

Philosophy & Religious Studies

Course Listings
Spring 2016



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PHILOSOPHY AND
INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES

Introduction to Philosophy – PHIL 1310
Prof. Dohmen – MWF 12:00-12:50 (CRN: 11999)
– WEB (CRN: 11728)

This course is a survey of basic themes in philosophy, addressing such fundamental concerns as the nature of morality and beauty, the relation of mind and body, and the existence of free will, through discussion and analysis of readings.

Introduction to Critical Thinking – PHIL 1330 (CRN: 11729)
WEB – Instructor TBA

An introduction to reasoning skills. This course focuses on the recognition of informal fallacies and the nature, use, and evaluation of arguments, as well as the basic characteristics of inductive and deductive arguments.

Introduction to Logic – PHIL 2350 (CRN: 12006)
TR 9:25-10:40 – Instructor TBA

An introduction to deductive logic including translation of sentences into formal systems, immediate inferences, syllogisms, formal fallacies, proofs of validity, and quantification.

Ethics and Society – PHIL 2320
multiple sections, see Schedule of Classes

This course features a study of selected texts reflecting a variety of ethical systems—with at least one major text from each of four historical periods (antiquity, medieval, early modern, and contemporary). Ethical theories examined will include: deontology, utilitarianism, and virtue theory.

Ancient Greek Philosophy — PHIL 3345 (CRN: 13763)
Prof. Robinson — MW 1:40-2:55

What is known in the West as ‘philosophy’ began in Ancient Greece in the sixth and fifth centuries BCE. But why bother studying thinkers who lived over 2,000 years ago? One fundamental reason is that the Greeks laid the foundation for Western culture and the traditions of Western philosophy and science. The Greeks are our intellectual ancestors, and so to understand something of their achievements is to open a window onto our own culture and ourselves. In this course we will read texts from Thales to Aristotle in order to dip into this legacy that has shaped Western culture. But there’s a second reason for studying these long dead philosophers. Many of their solutions to the great problems and questions of philosophy are still alive and remain vitally important and relevant today. Take Plato. The great British philosopher Alfred North Whitehead famously declared that the European tradition of philosophy is a series of ‘footnotes to Plato.’ In studying Plato we encounter questions that are relevant today. What is knowledge? Are values relative? Should we act in accordance with a law even if it is unjust? What is the best human life? In reading Plato we are also confronted by answers to these questions that challenge our contemporary modes of living and thinking. In this course we will read the Greeks because they still speak to us and can teach us about the meaning and value of human existence.

Philosophy of Law — PHIL 3347 (CRN: 13796)
Prof. Davidson — WEB

Laws must be supported by proof of their legitimacy—as well as by force. But what legitimates laws? Is it conformity to moral justice, or the will of the majority, or contractual consent between individuals, or rulers’ power to ensure obedience? We will analyze these legitimations of legal order through their historical development and through their strongest critics. Topics include punishment, ideology, libertarianism, implicit consent, and revolution.

Philosophy of Religion
PHIL 3360 (CRN: 13791) / RELS 3360 (CRN: 14360)
Prof. Norton — TR 3:05-4:20

As an academic discipline, what is usually called ‘philosophy of religion’ is concerned with topics such as the existence and nature of God, the immortality of the soul, and the rational justification of these and other religious beliefs. However, we can also understand philosophy of religion to have the nature of religion itself as topic. What makes something a ‘religion,’ certain kinds of beliefs or practices? Which ones? What distinguishes the religious from the ethical, political, or aesthetic? In this class, we will cover both of these forms of philosophy of religion – though we will focus more on the second. After spending a couple of weeks looking at traditional arguments and counter-arguments concerning the existence and nature of God, we’ll explore a wide variety of perspectives on what religion is and how it works. Our readings will cover ideas about religion from philosophers such as Kant, Schleiermacher, Feuerbach, Wittgenstein, Irigaray, and Derrida (among others)—as well contemporary theorists of religion working in fields other than philosophy—including topics like faith, ritual, morality, and salvation.

Feminist Theory — PHIL 4333 (CRN: 13792)
Prof. Dohmen — TR 10:50-12:05

Historically, philosophy has had a tendency to stay away from messy topics like pregnancy and birth, vomit and shit, skin and wounds, cyborgs and disease. In other words, philosophy has avoided our concrete embodiments. One trend within feminist thought has been an attempt to recover the body, to make it central to philosophy. In this class, we will consider feminist thinkers who have engaged with the body, and who fall broadly within four camps: psychoanalysis, phenomenology, poststructuralism, and disability theory. Such thinkers include the well-known Julia Kristeva, Luce Irigaray, Iris Marion Young, Sandra Lee Bartky, Angela Davis, Judith Butler, Donna Haraway, Susan Wendell, and Rosemarie Garland Thomson. We will also spend time on more recent works by the likes of Alison Kafer, Gayle Salamon, and Elizabeth Wilson. [Graduate section: PHIL 5333 — CRN: 13794]

Nietzsche's Process Legacy — PHIL 4380 (CRN: 12008)

Prof. Robinson — TR 1:40-2:55

This course seeks to introduce students to the problems, texts, and concepts of modern process philosophy as a series of responses to some of the key questions of philosophy. At the center of the course is the great 19th-century German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche. Nietzsche typically addresses the great questions of philosophy—for example, questions about the nature, form, and purpose of life, time, and consciousness—in relation to the concepts of becoming, change, and fluidity. The fundamental 'stuff' of the world is here understood not as a fixed material substance or 'thing' but as a 'process' of becoming. A substance with fixed properties is replaced by a fluid series of complex and interrelated events. A river is not an 'object' but a flowing, ever-changing process such that 'one cannot step twice into the same river.' Beneath consciousness there lies a turbulent vortex of force relations, and behind the 'deed' there is no 'doer' but a chaos of impulses struggling for expression. However, the nature and conception of this processual reality varies throughout the tradition, and Nietzsche's thought points us back to the great 'fire' of the pre-Socratic thinker Heraclitus and toward the concept of 'difference' of the 'postmodern' philosopher Gilles Deleuze. In this course we will concentrate on Nietzsche and Nietzsche's 20th-century process 'heirs'—primarily Bergson, James, Whitehead, and Deleuze—and contrast them in order to examine the value and significance of process thought as a contemporary philosophy.

[Graduate section: PHIL 5380 — CRN: 13151]

3000- and 4000-level PHIL courses generally have PHIL 1310, PHIL 2320, or instructor consent as their prerequisite

World Religions — RELS 2305

Prof. Hale — TR 10:50-12:05 (CRN: 12009)

This course examines the global patterns of contemporary world religions as symbol systems and expressions of discrete, coherent world views. It focuses on the particular histories, practices, and beliefs of the major world religions.

Food and Faith — RELS 4385 (CRN: 14368)

Prof. Dahlan-Taylor — WEB

This course will explore the relationship between food and religion in the teachings and traditions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. It includes discussions of the way food practices contribute to the formation of religious identity, and how such formation have changed from pre-modern to modern times. The course will also discuss the ethical aspect of food, by focusing on the issue of meat-eating in the context of industrial farming and food production.

RELS 4385 fulfills the Religious Studies Minor requirement in "Major Religious Traditions"

Religion, Society, and Culture — RELS 4321 (CRN: 12010)

Prof. Hale — TR 12:15-1:30

This course deals with the anthropology of religion, so we will read and discuss material dealing with religion from an anthropological perspective. The articles we read will focus on religion as it is practiced, rather than abstract or idealized ideas about religion. Topics will include myth, ritual, shamanism, altered states of consciousness, healing, witchcraft, and sorcery. The class will be conducted mainly through discussions. Insights from various backgrounds and fields of study are encouraged.

Students enrolling in 1000- or 2000-level PHIL or RELS courses are advised to have completed (or be concurrently enrolled in) RHET 1311