Philosophy & Religious Studies

Course Listings
Summer & Fall 2018

Summer 2018 Courses

1st Term: May 29 – July 2 • 2nd Term: July 9 – Aug 10

Ethics and Society — PHIL 2320
On Campus (2nd Term): Prof. Robinson — MTWRF 12:00-1:30
Multiple Sections Online (see Schedule of Classes)
1st & 2nd term

Introduction to Philosophy — PHIL 1310
Prof. Thomas — WEB (CRN: 30246 / UALR Online: 32203)
2nd term

Intro to Logic — PHIL 2350
Prof. Spino — WEB (CRN: 30902 / UALR Online: 31723)
1st term

World Religions — RELS 2305
Prof. Hale — WEB (CRN: 30038 / UALR Online: 31498)
2nd term

Free Will — PHIL 4380 (Topics in Philosophy)
Prof. Spino — WEB (CRN: 31724 / UALR Online: 31725)
2nd term

Many people accept that objects in the universe are governed by scientific laws, even if we don’t have perfect knowledge of said laws. But since people exist within the universe as well, are we not subject to the same kinds of laws? This course will focus on the philosophical and psychological issues surrounding the possibility of free will. In particular, we will focus on the following question: if all motion in the universe, including chemical reactions and neuronal interactions in the brain, is determined by scientific laws we have no control over, are our consciousness decisions really up to us? Or are they the inevitable result of complex scientific equations? We will also consider the relationship of free will with moral responsibility. Moral responsibility and holding people acceptable for what they do seems to presuppose a free will, so any threat to free will is a threat to how we judge the actions of others (and ourselves!).

Summer course offerings may change subject to availability of instructors and expected enrollment; check the Schedule of Classes online or ask your advisor for the most up-to-date information.
Fall 2018 Courses

Introduction to Philosophy — PHIL 1310  
Prof. McAuliffe — MWF 11:00-11:50 (CRN: 60345)

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.

Ethics and Society — PHIL 2320  
Multiple Sections On-Campus and Online, 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. Ethical theories examined will include: deontology, utilitarianism, and virtue theory.  
Fulfills Core Curriculum requirement: Humanities

Introduction to Logic — PHIL 2350  
Prof. Spino — MWF 10:00-10:50 (CRN: 65452)

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

World Religions — RELS 2305  
Prof. Taylor — WEB (CRN 60681 / UALR Online: 62875)

This course examines the beliefs, practices, histories, and selected sacred texts of major Eastern and Western religions, including Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Daoism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. It emphasizes themes that reflect common values across different religious perspectives while acknowledging key differences.  
Fulfills Core Curriculum requirement: Humanities

Modern Philosophy — PHIL 3320  
Prof. Thomas — TR 1:40-2:55 (CRN: 60353)

The Modern Era is typically taken to be between 1600 and 1800 (from Shakespeare to Beethoven), and marked by the development of empirical science and the rejection of religious scholasticism. The focus of this course will be on early modern philosophy, primarily the rationalists (such as Descartes) and the empiricists (such as Hume), but we will also spend some time looking at the philosophers who set the stage for the Modern era, coeval philosophical developments outside of Europe, and how the problems raised by the Modern philosophers shaped later philosophical approaches—problems such as: what beliefs should we reject or accept? what can we know on the basis of our senses alone? or on the basis of reason alone? what sorts of things are there to know about?  
Philosophy major: counts toward History of Philosophy

Medical Ethics — PHIL 3335  
Prof. Spino — TR 10:50-12:05 (CRN: 62563)

In this course, we will focus on thinking critically about ethical problems that arise in the fields of medicine and bio-engineering. The course is organized around the three areas of medical procedures, medical research, and medical resources. We will consider ethical challenges surrounding specific medical procedures, like abortion, euthanasia, and cosmetic surgeries; we will consider ethical challenges for medical research, like privacy, informed consent, and the moral status of research animals; and we will consider ethical challenges connected to public health and scarce medical resources, like organ transplantation, triage, and public healthcare. Special emphasis will be placed on the relationship between ethical theory and public policies governing medical practice.  
Philosophy major: counts toward Moral/Political Philosophy

3000- and 4000-level PHIL courses generally have PHIL 1310, PHIL 2320, or instructor consent as their prerequisite. Students enrolling in 1000- or 2000-level PHIL or RELS courses are advised to have completed (or be concurrently enrolled in) RHET 1311.
Ethics Bowl — PHIL 3386  
Prof. Spino — meeting time TBD (CRN: 64673)

This course is an advanced applied ethics course taught with a focus on specific case studies created by the Association for Practical and Professional Ethics for a regional debate competition each year. Students will have the opportunity to engage with ethical problems on wide ranging topics, such as social and political ethics (e.g., gun control or national health care), global issues (e.g., economic globalization or global warming), personal responsibility (e.g., local activism), and academic topics (e.g., plagiarism or academic freedom), to name only a few possibilities. Work on the case studies will allow students to improve not only their research and writing ability, but their oral communication skills as well. Much of the course will involve structured, in-class debate.

The course will also prepare students to participate in a regional Ethics Bowl (held in mid-November in Indianapolis) as part of the UA Little Rock Ethics Bowl Team. While participation on the Ethics Bowl Team will be encouraged, it will not be required.

The course will meet regularly each week like a normal seminar course, but its meeting time will be determined to meet the needs of the students’ schedules.

For more information about the Ethics Bowl Team, visit:  
http://ualr.edu/philosophy/orgs/ethics-bowl/

For more information about the structure, rules, and guidelines of Ethics Bowl competitions, as well as cases from past years, visit:  
http://appe.indiana.edu/ethics-bowl/ethics-bowl/

Instructor consent is required to register for this course; contact Prof. Spino prior to registering.

Existentialism — PHIL 3370  
Prof. Robinson — W 6:00-8:40 (CRN: 60355)

“I was born here and I’ll die here against my will” – Bob Dylan

This course seeks to introduce students to the central ideas of existentialism, perhaps the most influential movement in 20th century philosophy, by examining the development of existentialist concepts and themes in philosophical texts as well as film and literature. Existentialism captured the attention of a generation and became a way of living expressed in art, cinema, literature, fashion and journalism. In philosophy, literature, and film, existentialist ideas problematized our understanding of freedom and responsibility and challenged our attitudes to the meaning of life and death. Existential thinkers paid special attention to ‘moods’ like nausea, anguish, and anxiety and the ways in which they structure our experience of daily life. Only by embracing these moods and refusing any external determination of value could the individual live a life of authenticity and freedom. The objective of our course will be to examine the development of these existentialist themes in philosophy, literature, and film to see whether they capture not just the thought of a certain period, but say something of lasting significance about the meaning of life and the human condition.

Philosophy of Race — PHIL 4373  
Prof. McAuliffe — MW 1:40-2:55 (CRN: 65453)

The meaning of race seems to change daily as national conversations confront which economic disparities, incidences of violence, and social marginalizations are impacted by the legacy of racial injustice in the U.S. This course will help us understand how we got here, by exploring the conceptual history of racial categorization in the U.S. We will consider the ways that the significance of social identity is continually altered by a combination of self-understanding, social location, and the ways gender, race, class, sexuality, ethnicity and nationality affect each other. Critical philosophers of race have confronted the logic of imperialism by decolonizing thought, resisted carceral logics through abolitionist ones, and vivified the ethics of diversity through a critique of the terms of inclusion. Engaging with the philosophy of race will thus help us anticipate how up to the minute changes in the social world will affect the future of social justice in the U.S.

Graduate section: PHIL 5373 (CRN: 65454)
Theories of Religion — RELS 3300  
Prof. Hale — TR 9:25-10:40 (CRN: 65455)

This course familiarizes students with a variety of theoretical approaches and methods used in the study of religions, both currently and historically. It also highlights central issues that arise in studying religions from the academic perspective, including but not limited to: the difficulties of defining religion, the differences between “insider” and “outsider” perspectives, the challenges present in comparing religions, and attempts to explain the origin of religion.

Psychology of Religion — RELS 3363  
Prof. Jones — WEB (CRN: 61743 | UALR Online: 63791)

Understanding religious behavior and experience has long been an interest in psychological research. Religion, however, has proven to be a difficult area for traditional scientific approaches and research given the seemingly unique place and scope that it has in our lives. This course will seek to examine various psychological perspectives on religion with particular focus on the varieties of religious experience, the nature of religious belief, psychological interpretations of religious experiences and practices, the findings of neuroscience with regards to religious phenomena, and the role of religion via its intersection and application in counseling.

Cross-listed as PSYC 3363

Religion, Society, and Culture — RELS 4321  
Prof. Hale — TR 10:50-12:05 (CRN: 63456)

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.

Cross-listed as ANTH 4321 and SOCI 4321

History of Apocalyptic Thought — RELS 4313  
Prof. Ross — TR 12:15-1:30 (CRN 65680)

Same as HIST 4313

Why Should I Study Philosophy?

“Philosophers are comfortable in the courtroom, control room, or boardroom. They are trained in public expression and mental discipline, both crucial skills for managers, executives, lawyers, and leaders. ... Philosophy teaches a person to engage not with the superficial symptoms of surrounding society, but, like a good MD, to consider the deeper history and structural causes.”

(“A Case for Majoring in Philosophy,” Forbes.com)

“Philosophy classes taught me something applicable to any and every job: clarity of thought. Name me one aspect of your life that doesn’t benefit from being able to think something through clearly. Because it delivers real skills, philosophy doesn’t go out of fashion the way the trendy subjects do.”

(“Be Employable, Study Philosophy,” Salon.com)

“In the US, where the number of philosophy graduates increased by 5% a year during the 1990s, only a very few go on to become philosophers. Their employability is impressive by any standard. ... Philosophy is the ultimate transferable work skill.”


“Philosophy is to be studied, not for the sake of any definite answers to its questions since no definite answers can, as a rule, be known to be true, but rather for the sake of the questions themselves; because these questions enlarge our conception of what is possible, enrich our intellectual imagination and diminish the dogmatic assurance which closes the mind against speculation; but above all because, through the greatness of the universe which philosophy contemplates, the mind also is rendered great, and becomes capable of that union with the universe which constitutes its highest good.”

(“The Problems of Philosophy,” Bertrand Russell)