

# **PHILOSOPHY DEPARTMENT COURSE OFFERINGS SPRING 2010**

**Introduction to Philosophy, Philosophy 100W  
Instructor: Dick Liebendorfer**

**The Mind Body Problem, Philosophy 101W  
Instructor: Sun Yu**

**Logic and Critical Thinking, Philosophy 110  
Instructor: John Humphrey**

**Introduction to Ethics, Philosophy 120W  
Instructor: Brandon Cooke**

**Medical Ethics, Philosophy 222W  
Instructor: Jaime Hoffman**

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## **Matt Brophy, Phil 224: Business Ethics**

The intent of this course is to establish that "business ethics" is not an oxymoron: ethics does have a place in business. Throughout the course, we will examine the relationships between business and ethics. For instance, does business have the minimal responsibility not to harm? Or does business have additional obligations, such as preventing harm or even promoting moral good? If business has some moral obligation, to what extent must a business balance sheer profit promotion against these obligations? We will examine "classical" views of business ethics (known as stockholder theory); in contrast, we will also consider another popular contemporary view known as "stakeholder theory."

The objectives of this course are to familiarize you with basic intersections of morality and business practices; to introduce you to ethical issues related to business; and to provide you with an ethical framework, which can help you ethically navigate in the business world. We will examine various moral theories that can be applied to ethics in business: Kantian ethics, utilitarianism, virtue ethics, entitlement theory, social contract theory, and feminist ethics of care, among others.

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## **Craig Matarrese, PHIL 226w: Environmental Ethics**

Questions about human responsibilities to other animals and the environment gain urgency as environmental crises become more prevalent and animal species continue to be eliminated. This course examines what various philosophical approaches have to offer regarding the environment, as well as what challenges environmental problems pose for philosophy. In addition to looking at classical texts about the welfare of animals, human ties to the ecosystem, the idea of wilderness, and theories of the intrinsic value of nature, we will also consider alternatives to traditional environmental ethics, including deep ecology, ecofeminism, and environmental pragmatism.

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## **Matt Brophy, PHIL 321: Social & Political Philosophy**

In this course, we will study some of the most fundamental issues in political philosophy: Why have a government? What kind of government, if any, is morally justified? What is the moral responsibility of the citizen to the laws of the state? When (if ever) is revolution justified? To what liberties are citizens entitled? Ought the government at all determine how resources are distributed, and if so how?

We will examine the philosophical grounds of several political viewpoints: political liberalism, libertarianism, communitarianism, socialism and egalitarianism. Though our reading will focus primarily on political theories, we will consider several contemporary political and social issues, (which help illustrate these theories): illegal immigration, homosexual marriage, freedom of speech, eugenics & reproductive technology, liberty vs. security post-9-11, animal ethics, responsibility to future generations, the role of government in business, etc.

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## **Dick Liebendorfer, PHIL 336: History of Modern Philosophy**

We will read and critically discuss some of the most important philosophical texts of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This period in the history of philosophy is an important and interesting one. The principal controversies of the time were those between rationalists and empiricists on the one hand and idealists and realists on the other. These controversies are interesting on their own. However, they also gave birth to ideas that have preoccupied philosophers ever since. Much philosophy of the current century can be understood only as a reaction to ideas developed by philosophers from Rene Descartes to Immanuel Kant. Thus the modern period is of interest not only in its own right but also for the influence it has had on later philosophers. As we proceed we will look at some of this influence.

TEXT: MODERN PHILOSOPHY: AN ANTHOLOGY OF PRIMARY SOURCES, EDITED BY ROGER ARIEW AND ERIC WATKINS

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## **John Humphrey, Philosophy 361: Philosophy of Religion**

During the semester, we will analyze, clarify, critique, (recreate?) key concepts of religion, including God, miracles, religious experience, faith, evil, the supernatural, order and design, morality, immortality, creationism and evolution, to name the most prominent. We will also examine many of the most significant arguments for the existence of God (and critiques thereof) by philosophers throughout the history of philosophy, including St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Anselm, the infamous monk Gaunilo, David Hume, William James, John Hick, Alvin Plantinga, among others. Time permitting, I would like to examine some of the recent work by the so-called neo-atheists, Sam Harris, Richard Dawkins and Daniel Dennett. I would also like to make time to think and write about a number of recent documentaries on religion, including perhaps *Jesus Camp*, *The God Who Wasn't There*, *The Four Horsemen*, among others. (Popcorn WILL NOT be provided).

The texts/readings for the course have yet to be finalized (some texts, some handouts, some material culled from the web, etc.) but course requirements will include enough reading and written assignments to allow us all a satisfying philosophical experience. An open mind and a willingness to read, write, speak and think rigorously and judiciously are the only prerequisites.

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## **Dick Liebendorfer, PHIL 437/537: Contemporary Philosophy**

In this course will study some of the central themes, issues and texts of twentieth century philosophy. Among the topics we will take up are the grounds of knowledge, the nature of reality, the relation of the mind to the body, the relation of thought and language to the world, the nature of truth, the difference between fact and value and the importance of history as a backdrop against which all of the foregoing topics are considered. We will address these topics as they arise in the following texts, portions of which will (likely) serve as our texts: *Language, Truth and Logic* by A.J. Ayer, *The Threefold Cord: Mind, Body and World* by Hilary Putnam and *Ways of World Making* by Nelson Goodman. In addition to portions of the foregoing we will read some additional essays by W.V.O Quine, Donald Davidson and Richard Rorty. Goodman's *Ways of World Making*, as well as other readings, opens the possibility of cognitive and moral relativism, a possibility already lurking in themes that run through 20<sup>th</sup>, now 21<sup>st</sup>, century philosophy. Possible readings advocating kinds of relativism include articles by Sandra Harding and others. Other readings argue against the coherence of relativism; for example, an article by Donald Davidson titled "On the Very idea of a Conceptual Scheme."

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## **Craig Matarrese, PHIL 440/540: Philosophy of Law**

This course explores some of the basic philosophical issues in law by connecting legal problems to well-developed and traditional problems in philosophy, e.g., in ethics, political philosophy, and epistemology, and investigates the philosophical underpinnings of the development of law. Philosophers tend to take a much more analytical approach to law (as opposed to historical, sociological, political, or legalistic approaches) than others who write on the subject, and this course will consider, for example, writings by Ronald Dworkin and Richard Posner, both of whom have written widely on issues in law, and who are considered by many to be among the most influential legal theorists today. We'll also look at books by two sitting Supreme Court Justices: Stephen Breyer and Antonin Scalia.

For Spring 2010, the course will focus on the First Amendment, and will be team-taught with Business Law professor Dan Levin. The course considers the following questions: What does "Free Speech" mean in the United States? How does the First Amendment impact an employee's right to express himself or herself at work? Do corporations and labor unions have a right to free speech? Why did America's founders wish to prevent an official government religion? When can an employer require that his or her employees be of a particular religion? How does the First Amendment impact an employee's right to practice his or her religion?

In the course, students will: (1) become familiar with basic philosophical approaches to law; (2) understand how traditional areas in the history of philosophy have been broadened to include problems in law, for example, the way epistemological ideas and claims have been used to evaluate the truth and validity of legal claims, or the way various ethical and political theories have been employed to evaluate the fundamental principles and development of law; (3) develop their own analytical and critical abilities as they learn about these philosophical and legal theories and apply them to current issues in law.

Some previous exposure to philosophy is desirable but not required for the course. Some of the reading will be quite challenging, but the course aims to help students grapple with these difficult texts. Those who make a real effort to engage these writings should do fine, and should get a good deal out of it.

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## **Jaime Hoffman, PHIL 450/550: Special Topics: Philosophy and Literature**

In this course, we will consider the relationship between philosophy and literature. To this end, we will ask how philosophical and literary studies can inform each other. Some have thought philosophy and literature address the same sorts of questions in different ways and with different results. We will ask to what extent this is true. Particular attention will be paid to questions relating to morality and the good life and how philosophy and literature can help us to think about what these involve.

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## **Brandon Cooke, PHIL 465/565: Philosophy of Film**

This course investigates some of the central philosophical issues in our thinking about film. What are the defining elements of film? Is it inherently realistic? What is the proper ontological characterization of film? Do films have narrators, and if so, how should these be conceived? What role do artistic intentions play in the interpretation of films? How do we account for our emotional responses to film? Can films develop a spectator's ethical character? Are films with morally evil messages aesthetically bad? Can films "do" philosophy?

This is neither a course in criticism, nor in film history, nor in film technique, though consideration of all of these areas will be necessary for our philosophical purposes. The course will thus focus largely on the work of philosophers, rather than critics or theorists. That said, we will continually be asking about the significance of the examined philosophical theories to our critical appreciation of film as an art.

We will view approximately one film per week. On our first class meeting, we will arrange a separate 2-hour regular screening time. Those who are unable to attend screenings will need to make sure to see the films on their own time.

**Recommended Prerequisites:** PHIL 460 (Philosophy of the Arts) or two philosophy classes.

### **Likely Course Texts:**

Livingston and Plantinga, *Routledge Companion to the Philosophy of Film*  
Carroll and Choi, *Philosophy of Film and Motion Pictures*

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## **Sun Yu, PHIL 481/581: Philosophy of Biology**

From Charles Darwin's theory of evolution to the Human Genome Project, biology has made a profound impact on our society as well as science and technology. Many issues, especially, the conceptual and methodological issues, emerged in contemporary biological sciences, including evolutionary biology, developmental biology, molecular biology, and neuroscience, and have led us to examine and discuss them.

In this course we will explore several topics: What is Darwinian evolutionary theory? What is species? What are biological functions? What is the gene? Does biology differ from chemistry and physics? These are not the questions that philosophers can readily answer. Neither can they be answered by scientific research itself. Philosophy, biological sciences and other disciplines should meet together in order to find the answers.

No previous background in biology or philosophy is presupposed. Students from all fields are welcome.

Texts: Alex Rosenberg and Daniel W. McShea, 2008, *Philosophy of Biology*, Routledge  
Kim Sterelny and Paul E. Griffiths, 1999, *Sex and Death*, Univ. of Chicago Press