

Philosophy Course Offerings
200-level and above
Fall 2020

Philosophy 212: Philosophy of Art
Professor Brian Bruya
T/Th 12:30 – 1:45

What is art and what is its role in society? What makes an artist? Is there something that distinguishes artistic process from other kinds of activities? Who determines a "good" piece of art and what are the criteria? When we view and contemplate art, how is that distinct from how we view and contemplate other things in life? What is the difference between an art and a craft? Is there a difference between high art and low art? Is it possible for non-human animals or artificial intelligence to create art? What is the relationship between art and the artificial? Is there such a thing as natural art? Is there a spirituality to art?

In this course, we will explore some of these questions through classic and contemporary writings on art from both Western and non-Western traditions.

PHIL 212 fulfills the General Education requirement for Area IV: Knowledge of the Disciplines in the Humanities.

PHIL 212 fulfills the Ethics and Value Theory requirement in the Philosophy Program.

Philosophy 215: Philosophy of Religion
Professor Brian Bruya
T/Th 2:00 – 3:15

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 212 fulfills the Knowledge and Reality requirement in the Philosophy Program.

PHIL 220 – Ethics
Professor Brian Coffey
MW 2:00 and online

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
Professor Jeremy Proulx
Online

There is an ethical dimension to every single aspect of business. Even the most seemingly mundane administrative functions have wide-ranging effects on people. In this course, we will explore a wide range of ethical issues that arise in the business world. Through readings in philosophy, legal cases, and case studies, we will consider issues of corporate responsibility, organizational structure and accountability, economic justice, sustainability and climate change, discrimination, ethics and technology, and issues particular to international business. This course is appropriate for anyone who wants a deeper understanding of the moral landscape of the manifold functions of businesses, how ethics affects business decision-making, and how to be a responsible, considerate, and respectable business leader.

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 221 also offered MW 11:00; instructor TBA

PHIL 223 - Medical Ethics
Professor Brian Coffey
MW 11:00, T/Th 11:00

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 sections

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

The COVID-19 pandemic raises many ethical questions. We don't have sufficient resources to treat all of those who contract the virus. Given that we don't have enough ventilators, what do we do? How do we decide who gets a ventilator? This is an instance of the problem of determining the fair allocation of scarce of medical resources.

In this class, we will talk about justice in health care. We will address health care access generally, and then we will spend two weeks talking about issues of justice that have arisen during the COVID-19 pandemic.

We'll also talk about other topics in medical ethics: patient autonomy and informed consent, reproductive technology, genetic manipulation, and other related issues.

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 also offered MW 9:30 and MW 3:30; instructors TBA
PHIL 225: Philosophy & Society
Professor Michael Doan
MW 11:00 – 12:15 p.m.

This course engages in critical analysis of our society's institutions and principles. Major works of political philosophy will be considered in light of their implications for controversies linked to systemic social inequalities, such as affirmative action; freedom of speech, religion, and conscience: protest, violence, and civil disobedience; prisons and law enforcement; access to education; and immigration.

PHIL 225 fulfills the General Education requirement for Area IV: Knowledge of the Disciplines in the Humanities.

PHIL 225 fulfills the Social Justice requirement in the Philosophy Program

PHIL 226: Feminist Theory
Professor Peter Higgins
T/Th 11:00 – 12:15 and T/Th 12:30 – 1:45

Feminist theory is an area of thought that seeks to expose, analyze and critically assess the justice of gender inequalities present in our society, in other societies, and globally. This course focuses on six sets of questions:

- What is feminism?
- What is gender? Is gender “natural”? Are norms of gender unjust?
- What is sexism? Why is sexism unjust?
- How is contemporary American society sexist, if at all? Are women oppressed? Are men oppressed?
- How should feminists reason about apparently sexist practices occurring outside of their own society?
- What are the ultimate goals of feminism? What would a gender-just society look like?

This is a foundational course for Philosophy majors and minors interested in social justice.

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 Kate Mehuron
Online (2 sections)

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 McMahan
MW 12:30 – 1:45; Honors Section MW 11:00 – 12:15

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. In order to carry out this study, we will engage with major philosophical insights that are of interest to human experience generally, and that are also highly relevant to feminist analyses and practices devoted to understanding and transforming situations of oppression

for women as well as for other disadvantaged groups. Through studies of work from authors such as Simone de Beauvoir, Iris Marion Young, Angela Davis, Judith Butler, Gloria Anzaldúa, Evelyn Fox Keller, Susan Moller Okin, and Uma Narayan, we will explore questions concerning i) the specific nature of oppression and possibilities for resistance; ii) the embodied, intersectional, and performative nature of identity; (iii) feminist approaches to science and other forms of collective knowledge; and (iv) challenges and new possibilities that arise in opposing the oppression of women in postcolonial, global contexts.

*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 228 Global Ethics
Instructor TBA
MW 9:30 – 10:45

An exploration of major ethical traditions from around the world in their application to particular moral issues such as reproduction, the environment, war, punishment, human rights, development, biomedical issues, and euthanasia.

*PHIL 228 fulfills the General Education requirement for either Area IV:
Knowledge of the Disciplines in the Humanities or Global Awareness.*

PHIL 228 fulfills the Eastern and Global requirement in the Philosophy Program.

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

Environmental ethics is focused on ethical concerns relating to nature or the environment. Some of these concerns are about the human relationship to nature (e.g., how we're using it). While other concerns are about the value or

moral significance of nature or the environment, where this value or significance isn't necessarily about *us* (e.g., what is good for us).

I assume any plausible environmental ethic needs to have an answer to two basic questions: What nature (or environments) matter, and why? Answering these questions is challenging, in part because the nature or environments that might matter are multiple and contested, and we need to be clear about what we mean when we use these terms. Similarly, answers to the why question are multiple and contested. We can't actually answer the why question without delving into philosophical debates about what is good and bad, right and wrong, and how these ideas relate to obligations we have. Clarifying these matters requires us to engage in (what philosophers call) normative ethical theorizing. One of our basic tasks, then, is to study a range of views that attempt to answer these two questions. The bigger project of the class is to articulate an environmental ethic that is responsive to the multitude of relevant considerations at play, supported by good reasons, and capable of guiding action and policy.

In the course of our investigations, we'll consider different normative views on a number of more specific questions. These questions include:

- What is the basis of our obligations to each other, and what specific obligations do we have?
- What obligations do present generations have to people who will live in the future?
- How does concern for nature or the environment inform, or relate to, our obligations to present and future people?
- Is nature, or some part of it, valuable or morally considerable *in its own right*—that is, independently of its relation to human well-being or of obligations we have to each other? If so, which beings, objects, etc., matter? For example: All sentient beings? All living things? Species? Ecosystems? Natural entities? (And what do we mean by “natural,” and why is naturalness supposedly valuable?)
- In terms of how we should live, what are the practical implications of acknowledging that certain nonhuman beings, objects, etc., are (or might be) valuable or morally considerable?
- How do answers to the preceding questions relate to debates about sustainability? What are the most plausible conceptions of sustainability?

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 also offered MW 12:30 – 1:45; instructor TBA

PHIL 260: Existentialism
Professor Kate Mehuron
MW 12:30-1:45 p.m.

Does life have meaning? Can values exist if God does not? This course considers the works of central existentialist figures such as Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Sartre and Camus as well as related literary works. It addresses topics involving value, such as authentic existence, freedom, nihilism, meaning, subjectivity and values. The course is both an introduction to this body of work and an attempt to raise individual awareness of the human condition within which our existence takes place. In the quest to redefine human nature and human freedom, existentialists challenge the authority of religion, conventional and philosophical notions of truth, and the notion of objective morality. We study the social context of these philosophical rebellions and discover the ways that existentialism continues to transform society by its persistent challenge to ideological authority and to mass social movements. The traditional method of philosophy, critical and analytical reasoning, is taught in this course. Students will learn habits of mind and writing skills that help you to develop and critique philosophical arguments.

PHIL 260 fulfills the General Education requirement for Area IV: Knowledge of the Disciplines in the Humanities.

PHIL 260 fulfills the Ethics and Value Theory requirement in the Philosophy Program.

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!!

****If you plan to do graduate work in philosophy, I strongly recommend that you take this class.****

PHIL 281 fulfills the Logic and Reasoning requirement in the Philosophy Program.

PHIL 292 Philosophy of Buddhism
Instructor TBA
MW 11 – 12:15

This course is a survey of the philosophy of the Buddhist tradition, beginning with its origins in India and examining its developments in India and across Asia. Students will be introduced to major issues, figures, and texts of the tradition.

PHIL 292 fulfills the General Education requirement for Area IV: Knowledge of the Disciplines in the Humanities.

PHIL 292 fulfills the Eastern and Global requirement in the Philosophy Program

PHIL 331W Modern Philosophy
Professor Jeremy Proulx
MW 12:30 – 1:45

In the traditional philosophical cannon, the modern period in the history of Western philosophy is usually presented as a debate in epistemology between, on the one hand, rationalists, who claim that the mind makes original contributions to knowledge, and, on the other hand, empiricists, who claim that all knowledge can traced back to experience. There is certainly something to this distinction in that provides us with some basic points of reference in modern thought. And we will spend time in this course reading selections from some of the great rationalists and empiricists like Descartes, Locke, Spinoza, Hume, and Kant. But we will also attempt to read the modern cannon with an eye to challenging this traditional caricature of modern thought. This challenge will take place along three major trajectories.

First, we will read some lesser-known but nevertheless important philosophers in the modern word, whose ideas do not easily fit into the empiricism-rationalism paradigm. We will read the French Enlightenment Philosopher Denis Diderot, who defended the idea of blending of empiricism and rationalism in the form of a kind of ‘speculative metaphysics’ grounded in experimentalism. We will also read selections from Margaret Cavendish, whose ideas about living matter inform some of the most powerful early critiques of Descartes’ substance dualism. **Second**, we will read a famous challenge to one of the basic assumptions of modern philosophy, the assumption that there is a distinction between what is given (empirical content of experience) and what is a contribution of the mind. Richard Rorty’s infamous *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* was one of the most hotly debated books of the twentieth century and right at its core is a powerful critique of the basic orientation of modern thought from Descartes to Kant and beyond. **Third**, we will read a Susan Neiman’s ‘alternative history of philosophy’ *Evil in Modern Thought*. This book not only challenges the traditional modern canon by reinterpreting the traditional modern epistemological problematic as an ethical-metaphysical one; this book also provides us with an example of how reading and interpreting the history of philosophy can be a form of philosophical argument.

In this course, then, we will not only explore some of the great ideas and intellectual struggles of the modern period; we will also try to gain some perspective on the limits of 'histories of philosophy' and attempt to understand the history of philosophy itself as a vibrant, living tree, with new branches constantly reaching for the light.

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

PHIL 331W counts as a Writing Intensive course.

PHIL 423/523: 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 423 fulfills the Social Justice requirement in the Philosophy Program.

PHIL 470W/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 470W fulfills the Knowledge and Reality requirement in the Philosophy Program.

PHIL 470W counts as a Writing Intensive course.

Philosophy of Science 480W/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 480W fulfills the Knowledge and Reality requirement in the Philosophy Program.

PHIL 480W counts as a Writing Intensive course.

Philosophy 494/594
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 494 fulfills the Eastern and Global requirement in the Philosophy Program.
