

Winter 2019 Philosophy Graduate Course Descriptions

PHIL 513: Global Justice **Professor Peter Higgins** **MW 2:00-3:15**

Political theory and philosophy have traditionally focused on justice within the borders of the nation-state. Given this course's global scope, it is focused on the normative analysis of global institutions (economic, political, and social). Questions that will be considered include:

- Should compatriot interests receive greater weight than those of foreigners in moral decision-making?
 - By what policies may nation-states justly restrict immigration?
 - What duties do affluent Western societies have to alleviate global poverty?
 - Under what circumstances is humanitarian intervention justified?
 - What are the appropriate boundaries of state sovereignty?
 - What would a just global order look like?
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PHIL 543: Philosophical Approaches to Moral Psychology **Professor Michael Doan** **TR 11:00-12:15**

This course examines the roles of cognition, judgment, perception, and emotion in relation to our capacities for acting responsibly. Topics may include theories of the emotions and reactive attitudes; the relationship between feeling and knowing; and virtuous and vicious motivational states in contexts of social injustice.

PHIL 570: Twentieth Century European Philosophy **Professor Kate Mehuron** **MW 12:30-1:45**

A study of some of the major philosophical problems raised by twentieth century European philosophy. Topics include: post-structuralist notions of institutional power and individual

agency; sexuality and gender in postmodern feminisms; post-Marxist notions of social and political change. Broad philosophical currents in critical social theory, postmodern philosophies, and deconstructive writing are examined with these themes in mind.

Graduate students are asked to demonstrate the ability to master an additional text in contemporary European philosophy, or conduct a literature review relevant to a research topic in this field, or develop and defend a sustained philosophical argument about a special research topic, culminating in a final research paper.

PHIL 581: Philosophy of the Life Sciences
Professor John Koolage
TR 2-3:15

The philosophy of particular sciences, until very recently, has been dominated by philosophy of physics. Not surprisingly, this has contributed to some helpful, but ultimately false, understandings of the epistemology of science, the metaphysics that is part and parcel of scientific inquiry, and the nature of science itself.

The Life Sciences, sciences such as psychology, biology, and sociology, have provided a number of interesting avenues for philosophic inquiry. First, in some cases, inquiry in a particular branch of science answers what appear to philosophic questions. It has been suggested, for example, that evolutionary biology has successfully resolved the question, “what is the meaning of life?” Second, our understanding of science needs to be altered in light of the structures of the life sciences. Where physics suggests that an important goal of a mature science is to identify laws of nature, many of the life sciences proceed without any laws. Psychology is a nice example of this sort of structure – if there are any laws of psychology at all, they seem to have exceptions. Third, the epistemology of science has been under review as a result of progress in the life sciences. Unlike the old days of physics, where it may have appeared that deterministic laws and deduction governed scientific reasoning, sociology, psychology, and biology seem to require probabilistic frameworks to understand good reasoning. Other branches of the life sciences introduce methods that seem to defy traditional epistemologies, such as the use of case study in psychology or narratives in anthropology. Finally, the life sciences are chock full of concepts that philosophers can appropriate or elucidate, whether for scientific or philosophic aims. Concepts such as embodied minds, extended cognition, natural selection, ecosystems, health, belief, species, populations, and so on, are all ripe for philosophic examination.

In this iteration of the class we will focus primarily, and somewhat narrowly, on (1) Philosophy of Psychology and (2) Philosophy of Geology, Archeology, and Paleontology. Recent work by Kristin Andrews has raised problems for traditional views of Folk Psychology – the “science” by which we predict the everyday behavior of others. Andrews’ work on animal cognition has suggested that the way we predict the behavior of others is very pluralistic, and not at all as uniform as it tends to feel to us when we make said predictions. This development generates problems for views such as Theory-Theory and Simulation Theory, both of which have been used to understand phenomena such as autism and sociopathy. We will read Andrews’ book

and a number of journal articles with the goal of better understanding and engaging a dispute about psychological states in ourselves and others. In the second half of the class, we will read Adrian Currie's very new book, *Rock, Bone, and Ruin*, to delve into the historical sciences. The historical sciences tend to defy the experimental paradigm and raise interesting questions about the nature of scientific inference. Since these historical sciences also tend to inform philosophic inquiry in a number of areas, this will also serve as a way of reflecting on whether philosophic inquiry can be enhanced or transformed by an examination of specific, scientific epistemologies.