

# Fall 2018 Philosophy Course Descriptions

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## Featured Undergraduate Courses

(For a full list of undergraduate course offerings,  
please see the course schedule at [my.emich.edu](http://my.emich.edu).)

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**PHIL 100: Introduction to Philosophy**  
**Professor Jeremy Proulx**  
**TR 12:30-1:45 p.m.**  
**TR 2-3:15 p.m.**  
**Two online sections**

This course is a historical introduction to some major philosophical themes and thinkers. Through a reading of primary sources we will consider questions of the nature of truth, knowledge, reality, responsibility, human nature, and the meaning of human existence. The objective of the course is to furnish you with the basic philosophical-historical contexts in which the discipline of philosophy has developed and thrived. We will explore the ways in which the concerns and issues that dominated a particular period in history gave momentum to the thought of some of history's most celebrated philosophical luminaries. Readings are selected from thinkers like Parmenides, Plato, Aristotle, Mengzi, Xunzi, Epictetus, Anselm, Aquinas, Hobbes, Kant, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Bergson, and James. Rather than on mastery of the course content, the emphasis in the course will be on meaningful engagement with the texts and guided discussion between students.

**PHIL 100 fulfills the General Education requirement for Knowledge of the  
Disciplines in the Humanities.**

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**PHIL 120: Introduction to Critical Reasoning**  
**Professor Michael Doan**  
**MW 12:30-1:45 p.m.**  
**MW 2:00-3:15 p.m.**

This is a course in critical reasoning, the methodology of philosophy. This course offers an introduction to the techniques of identifying and evaluating arguments. Our emphasis will be on the enhancement of reasoning skills through the study of arguments in their natural settings (e.g.

newspapers, political speeches, advertising). We will also explore such related topics as logical fallacies, inductive and moral reasoning, and the logic of explanation in the social sciences.

**PHIL 120 fulfills the General Education requirement for Knowledge of the Disciplines in the Humanities, as well as the Logic and Reasoning requirement in the Philosophy Program.**

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**PHIL 215: Philosophy of Religion**  
**Professor Brian Bruya**  
**MW 3:30-4:45 p.m.**

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 Knowledge of the Disciplines in the Humanities, as well as the Epistemology and Metaphysics requirement in the Philosophy Program.**

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**PHIL 215: Philosophy of Religion**  
**Professor Jeremy Proulx**  
**TR 11 a.m.-12:15 p.m.**

This course is an introduction to the philosophical study of religion. Despite the dominant secularism in our modern democracies, religion continues to be a force that shapes and influences the lives of a growing number of people around the world. The objective of the course is to provide a context for understanding some of the world's major religions from a philosophical perspective. We will spend a good deal of time discussing the role that religion plays in our lives, in society in general, and in forming our moral convictions. How does religion shape our understanding of ourselves and our relationship with other people and with our moral community? How can we facilitate substantial conversation between diverse religious communities? What role does religion play in modern secular democracy? We will also explore philosophical questions about the nature of religion, God, and of religious experience. How can religion be defined? Is there something essential and common to all religious belief that we can identify as distinct from other kinds of beliefs or

convictions? Is it possible, for instance, to 'know' that something like 'God' exists? If so, what kind of knowing is this? If not, what is the experience that is proper to religion? I hope that you leave this class with a deepened understanding of the complexities and varieties of religion as a system of belief and a cultural practice. The class will be conducted as a lecture and discussion seminar. I will give weekly lectures to introduce the readings and to provide some historical and philosophical context, but much of the class will depend on your participation. This means that you should come to class having done the readings, prepared to ask questions and to participate in the discussion. This course is part of an ongoing project to develop an understanding of religion and religious practice that is relevant to the highly diverse global community in which we find ourselves living in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

**PHIL 215 fulfills the General Education requirement for Knowledge of the Disciplines in the Humanities, as well as the Epistemology and Metaphysics requirement in the Philosophy Program.**

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**PHIL 220: Ethics**  
**Professor Jill Dieterle**  
**TR 9:30-10:45 a.m.**

This course is an introduction to ethics. We will start with basic questions in ethics: What is ethics about? Why are some acts morally permissible and others morally wrong? We will also discuss several ethical issues. For example: Is the current distribution of income and wealth justified? Do we have duties to those less well off? If so, what kind? What obligations do we have to non-human animals? What are the ethical implications of our consumerist society?

**PHIL 220 fulfills the General Education requirement for Knowledge of the Disciplines in the Humanities, as well as the Values requirement in the Philosophy Program.**

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**PHIL 221: Business Ethics**  
**Professor Brian Coffey**  
**TR 11 a.m.-12:15 p.m.**  
**TR 2-3:15 p.m.**

The influence of businesses and corporations pervades nearly every aspect of our daily lives. They determine what food we eat, what clothes we wear, what products we use, where the materials for those goods come from, the costs of those goods and services, etc. With such powerful influence comes the responsibility to not abuse that power...or does it? 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 raised within the context of the practice of business. Topics for discussion might include: Do businesses and corporations have a responsibility to be ethical, or are they just there to make profit? Who is to blame when a corporation acts unethically?

What responsibilities do we have to businesses (as consumers, as employees, etc.). Are there techniques for selling and marketing goods that are wrong? Are there goods that should not be for sale? Etc. In each case, we will rigorously evaluate the reasoning that people have given for their stance on the issue.

**PHIL 221 fulfills the General Education requirement for Knowledge of the Disciplines in the Humanities, as well as the Values requirement in the Philosophy Program.**

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**PHIL 221: Business Ethics**  
**Professor Jill Dieterle**  
**Online section**

This course deals with the interaction between ethics and business. What is the role of morality in the context of business? Should the only objective of businesses be to make money while staying within the law? Should corporations have rights? What rights and obligations should employees have? What ethical issues have arisen due to globalization? We will examine these and other questions in PHIL 221 Business Ethics.

**PHIL 221 fulfills the General Education requirement for Knowledge of the Disciplines in the Humanities, as well as the Values requirement in the Philosophy Program.**

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**PHIL 223: Medical Ethics**  
**Professor Brian Coffey**  
**TR 9:30-10:45 a.m.**  
**Two online sections**

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 Knowledge of the Disciplines in the Humanities, as well as the Values requirement in the Philosophy Program.**

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**PHIL 226: Feminist Theory**  
**Professor Peter Higgins**  
**MW 2-3:15 p.m.**

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 gender norms 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 requirements for Global Awareness and Knowledge of the Disciplines in the Humanities, as well as the Eastern/Global requirement in the Philosophy Program.**

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**PHIL 226: Feminist Theory**  
**Professor Laura McMahon**  
**MW 11:00 a.m.-12:15 p.m.**  
**MW 12:30-1:45 p.m.**

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.

The major themes of this course will be those of *recognition*, *embodiment*, and *enlightenment*. Drawing on major writings from the History of Philosophy as well as from historical and contemporary work in Feminist Philosophy, we will ask questions such as:

- How are our identities shaped by contexts not of our choosing, and by how we are seen and treated by other people? How might this take objectifying and oppressive forms in the lived

experience of women? How do race, class, and sexuality complicate the oppressive situations of women?

- How does lived experience in general, and the lived experience of women in particular, take embodied and habitual forms? Are gendered identities essential to who we are, or is gender essentiality an illusion created by the habitual repetition of acts socially labeled “male” or “female”?
- How might we combat oppressive situations by way of “enlightenment” values of freedom, rationality, and independent thought? At the same time, how might these values themselves be deployed in hypocritical and oppressive ways in colonial and postcolonial global contexts?

**PHIL 226 fulfills the General Education requirements for Global Awareness and Knowledge of the Disciplines in the Humanities, as well as the Eastern/Global requirement in the Philosophy Program.**

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**PHIL 226: Feminist Theory**  
**Professor Kate Mehuron**  
**Two online 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 mix of women’s literature, feminist theoretical sources, and contemporary case studies of feminist activism to explore these questions.

**PHIL 226 fulfills the General Education requirements for Global Awareness and Knowledge of the Disciplines in the Humanities, as well as the Eastern/Global requirement in the Philosophy Program.**

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**PHIL 229: Environmental Ethics**  
**Professor J. Michael Scoville**  
**TR 11 a.m.-12:15 p.m.**  
**TR 12:30-1:45 p.m.**

Environmental ethics focuses on the ethical aspects of the human relationship to nature. I assume any plausible environmental ethics needs to have an answer to at least two basic questions: What nature matters, and why? I assume, further, that “nature” is a contested concept, one that has

multiple, often competing, meanings. Similarly, answers to the “why” question are multiple and contested. One of our basic tasks is to get clear on such complexities in order to make progress on articulating an environmental ethic that holds up to philosophical scrutiny.

In order to complete this task, we will consider a number of more specific questions, including:

- How does concern for nature relate to, and complicate, our obligations to present and future people? And *why* are we obligated with regard to each other—what is the basis of our obligations?
- Are nonhuman beings, objects, or processes valuable or morally considerable in their own right, that is, independently of their 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? Biotic communities? *Natural* entities?
- 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 in their own right?
- What does sustainability mean, and what are the most plausible conceptions of it?

In addition to exploring these questions, and various answers to them, we’ll study a number of normative ethical views, that is, views concerning what is good and bad, right and wrong, and why.

**PHIL 229 fulfills the General Education requirement for Knowledge of the Disciplines in the Humanities, as well as the Values requirement in the Philosophy Program.**  
**PHIL 229 also fulfills a core course requirement in the Environmental Science and Society (ENVI) Program.**

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**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 Knowledge of the Disciplines in the Humanities, as well as the Values requirement in the Philosophy Program.**

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**PHIL 291: Introduction to Asian Philosophy**  
**Professor Brian Bruya**  
**TR 3:30-4:45 p.m.**

Philosophy 291 is an introduction to major aspects of South and East Asian philosophical traditions. The course is divided evenly into four units. The first unit explores the major texts of philosophical Daoism. The core concepts of Daoism, such as spontaneity, responsiveness, reversion, and simplicity, pervade Chinese philosophy and culture (from ethics to art to medicine) and are explored in depth through the writings of Laozi and Zhuangzi.

The second unit is an introduction to Buddhism. We begin with the core texts of the early Indian tradition, such as *Setting in Motion the Wheel of Truth* and *The Foundations of Mindfulness*. Through these texts, we learn the key concepts and methods of the tradition, such as emptiness, meditation, dependent origination, and nirvana. From the early Indian tradition we move on to the Chinese and Japanese Chan/Zen tradition, exploring its developments not only from the Indian tradition but also out of its Daoist precursor.

In the third unit, we focus on two core texts of the Indian tradition, the *Yoga Sutras* and the *Bhagavad Gita*. Here we learn the key metaphysical and ethical ideas of the vast Indian tradition, from non-violence and Truth to fate and self-realization.

The fourth unit grows out of the third by exploring the contemporary global issue of non-violent revolution through the life, work, and philosophy of Mohandas Gandhi. Gandhi's philosophy is a direct descendant of his Hindu precursors but with important pragmatic adjustments. We explore these and their implications for social justice movements throughout the world.

Texts in this course include a broad range of genres, such as early religious tracts, dialogue, colorful episodes, analytic arguments, and cutting edge interpretation. Because of the vastness of the subject matter, course material will be considered a base from which students go on to explore more refined topics in projects of their own interest.

**PHIL 291 fulfills the General Education requirement for Knowledge of the Disciplines in the Humanities, as well as the Eastern and Global requirement in the Philosophy Program.**

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**PHIL 330W: History of Philosophy: Ancient**  
**Professor Michael Doan**  
**MW 11:00 a.m.-12:15 p.m.**

This course explores philosophy as it was practiced and conceived of in ancient Greece. We will focus on the lives and works of several ancient Greek philosophers, including the Presocratics, Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, with a view to understanding and drawing connections between their respective approaches to fundamental questions of human interest. Through critical engagement with the focal concerns, arguments, and outlooks articulated by these thinkers, we will examine central questions concerning the natural world, human conduct, and our capacities for knowledge and wisdom. The emphasis throughout will be on analyzing both what these thinkers say and their reasons for saying what they do. We will aspire to develop a critical understanding of several questions, problems, and arguments that, though articulated during a very different era, remain very much alive and relevant today.

**PHIL 330W fulfills the History of Philosophy requirement in the Philosophy Program and the Writing Intensive course requirement in the General Education Program.**

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**PHIL 355W: Philosophy of Law**  
**Professor Peter Higgins**  
**MW 3:30-4:45 p.m.**

Philosophy of Law is the study of law and legal reasoning *as such*. In contrast to law, which asks, for example, “Is X a crime?” or “Is there sufficient evidence to convict?”, the Philosophy of Law asks more abstract and fundamental questions; for example, “What is a law?” or “What counts, or ought to count, as evidence?” This course will investigate several questions unique to Philosophy of Law as a field of Philosophy, including (beyond those already noted):

- How ought legal texts be interpreted? Is it legitimate to reason from precedent?
- Are discriminatory laws unjust? What does “equal protection of the laws” require? To whom ought equal protection be legally guaranteed?
- Can legal punishment be justified?
- When is a person legally responsible for criminal actions? Can we be legally responsible for omissions? Do intentions matter for legal responsibility? To what extent does insanity diminish responsibility?

Writing is an essential element in learning, and a standard component, in all upper-level Philosophy classes. Hence, this course is designated as “Writing Intensive.” In fulfillment of this designation, students will write three short essays (3-4 pages) and one longer essay (8-10 pages) in this class.

**PHIL 355W fulfills the Values requirement in the Philosophy Program and the Writing Intensive course requirement in the General Education Program.**

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**PHIL 425W: Theories of Justice**  
**Professor J. Michael Scoville**  
**TR 3:30-4:45 p.m.**

This course on theories of justice will be largely focused on climate justice. Our investigations will involve, in part, grappling with some general philosophical issues that arise for any serious theorizing about justice. The issues I have in mind include: puzzles and complexities relating to intergenerational justice; the value and limitations of ideal versus nonideal theorizing about justice; how to conceptualize responsibility (individual, collective, institutional) for causing and redressing injustice; and the nature and scope of justice-based claims and obligations, and how these relate to other values, claims, and obligations.

In addition to considering the issues just mentioned, we will explore a number of challenges and questions that are specific to climate change and climate justice. These include: climate change and the creation of new kinds of vulnerability, risk, and harm; determining fair burden sharing with respect to mitigating and adapting to climate change; determining fair allocations of the remaining atmospheric capacity to absorb anthropogenic emissions; the relation of climate justice to other justice-based aims, notably, the alleviation of global poverty and inequality; collective action problems and motivational gaps in addressing climate change; institutional barriers to addressing climate change; and consideration of the environmental values and goods most threatened by climate change.

**PHIL 425W fulfills the Values requirement in the Philosophy Program and the Writing Intensive course requirement in the General Education Program.**

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**PHIL 429W: Topics in Environmental Philosophy: Non-Human Animals**  
**Professor Jill Dieterle**  
**TR 12:30-1:45 p.m.**

This instance of PHIL 429W focuses on non-human animals. We will begin with an examination of moral behavior in non-human animals. Current research demonstrates that many exhibit behavior that is consistent with having the capacities of empathy, altruism, and cooperation. There is evidence that at least some non-human animals have a sense of fairness. We will examine this research and the assumptions behind it. For example, Bekoff & Pierce (2009) argue that many non-human animals are moral *agents*. But what do they mean by “morality”? And what do they mean by “agent”? Rowlands (2012) defends the view that (at least some) non-human animals are moral *subjects* in that they have the ability to act for moral reasons, but since they are not *reflective* about those reasons, they are not moral agents. And so on. We will also look at some work on non-human animal

cognition and emotion. Finally, we will talk about the moral status of non-human animals. Do the findings of current research on animal moral behavior and animal cognition have implications for our duties toward them?

**PHIL 429W fulfills the Epistemology and Metaphysics requirement in the Philosophy Program and the Writing Intensive course requirement in the General Education Program.**

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**PHIL 480W: Philosophy of Science**  
**Professor W. John Koolage**  
**TR 2-3:15 p.m.**

In this iteration of PHIL 480/580, we will explore three contemporary issues in the General Philosophy of Science. First, we will read and think about scientific epistemology. Here will focus on the ideas of induction, explanation, confirmation, evidence, and falsification. We will read some of the “heavy hitters” in scientific epistemology, including, but not limited to, Deborah Mayo, Elliott Sober, Thomas Kuhn, Karl Popper, Gilbert Harman, Philip Kitcher, Helen Longino, Rudolf Carnap and W.V.O. Quine. Second, we will explore an older (1990s) discussion regarding scientific realism (the view that the sciences offer us true or approximately true descriptions of the world) and a newer (2010s) discussion regarding selective realism. The selective realism dispute has become quite ‘heated,’ with a half dozen journal articles on the topic in the last two years. Finally, we will take on a recent dispute about the plausibility of scientific realism in light of scientific pluralism (the view that the sciences cannot – or will not – be resolved into a single grand unified theory). To this end, we will read *Scientific Pluralism Reconsidered* by Stephanie Rupy or *The Routledge Handbook of Scientific Realism* by Juha Saatsi.

**PHIL 480W fulfills the Epistemology and Metaphysics requirement in the Philosophy Program and the Writing Intensive course requirement in the General Education Program.**

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