

Philosophy Course Offerings
200-level and above
Fall 2023

Philosophy 215: Philosophy of Religion
Professor Brian Bruya
MW 12:30 – 1:45

What is religion—can it be defined? What does religion do for us culturally, intellectually, ethically, and aesthetically? What is the difference, if any, between religious belief and other kinds of belief—should we insist on the same methods of justifying knowledge claims in religion as we do in science or in law? What does it mean that others have very strong religious beliefs that contradict one’s own very strong religious beliefs—does one group have to be wrong? If so, how can you be sure that your group is the one that is right? What does religion have to do with meaning in life—can atheists have meaningful lives? What does religion have to do with ethics—can sincerely religious people be unethical? How is religion related to community, obligations to others, artistic expression, coping with suffering? What should be done when religious norms and community norms conflict? Is it morally wrong for someone to believe something that is patently false? These are examples of the questions covered in this course. Join us for a rip-roaring exploration! No beliefs required.

PHIL 215 fulfills the General Education requirement for Area IV: Knowledge of the Disciplines in the Humanities.

PHIL 215 fulfills the Knowledge and Reality requirement in the Philosophy Program.

PHIL 220: Ethics
Professor Brian Coffey
Sections offered:
T/Th 12:30 – 1:45
Online Asynchronous

This course will introduce students to the philosophical study of Ethics by exploring the tools and techniques of philosophical inquiry, and utilizing those tools to evaluate several important moral theories. Topics for discussion might include: Is anything really right or wrong, or is it all ‘subjective’? What is the relation of ethics to law? What is its relation to religion, or society? What, if anything, is truly valuable? Which features matter most when judging the ethics of a situation? Is there one best moral theory or do several theories reveal important insights into what we ought to do? etc. We will carefully and critically read both classical and contemporary writings in ethics with the goal of not only understanding what others have written before us, but also how we can use their insights to help us deliberate about ethical choices in our own lives. We will not be passively learning about ethics—we will be *putting our ethical expertise into practice*.

PHIL 220 fulfills the General Education requirement for Area IV: Knowledge of the Disciplines in the Humanities.

PHIL 220 fulfills the Ethics and Value Theory requirement in the Philosophy Program

Philosophy 221: Business Ethics
Instructors TBA
Sections offered:
MW 2:00 – 3:15
Online Asynchronous

A consideration of ethical questions regarding business practices in a global environment. Students will be introduced to ethical theory and critical reasoning. They will use these tools to critically examine the market system itself, as well as practices of multinational business. Students will explore the ethical responsibilities of corporations with regard to employees, consumers, and other stakeholders.

PHIL 221 fulfills the General Education requirement for Area IV: Knowledge of the Disciplines in the Humanities.

PHIL 221 fulfills the Ethics and Value Theory requirement in the Philosophy Program

PHIL 223: Medical Ethics
Professor Brian Coffey
Sections offered:
T/Th 11:00 – 12:15 and 3:30 – 4:45

We trust doctors, nurses, medical scientists, and other healthcare providers to give us the best care possible when we are sick; in many cases we literally put our lives in their hands. Those working in healthcare thus need to be particularly aware and careful of the various ways they may treat their patients unethically. In this course, students will learn about the philosophical study of ethics, and how to use the tools and methods of philosophy to think critically about contentious moral issues. We will discuss various moral issues raised within the context of the practice of medicine, and rigorously evaluate the reasoning that people have given for the stances they have taken on these issues. Topics for discussion might include: abortion, euthanasia, cloning, stem cell research, genetic selection / eugenics, healthcare allocation when resources are scarce, research involving animal and/or human testing.

PHIL 223 fulfills the General Education requirement for Area IV: Knowledge of the Disciplines in the Humanities.

PHIL 223 fulfills the Ethics and Value Theory requirement in the Philosophy Program

PHIL 223: Medical Ethics
Professor Jill Dieterle
Online Asynchronous

This course is an examination of ethical issues in medicine and health care.

The Supreme Court recently overturned *Roe v. Wade*. As a result, the legal status of abortion is now determined by individual states. We will examine the

ethical arguments on both sides of the abortion debate and discuss some of the consequences of legal prohibitions on abortion.

We'll also talk about other topics in medical ethics: pandemic ethics, vaccine refusal, patient autonomy and informed consent, reproductive technology, and genetic screening.

PHIL 223 fulfills the General Education requirement for Area IV: Knowledge of the Disciplines in the Humanities.

PHIL 223 fulfills the Ethics and Value Theory requirement in the Philosophy Program

PHIL 223: Medical Ethics
Professor John Ouko
Online Asynchronous

This course examines the relationships between contemporary values in the medical profession and traditional ethical values. Students will investigate various ethical theories and critically examine controversial issues in medicine such as whether physicians should participate in state-ordered executions, physician assisted suicide, prenatal testing and selective abortion, using preimplantation genetic diagnosis to save a sibling, whether dying babies should be used in experimental medicine (even to help other babies), ethical issues in first-time organ surgeries, et cetera.

PHIL 223 fulfills the General Education requirement for Area IV: Knowledge of the Disciplines in the Humanities.

PHIL 223 fulfills the Ethics and Value Theory requirement in the Philosophy Program

Additional sections of PHIL 223 offered MW 9:30 – 10:45 and 2:00 – 3:15; instructors TBA

PHIL 224: Ethics and Food
Professor Jill Dieterle
T/Th 9:30 – 10:45

Issues related to food, its production and its distribution have garnered international attention in the last decade. This course is devoted to examining those issues from a philosophical/ethical perspective. We will discuss the industrialization of food production, the effect of agriculture on the environment, alternative food movements, food deserts, and the global problem of food insecurity. We will also examine and critique the idea of “responsible consumption” and whether ethical consumers have the power to transform the food system. Finally, we’ll discuss body image and food.

PHIL 224 fulfills the General Education requirement for Area IV: Knowledge of the Disciplines in the Humanities.

PHIL 224 fulfills the Ethics and Value Theory requirement in the Philosophy Program

PHIL 224 counts as an elective in the Environmental Science and Society program.

PHIL 226: Feminist Theory
Professor Kate Mehuron
Online Asynchronous

This course critically evaluates feminist critiques of society and feminist visions of the ideal egalitarian society. Questions examined in this course include: What is a just society? What constitutes equal treatment? What is oppression? How does oppression relate to social equality? How do ethnicity, race, and sexual identities intersect with gender to affect social equality? Are women and men essentially different, or are such differences the result of socialization? What are the major theories, and conceptual differences that inform feminist social change movements? The course will use a variety of feminist philosophical sources to explore these questions.

PHIL 226 fulfills the General Education requirement for either Area IV: Knowledge of the Disciplines in the Humanities or Global Awareness.

PHIL 226 fulfills the Eastern and Global requirement in the Philosophy Program.

PHIL 226: Feminist Theory
Professor Laura McMahon
MW 11:00 – 12:15 (Honors Section) and 3:30 – 4:45

This course engages in a philosophical study of the situation of women in the contemporary world—a situation that is in deep and pervasive respects a situation of inequality and oppression. Part One will inquire into the nature of oppression, not only along gendered lines but also along the lines of race, sexual orientation, and class, and how such oppression plays out in diverse areas of contemporary life. Part Two will examine feminist arguments concerning the social construction of gender and sex, inquiring into the manner in which femininity (and also masculinity) are less natural categories than learned patterns of behavior beginning in early childhood. In Part Three of the course, we will turn to a study of the problems facing women in multicultural contexts, inquiring into the interactions between sexism and cultural imperialism and into more just ways in which we might relate to one another in a global context.

PHIL 226 fulfills the General Education requirement for either Area IV: Knowledge of the Disciplines in the Humanities or Global Awareness.

PHIL 226 fulfills the Eastern and Global requirement in the Philosophy Program.

Additional sections of PHIL 226 offered T/Th 2:00 – 3:15 and online asynchronous; instructors TBA

PHIL 229: Environmental Ethics
Prof. J. Michael Scoville
T/Th 2:00 – 3:15

Contemporary discussions of environmental ethics are animated by a number of questions. Which aspects of nature (or of particular environments) are important or valuable, and why? How does concern for human beings relate to concern for nature or the environment? What policies are needed to address pressing issues such as climate change or the loss of biodiversity? How is sustainability best understood and is it a useful goal for collective action and policy? What sorts of character traits, dispositions, and ways of living do we need to cultivate in order to support an environmental ethic in practice? Answers to these questions are multifaceted and contested. We'll study a range of philosophical views that offer insight and practical guidance.

PHIL 229 fulfills the General Education requirement for Area IV: Knowledge of the Disciplines in the Humanities.

PHIL 229 fulfills the Ethics and Value Theory requirement in the Philosophy Program.

PHIL 229 also fulfills a core course requirement in the Environmental Science and Society (ENVI) Program.

PHIL 229: Environmental Ethics
Professor John Ouko
Online Asynchronous

This course addresses ethical and other philosophical issues concerning the environment. The course introduces philosophical perspectives on the environment from a variety of traditions and perspectives, and applies these perspectives to such issues as climate change, environmental justice, animal rights, preservation, pollution, sustainability, energy, and future generations.

PHIL 229 fulfills the General Education requirement for Area IV: Knowledge of the Disciplines in the Humanities.

PHIL 229 fulfills the Ethics and Value Theory requirement in the Philosophy Program.

PHIL 229 also fulfills a core course requirement in the Environmental Science and Society (ENVI) Program.

PHIL 246: Introduction to African Philosophy
Professor John Ouko
T/Th 11:00 – 12:15

This course introduces students to the approaches within African philosophy and explores the main issues currently under study in African philosophy such as knowledge and reality, morality in African thought, conceptual issues concerning religion in African cultures, African conceptions of a person, and African political thought, among others. Students will learn how African philosophy has addressed philosophical problems in different areas of philosophy.

PHIL 246 fulfills the General Education requirement for Area IV: Knowledge of the Disciplines in the Humanities.

PHIL 246 fulfills the Eastern and Global requirement in the Philosophy Program.

PHIL 320: Gender, World Religions, and Social Justice
Professor Kate Mehuron
T/Th 3:30 – 4:45

This course examines and evaluates gendered religious practices in global contexts. We inquire how contemporary people, from within their religious realities, can identify and address human rights and social justice issues that are implicated by their religious experiences. Religious realities feature the intersections of sex and gender with the religious and cultural dimensions of everyday life. The concept of intersectionality can show how religions contribute to the gendered and sexed experiences of people living within specific societies. We will study mythic and symbolic concepts and ritual practices that are simultaneously sexed and/or gendered, as part of religions in global situations. Students will formulate and support their arguments about how specific global religious realities can detract from, or contribute to, a just society.

PHIL 320 fulfills the Eastern and Global requirement in the Philosophy Program.

PHIL 331W: Modern Philosophy
Professor Kris Phillips
MW 11:00 – 12:15

The traditional narrative surrounding the development of philosophy in the 17th and 18th centuries revolves around a dispute between so-called “rationalists” (Descartes, Spinoza and Leibniz), “empiricists” (Locke, Berkeley, and Hume), culminating in a great unifier (Kant). There are a number of reasons to be unhappy with this narrative. It oversimplifies the complex interactions and influences important thinkers had on one another; ignores the contributions women made to the intellectual scene; forces us to study systematic thinkers in an incomplete way; and offers at best a shallow understanding of tremendously rich philosophical and scientific issues.

In this class, we will focus on only three figures from the “modern” era: Rene Descartes, Margaret Cavendish, and David Hume. We will devote substantial time to developing and understanding their philosophical systems and the interconnections between these thinkers. The idea is to develop the skills required to approach the works from this era (for example: how to read texts closely, how to extract extended arguments from longer manuscripts, how to reconstruct arguments in a way that is charitable to the author, how to be sensitive to and avoid anachronism, and how to approach a philosopher’s work *systematically*). The reason that we will focus on these skills is that they will allow you continue to read modern philosophy carefully and attentively well beyond our short time together.

PHIL 331W fulfills the History of Western Philosophy requirement in the Philosophy Program.

PHIL 331W counts as a Writing Intensive course.

PHIL 427W: Social Epistemology
Professor Jill Dieterle
T/Th 12:30 – 1:45

Traditional theories of knowledge are individualistic in that the focus is how individual epistemic agents can properly use their cognitive devices to come to know things. But knowledge production has social elements. Social epistemology explores how social-epistemic activities or practices impact the epistemic outcomes of particular agents or groups. One of our topics this semester will be the dynamics of testimony. When is testimony trustworthy? What happens when people's testimony is unjustifiably discounted? Other topics we'll explore this semester include trust and trustworthiness (both within and between diverse communities of knowers), peer disagreement (when is it reasonable to revise one's beliefs in the face of disagreement?), and epistemologies of ignorance.

PHIL 427W fulfills the Social Justice requirement in the Philosophy Program.

PHIL 427W counts as a Writing Intensive course.

PHIL 495W: Phenomenology
Professor Laura McMahon
MW 2:00 – 3:15

Phenomenology is the rigorous description of experience as it is actually lived—a more difficult task than it might initially seem! In this course, we will study some of the foundational figures and texts in the phenomenological movement in Germany and France in the twentieth-century, as well as a number of more contemporary writings in the recent area of study that has come to be known as “Critical Phenomenology.” The course will introduce students to foundational texts from classical figures in phenomenology, such as Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty. It will then explore the specifically social- and political significance of classical phenomenological concepts and themes, such as the intentional structure of consciousness, being-in-the-world, embodiment, and habit, through an engagement with recent and contemporary phenomenological scholars working on topics of gender and race, war and incarceration, and revolutionary action and transformation.

PHIL 495W fulfills the Knowledge and Reality requirement in the Philosophy Program.

PHIL 495W counts as a Writing Intensive course.
