Philosophy Course Offerings
Spring 2022
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SO = Synchronous Online
AO = Asynchronous Online

Courses in orange satisfy general education requirements.
PHIL 1101 (Objective 4A): Introduction to Philosophy

*Multiple sections offered. See BengalWeb class schedule.*

An introduction to major thinkers and major problems in philosophy. Topics may include the existence of God, the nature of knowledge, and the meaning of life.

PHIL 1103 (Objective 4A): Introduction to Ethics

*Multiple sections offered. See BengalWeb class schedule.*

How should we live? This is the fundamental question of ethics, and it is in this sense that ethics, as a branch of philosophy, is practical rather than theoretical: it is concerned not primarily with what to believe or with what exists but with what to do, how to act. This course will introduce you to some of the most important questions that arise in ethics: What would constitute a good human life? What is the highest good? What is the foundation of morality? Can moral claims be objectively true or false? What could make them true or false? What is the content of morality? What (kinds of) actions are morally right or wrong, and why? Why should I be moral? What is the relationship between morality and self-interest? Is it always in my interest to behave morally? If so, how?
PHIL 2201 (Objective 7): Introduction to Logic
01: MWF 10:00-10:50
Instructor: Michael Roche
This course is an introduction to logic. After a brief introduction to certain basic logical concepts, we will turn our attention to three systems of deductive logic: categorical, sentential, and predicate. Each system will allow us to represent in a very precise way the logical structure that underlies certain of our own statements in natural language. For each system, we will first learn to translate English statements into that system. Once appropriately translated, we will then learn to test both individual statements and sets of statements for various interesting properties, focusing mostly on validity. In addition to deductive logic, we will also study various informal fallacies. Students successful in this course will greatly improve both their own reasoning skills and their ability to evaluate the reasoning of others.

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PHIL 2210 (Objective 9): Introduction to Asian Philosophies
01: MW 2:30-3:45 SO
Instructor: Evan Rodriguez
A study of Hindu, Buddhist, Confucian, and Taoist approaches to topics such as immortality, time, knowledge, reality, mystical experience, and the question of duty.

PHIL 2230: Medical Ethics
01: AO Online
Instructor: Ralph Baergen
02, 03: AO Online
Instructor: Nobel Ang
Could lying to or deceiving a patient ever be justified? How far does a patient’s right to refuse treatment extend? Who should make decisions for the patient if she is unable? Is it ever permissible to help a patient die? To what extent should conscientious refusal among health care workers be permitted? Is it unethical for health care workers to participate in executions? Is abortion ever morally justified? Is it ever unjustified? How should scarce medical resources like donor organs be distributed? To what extent do citizens have a right to basic health care?
PHIL 3353: Philosophy of Law
01: TR 1:00-2:15
02: TR 1:00-2:15 SO
Instructor: James Skidmore

What exactly is a law? What distinguishes laws from mere rules or commands? How should we interpret general constitutional phrases such as “cruel and unusual punishment” or “equal protection of the laws?” When is it permissible—or obligatory—for a citizen to break the law? Is there a constitutional right to privacy? How should law regulate marriage? These are the sorts of theoretical and applied questions we will investigate in this course.

PHIL 3355: Political and Social Philosophy
01: TR 11:00-12:15
02: TR 11:00-12:15 SO
Instructor: James Skidmore

Human beings tend to live in societies, rather than simply on our own. This raises important philosophical questions: What is the proper relationship between the individual and society (or the state)? Why should I obey the laws of the society in which I live? What justifies the coercive power of the state? What is the source of its authority? What does it mean to say that individuals have rights (like the right to life or liberty), and what rights must the state respect? How should wealth and other social goods be distributed in societies?
PHIL 4420/5520: Philosophy of mind

01: MW 1:00-2:15
Instructor: Michael Roche

This course is an introduction to the philosophy of mind. Philosophers of mind consider fundamental questions about the nature of the mind and its relationship to the physical body and brain. Questions that we shall consider in this course include: Is the mind just the brain, or is it somehow distinct from the brain and physical body? How do mental events interact with bodily events and behavior? Is it possible for machines to have minds? Can contemporary physical science explain consciousness? To what extent are animal minds like human minds? What do psychopathologies, like schizophrenia and autism, tell us about the mind? How do we come to understand other people’s minds? Philosophical readings will be supplemented with readings from psychology, neuroscience, and science fiction.

PHIL 4454/5554: Topics in Biomedical Ethics

01: AO Online
Instructor: Ralph Baergen

This time the course’s central theme is disease prevention vs. medical treatment. Healthcare providers, their (potential) patients, and policy makers have lots of decisions to make about how much of our time and resources should be spent trying to prevent illness and injury, and how much should be spent treating them once they arise. These choices involve ethical considerations: How should we balance our entitlement to privacy with public health authority’s need to monitor the population’s health? To what extent are we ethically justified in limiting individual liberty in order to keep people safe (e.g., seat belts, helmets, vaccines, face masks)? Would it be ethical to genetically manipulate a human embryo in order to prevent a serious genetic defect?

Course work will involve readings (posted to Moodle as PDF files), watching videos of my presentations on each topic, participating in online discussion forums, and writing a term paper.
PHIL 4460/5560: Theory of Knowledge

01: MW 11:00-12:15 SO
Instructor: Evan Rodriguez

What do we really know? How do we know it? Why care about the truth? In this course, we address such questions through a survey of philosophical accounts of knowledge and its role in our lives. We begin with ancient Greek and Indian philosophers, then look to contemporary reactions to and developments of these ancient perspectives. Along the way, we address specific problems of defining knowledge, understanding its structure, and seeing the ethical implications of the knowledge we have access to. We then take a step back and reflect on the very methodology we have been using to better equip ourselves for effectively seeking answers.