic interference by the state into the lives of its citizens justified? We will look at civil disobedience and theories of legal interpretation. We will pay special attention to the first amendment and questions concerning free speech and hate speech. We will read classic works (such as John Stuart Mill, On Liberty and H. L. A. Hart, The Concept of Law), contemporary articles, and United States Supreme Court cases.

Class Format: meeting with the instructor in pairs for an hour each week
Requirements/Evaluation: a 5- to 7-page paper every other week (6 in all), prepare and present a written critique of their partners' papers in alternate weeks, and revise and re-write
Prerequisites: none
Enrollment Limit: 10
Enrollment Preferences: first-year students
Expected Class Size: 10
Grading: no pass/fail option, no fifth course option
Distributions: (D2) (WS)
Writing Skills Notes: A 5- to 7-page paper every other week (6 in all), prepare and present a written critique of their partners’ papers in alternate weeks, and revise and re-write one of their papers. Students will receive from the instructor timely comments on their writing skills, with suggestions for improvement.

Not offered current academic year

PHIL 126 (F) Paradoxes (WS)

There are three grains of sand on my desk. This is unfortunate, but at least there isn't a heap of sand on my desk. That would be really worrisome. On the other hand, there is a heap of sand in my backyard. I don't know how exactly how many grains of sand are in this heap, but let's say 100,000. My daughter removes one grain of sand. I don't know why, she just does. It seems like there is still a heap of sand in my backyard. In fact, it seems like you can't change a heap of sand into something that isn't a heap of sand by removing one grain of sand. Right? But now we have a problem. By repeated application of the same reasoning, it seems that even after she removes 99,997 grains of sand--I don't know what she wants with all this sand, but I'm starting to worry about that girl--there is still a heap of sand in my backyard. But three grains isn't enough for a heap. So there is not a heap in my backyard. Now I'm confused. Where did my reasoning go wrong?

What we have here is an example of the sorites paradox. It is a paradox, because I started with seemingly true statements and used valid reasoning to arrive at contradictory conclusions. We can learn a lot about logic, language, epistemology and metaphysics by thinking through and attempting to resolve paradoxes. In this class, we'll work together to think through some ancient and contemporary paradoxes. We'll also work on writing lucid prose that displays precisely the logical structure of arguments, engages in focused critique of these arguments, and forcefully presents arguments of our own. Other topics could include: Zeno's paradoxes of motion and plurality, the liar's paradox, the surprise-exam paradox, paradoxes of material constitution, Newcomb's Problem, and the Prisoner's Dilemma.

Class Format: The format of this class is different this year. The instructor will record 2-3 lectures per week which will be made available online. We will also have small tutorial-style meetings each week for which some students will write papers and others will comment on these papers. These tutorial-style meetings will be in-person or via zoom. Finally, there will be synchronous weekly meetings of the class as a whole for discussion and review.

Requirements/Evaluation: (i) Weekly small group papers (4-5 pages) or comments (1-2 pages) on papers of peers; (ii) Final term-paper (~10 pages) in multiple drafts; (iii) Active and informed participation in class discussions.

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 15

Enrollment Preferences: First and second year students. Prospective philosophy majors.

Expected Class Size: 15

Grading: no pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

Unit Notes: Meets 100-level PHIL major requirement

Distributions: (D2) (WS)

Writing Skills Notes: Students will write a number of short papers and responses to papers of their peers. Both the content and the writing will be evaluated. These papers will focus on clear and precise presentation and evaluation of arguments. Each student will also write a final term-paper in multiple drafts. For the final paper, each student will develop a topic in consultation with the instructor and will do independent research. They will submit a first draft and will then revise that draft.

Fall 2020

SEM Section: H1 MWF 8:15 am - 9:30 am Keith E. McPartland

PHIL 127 (F)(S) Meaning and Value (WS)

What gives an individual life meaning? Pleasure? Success in achieving desires? Flourishing in ways distinctive to a rational agent or a human being (including, for example, developing rational capacities and self-mastery, succeeding in worthwhile projects, cultivating relationships, living morally, developing spiritually)? Can we be mistaken about how well our lives are going, or about what has value? What are the main sources of uncertainty here? Does the fact that our lives will end threaten their meaning? Can luck spoil an otherwise meaningful life? Can science contribute to our understanding of these issues? We'll examine these and related questions through historical and contemporary readings.

Class Format: This tutorial will meet remotely by Zoom on a fixed weekly schedule agreed to by the instructor and participants.

Requirements/Evaluation: Five tutorial papers (5-6 pages in length), five critiques (2-3 pages in length), and one rewrite.
Prerequisites: None. This tutorial is an appropriate first course in PHIL.

Enrollment Limit: 10

Enrollment Preferences: First-year students and potential philosophy majors

Expected Class Size: 10

Grading: no pass/fail option, no fifth course option

Unit Notes: This course meets the 100-level PHIL major requirement.

Distributions: (D2) (WS)

Writing Skills Notes: Students will write a tutorial paper (5-6 pages in length) every other week, and a peer critique (2-3 pages in length) in alternating weeks, evenly spaced throughout the semester. The instructor will provide timely comments on writing skills, with suggestions for improvement.

Fall 2020
TUT Section: RT1    TBA    Melissa J. Barry

Spring 2021
TUT Section: T1    TBA    Melissa J. Barry

PHIL 201  (F)  History of Ancient Greek Philosophy

Cross-listings: CLAS 203  PHIL 201

Primary Cross-listing

Very few people believe that everything is water, that we knew everything before birth, that philosophers ought to rule the state, or that the earth is at the center of the cosmos. Why then should we spend our time studying people who in addition to having these surprising beliefs have been dead for 2500 years? First of all, Greek thinkers, especially Plato and Aristotle, radically shaped the trajectory of western thought in every area of philosophy. No one can have an adequate understanding of western intellectual history without some familiarity with the Greeks, and we might think that an understanding of our intellectual history can deepen our understanding of our own situation. More importantly, many of the thinkers that we will read in this class are simply excellent philosophers, and it is worthwhile for anyone interested in philosophical problems to read treatments of these problems by excellent philosophers. We will begin the course by looking briefly at some of the Presocratic philosophers active in the Mediterranean world of the seventh through fifth centuries BCE, and some of the sophists active in the fifth century. We will then turn to several of Plato's dialogues, examining Plato's portrayal of Socrates and his development of a new and profoundly powerful philosophical conception. Finally, we will examine some of Aristotle's works on metaphysics, epistemology and ethics, considering some of the ways Aristotle's thought responds to that of predecessors.

Class Format: The format of this class is going to be different this year. We will not have in-person lectures. Instead, approximately three 1-hour recorded lectures will be made available each week for students to watch. There will also be meetings of 3-4 students with the instructor each week for which some students will write papers and others will prepare comments. These will be either in-person or via zoom. Finally, there will be a synchronous zoom session each week for larger group discussion.

Requirements/Evaluation: (i) Students will write papers (4-6 pages) for the small groups meetings and will comment on the papers of their peers (1-2 pages); (ii) There will be two take-home exams including a comprehensive final exam; (iii) Active and informed participation in small group discussions.

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 20

Enrollment Preferences: Philosophy and Classics Majors.

Expected Class Size: 15-20

Grading: no pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

Unit Notes: Philosophy majors must take either PHIL 201 or PHIL 202 (and are encouraged to take both)

Distributions: (D2)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

CLAS 203 (D1) PHIL 201 (D2)

Fall 2020
LEC Section: H1    MWF 11:45 am - 1:00 pm    Keith E. McPartland
PHIL 202  (S)  History of Modern Philosophy
This course is a survey of 17th- and 18th-century European philosophy with a focus on the nature of reality and the limits of knowledge (metaphysics and epistemology, respectively). That span—the “modern” era of philosophy—was active and exciting in a way that continues to attract much scholarly interest. Moreover, it remains a crucial inspiration for many contemporary philosophical approaches and themes. Understanding modern philosophy is to confront the ambitions and hopes of the Enlightenment, and to uncover the foundations and assumptions of contemporary Western philosophy. Topics include the origin and composition of the universe, the relation of mind and body, skepticism, free will, rationality, and the role of science in human understanding.

Requirements/Evaluation:  weekly papers plus midterm and final exams
Prerequisites: none
Enrollment Limit: none
Enrollment Preferences: none
Expected Class Size: 25
Grading:  yes pass/fail option,  yes fifth course option
Unit Notes: Philosophy majors must take either PHIL 201 or PHIL 202 (and can take both)
Distributions: (D2)

Spring 2021
LEC Section: 01  TBA  Justin B. Shaddock

PHIL 203  (S)  Logic and Language  (QFR)
Logic is the study of reasoning and argument. More particularly, it concerns itself with the difference between good and bad reasoning, between strong and weak arguments. We all examine the virtues and vices of good arguments in both informal and formal systems. The goals of this course are to
improve the critical thinking of the students, to introduce them to sentential and predicate logic, to familiarize them with enough formal logic to enable
them to read some of the great works of philosophy, which use formal logic (such as Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus*), and to examine some of the
connections between logic and philosophy.

Class Format: discussion
Requirements/Evaluation: a midterm, a final, frequent homework and problem sets
Prerequisites: none
Enrollment Limit: 40/sect
Enrollment Preferences: Philosophy majors, seniors, juniors, sophomores, first-years in that order.
Expected Class Size: 40/sect
Grading:  yes pass/fail option,  yes fifth course option
Distributions: (D2)  (QFR)
Quantitative/Formal Reasoning Notes: The main part of the course is learning two formal languages of logic: sentential logic predicate logic
Attributes: Linguistics  PHIL Contemp Metaphysics + Epistemology Courses
Not offered current academic year

PHIL 204  (F)  Hegel and Marx
This course will explore the themes of alienation, fetishism, ideology, dialectic, sociality, and freedom in the philosophical writings of G.W.F. Hegel and Karl Marx. We will focus our study on Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit* and Marx’s early writings. We will conclude by considering some critical appropriations of Marx by 20th Century philosophers, including Georg Lukacs, Max Horkheimer, and Theodor Adorno.

Requirements/Evaluation: midterm and final papers
Prerequisites: none
Enrollment Limit: none
Enrollment Preferences: Philosophy majors
PHIL 209 (S) Philosophy of Science

Cross-listings: STS 209 PHIL 209 SCST 209

Primary Cross-listing

It is a generally held belief, in our time and culture, that science is the best source of our knowledge of the world, and of ourselves. The aim of this course is to examine the origins, grounds, and nature of this belief. We will analyze and discuss various accounts of scientific method, structure and justification of scientific theories, scientific choice, change, and the idea that scientific knowledge is progressive. The course will begin with the "received view" of science, advanced by logical empiricists, which assumes the objectivity and the rationality of science. We will then discuss philosophies of science which emerged out of various criticisms of this view - especially those of Popper, Lakatos, Kuhn and Feyerabend - and the challenges to the assumptions of scientific objectivity and rationality their works provoked. This discussion will naturally lead us to the relativist and social-constructivist views developed within contemporary science studies. Finally, we will analyze the current debate about cognitive credentials of science and proper approach to the study of science, which came to be known as "the science wars."

Class Format: short lecture component in each class

Requirements/Evaluation: class attendance, preparedness and participation; three short assignments; three 5 pages long papers, the last of which will be the final paper, due a week after the end of classes

Prerequisites: one PHIL course, or declared major in a natural science, or permission of instructor

Enrollment Limit: 19

Enrollment Preferences: Philosophy majors and prospective majors

Expected Class Size: 10-15

Grading: no pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

Distributions: (D2)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

STS 209 (D2) PHIL 209 (D2) SCST 209 (D2)

Attributes: COGS Related Courses HSCI Interdepartmental Electives PHIL Contemp Metaphysics + Epistemology Courses

Not offered current academic year

PHIL 211 (F) Ethics of Public Health (WS)

From questions about contact tracing apps to racial and age disparities in health risk and outcomes, the COVID-19 pandemic has foregrounded the importance of ethics as a key concern in public health policies and activities. Moreover, the ethical issues that are implicated in responses to the pandemic reflect the range of those manifested across the field of public health as a whole. In this course, we will survey the ethics of public health through the lens of the COVID-19 pandemic, investigating concepts and arguments that are central to the ethics of public health research and practice. For example, we will examine the ethics of disease surveillance, treatment and vaccine research, resource allocation and rationing, compulsion and voluntariness in public health measures, and social determinants of health outcomes, among other topics. To do this, we will need to become familiar with key ethical theories; think deeply about such concepts as privacy, paternalism and autonomy, exploitation, cost-benefit analysis and justice; and compare the function of these concepts in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic with the way they work in responses to other public health concerns.

Class Format: This class will be conducted remotely, via weekly synchronous tutorial meetings on Zoom or Google Meet.

Requirements/Evaluation: Biweekly 5-7 page papers, oral commentaries, and tutorial discussions.

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 10

Enrollment Preferences: declared and prospective Philosophy majors and Public Health concentrators, students with a specific curricular need for the course, and students with a high level of interest who are unlikely to have an opportunity to take the course in a future term
**Expected Class Size:** 10

**Grading:** no pass/fail option, no fifth course option

**Unit Notes:** Public Health concentrators may use either PHIL 211T Ethics of Public Health or PHIL 213T Biomedical Ethics to fulfill their 3-elective requirement, but they may not use both courses to do so.

**Distributions:** (D2) (WS)

**Writing Skills Notes:** Students will write six biweekly papers of 5-7 pages in length, one of which they will revise and submit at the end of the term. In each of the tutorial papers students will describe and evaluate arguments in the assigned readings, and will develop arguments in support of their own ethical positions. Students will receive written and oral feedback, concentrated particularly in the first half of the semester, to improve their ability to present clear and effective written arguments.

**Attributes:** PHIL Contemporary Value Theory Courses PHLH Bioethics + Interpretations of Health

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**PHIL 212 (S) Ethics and Reproductive Technologies**

**Cross-listings:** WGSS 212 PHIL 212 STS 212 SCST 212

**Primary Cross-listing**

In her groundbreaking book, *The Tentative Pregnancy*, Barbara Katz Rothman writes that "[t]he technological revolution in reproduction is forcing us to confront the very meaning of motherhood, to examine the nature and origins of the mother-child bond, and to replace--or to let us think we can replace--chance with choice." Taking this as our starting point, in this course we will examine a number of conceptual and ethical issues in the use and development of technologies related to human reproduction, drawing out their implications for such core concepts as "motherhood" and "parenthood," family and genetic relatedness, exploitation and commodification, and reproductive rights and society's interests in reproductive activities. Topics will range from consideration of "mundane" technologies such as in vitro fertilization (IVF), prenatal genetic screening and testing, and surrogacy, to the more extraordinary, possibly including pre-implantation genetic diagnosis (PGD), post-menopausal reproduction, and post-mortem gamete procurement. Background readings include sources rooted in traditional modes of bioethical analysis as well as those incorporating feminist approaches.

**Class Format:** discussion

**Requirements/Evaluation:** active participation in class discussions, three or four short reflection papers, and two longer papers (5-7 and 7-10 pages)

**Prerequisites:** none, but introductory-level course in PHIL and/or WGSS recommended

**Enrollment Limit:** 19

**Enrollment Preferences:** WGSS and PHIL majors or prospective majors

**Expected Class Size:** 19

**Grading:** yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

**Unit Notes:** meets Contemporary Value Theory requirement only if registration is under PHIL

**Distributions:** (D2)

**This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:**

WGSS 212 (D2) PHIL 212 (D2) STS 212 (D2) SCST 212 (D2)

**Attributes:** PHIL Contemporary Value Theory Courses PHLH Bioethics + Interpretations of Health

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**PHIL 213 (S) Biomedical Ethics (WS)**

Much like the construction of medical knowledge itself, it is from specific cases that general principles of biomedical ethics arise and are systematized into a theoretical framework, and it is to cases they must return, if they are to be both useful and comprehensible to those making decisions within the biomedical context. In this tutorial we will exploit this characteristic of biomedical ethics by using a case-based approach to examining core concepts of the field. The first portion of the course will be devoted to developing and understanding four moral principles which have come to be accepted as canonical: respect for autonomy, beneficence, nonmaleficence, and justice. The remainder of the course will consider key concepts at the core of medical ethics and central issues for the field, such as privacy and confidentiality, the distinction between killing and "letting die," and therapy vs.
research. To this end, each week we will (1) read philosophical material focused on one principle or concept, and (2) consider in detail one bioethics case in which the principle or concept has special application or relevance. In some weeks, students will be asked to choose from a small set which case they would like to address; in others the case will be assigned.

**Class Format:** students will meet with the professor in pairs for approximately 75 minutes per week, writing and presenting 5- to 7-page essays every other week, and commenting orally on partners' essays in alternate weeks

**Requirements/Evaluation:** bi-weekly papers, oral commentaries, and tutorial discussions

**Prerequisites:** none

**Enrollment Limit:** 10

**Enrollment Preferences:** PHIL majors, PHLH concentrators, those who have a curricular need for the course, those who have been dropped from the course in previous semesters due to over enrollment

**Expected Class Size:** 10

**Grading:** no pass/fail option, no fifth course option

**Distributions:** (D2) (WS)

**Writing Skills Notes:** Students will write six tutorial papers of 5-7 pages in length, one of which they will revise and submit at the end of the term. In each of the tutorial papers students will describe and evaluate arguments that appear in the assigned readings, and will develop arguments in support of their own ethical positions. Students will receive written and oral feedback, concentrated particularly in the first half of the semester, to improve their ability to present clear and effective written arguments.

**Attributes:** PHIL Contemporary Value Theory Courses  PHLH Bioethics + Interpretations of Health

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**PHIL 216 (S) Philosophy of Animals**

**Cross-listings:** ENVI 216  PHIL 216

**Primary Cross-listing**

Animals are and always have been part of human life. To name just a few: We treat animals as companions, as food, as objects of wonder in the wild, as resources to be harvested, as testing grounds for science, and as religious sacrifice. The abstract philosophical question before us is, *what are animals such that they can be all these things?* In this course we aim to engage that abstract question through two more focused projects. Firstly, we will try to understand the mental lives of non-human animals. Secondly, we will try to make sense of the moral dimensions of our relationship to animals. Throughout we will to fuse a rigorous scientific perspective with more humanistic themes and philosophical inquiry. Topics include sentience, animal cognition, language in non-human animals, empathy and evolution, the history of domestication, animal rights, cross-cultural views on animals, arguments against and for vegetarianism and veganism, the morality of zoos, hunting and fishing, and pets and happiness.

**Requirements/Evaluation:** four 4- to 5-page papers and one 10- to 12-page final paper

**Prerequisites:** none

**Enrollment Limit:** 19

**Enrollment Preferences:** students with at least one previous philosophy course; there is no need to email the professor in advance to indicate interest in the course

**Expected Class Size:** 19

**Grading:** no pass/fail option, no fifth course option

**Unit Notes:** meets Contemporary Metaphysics & Epistemology requirement only if registration is under PHIL

**Distributions:** (D2)

**This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:**

ENVI 216 (D2) PHIL 216 (D2)

**Attributes:** COGS Interdepartmental Electives  ENVI Humanities, Arts + Social Science Electives  PHIL Contemp Metaphysics + Epistemology Courses

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Spring 2021
PHIL 220 (F) Happiness

According to Aristotle the ultimate good is happiness—everything we desire we desire for the sake of happiness. Yet what is it to be happy? Should we value other things (say justice or passionate commitment and curiosity) over happiness? Are happiness and pleasure the same thing? Is happiness an emotional or mental state or is it a social construct? What do the social and psychological sciences have to teach us about happiness? Philosophy? Is the happy life a life of virtue? Does being virtuous guarantee happiness? How important are honor, money, love, work, friendship and our connections to others to our happiness? In this tutorial we will read from Ancient, modern and contemporary philosophical sources as well several relevant studies in the social sciences and positive psychology movement in order to engage questions concerning happiness.

Requirements/Evaluation: five 5-page papers and five 2-page papers

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 10

Enrollment Preferences: students interested in philosophy and/or happiness

Expected Class Size: 10

Grading: no pass/fail option, no fifth course option

Distributions: (D2)

Not offered current academic year

PHIL 222 (F) Minds, Brains, and Intelligent Behavior: An Introduction to Cognitive Science

Cross-listings: PSYC 222 PHIL 222 COGS 222

Secondary Cross-listing

This course will emphasize interdisciplinary approaches to the study of intelligent systems, both natural and artificial. Cognitive science synthesizes research from cognitive psychology, computer science, linguistics, neuroscience, and contemporary philosophy. Special attention will be given to the philosophical foundations of cognitive science, representation and computation in symbolic and connectionist architectures, concept acquisition, problem solving, perception, language, semantics, reasoning, and artificial intelligence.

Class Format: This hybrid course will meet in-person and will also be available for remote video attendance and participation. Remote students will be expected to attend class synchronously with the in-person lecture and will not be able to watch lectures at other times, so must be available during the class hours in the catalog. Supplemental material--e.g., office hours, study sessions for exams, background discussion for weekly assignments--will be delivered on-line.

Requirements/Evaluation: midterm and final exams, and self-paced weekly exercises

Prerequisites: PSYC 101 or any PHIL course or CSCI 134 or permission of instructor; background in more than one of these is recommended. It is not necessary to contact the instructor to indicate a special interest in the course.

Enrollment Limit: 20

Enrollment Preferences: sophomore and first-year students, with additional preference given to students who satisfy more of the prerequisites.

Expected Class Size: 20

Grading: no pass/fail option, no fifth course option

Unit Notes: meets Contemporary Metaphysics & Epistemology requirement only if registration is under PHIL

Distributions: (D2)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

PSYC 222 (D2) PHIL 222 (D2) COGS 222 (D2)

Attributes: Linguistics PHIL Contemp Metaphysics + Epistemology Courses PSYC 200-level Courses

Fall 2020

LEC Section: H1 TR 11:30 am - 12:45 pm Joseph L. Cruz
PHIL 223  (S)  Philosophy of Sport
Sports: many of us (at Williams, in the US, throughout most of the world) play them, yet more of us watch them, and we invest not only our time but enormous amounts of money in them (we build sports arenas, not cathedrals; in 2013, in 40 of the 50 United States, the highest-paid public official was a football or basketball coach). Why do sports matter so much to us? Should they? The topics we consider in responding thoughtfully to these questions will include sports and health, sports and education, ethical issues in sports (including issues of class, gender, and race), and sports and beauty.

Class Format: discussion
Requirements/Evaluation: short writing assignments for most classes
Prerequisites: none
Enrollment Limit: 30
Enrollment Preferences: seniors, then juniors, then sophomores
Expected Class Size: 30
Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option
Distributions: (D2)

PHIL 224  (S)  Marx, Nietzsche and Freud  (WS)
The writings of Marx, Nietzsche and Freud continue to influence important debates in the humanities and social sciences. Marx's historical materialism, Nietzsche's post-metaphysical and naturalistic turn in ethics, and Freud's emphasis on the unconscious determinants of human behavior all represent what has been referred to as the decentering of human consciousness in explanations of human history and existence. All three thinkers have had a profound influence on critical theories of the 20th century. In this tutorial, we will focus on questions concerning their methods of critique, and their respective diagnoses of modern culture and societies. All three attempt to explain particular sources of human suffering such as loss of meaning, the sense of alienation from self and others, constraints on free expression, and nihilistic world-weariness. The course texts may include several short selections from important historical influences such as Kant and Hegel as well as 20th century figures who have reacted to, revised, or responded to them in creative ways. Among the latter one could include Louis Althusser, Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze, Jacques Lacan, Luce Irigaray, Judith Butler, Wendy Brown, Elizabeth Grosz and Peter Sloterdijk, to name only a few.

Requirements/Evaluation: bi-weekly papers, oral commentaries, and tutorial discussions
Prerequisites: 100-level Philosophy course, PHIL 202, or permission of instructor
Enrollment Limit: 10
Enrollment Preferences: Philosophy majors or prospective majors and students with background and interest in critical theories
Expected Class Size: 10
Grading: no pass/fail option, no fifth course option
Distributions: (D2)  (WS)

Writing Skills Notes: Students will write six tutorial papers on assigned topics or questions of 5- to 6-pages in length, one of which they will revise and submit at the end of the term. Students will receive written and oral feedback, concentrated particularly in the first half of the semester, to improve their ability to present clear and effective written arguments and interpretations.

Attributes: PHIL History Courses

PHIL 225  (F)  Existentialism
We will study the philosophical and literary works of Soren Kierkegaard, Friedrich Nietzsche, Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, and Albert Camus. What makes these thinkers "Existentialists"? It's not merely that they ask the question, "What gives meaning to a human life?" And, it's not merely that their answers invoke our freedom to determine our own identities. More than this, Existentialists emphasize the subjective relation we bear to our belief systems, moral codes, and personal identities. Existentialists investigate irrational phenomena of human life, including anxiety, boredom, tragedy, despair, meaning, death, faith, sexuality, love, hate, sadism, masochism, and authenticity. And, Existentialists express their thought in philosophical treatises as often as in literary works. In this course we will attempt to understand the dimensions in which Existentialism is a distinctive intellectual tradition.
Class Format: This course will implement the tutorial format and be conducted remotely. Each week, students will watch a pre-recorded lecture given by the professor (asynchronously), and meet in pairs or trios with the professor for roughly 75 minutes via Zoom (synchronously).

Requirements/Evaluation: Each week, students will complete the assigned readings, watch a pre-recorded lecture by the professor, write an essay, and meet in pairs or trios with the professor. Students will take turns as the leader one week, and the respondent the next. The week's leader will write a 5- to 6-page essay on the assigned reading, due 48 hours before the meeting. The week's respondent will write a 2-page essay on the leader's essay due at the time of the meeting. At the meetings, both students will present their essays and hold a discussion. Students will be evaluated cumulatively on their essays and contributions to discussion.

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 18

Enrollment Preferences: preference to Philosophy majors

Expected Class Size: 18

Grading: no pass/fail option, no fifth course option

Distributions: (D2)

Attributes: PHIL History Courses

Fall 2020

TUT Section: RT1    TBA     Justin B. Shaddock

PHIL 227  (F)  Death and Dying  (WS)

In this course we will examine traditional philosophical approaches to understanding death and related concepts, with a special focus on the ethical concerns surrounding death and care for the dying. We will begin with questions about how to define death, as well as reflections on its meaning and function in human life. We will move on to examine ethical issues of truth-telling with terminally ill patients and their families, decisions to withhold or withdraw life-sustaining treatments, the care of seriously ill newborns, physician-assisted suicide, euthanasia, and posthumous interests. In addition to key concepts of death, dying, and terminal illness, we will develop and refine notions of medical futility, paternalism and autonomy, particularly within the context of advance directives and surrogate decision making.

Class Format: discussion

Requirements/Evaluation: class attendance and participation, periodic short essays (3 or 4 total, 2-3 pages each), two mid-length papers (5-7 pages and 7-10 pages, respectively); possible experiential learning component

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 19

Enrollment Preferences: PHIL majors, PHLH and STS concentrators, and students with curricular need for the course.

Expected Class Size: 15-19

Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

Distributions: (D2)  (WS)

Writing Skills Notes: Students will write periodic short papers (2-3 pages each), a midterm paper (5-7 pages) and a final paper (7-10 pages). Short papers focus on concepts, arguments, and writing skills needed in the midterm and final papers, in which students are expected to describe and evaluate arguments from assigned readings, and to present clear and effective arguments in support of their own ethical positions. Students receive feedback on all papers and have the opportunity to revise midterm and final papers.

Attributes: PHIL Contemporary Value Theory Courses  PHLH Bioethics + Interpretations of Health

Not offered current academic year

PHIL 228  (F)  Feminist Bioethics  (WS)

Cross-listings: PHIL 228  STS 228  WGSS 228

Primary Cross-listing

In this course we will explore the ways in which feminist approaches to moral thinking have influenced both the methodology and the content of contemporary bioethics. The first portion of the course will address the emergence of the "Ethics of Care," critically assessing its origins in feminist theory, its development within the context of the caring professions, and its potential as a general approach to bioethical reasoning. The second
portion of the course will use feminist philosophy to inform our understanding of the ways in which gender structures the individual's interactions with the health care system. To do this we will explore topics that might traditionally be considered "women's issues" in healthcare, such as medicine and body image (e.g., cosmetic surgery, eating disorders), reproductive and genetic technologies, and research on women and their health care needs. In addition we'll also look at feminist analyses of topics that traditionally have not been regarded as "gendered," such as resource allocation and end of life issues.

Class Format: discussion

Requirements/Evaluation: active participation in class discussions; periodic short papers (2-3 pages); midterm and final paper (5-7 and 7-10 pages, respectively); and one oral presentation

Prerequisites: none, although previous coursework in WGSS is desirable

Enrollment Limit: 19

Enrollment Preferences: prospective and declared majors or concentrators in PHIL, WGSS, STS, and PHLH, especially those who need the course to satisfy major or concentration requirements

Expected Class Size: 19

Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

Unit Notes: meets Contemporary Value Theory requirement only if registration is under PHIL

Distributions: (D2) (WS)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

PHIL 228 (D2) STS 228 (D2) WGSS 228 (D2)

Writing Skills Notes: Students will write periodic short papers (2-3 pages each), a midterm paper (5-7 pages) and a final paper (7-10 pages). Short papers focus on concepts, arguments, and writing skills needed in the midterm and final papers, in which students are expected to describe and evaluate arguments from assigned readings, and to present clear and effective arguments in support of their own ethical positions. Students receive feedback on all papers and have the opportunity to revise midterm and final papers.

Attributes: AMST Critical and Cultural Theory Electives JLST Interdepartmental Electives PHIL Contemporary Value Theory Courses PHLH Bioethics + Interpretations of Health

Not offered current academic year

PHIL 231 (S) Ancient Political Thought

Cross-listings: PHIL 231 PSCI 231

Secondary Cross-listing

The core activity of this seminar is the careful reading and sustained discussion of selected works by Plato and Aristotle, but we will also engage such other thinkers as Epictetus and Augustine, and, from a political and theoretical point of view, selections from the Hebrew Bible and New Testament. Among the questions that we will address: What is justice? How can it be known and pursued? How is political power generated and exercised? What are the social and ethical prerequisites—and consequences—of democracy? Must the freedom or fulfillment of some people require the subordination of others? Does freedom require leading (or avoiding) a political life? What distinguishes that kind of life from others? What does it mean to be "philosophical" or to think "theoretically" about politics? Although we will attempt to engage the readings on their own terms, we will also ask how the vast differences between the ancient world and our own undercut or enhance the texts' ability to illuminate the dilemmas of political life for us.

Class Format: discussion

Requirements/Evaluation: three 7- to 8-page papers

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 25

Enrollment Preferences: Political Science majors

Expected Class Size: 18

Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

Distributions: (D2)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

PHIL 231 (D2) PSCI 231 (D2)

Attributes: PSCI Political Theory Courses
PHIL 232 (F) Modern Political Thought

Cross-listings: PSCI 232 PHIL 232

Secondary Cross-listing

This course is a chronological survey of major works of political theory from the 16th to the 20th century. In discussions and writing, we will explore the diverse visions of modernity and of politics offered by such thinkers as Machiavelli, Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Marx, Mill, and Freud. They help us ask: What is freedom? Who is equal? Who should rule? With what limits and justifications? What form of government best serves the people? Who are the people, anyway? And on what grounds can we justify confidence in our provisional answers to such questions? Class will be primarily driven by discussion, often preceded by brief lectures. Attention to the writing process and developing an authorial voice will be a recurrent focus of our work inside and outside the classroom.

Class Format: Class meetings will be conducted remotely using zoom.

Requirements/Evaluation: three papers of 4-6 pages; class participation; brief informal writing tasks inside and outside of class meetings

Prerequisites: none; open to all

Enrollment Limit: 12

Enrollment Preferences: Political Theory concentrators, then Political Science majors

Expected Class Size: 12

Grading: yes pass/fail option, no fifth course option

Distributions: (D2)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:
PSCI 232 (D2) PHIL 232 (D2)

Attributes: PSCI Political Theory Courses

Fall 2020

SEM Section: R1 MR 1:30 pm - 2:45 pm Laura D. Ephraim

PHIL 235 (S) Morality and Partiality: Loyalty, Friendship, Patriotism

The aim of this tutorial is to critically examine the nature, importance, and ethical value of personal attachments and loyalties. Loyalty is frequently expected by family, friends and lovers, and demanded by institutions, religious and political communities, as well as by the state. A person incapable of loyalty is often characterized as fickle, cold, self-serving and sometimes even pathological. However, the status of loyalty as a virtue has always been suspect: it has been argued that it is incompatible with impartiality, fairness and equality, and claimed that it is always exclusionary. So, some relationships with other people--such as friendships, familial ties, love, patriotism--seem to be ethically desirable, central to the quality of our lives, and yet prima facie in tension with the widely held belief that morality requires impartiality and equal treatment of all human beings. Are we ever justified in having more concern, and doing more, for our friends, family, community or nation? Does morality require that we always subordinate our personal relationships to universal principles? Is patriotism incompatible with cosmopolitanism, and if so, which of the two should we value? If loyalty is a virtue, what are the proper limits of its cultivation and expression?

Class Format: tutorial pairs will meet with the instructor for one hour a week

Requirements/Evaluation: tutorial attendance and participation; bi-weekly tutorial papers, each about 5 pages long (totaling 6 per student); bi-weekly oral responses to the paper of the tutorial partner

Prerequisites: none; open to first year students

Enrollment Limit: 10

Enrollment Preferences: Philosophy majors and then sophomores

Expected Class Size: 10

Grading: no pass/fail option, no fifth course option

Distributions: (D2)

Attributes: PHIL Contemporary Value Theory Courses
PHIL 236 (F) Contemporary Ethical Theory (WS)
This course will examine central questions in normative ethics, including the following: Which features of actions are morally important and why (e.g., their motive, their intrinsic nature, or their consequences)? Which characteristics of persons give them moral status? How should moral equality be understood, and what is its foundation? When should we give morality priority over personal commitments and relationships, and why? What makes an individual's life go well? Are we capable of disinterested altruism, or are we motivated solely by self-interest? By which methods should we pursue these questions? We will examine these and related issues by looking in depth at contemporary defenses of consequentialist, deontological, and contractualist theories.

Class Format: This tutorial will meet remotely by Zoom on a fixed weekly schedule agreed upon by the instructor and participants.

Requirements/Evaluation: Six tutorial papers (5-6 pages in length) and six critiques (2-3 pages in length).

Prerequisites: at least one PHIL course or permission of instructor

Enrollment Limit: 10

Enrollment Preferences: Current and prospective philosophy majors

Expected Class Size: 10

Grading: no pass/fail option, no fifth course option

Distributions: (D2) (WS)

Writing Skills Notes: Students will write a tutorial paper (5-6 pages in length) every other week, and a peer critique (2-3 pages in length) in alternating weeks, spaced evenly throughout the semester. The instructor will provide timely comments on writing skills, with suggestions for improvement.

Attributes: PHIL Contemporary Value Theory Courses

Fall 2020
TUT Section: RT1 TBA Melissa J. Barry

PHIL 239 (S) The Ethics of Artificial Intelligence

Cross-listings: STS 239 PHIL 239

Primary Cross-listing

We will someday live alongside artificially intelligent beings who equal or exceed us. Commentators ranging from technology magnates to physics geniuses—not to mention decades of apocalyptic science fiction—have urged that that future is nothing short of an existential threat to human beings. Whether this is hyperbole or wise prognostication, it cannot be denied that the rise of AI will be a tectonic shift for culture, technology, and our fundamental sense of ourselves. When AI is fully realized, it is likely to be amongst the most important things to happen to our species. Some challenges we face are broad and about the future, though perhaps not the far future. How can we ensure that AI’s will act morally? Is a world with AI’s overall better or worse for us? How do we create legal and policy frameworks that cover a new kind of thinking being? If they are conscious, will AI’s have dignity and rights? Other questions are pressing and immediate: Artificial intelligence techniques are used today to help decide whether someone gets a bank loan, is eligible to be released on bail, or in need of particular medical treatment. And right now there are autonomous vehicles deciding how to behave in traffic, and autonomous weapons capable of delivering lethal force. Is it moral for us to pass along these sorts of decisions to AI’s? What if they are biased, unbeknownst to us? What if they are more fair? In this course we will engage ethical questions surrounding the seeming inevitability of AI.

Class Format: mixture of lectures and discussion

Requirements/Evaluation: four short (3- to 4-page) writing assignments and a final essay (8-10 pages)

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 25

Enrollment Preferences: CSCI or PHIL majors or STS or COGS concentrators

Expected Class Size: 25

Grading: no pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

Distributions: (D2)
This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:
STS 239 (D2) PHIL 239 (D2)

Attributes: PHIL Contemporary Value Theory Courses

Not offered current academic year

PHIL 240  (F) Philosophy of Education

Cross-listings: PHIL 240 INTR 240

Primary Cross-listing

Why are you here? What do you expect to learn? How do you expect to learn? The College Mission Statement says that "Williams seeks to provide the finest liberal arts education by nurturing in students the academic and civic virtues, and their related traits of character." How have you already been taught the academic and civic virtues? Where have you been taught them? In school? On the sports field? At home? How did you develop your character? This first-year seminar will examine the philosophy of education through educational autobiographies: works that tell the story of a moral and intellectual education. Each book was chosen by and will be introduced by a professor from a different department, and then Professor of Philosophy Steve Gerrard will continue the discussion.

Requirements/Evaluation: several short papers

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 12

Enrollment Preferences: only first-year students

Expected Class Size: 12

Grading: yes pass/fail option, no fifth course option

Distributions: (D2)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:
PHIL 240 (D2) INTR 240 (D2)

Not offered current academic year

PHIL 241  (F) Contemporary Metaphysics

In this course, we will examine a number of issues in contemporary metaphysics through a discussion of the nature of kinds. The problem of universals has vexed philosophers at least since the time of Plato. Oscar is a dog and Annie is a dog. Oscar and Annie aren't identical but they have something in common; each of them is a dog, each of them belongs to a single kind and they share the property of being a dog. But what is going on here? We, at least most of us, are happy to say that Oscar and Annie exist. But is there a third entity that we need to countenance: the universal caninity? If we do think that there is such a thing as caninity, what sort of thing is it? If we don't, what accounts for the truth of our judgment that Oscar and Annie have something in common? Scientists often give explanations for the behavior of objects in terms of their properties. What role do properties play in causation, explanation and laws of nature? Finally there are different kinds of kind. Some kinds or properties seem to be pretty natural, e.g. being an electron or a dog. Other kinds seem to be less natural and seem somehow to be socially constructed, e.g. being a work of art, an American or a sausage. But are there really natural kinds? Can we, as Plato put it, "carve nature at the joints", or are all kinds constructed rather than discovered? Furthermore what is involved in the social construction of a kind? Finally, the nature and existence of some kinds is a hotly contested political matter. How should we think about racial kinds or about gender kinds? While we will be concerned to place our discussions of these issues in historical context, most of the reading for the class will consist in articles written by contemporary philosophers.

Class Format: discussion

Requirements/Evaluation: one 10 page midterm paper and one 15 page final paper which will involve draft and revision, possible short response papers, and active participation in class

Prerequisites: one PHIL course; familiarity with formal logic helpful but not required; or permission of instructor

Enrollment Limit: 18

Expected Class Size: 10-15

Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

Distributions: (D2)

Attributes: PHIL Contemp Metaphysics + Epistemology Courses
PHIL 243 (F) The Philosophy of Higher Education: College Controversies (WS)
What are the purposes of higher education? What are the purposes of liberal arts colleges in America? What should be the goals of Williams College? We will begin examining these questions by studying the history of controversies in American higher education, concentrating especially on debates about the curriculum. We will then turn to contemporary controversies such as campus free speech. Assigned works will include Booker T. Washington, Industrial Education, W.E.B. Du Bois, The Talented Tenth, Frederick Rudolph, Williams College 1793-1993: Three Eras, Three Cultures, Michael S. Roth, Beyond the University: Why Liberal Education Matters, Allan Bloom, The Closing of the American Mind, Martha Nussbaum, Cultivating Humanity, William Deresiewicz, Excellent Sheep: The Miseducation of the American Elite and the Way to a Meaningful Life, Greg Lukianoff and Jonathan Haidt, The Coddling of the American Mind: How Good Intentions and Bad Ideas Are Setting Up a Generation for Failure, and Anthony T. Kronman, The Assault on American Excellence.

Class Format: This course is a tutorial. Students will meet in pairs with the instructor one hour per week. The default assumption is that this course will meet on-line. If the weather permits we could sometimes meet outside. If there is a reasonably sized well ventilated classroom we could occasionally meet there.

Requirements/Evaluation: A 5- to 7-page paper every other week (6 in all), prepare and present a written critique of their partners' papers in alternate weeks
Prerequisites: none
Enrollment Limit: 10
Enrollment Preferences: I will be seeking a balance of interests and backgrounds; preference given to students who have taken at least one philosophy course
Expected Class Size: 10
Grading: no pass/fail option, no fifth course option
Distributions: (D2) (WS)
Writing Skills Notes: A 5- to 7-page paper every other week (6 in all), prepare and present a written critique of their partners' papers in alternate weeks, and will receive from the instructor timely comments on their writing skills, with suggestions for improvement.
Attributes: PHIL Contemporary Value Theory Courses

PHIL 244 (S) Environmental Ethics (WS)
Cross-listings: PHIL 244 ENVI 244
Secondary Cross-listing
What ethical standards should guide our individual and societal choices when those choices affect current and future environmental conditions? This course will introduce students to fundamental concepts, methods, and issues in environmental ethics. Initial tutorial meetings will focus on theoretical materials that will background later discussions and will include classic readings from the environmental ethics literature (e.g., Leopold, Taylor, Rolston). Subsequent sessions will pair readings about key concepts with specific cases that raise complex ethical issues, including the concept of moral standing and, e.g., people who do not yet exist, non-human individuals, species, and complex living systems; the concept of moral responsibility and complicity in environmentally damaging practices; the legitimacy of cost-benefit analysis as an environmental policy tool; and the valuation of human lives.

Requirements/Evaluation: six essays (5-7 pages each) and six carefully prepared oral responses to partners' essays; evaluation will be based on essays, oral responses, and quality of discussion
Prerequisites: ENVI 101 or one course in PHIL
Enrollment Limit: 10
Enrollment Preferences: declared and prospective Environmental Studies majors and concentrators
Expected Class Size: 10
Grading: no pass/fail option, no fifth course option
PHIL 245 Mind and Persons in Indian Thought

In this course, we follow the Indian philosophical conversation concerning the self and the nature of consciousness, particularly as they are found in its various Yogic traditions. We start with some of the Hindu views about the self and the mind and consider their ethical implications. We then consider a range of Buddhist critiques of these views, focusing more particularly on the Madhyamaka, which radicalizes the critique of the self into a global anti-realist and skeptical stance. We also examine the Yogacara school, which offers a process view of reality focusing on the analysis of experience. We conclude by considering some of the later Hindu holistic views of the self as responses to the Buddhist critique. In this way we come to realize that far from being the irrational foil of “the West,” Indian tradition is a rich resource for thinking through some of the central questions that have challenged philosophers in both traditions.

Class Format: discussion

Requirements/Evaluation: full attendance and participation, three short essays (6 pages each)

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 18

Expected Class Size: 18

Grading:

Distributions: (D2)

Attributes: GBST South + Southeast Asia Studies Electives

Not offered current academic year

PHIL 248 (S) Free Speech and Its Enemies

The Williams College Mission statement says that "free inquiry requires open-mindedness, and commitment to community draws on concern for others". The question of this course is whether these values are in conflict. Does free inquiry clash with concern for others, or do they (or can they) work together? We will begin with John Stuart Mill's powerful defense of free speech in On Liberty, but will then investigate challenges to Mill's traditional liberalism from thinkers, such as Catharine MacKinnon, who believe that such rights are never neutral. Our subjects will include hate speech, press censorship, pornography, controversial art, sacrilegious speech and campus controversies. We will, undoubtedly, have to adjust the syllabus to respond to breaking international, national and local news. The course will, I hope, provide the students an opportunity and the tools to intellectually examine deeply emotional and contentious issues. This course is part of the John Hyde Teaching Fellowship.

Requirements/Evaluation: several short responses (including op-eds on current controversies) and longer final projects (a 12- to 15-page paper or equivalent work in other media)

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 25

Expected Class Size: 20

Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option
PHIL 250  (F)  Philosophy of Economics  (WS)
The status of economics as a predictive science has been most prominently brought into question, historically, by three unpredicted yet extremely important economic events: the Great Depression of the 1930s, stagflation of the 1970s, and bursting of the mortgage bubble in 2008. The issue of prediction was also raised by economist Donald McCloskey who, in 1988, asked his fellow economists, “If you’re so smart, why ain’t you rich?” Some critics find predictive failures of economists unsurprising, given the frequent reliance of the latter on assumptions known to be false (e.g., that economic agents are always selfish, have perfect information, and never make mistakes) and on models that unavoidably ignore potentially relevant factors. Perhaps, then, economics is not primarily a predictive science, but instead a descriptive, historical, and/or mathematical one. In this course, relying on works by economists and philosophers, we examine the status of economics as an academic discipline, focusing on its assumptions, methods, and results.

Requirements/Evaluation: six 6- to 8-page essays, six 2- to 3-page response papers, participation in discussions
Prerequisites: none
Enrollment Limit: 10
Enrollment Preferences: Philosophy majors and potential majors, then Economics majors and potential majors
Expected Class Size: 10
Grading: no pass/fail option, no fifth course option
Distributions: (D2)  (WS)
Writing Skills Notes: Six 6- to 8-page essays. Students will receive from the instructor timely comments on their writing skills, with suggestions for improvement.
Attributes: PHIL Contemporary Value Theory Courses

PHIL 251  (S)  Offensive Art
Cross-listings: THEA 251  PHIL 251
Primary Cross-listing
Twenty-four centuries ago Plato argued for censorship of art. In the last century New York City mayor Rudy Giuliani attempted to shut down the Brooklyn Museum "Sensations" exhibit because he claimed it offended Christians, and the Cincinnati Contemporary Arts Center was prosecuted for exhibiting allegedly obscene photographs by Robert Mapplethorpe. Just recently, the magazine The Nation apologized for publishing Anders Carlson-Wee's poem adopting the voice of a homeless person, writing "We are sorry for the pain we have caused to the many communities affected by this poem." At Williams College a mural in The Log was temporarily boarded over, Herman Rosse's painting "Carnival of Life" was removed from the '62 Center, and the Theater department cancelled the production of Aleshea Harris' Beast Thing. What should be done about offensive art? What is offensive art? Does it matter who is offended? Does offensive art harm? Is there a difference between being offended and being harmed? Is there a difference between cultural appropriation and cultural appreciation? What are the responsibilities of museum curators and theater producers when presenting art that might offend? Who gets to decide the answer to these questions; indeed, who gets to decide what questions to ask? We will attempt answers by studying classical works (such as Plato's Republic and John Stuart Mill's On Liberty), contemporary articles, and works of art in various media. Trigger Warning: all the works of art studied in this class will be chosen partly because they have offended a significant number of people. You are very likely to be offended by some of the art we discuss. This will be the only trigger warning for the class; if you don’t want to be offended then this course is not for you. This course is part of the John Hyde Teaching Fellowship.

Requirements/Evaluation: several short responses (including op-eds on current controversies) and longer final projects (a 12- to 15-page paper or equivalent work in other media)
Prerequisites: none
Enrollment Limit: 25
Enrollment Preferences: seniors, juniors, then sophomores in that order
Expected Class Size: 17
Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option
PHIL 252 (F) Autopoietic Systems  (WS)

Cross-listings: PHIL 252 STS 252

Primary Cross-listing

In ancient Greece, Democritus took his ontological bearings by atoms he took not to come to be, change, or pass away, but to move and interconnect in space so as to compose everything else. Plato also took his ontological bearings by entities that do not change, but ones that are not in space or time: mathematical structures and, at least aspirationally, the forms or ideas of the good, the beautiful, etc. Aristotle, finally, took his ontological bearings by temporal entities, i.e., organisms. In these terms, modern science combines central teachings of Democritus and Plato: the universe is understood as a mechanism whose components--ultimately, atoms--interact in ways governed by mathematical laws, and--for Descartes and his followers--animals, too, are machines rather than organisms. Hence, Laplace's (1814) thesis that "An intellect which at a certain moment would know all forces that set nature in motion, and all positions of all items of which nature is composed, if this intellect were also vast enough to submit these data to analysis, it would embrace in a single formula the movements of the greatest bodies of the universe and those of the tiniest atom; for such an intellect nothing would be uncertain and the future just like the past would be present before its eyes." This deterministic, mechanistic, and reductionist way of thinking has, for the past several hundred years, powerfully influenced such diverse fields as philosophy, biology, and economics. Over the past few decades, however, it has been challenged by new discoveries, particularly in physics and biology, and by theoreticians in a variety of disciplines. These theoreticians focus on complex, dynamic systems as, in one terminology, wholes that are more than the sums of their constituents. In this tutorial, we examine some of the most promising and intriguing trends in this potentially revolutionary movement. Our central focus will be on autopoietic systems, i.e., entities that subsist over time despite changing their material constituents. The smallest such entities are cells, but the tissues, organs, and organisms of which many cells are constituents are also autopoietic systems, as are yet more complex entities such as universities, economies, ecosystems, and states. The process ontology required by autopoietic systems is a radical alternative to the ontology that has been dominant for the past several centuries. It has many exciting implications for various subdisciplines in philosophy and for various academic disciplines beyond philosophy.

Class Format: Virtual

Requirements/Evaluation: Presentations, responses to presentations, essays, response papers, participation in discussions.

Prerequisites: None.

Enrollment Limit: 10

Enrollment Preferences: Philosophy majors and potential majors.

Expected Class Size: 10

Grading: no pass/fail option, no fifth course option

Distributions: (D2) (WS)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

PHIL 252 (D2) STS 252 (D2)

Writing Skills Notes: Students will write 6 6-8 page essays and 6 2-3 page response papers. I will comment on all the essays, and my comments will aim to help students improve their writing skills. Among the issues to be addressed will be the challenge of writing essays to be presented rather than simply to be read.

Attributes: PHIL Contemp Metaphysics + Epistemology Courses

Fall 2020

TUT Section: HT1  TBA  Alan White

PHIL 272 (F) Free Will and Responsibility  (WS)
Primary Cross-listing

Our practice of holding people responsible seems justified as long as their choices are free. But when does a choice qualify as free? Must it be unaffected by any outside influences? If so, freedom may seem impossible since we're all deeply influenced by factors ranging from the general laws of nature to specific features of our genetic endowment and social environment (including religion, political ideology, and advertising). These affect not only our particular choices but also, more fundamentally, who we are and what we value. The real question, then, seems to be whether, and how, free choice is possible amidst all of these influences. We'll attempt to answer this question by examining recent philosophical work on the nature of free will and responsibility.

Class Format: students meet with the instructor in pairs for roughly an hour each week

Requirements/Evaluation: five 5-page papers and five 2-page papers

Prerequisites: one PHIL course

Enrollment Limit: 10

Enrollment Preferences: current and prospective Philosophy majors

Expected Class Size: 10

Grading: no pass/fail option, no fifth course option

Distributions: (D2) (WS)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

PHIL 272 (D2)  JLST 272 (D2)

Writing Skills Notes: Five 5-page papers and five 2-page papers, evenly spaced throughout the semester. Students will receive from the instructor timely comments on their writing skills, with suggestions for improvement.

Attributes: PHIL Contemporary Value Theory Courses

Not offered current academic year

PHIL 281 (S) Philosophy of Religion (WS)

Cross-listings: PHIL 281 REL 302

Primary Cross-listing

Our goal will be to determine how far reason can justify belief in God. We will examine well-known philosophical arguments for and against the existence of God (including the ontological argument, the cosmological argument, the teleological argument, the argument from religious experience, and the argument from evil). For each argument, we will first look at historically important formulations and then turn to contemporary reformulations. Our aim will be to identify and evaluate the strongest version of each argument. After working through these arguments, we will reflect more generally on the proper roles of reason and faith in justifying religious belief. Near the end of the semester, we'll also examine some evolutionary explanations of religious belief. Our tools in this course will be logic and reason, even when we are trying to determine what the limits of reason might be. Authors will include Plato, Anselm, Aquinas, Pascal, Paley, Hume, Kant, Kierkegaard, and several contemporary philosophers.

Class Format: students meet with instructor in pairs for an hour each week; emphasis will be placed on developing skills in reading, interpretation and oral argument as well as critical reasoning and writing

Requirements/Evaluation: five 5-page papers and five 2-page papers

Prerequisites: one PHIL course

Enrollment Limit: 10

Enrollment Preferences: current and prospective Philosophy majors

Expected Class Size: 10

Grading: no pass/fail option, no fifth course option

Distributions: (D2) (WS)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

PHIL 281 (D2) REL 302 (D2)

Writing Skills Notes: Five 5-page papers and five 2-page papers, evenly spaced throughout the semester. Students will receive from the instructor timely comments on their writing skills, with suggestions for improvement.
PHIL 288  (F)  Embodiment and Consciousness: A Cross-Cultural Exploration

Cross-listings:  REL 288  PHIL 288

Secondary Cross-listing

This course examines some of the central questions raised by the study of the consciousness: the place of intentionality, the role of emotions, the relation with the body, the nature of subjectivity, the scope of reflexivity, the nature of perceptual presence, etc. In confronting these difficult questions, we do not proceed purely theoretically but consider the contributions of various observation-based traditions, from Buddhist psychology and meditative practices to phenomenology to neurosciences. We begin by examining some of the central concepts of Buddhist psychology, its treatment of the mind as a selfless stream of consciousness, its examination of the variety of mental factors and its accounts of the relation between cognition and affects. We also introduce the practice of meditation as a way to observe the mind and raise questions concerning the place of its study in the mind-sciences. We pursue this reflection by examining the views of James, Husserl, Sartre and Merleau-Ponty, particularly as they concern the methods for the study of the mind and the relation between consciousness, reflexivity and the body. In this way, we develop a rich array of analytical tools and observational practices to further our understanding of the mind. But we also question the value of these tools based on first person approaches by relating them to the third person studies of the mind. In this way, we come to appreciate the importance of considering the biology on which mental processes are based and the light that this approach throws on the nature of consciousness. We conclude by considering the relation between first and third person studies of the mind, focusing on the concept of the embodied mind as a fruitful bridge between these different traditions.

Requirements/Evaluation:  regular practice of meditation, a class presentation, a short essay (6-pages); a long final research paper (15 pages)

Prerequisites:  any introduction to philosophy and at least two upper level courses in PHIL, at least one of which meets the Contemporary Metaphysics or Epistemology distribution requirement for the major, no exceptions;

Enrollment Limit:  18

Enrollment Preferences:  Religion and Philosophy majors

Expected Class Size:  18

Grading:  yes pass/fail option,  no fifth course option

Unit Notes:  there is no need to email the professor in advance to indicate interest in the course

Distributions:  (D2)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:
REL 288 (D2) PHIL 288 (D2)

Attributes:  COGS Interdepartmental Electives  PHIL Contemp Metaphysics + Epistemology Courses

Not offered current academic year

PHIL 306  (S)  The Good Life in Greek and Roman Ethics

Cross-listings:  CLAS 306  PHIL 306

Primary Cross-listing

Most thoughtful human beings spend a good deal of time musing about how we ought to live and about what counts as a good life for a human being. The philosophers of ancient Greece and Rome were among the first thinkers to develop rigorous arguments in response to such musings. Much of the moral philosophy produced in Greece and Rome remains as relevant today as when it was written. In this course, we will examine some central texts in ancient Greek and Roman moral philosophy. We will begin by reading some of Plato's early dialogues and his Republic. We will then turn to Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics. We will then examine writings in the Stoic and Epicurean traditions, as well as Cicero's On the Ends of Good and Evil. As we proceed through the course, we will look at the way in which each thinker characterizes happiness, virtue and the relation between the two. We will also pay close attention to the way in which each of these thinkers takes the practice of philosophy to play a key role in our realization of the good human life. This course is part of the Williams College program at the Berkshire County Jail and House of Corrections and will be held at the jail. Transportation will be provided by the college. The class will be composed equally of Williams students and inmates, and one goal of the course will be to encourage students from different backgrounds to think together about issues of common human concern.

Requirements/Evaluation:  several short response pieces; a final paper of 10-15 pages

Prerequisites:  none

Enrollment Limit:  9
Enrollment Preferences: juniors & seniors & students who can demonstrate an interest in the subject matter of the class; there will not be any preference purely on the basis of major; final selection for the course will be made on the basis of an interview with the instructor

Expected Class Size: 9

Grading: no pass/fail option, no fifth course option

Distributions: (D2)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:
CLAS 306 (D1) PHIL 306 (D2)

Attributes: PHIL History Courses

Not offered current academic year

PHIL 307 (F) Augustine's Confessions

Cross-listings: CLAS 307 PHIL 307 REL 303

Primary Cross-listing

No thinker has done more to shape the Western intellectual tradition than Augustine (354-430 CE), and no book displays Augustine's dynamic vision of reality more compellingly than the Confessions. Its probing and intimate reflections on the meaning of human life, the nature of God and mind, time and eternity, will and world, good and evil, love and sexuality have challenged every generation since Augustine's own. The seminar will be structured around a close, critically engaged reading of the Confessions (in English translation) and will give attention to its historical context and significance as well as to its philosophical and theological ideas. (There will be optional, supplementary opportunity to engage with the Latin text for interested students with some facility with Latin.)

Class Format: The course will be taught in a hybrid (partly in-person, partly remote) or wholly remote format—no final decision about format will be made in early September, prior to the first class. Class meetings (in whatever format) will consist primarily in student presentations and open, directed discussion of assigned readings.

Requirements/Evaluation: Regular reading assignments from the Confessions and related secondary literature. Weekly participation in online discussion on Glow (15% of final grade); 3 class presentations (of various lengths and kinds) (20%); a short paper (maximum 1500 words) due around the middle of the semester (20%); a term paper in two drafts (maximum 3000 words) due near and the end of the semester (40%); preparation for and participation in class that shows thoughtful engagement with the assigned readings (5%).

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 15

Enrollment Preferences: Advanced students in Philosophy, Religion and/or Classics

Expected Class Size: 15

Grading: yes pass/fail option, no fifth course option

Distributions: (D2)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:
CLAS 307 (D1) PHIL 307 (D2) REL 303 (D2)

Attributes: PHIL History Courses

PHIL 308 (F) Wittgenstein's "Philosophical Investigations"

Bertrand Russell claimed that Ludwig Wittgenstein was "perhaps the most perfect example I have ever known of genius as traditionally conceived--passionate, profound, intense, and dominating." Wittgenstein's two masterpieces, the Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus and the Philosophical Investigations, stand like opposing poles around which schools of twentieth-century analytic philosophy revolve. The Wittgenstein of the Tractatus is known as the "earlier Wittgenstein," the Wittgenstein of the Investigations is known as the "later Wittgenstein." This course is an intensive, line-by-line study of the Investigations--one of the greatest (and thus, one of the most controversial) books in the history of philosophy. Aside from its overwhelming influence on 20th and 21st century philosophy and intellectual culture, any book which contains the remark, " if a lion could talk, we could not understand him," deserves serious attention.

Fall 2020

SEM Section: H1 TR 6:45 pm - 8:00 pm Scott C. MacDonald
PHIL 310  (F)  Wittgenstein's Later Philosophy  (WS)

Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951) is probably the greatest philosopher of the 20th century. His later work, best known through posthumously published Philosophical Investigations, continues to influence contemporary thinking about language, mind, action, knowledge, ethics, religion, aesthetics, culture, and of course, philosophy itself. Understanding later Wittgenstein is thus vital for engaging in contemporary philosophy, but neither the interpretation nor the evaluation of his thought is straightforward or easy. Later Wittgenstein is a controversial, polarizing figure; but serious reading of his work is invariably intellectually enriching and fertile. This tutorial aims to provide students with the skills necessary for careful, serious and thorough reading of Wittgenstein's later philosophy. In the first part of the course, we will read Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigations, one of the greatest books ever written. In the second part of the course, we will read On Certainty, and selections from other of Wittgenstein's posthumously published works: Zettel, Philosophical Grammar, Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology, Culture and Value, Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief, and The Big Typescript. Throughout the course, we will consult and discuss the important secondary literature on Wittgenstein, and analyze different philosophical presuppositions and goals that motivate particular readings. The central topics of the course will be: meaning, rule following, human languages; private experiences and other minds; intention and action; knowledge and skepticism; and especially, the methods and nature of philosophy.

Requirements/Evaluation: tutorial attendance and participation; bi-weekly tutorial papers, each about 5 pages long (totaling 6 per student); bi-weekly oral responses to the paper of the tutorial partner

Prerequisites: two Philosophy courses

Enrollment Limit: 10

Enrollment Preferences: preference will be given to students who already took a course on Wittgenstein, for example, PHIL 309

Expected Class Size: 10

Grading: no pass/fail option, no fifth course option

Distributions: (D2)  (WS)

Writing Skills Notes: Students will write two short (about 800 words) seminar papers; five 5-7 pages long papers; five 2-3 pages long comments on their tutorial partner's papers; and a final paper (also 5-7 pages long) which will be a revision of one of the previously written papers. Students will get regular feedback from their tutorial partner and from the instructor on the substance of their work as well as on their oral and writing skills, with suggestions for improvement.

Attributes: Linguistics  PHIL History Courses

Not offered current academic year
**PHIL 315 (F) Kant's Critique of Pure Reason**

Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* is perhaps the most significant text in the history of philosophy. It puts an end to the Early Modern traditions of Rationalism and Empiricism, and it stands at the beginning of both the Analytic and Continental traditions in contemporary philosophy. Love it or hate it, you cannot ignore it. In this course, we will study the most important and influential chapters of the *Critique* with the help of some secondary literature.

**Class Format:** This course will implement the tutorial format and be conducted remotely. Each week, students will watch a pre-recorded lecture given by the professor (asynchronously), and meet in pairs with the professor for roughly 75 minutes on Zoom (synchronously).

**Requirements/Evaluation:** Each week, students will complete the assigned readings, watch a lecture by the professor, write an essay, and meet in pairs with the professor. Students will take turns as the leader one week, and the respondent the next. The week's leader will write a 6-page essay on the assigned reading, due 48 hours before the meeting. The week's respondent will write a 2- to 3-page essay on the leader's essay due at the time of the meeting. At the meetings, both students will present their essays and hold a discussion about the readings. Students will be evaluated cumulatively on their essays and contributions to discussion.

**Prerequisites:** PHIL 202

**Enrollment Limit:** 10

**Enrollment Preferences:** Philosophy majors

**Expected Class Size:** 10

**Grading:** no pass/fail option, no fifth course option

**Distributions:** (D2)

**Attributes:** PHIL History Courses
on alternate weeks; evaluations are based on written work as well as level of preparation and intellectual engagement in tutorial meetings

**Prerequisites:** PHIL 202, Kant course, or permission of instructor

**Enrollment Limit:** 10

**Enrollment Preferences:** Philosophy majors and students with background in political theory, feminist theory, or post-colonial theory

**Expected Class Size:** 10

**Grading:** no pass/fail option, no fifth course option

**Distributions:** (D2) (DPE) (WS)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

PHIL 321 (D2) WGSS 322 (D2)

**Writing Skills Notes:** Tutorial format requires significant writing (six 5-page papers), weekly commentary on writing, and instructor comments on papers.

**Difference, Power, and Equity Notes:** In this course power, differences, and overcoming injustice, inequality, and domination are central topics.

**Attributes:** PHIL History Courses WGSS Theory Courses

Not offered current academic year

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**PHIL 323 Critical Theory: Praxis and Critique (DPE) (WS)**

What is to be done? This question haunts critical theory. To be sure, critical theories are important, even indispensable. They enable us to see the world in new ways, and to unmask pernicious relations of power. They can even produce an incentive to work for change. Yet, as critical theorist Bernard Harcourt notes: "Tragically, we remain impoverished when it comes to critically thinking through practice.” Critical theories tend to privilege theory over practice–reasoning, knowledge and wisdom over action, doing, and being. To be sure, in the nineteenth century, Marx called for a philosophy oriented toward change, not merely contemplation. In his later works, Foucault too endorsed a shift from the Socratic injunction "know thyself,” to care for the self. He identified courageous truth-telling as essential to political practices. Yet the model of the courageous individual speaking truth to power is not sufficient as an account of praxis. In this course we explore a range of contemporary understandings of critical social and political practice. Readings may include recent work by Hannah Arendt, Seyla Benhabib, Judith Butler, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, Fred Moten, Bruno Latour and Chantal Mouffe. Among the topics discussed will be performative assembly, the "undercommons,” climate politics, and the idea of a left populism. The course draws generously from materials used in Harcourt's 13/13 seminar series at Columbia University.

**Class Format:** We may schedule two seminar meetings in addition to weekly tutorial meetings.

**Requirements/Evaluation:** 6 five-page papers on assigned or chosen topics, 6 2-page commentaries on tutorial partner's papers as well as quality of engagement and evidence of preparation in weekly tutorial meetings.

**Prerequisites:** At least two courses in philosophy, including 202, or 204, or 224T or permission of instructor.

**Enrollment Limit:** 10

**Enrollment Preferences:** Students with demonstrated background in critical theory as well as majors or prospective majors in philosophy.

**Expected Class Size:** 10

**Grading:**

**Distributions:** (D2) (DPE) (WS)

**Writing Skills Notes:** This is a tutorial. Students will write six five-page papers and receive extensive commentary on their writing every other week by tutorial partners and the professor.

**Difference, Power, and Equity Notes:** Critical theories explore questions concerning inequality, difference, domination and oppression as well as ideology and identity. This course will do the same.

**Attributes:** PHIL History Courses

Not offered current academic year

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**PHIL 327 (S) Foucault on Power and Knowledge (DPE) (WS)**

**Cross-listings:** WGSS 327 PHIL 327

**Primary Cross-listing**

This course begins with a brief introduction to some of Foucault's early writings but focuses on a close reading of a selection of middle and late texts
that have become central to debates about the significance and value of his work such as: *Discipline and Punish, The History of Sexuality* (vols. 1-3), and selected interviews and course lectures. We will focus particularly on how subjects are positioned in relation to his writings on power and knowledge with particular attention to the later so-called ethical writings in the years before his untimely death in 1984.

**Requirements/Evaluation:** evaluation will be based on written work (six 5- to 6-page papers, and six 2-3 page commentaries on their partner’s papers) as well as the quality and level of preparation and intellectual engagement in our weekly meetings.

**Prerequisites:** at least two courses in PHIL or political or critical theory, or permission of instructor

**Enrollment Limit:** 10

**Enrollment Preferences:** current or prospective Philosophy and Women’s, Gender and Sexuality Studies majors

**Expected Class Size:** 8-10

**Grading:** no pass/fail option, no fifth course option

**Unit Notes:** meets History requirement only if registration is under PHIL

**Distributions:** (D2) (DPE) (WS)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

WGSS 327 (D2) PHIL 327 (D2)

**Writing Skills Notes:** Students will write between 40-50 pages by the end of the semester and receive regular feedback on their written work from the instructor and their tutorial partner. They will write both expository, interpretive and critical essays and will regularly be asked to defend their interpretations and arguments.

**Difference, Power, and Equity Notes:** This is a course about power and freedom. We read genealogical histories of disciplinary institutions that exclude and aim to correct “dangerous” or “abnormal” individuals, or attach them to identities and desires in order to manage them. We also address power at the level of population management, the emergence of the neoliberal idea of the self as enterprise, and the promise of resistance in the form of ethical practices of freedom.

**Attributes:** AMST Critical and Cultural Theory Electives PHIL History Courses WGSS Theory Courses

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**PHIL 328 (S) Kant's Ethics**

Although Kant initially planned for his magnum opus to comprise theoretical and practical chapters, his metaphysics and epistemology take up all of his *Critique of Pure Reason* while his ethics is spread out over a series of works—*Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals, Critique of Practical Reason,* and *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*. These latter writings of Kant's had a tremendous influence on the development of subsequent moral philosophy and indeed set the stage for contemporary discussions of the nature of practical reason, motivation, freedom, and morality. Our seminar will have two aims: (1) to reconstruct the single most compelling moral theory from Kant’s various ethical writings, and (2) to trace the influence of Kant's ethics in contemporary philosophy.

**Requirements/Evaluation:** two 8-page seminar papers and a 12-page final paper

**Prerequisites:** two courses in PHIL (including a 100-level PHIL course; PHIL 201 or 202 recommended); or permission from the instructors

**Enrollment Limit:** 20

**Enrollment Preferences:** Philosophy majors

**Expected Class Size:** 15

**Grading:** no pass/fail option, no fifth course option

**Distributions:** (D2)

**Attributes:** PHIL History Courses

Not offered current academic year

**PHIL 332 (S) Aristotle's Metaphysics**

**Cross-listings:** CLAS 332 PHIL 332

Primary Cross-listing
In this course we will study Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* concentrating of books gamma-theta. Aristotle sets out to study being qua being, or what is insofar as it is. The thoughts that Aristotle expresses in these books were instrumental in setting an intellectual agenda that dominated western thought through the Middle Ages and provided the backdrop against which the modern philosophical tradition arose. Furthermore, many of the issues that Aristotle takes up in these books remain of central importance in contemporary philosophy. Our main goal in this course is to work our way through Aristotle’s text which can be extremely daunting, and to reconstruct his central positions and his arguments for these positions. We will also read selections from the vast secondary literature on Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*.

**Requirements/Evaluation:** discussion leadership, weekly short papers, term paper

**Prerequisites:** PHIL 201, CLAS 203

**Enrollment Limit:** 12

**Enrollment Preferences:** Philosophy and Classics majors

**Expected Class Size:** 8-10

**Grading:** no pass/fail option, no fifth course option

**Distributions:** (D2)

**This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:**

CLAS 332 (D1) PHIL 332 (D2)

**Attributes:** PHIL History Courses

Not offered current academic year

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**PHIL 336 (S) Political Liberalism and its Critics** (WS)

Political liberalism has been both celebrated and lamented. The philosopher John Rawls is widely credited with reviving liberalism in the late 20th century and providing its most persuasive defense. In this tutorial, we’ll read portions of Rawls’ major works, *A Theory of Justice* and *Political Liberalism*, and trace how his theory evolved in response to an array of critics, including libertarians, perfectionists, communitarians, feminist philosophers, and critical race theorists. Among other things, these critics challenged Rawls’ interpretation and defense of the social contract framework, the ideals of freedom and equality, the content of principles of justice, political neutrality about the good, the nature of the self, the division between public and private spheres, and the distinction between ideal and non-ideal theory. We’ll examine these criticisms in depth. If time permits, we’ll also look briefly at some recent post-Rawlsian debates about the nature of distributive justice (e.g., luck vs. relational egalitarianism, or global justice).

**Class Format:** This class will meet once per week at a time agreed upon by the instructor and participants.

**Requirements/Evaluation:** Six tutorial papers (5-6 pages in length) and six critiques (2-3 pages in length)

**Prerequisites:** Two PHIL courses, or permission of instructor

**Enrollment Limit:** 10

**Enrollment Preferences:** Current and prospective philosophy majors

**Expected Class Size:** 10

**Grading:** no pass/fail option, no fifth course option

**Distributions:** (D2) (WS)

**Writing Skills Notes:** Students will write a tutorial paper (5-6 pages in length) every other week, and a peer critique (2-3 pages in length) in alternating weeks, evenly spaced throughout the semester. The instructor will provide timely comments on writing skills, with suggestions for improvement.

**Attributes:** PHIL Contemporary Value Theory Courses

Spring 2021

TUT Section: T1 TBA Melissa J. Barry

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**PHIL 337 (F) Justice in Health Care** (WS)

Justice is a notoriously complex and elusive philosophical concept, the conditions of which are even more difficult to articulate within real world institutions and contexts than in the abstract. In this course we’ll explore justice as a fundamental moral principle and as a desideratum of the US health care system. The first portion of the course will be devoted to considering general theories of justice as well as alternative conceptions of justice specifically within the health care context. While social justice and distributive justice are deeply intertwined in the health care context and we will
discuss both, we will focus primarily on the concept of distributive justice. This theoretically oriented work will provide the background for subsequent examination of specific topics, which may include, among others: justice in health care financing and reform; justice in health care rationing and access to health care, with particular attention to the intersections of rationing criteria with gender, sexuality, race, disability, and age; justice in the procurement and allocation of organs for transplantation; obesity and personal responsibility for illness; and justice in medical research, including “double standards” for research conducted in low resource settings.

Class Format: This class will be conducted remotely, via weekly synchronous tutorial meetings on Zoom or Google Meet.

Requirements/Evaluation: biweekly papers, oral commentaries, and tutorial discussions

Prerequisites: none

Enrollment Limit: 10

Enrollment Preferences: PHIL majors, PHLH concentrators, those with curricular need for the course, those who have been dropped from the course in previous semesters due to over enrollment, and those who are unlikely to have an opportunity to take the course in a later term

Expected Class Size: 10

Grading: no pass/fail option, no fifth course option

Distributions: (D2) (WS)

Writing Skills Notes: Students will write six tutorial papers of 5-7 pages in length, one of which they will revise and submit at the end of the term. In each of the tutorial papers students will describe and evaluate arguments that appear in the assigned readings, and will develop arguments in support of their own ethical positions. Students will receive written and oral feedback, concentrated particularly in the first half of the semester, to improve their ability to present clear and effective written arguments.

Attributes: JLST Interdepartmental Electives PHIL Contemporary Value Theory Courses PHLH Bioethics + Interpretations of Health

Fall 2020
TUT Section: RT1 TBA Julie A. Pedroni

PHIL 338 (F) Intermediate Logic (QFR)

Cross-listings: MATH 338 PHIL 338

Primary Cross-listing

In this course, we will begin with an in-depth study of the theory of first-order logic. We will first get clear on the formal semantics of first-order logic and various ways of thinking about formal proof: natural deduction systems, semantic tableaux, axiomatic systems and sequent calculi. Our main goal will be to prove things about this logical system rather than to use this system to think about ordinary language arguments. In this way the goal of the course is significantly different from that of Logic and Language (PHIL 203). Students who have take PHIL 203 will have a good background for this class, but students who are generally comfortable with formal systems need not have taken PHIL 203. We will prove soundness and completeness, compactness, the Lowenheim-Skolem theorems, undecidability and other important results about first-order logic. As we go through these results, we will think about the philosophical implications of first-order logic. From there, we will look at extensions of and/or alternatives to first-order logic. Possible additional topics would include: modal logic, the theory of counterfactuals, alternative representations of conditionals, the use of logic in the foundations of arithmetic and Godel's Incompleteness theorems. Student interest will be taken into consideration in deciding what additional topics to cover.

Requirements/Evaluation: problem sets and exams

Prerequisites: some class in which student has studied formal reasoning

Enrollment Limit: 20

Enrollment Preferences: Philosophy majors; juniors and seniors

Expected Class Size: 15

Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

Distributions: (D2) (QFR)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:
MATH 338 (D3) PHIL 338 (D2)

Quantitative/Formal Reasoning Notes: This is a class in Formal Logic. PHIL 203 satisfies the QFR requirement. If anything, this class will be significantly more formal.
PHIL 341  (S)  Black Marxism: Political Theory and Anti-Colonialism  (DPE) (WS)

Cross-listings:  AFR 340  INTR 341  PSCI 373  PHIL 341

Secondary Cross-listing

The seminar involves a critical engagement with key Africana political leaders, theorists and liberationists. We will examine the Pan-African writings of: Cedric Robinson (Black Marxism); Walter Rodney (How Capitalism Underdeveloped Africa), Eric Williams (Capitalism and Slavery; From Columbus to Castro); Frantz Fanon (The Wretched of the Earth); Malcolm X (Malcolm X Speaks); Amilcar Cabral (Resistance and Decolonization; Unity and Struggle); C. L. R. James (The Black Jacobins).

Requirements/Evaluation:  Attend all classes. Papers are due 24 hours before the start of class. Participate in class discussions.

Prerequisites:  None

Enrollment Limit:  19

Expected Class Size:  19

Grading:  yes pass/fail option,  yes fifth course option

Distributions:  (D2)  (DPE) (WS)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

AFR 340 (D2) INTR 341 (D2) PSCI 373 (D2) PHIL 341 (D2)

Writing Skills Notes: Three thesis papers at five pages each (each receiving critical feedback from professor); one thesis paper revision with critical feedback from professor and peers, including one letter of revision explaining the student's revision process; one keyword glossary where students develop rigorous definitions of course key terms; one roundtable discussion based on the final paper.

Difference, Power, and Equity Notes: This course focuses on anti-colonial struggles against European powers. Research will include the concept of "internal colonies" in the US.

Spring 2021
SEM Section: 01    TBA    Joy A. James

PHIL 350  (S)  Emotions

Philosophy is often described as "thinking about thinking;" variously conceived inquiries into the nature, scope and limits of human reasoning have always been at its heart. Without challenging the centrality of such projects for philosophy, this tutorial will focus on a less emphasized, but equally essential aspect of our lives: emotions. What are emotions, and how should we think about them? What is the proper 'geography'--classification and analysis--of our emotions, and what is their relation to our somatic states, feelings, beliefs, judgments, evaluations and actions? Do we have any control over our emotions? Could we (individually and socially) educate and cultivate them? How are conscious and unconscious emotions related to a person's action, character, and her social world? In addressing these questions, we will simultaneously consider which methodological approach--if a single one can be privileged--should we adopt for examining emotions. We will try to determine what is the scope and nature of an adequate theory of emotions, what are the desiderata for such a theory, and what should count as evidence in its favor. We will examine a variety of philosophical and scientific theories of emotion, as well as some issues concerning normative aspects of emotions: the role of emotions in a good life and the concept of emotional maturity.

Requirements/Evaluation:  Class attendance, preparedness and participation; weekly meetings with the tutorial partner outside of the class; five lead papers (5-7 pages) and five short response papers (2-3 pages); and a 5-7 pages long final paper.

Prerequisites:  two philosophy courses.

Enrollment Limit:  10

Enrollment Preferences:  philosophy majors and prospective majors, then psychology majors.

Expected Class Size:  10

Grading:  no pass/fail option,  no fifth course option

Distributions:  (D2)
PHIL 360  (F)  The Political Thought of Frantz Fanon  (WS)
Cross-listings:  PSCI 370  PHIL 360  AFR 360  LEAD 360

Secondary Cross-listing
Martinican psychiatrist, philosopher, and revolutionary Frantz Fanon was among the leading critical theorists and Africana thinkers of the twentieth century. Fanon ushered in the decolonial turn in critical theory, a move calling on those both within and outside of Europe to challenge the coloniality of the age and to forge a new vision of politics in the postcolonial period. This course is an advanced seminar devoted to a comprehensive examination of Fanon's political thought. We will begin with an analysis of primary texts by Fanon and end by considering how Fanon has been interpreted by his contemporaries as well as activists and critical theorists writing today.

Requirements/Evaluation:  attendance and participation, weekly online reading response papers, a class presentation, two 7-page essays, and one 20-page final research paper
Prerequisites:  none
Enrollment Limit:  19
Enrollment Preferences:  Africana Studies concentrators, Leadership Studies concentrators, and Political Science majors
Expected Class Size:  10
Grading:  no pass/fail option,   yes fifth course option
Distributions:  (D2)  (WS)
This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:
PSCI 370 (D2) PHIL 360 (D2) AFR 360 (D2) LEAD 360 (D2)

Writing Skills Notes:  Students write weekly online reading response papers, two 7-page essays, and one 20-page final research paper. Students receive written feedback from me throughout, meet with me 1-on-1 to discuss 7-page essays to then revise/re-submit and also receive written feedback before final submission. Students will receive from the instructor timely comments on their writing skills, with suggestions for improvement.
Attributes:  AFR Core Electives  AMST Comp Studies in Race, Ethnicity, Diaspora  AMST Critical and Cultural Theory Electives  PSCI Political Theory Courses

Not offered current academic year

PHIL 364  (S)  Mental Health and Illness: Philosophical Considerations
Cross-listings:  STS 364  PHIL 364

Primary Cross-listing
This course will raise and discuss a number of philosophical questions concerning our current understanding of mental health and mental illness. We will begin by examining the general concepts of health and disease, and then apply them to human psychology. Throughout the course, our focus will be on the best theoretical and practical knowledge we now have to diagnose, explain, and alleviate mental illness. Some of the questions that we will discuss are: What is psychopathology and what are its causes? Is it possible to have systematic knowledge of subjective experience? If so, is that knowledge importantly different in kind or in rigor from the knowledge we gain through physics, chemistry or geology? Are there metaphysical and ideological assumptions in contemporary psychiatry, and if so, could and should they be avoided? What is the basis on which current psychiatric diagnostic manuals are organized? Is that principle of organization justifiable or not? Do particular case histories offer good explanations of psychopathology? In framing and answering these questions, we will discuss subjective experience (or phenomenology) of mental illness; holism vs. reductionism; functional, historical and structural explanations of psychopathology; theory formation, evidence, and the role of values in psychology and psychiatry; the diversity and disunity of psychotherapeutic approaches; relationship between knowers and the known; and relationship between theoretical knowledge in psychiatry and the practices of healing.

Requirements/Evaluation:  several writing assignments, evenly spaced throughout the semester
Prerequisites:  two philosophy courses; or one philosophy and one STS course; or consent of the instructor
Enrollment Limit: 20
Enrollment Preferences: students who took Philosophy of Science or Philosophy of Mind; Philosophy and Psychology majors
Expected Class Size: 20
Grading: no pass/fail option, yes fifth course option
Distributions: (D2)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

STS 364 (D2) PHIL 364 (D2)

Attributes: PHIL Contemp Metaphysics + Epistemology Courses

Not offered current academic year

PHIL 379  (F)  American Pragmatism
Cross-listings: PHIL 379  AMST 379

Primary Cross-listing
Along with jazz, pragmatism stands as the greatest uniquely American contribution to world culture. As the music wails in the background, we will study the classic pragmatists: William James, C. S. Peirce, and John Dewey. We will continue with the contemporary inheritors of the tradition: Cornel West, Richard Rorty, and Hilary Putnam. Although it has influenced both analytic and continental philosophy, pragmatism is a powerful third philosophical movement. Always asking what practical difference would it make, our authors investigate the central questions and disputes of philosophy, from epistemology and metaphysics to ethics and religion. Rather than seeing philosophy as an esoteric discipline, the pragmatic philosophers (with the possible exception of Peirce) see philosophy as integral to our culture and see themselves as public intellectuals.

Requirements/Evaluation: final paper, several short assignments
Prerequisites: at least two PHIL courses

Enrollment Limit: 25
Enrollment Preferences: Philosophy and American Studies majors, then seniors and juniors of any major
Expected Class Size: 12-15
Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option
Distributions: (D2)

This course is cross-listed and the prefixes carry the following divisional credit:

PHIL 379 (D2) AMST 379 (D2)

Attributes: AMST Critical and Cultural Theory Electives  PHIL History Courses  TEAC Related Courses

Not offered current academic year

PHIL 388  (S)  Consciousness
The nature of consciousness remains a fundamental mystery of the universe. Our internal, felt experience—what chocolate tastes like to oneself, what it is like to see the color red, or, more broadly, what it is like to have a first person, waking perspective at all—resists explanation in any terms other than the conscious experience itself in spite of centuries of intense effort by philosophers and, more recently, by scientists. As a result, some prominent researchers propose that the existence of consciousness requires a revision of basic physics, while others (seemingly desperately) deny that consciousness exists at all. Those positions remain extreme, but the challenge that consciousness poses is dramatic. It is at the same time the most intimately known fact of our humanity and science’s most elusive puzzle. In this tutorial we will read the contemporary literature on consciousness. We will concentrate both on making precise the philosophical problem of consciousness and on understanding the role of the relevant neuroscientific and cognitive research. Tutorial partners will have an opportunity to spend the end of the semester working on a special topic of their choosing including, for instance, consciousness and free will, pain and anesthesia, consciousness and artificial intelligence, or disorders of consciousness.

Class Format: expect several short lectures by the instructor over the course of the semester where all the tutorial members convene

Requirements/Evaluation: participants will present substantial written work in the tutorial every other week, and will be responsible for commenting on their tutorial partner's work on off weeks

Prerequisites: any introduction to philosophy and at least two upper level courses in PHIL, at least one of which meets the Contemporary Metaphysics or Epistemology distribution requirement for the major, no exceptions; no need to email the professor in advance
Enrollment Limit: 10

Enrollment Preferences: Philosophy majors, Neuroscience or Cognitive Science concentrators; open to sophomores; every effort will be made to pair students according to similar or complementary background

Expected Class Size: 10

Grading: no pass/fail option, no fifth course option

Distributions: (D2)

Attributes: COGS Interdepartmental Electives PHIL Contemp Metaphysics + Epistemology Courses

Not offered current academic year

PHIL 401 (F) Senior Seminar: Metaphilosophy

Put simply, metaphilosophy is reflection on the nature of philosophy, i.e., What is it? What is its aim? Its purpose? Its methods? Are such questions meaningful or important? Can the discipline be unified? Should it be? Unsurprisingly, philosophers have proffered a variety of answers to these questions, prompting one philosopher to remark, half-jokingly, that "there are as many definitions of philosophy as there are philosophers..." Thus, Plato described the philosopher as "the one who beholds all Time and all Being." Wilford Sellars regarded as uncontroversial, the view that it is "an attempt to see how things, in the broadest possible sense of the term, hang together in the broadest possible sense of the term." Critical theorists regard philosophy as social and ideology critique. Some understand its aim to be to answer normative questions about the nature of truth, justice, goodness and rationality. Finally, there are those who do not think philosophy can contribute much at all to answering such questions. In this senior seminar we will read a range of philosophical texts (Analytic, Pragmatist, and Continental or European) that either engage meta-philosophical debates or exemplify particular philosophical styles and methods in order to enrich our understanding of the discipline and of the value of meta-philosophical inquiry itself.

Class Format: This will be taught remotely. The professor will consult with members of the class to devise the optimal formats to ensure educational value and active engagement by the students. Students should expect to meet in a seminar format once a week, and in regular smaller tutorial style groups either weekly or every other week unless we decide on a different format.

Requirements/Evaluation: short (750 word) weekly seminar or tutorial response papers, several 6000 word tutorial papers, and a 12,000 word final paper.

Prerequisites: required of, and open only to, senior Philosophy majors

Enrollment Limit: 10

Enrollment Preferences: senior Philosophy majors only

Expected Class Size: 8-9

Grading: no pass/fail option, no fifth course option

Unit Notes: Required for all majors

Distributions: (D2)

Fall 2020

SEM Section: R1 MR 1:30 pm - 2:45 pm Jana Sawicki
SEM Section: R2 MR 3:15 pm - 4:30 pm Jana Sawicki

PHIL 491 (F) Senior Essay: Philosophy

This course involves Independent Study under the supervision of a member of the department. The objective is the presentation and writing of a senior essay (maximum 40 pages).

Grading: no pass/fail option, yes fifth course option

Distributions: (D2)

Fall 2020

HON Section: H1 TBA Jana Sawicki
PHIL 493 (F) Senior Thesis: Philosophy
This course involves independent study under the supervision of a member of the department. The objective is the preparation and writing of a senior thesis (maximum 75 pages). This is part of a full-year thesis (493-494).
Grading: no pass/fail option, yes fifth course option
Distributions: (D2)

Fall 2020
HON Section: H1 TBA Jana Sawicki

PHIL 494 (S) Senior Thesis: Philosophy
This course involves independent study under the supervision of a member of the department. The objective is the preparation and writing of a senior thesis (maximum 75 pages). This is part of a full-year thesis (493-494).
Grading: no pass/fail option, yes fifth course option
Distributions: (D2)

Spring 2021
HON Section: 01 TBA Jana Sawicki

PHIL 497 (F) Independent Study: Philosophy
Philosophy independent study.
Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option
Distributions: (D2)

Fall 2020
IND Section: H1 TBA Jana Sawicki

PHIL 498 (S) Independent Study: Philosophy
Philosophy independent study.
Grading: yes pass/fail option, yes fifth course option
Distributions: (D2)

Spring 2021
IND Section: 01 TBA Jana Sawicki

Winter Study

PHIL 30 (W) Senior Essay: Philosophy
Philosophy senior essay.
Class Format: senior essay
Grading: pass/fail only
Not offered current academic year

PHIL 31 (W) Senior Thesis or Essay: Philosophy
To be taken by students registered for Philosophy 491 or 493-494.
PHIL 99 (W) Independent Study: Philosophy
Open to upperclass students. Students interested in doing an independent project (99) during Winter Study must make prior arrangements with a faculty sponsor. The student and professor then complete the independent study proposal form available online. The deadline is typically in late September. Proposals are reviewed by the pertinent department and the Winter Study Committee. Students will be notified if their proposal is approved prior to the Winter Study registration period.

Class Format: independent study
Grading: pass/fail only
Not offered current academic year