

Philosophy Graduate Course Offerings Fall 2020

PHIL 523: Philosophical Perspectives on Disability
Professor Jill Dieterle
T/Th 12:30 – 1:45

Disability discourse classifies people on the basis of characteristics that are observed or inferred, and being classified as disabled is often a source of discrimination and oppression. As such, standard philosophical analyses of discrimination and oppression apply. Yet issues arise for those who are disabled that might not for other oppressed groups. For example, philosophical accounts of autonomy, agency, dependence, and even personhood often assume able bodies and minds. PHIL 423/523 examines and questions the abled assumptions at the core of most western political and moral philosophy. We will also examine and critique philosophical accounts of the quality of life.

PHIL 523 counts as a course in the Social Justice Division of the Philosophy M.A. Program.

PHIL 570: Contemporary European Philosophy
Professor Laura McMahon
MW 2:00 – 3:15

This course will draw on resources in 20th- and 21st-Century Continental Philosophy in order to study the ambivalent nature of modernity in (inter)personal, social, and political life. With readings from figures such as Max Weber, Martin Heidegger, Theodore Adorno and Max Horkheimer, Hannah Arendt, and Michel Foucault, we will ask questions such as:

- What are the Christian roots of Western secular modernity?
- How does the modern Enlightenment emphasize the primacy of the individual? In what ways is this emphasis on the freedom and equality

of all liberating? What of central importance to human existence might be lost with such an emphasis?

- What is the role of modern technology in human life? What kind of attitude towards the natural world and towards human beings does it encourage?
- Do modern security and surveillance measures serve to protect or to control individuals and populations?
- How do modern bureaucratic, economic, and political institutions take on a life of their own, such that we might say that human beings serve them rather than being served by them?
- What might authentic existence look like in the contemporary world?

PHIL 570 counts as a course in the Methods Division of the Philosophy M.A. Program.

Philosophy of Science 580

Professor John Koolage

T/Th 11:00 – 12:15

In this iteration of Philosophy of Science, we will study three broad themes in the philosophy of science. First, we will explore the notion of objectivity. Our touchstone philosopher for this theme will be Helen Longino. Her view is that objectivity is best understood as the proper epistemic functioning of groups of knowers. Our second theme is the relation of scientific epistemology to the aims of science. We will read a very new book by Angela Potochnick, *Idealization and the Aims of Science*, and some parts of Bas van Fraassen's revolutionary boo, *The Scientific Image*. Our final theme will be epistemic optimism in the sciences. Most people are optimistic about the sciences until they notice the details of scientific practice. We will read Adrian Currie's *Rock, Bone, and Ruin* to address these interesting concerns.

PHIL 580 counts as a course in the Methods Division of the Philosophy M.A. Program.

Philosophy 594
Topics in Chinese Philosophy: The Dialogues of Confucius
Professor Brian Bruya
Wednesdays 3:30 – 6:10 p.m.

The *Analects of Confucius*, though terse and epigrammatic, is a foundational text of Confucianism, providing us with core philosophical concepts that informed the tradition for centuries, right up to the present day. The *Dialogues of Confucius* is more expansive, purporting to fill in some of the blanks in the *Analects*, giving us a more comprehensive view of the philosophy of Confucius—but it has been suspected of being a forgery and presents problems that extend beyond philosophy to textual history and hermeneutics.

In this course, we will begin with the philosophy of the *Analects*. After setting our conceptual and historical foundation, we will give a close reading to the *Dialogues of Confucius*, using a draft manuscript of the first complete English translation. What can the *Dialogues* tell us about Confucian philosophy? In terms of metaphysics, political philosophy, ethics, and psychology, what gaps does it fill and how can it inform future research? This is an exploratory course that will require students to quickly master foreign-language, cross-cultural material and use sophisticated interpretive techniques to access and evaluate it.

Prior exposure to Chinese philosophy is not required.

PHIL 594 counts as a course in the Methods Division of the Philosophy M.A. Program.

PHIL 601: First Year Seminar in Philosophy
Professor Peter Higgins
T/Th 2:00 – 3:15

The purpose of PHIL 601 is to help students develop skills necessary for completion of the MA in Philosophy and success as professional philosophers. In particular, this class aims to make students proficient writers of substantial (15-20 page) philosophical essays. Students will be asked to write one essay in this class in a series of stages: constructing a well-honed thesis; writing an illuminating introduction; thoroughly yet precisely reviewing relevant literature; presenting cogent arguments for one's thesis; anticipating and replying to likely

objections; selecting an informative and interesting title; and preparing short and long abstracts. Each stage will incorporate at least one round of feedback and revision.

The topic of the class (about which students will write an essay) will be feminist philosophy. We will read a variety of works, classic and contemporary, that use philosophical methods to address fundamental questions of feminism: Can “natural” sex differences explain and justify gender inequalities? What does it mean to say that women are oppressed? What does it mean to say that gender “intersects with” other dimensions of social identity such as race? What is a “woman”?

PHIL 601 is a required course in the Philosophy M.A. Program and is limited to first-year students.

Philosophy graduate students also have the opportunity to take PHIL 281: Symbolic Logic

Professor Jill Dieterle

T/Th 9:30 – 10:45

In PHIL 281, we’ll take an in-depth look at what logic is and for what it can be used. The catalog description says: “An introduction to the notation and proof procedures of symbolic logic with emphasis on the clarification and development of the notion of a formal language.” That’s about right, but this course shouldn’t be as boring as the description makes it sound.

Some highlights of the course: Standard First-Order logic makes a number of assumptions. For example, it is assumed that every declarative sentence has a determinate truth value and that logical operators work much like English connectives. We’ll question those assumptions. Standard First-Order logic also has some rather counterintuitive results. For example, it turns out to be logically true that there is at least one thing in the world. Of course, no one will deny that there is at least one thing in the world, but (speaking philosophically), should that be a *logical* truth? We’ll look at logical systems that don’t have that result. Over the course of the semester, we’ll also spend some time talking about expressive completeness, the differences between

semantic consequence and deductive consequence, decision procedures, and
lots of other fun and interesting topics!!

Graduate students will take this course as a graduate level
independent study. Additional work will be required for
graduate credit.