

Philosophy Courses - Fall 2022

PHIL 150: Introduction to Logic

Professor:
Peter van Elswyk
Time:
MWF 10:00-10:50 AM

In a slogan, logic is about what follows from what. It concerns when information is guaranteed to be true because of how it is related to other true information. To learn a logic is to learn a formal language with its own rules (like a math or programming language), and to develop skill using this formal language. A logic is then used to figure out whether arguments are good or bad in roughly two steps. First, the argument is represented in a logic. Second, the argument is assessed by seeing whether it is constructed in a way where the argument's conclusion follows. Good arguments have conclusions that are guaranteed to be true when the premises are true because of how they are constructed; bad arguments do not. In this course, you will learn two logics: truth-functional logic and first-order logic. Truth-functional logic concerns arguments involving "and," "or," "if," and "not." First-order logic builds on truth-functional logic to concern complex arguments involving "every," "none," and "some."

PHIL 216 Introduction to Pragmatism

Professor:
Axel Mueller
Time:
MW 3:30-4:50 PM

Classics of Pragmatist Thought

Pragmatism is probably the first, but certainly the most important genuinely North American philosophical tradition. The classical writings of Peirce, James, Dewey set the stage for a completely new orientation in epistemology, moral and political theory, psychology and many other fields. Basic to all Pragmatist writers is the belief that the active and interactive human being in its natural and social environment has to stand at the center of reflection. They thus emphasize volitional, procedural, social, and evolutionary aspects of knowledge of any kind. Given this focus on practically involved intelligent agents, political pragmatists like Dewey, Addams, Locke explore the natural origins, revisability and legitimacy of moral and political norms. They develop the idea of a critical use of knowledge and its connection to non-violent democratic conduct. Neopragmatists (Rorty and Putnam) explore the philosophical and political implications of critical thinking.

PHIL 216: Introduction to Pragmatism

Professor:
José Medina
Time:
MW 2:00-3:30 PM

This course provides a broad overview of philosophical discussions of race and racism in American culture. In this overview, we will focus on phenomenological issues concerning the experience of race (especially in the US), epistemological issues concerning racial distortions and racial ignorance, and ethical and political issues concerning racial oppression. Some of the central questions that we will address are: How should we understand the concept of race and the processes of racialization through which people come to see themselves as having a racial identity? What are the different kinds of racial injustice that we can identify, and the different kinds of exclusion, subordination, marginalization and stigmatization that can be part of racial oppression? How should racial oppression be resisted? How should racial violence be stopped? How should we build racial solidarity and fight for racial justice? We will also explore the connections between race and other identity categories such as gender, sexuality, class, ethnicity, religion, and nationality.

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PHIL 253: Introduction to the Philosophy of Language

Professor:
Megan Hyska
Time:
TTh 9:30 - 10:50
AM

This is an introduction to the philosophy of language taught through a combination of classic philosophical texts and works of literature. Some questions we will ask may include: What is meaning? Can we ever really communicate with one another and, if so, how? How radically might a language differ from your own while still being a language? How does language mediate our politics and the way we conduct science? How do metaphors and similes work?

PHIL 262: Ethical Problems and Public Issues

Professor:
Chad Horne
Time:
TTh 2:00-3:20 PM

A study of ethical problems arising in public policy, as well as philosophical approaches to addressing these problems. Topics to be discussed include punishment, immigration, climate change, and global distributive justice.

PHIL 325: Philosophy of Mind: Persons and Minds

Professor:
Peter van Elswyk
Time:
TTh 2:00-3:20 PM

What are we? This is much is clear: we have bodies and minds. But how are we---whatever we are---related to these things? A theory of personal identity answers this question. It details whether having a body and a mind are essential or not to what we are. In this course, we will consider a variety of different answers such as: the view that we are souls (dualism), the view that we are first-person perspectives (constitutionalism), the view that we are mere animals (animalism), and the view that we are nothing at all (nihilism). Along the way, we will also consider the relevance of personal identity to questions like when life begins, the afterlife, and what it is to be conscious.

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PHIL 360: Topics in Moral Philosophy

Professor:
Kyla Ebels-Duggan
Time:
TTh 2:00- 3:00 PM

In the years leading up to World War II, Oxford University limited the enrollment of women to no more than 20% of undergraduate students. The war produced a brief natural experiment in what might happen if women were instead allowed full access. In moral philosophy, the result was the emergence of at least three major thinkers. Elizabeth Anscombe, Iris Murdoch, and Philippa Foot each carved out distinctive positions, but all defended the objectivity of morality and meaningfulness of claims about value. Together, they arguably deserve credit for keeping Anglophone ethics alive through a period in which certain orthodoxies of logical positivism threatened to undermine the subject. Their work on virtue, moral motivation, and goodness, among other themes, has proved more enduring than that of most of their mid-century opponents and is enjoying a resurgence of influence in contemporary moral philosophy. We will compare and contrast their approaches, both with the going views of their day and with one another. We will seek to understand why their influence persists, what lessons we can learn from them, and how we might further develop their views.

PHIL 361: Feminist Perspectives on Class, Labor, and Commodification

Professor:
Laura Martin
Time:
TTh 11:00-12:20 PM

This course will explore issues in feminist philosophy with particular focus on the relationship between patriarchal oppression and capitalism. Beginning with foundational questions, we will ask how capitalism alters the nature of women's oppression. Does it intensify it or provide preconditions for women's emancipation? How did the status of women change in the shift from feudalism to capitalism, and what lessons can be drawn from this history for current political struggles? In what ways are categories such as work, the wage, and the public-private split gendered? We will also explore related issues, such as the debate over the political status of housework, the ethics of commodifying women's reproductive and sexual capacities, the concept of emotional labor, and what it means to provide an intersectional analysis. Readings may include Marx, Engels, Hartmann, Federici, Mies, Davis, Hochschild, and Fraser.

PHIL 390: Philosophy of Law: Constitutional Theory

Professor:
Josh Kleinfeld
Time:
MW 3:30-4:50 PM

This course will address special topics in the philosophy of law, taking up one or more specific issues of philosophical interest such as the legitimacy of judicial review, theories of constitutional or statutory interpretation, or particular books, legal theorists, or schools of thought. Although an introductory course with no prerequisites, it will not focus on questions of the nature of law or the clash between legal positivists and natural lawyers.