

# Winter 2019 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 Brian Coffey** **MW 9:30-10:45 and 2-3:15**

This course will introduce students to the study of Philosophy by exploring the tools and techniques of philosophical inquiry, and utilizing those tools to evaluate answers to the ‘big’ philosophical questions. Topics for discussion might include: What do we know, and how do we know it? Do we have free will? Does God exist? What is the relation of our minds and bodies? How ought we to live? What if anything, is ‘the meaning of life’? Our discussion of these issues will be inspired and informed by both classical and contemporary writings that we will read carefully and critically. We will not be passively learning about philosophy—we will be *doing philosophy*.

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

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### **PHIL 100: Introduction to Philosophy** **Professor Jeremy Proulx** **TR 11-12:15 and 12:30-1:45** **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 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**  
**TR 2:00-3:15**

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 120: Introduction to Critical Reasoning**  
**Professor Jeremy Proulx**  
**Online section**

This is a course about the analysis, evaluation, and construction of arguments. During almost every day of our lives we are subjected to a barrage of claims to our attention and support. Companies want to sell us their products; politicians want to convince us that their ideas are the best ones; writers want to convince us of their point of view; the list can go on and on. All of these forces at work in our society have powerful resources at their disposal to persuade us. For this reason it is essential to be able to critically evaluate the information that is thrown at us from an increasing number of sources. This class will provide you with the tools necessary to subject the arguments and claims of others to critical and systematic analysis. We will also spend a good deal of time learning how to make our own arguments better. Using some basic methods of argumentation and persuasion and learning how to identify and avoid some common argumentative errors, we will develop an ability to make arguments with maturity and insight.

**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 220: Ethics**  
**Professor Jill Dieterle**  
**TR 12:30-1:45**

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 Ethics and Value Theory requirement in the Philosophy Program.**

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**PHIL 223: Medical Ethics**  
**Professor Brian Coffey**  
**TR 9:30-10:45 and 11-12:15**

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 Ethics and Value Theory requirement in the Philosophy Program.**

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**PHIL 223: Medical Ethics**  
**Professor Jill Dieterle**  
**Online section**

This course is an examination of ethical issues in medicine and health care. For example: The Religious Freedom Restoration Act is a pending piece of legislation in Michigan. If it were passed and Governor Snyder signed it, it would, among other things, allow health care providers, hospitals, medical centers, and insurers to deny service based on religious or moral objections. Here's a description of the bill from Wikipedia: "...the **Religious Freedom Restoration Act**...[would allow] for the refusal of service, the denial of employment and of housing, and other actions that act against a citizen's rights *if a person claims that working with or for that citizen would violate their religious freedom*" ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michigan\\_Religious\\_Freedom\\_Restoration\\_Act](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michigan_Religious_Freedom_Restoration_Act)). Opponents of the bill argue that if it were to become law, it would significantly undermine patient autonomy in the state. How do we assess this bill? Whose rights are at stake? How do we balance those rights? In PHIL 223: Medical Ethics, we'll talk about how patient autonomy and provider rights of conscience interact. We'll also talk about the just allocation of scarce medical resources, the ethical status of surrogate motherhood and in vitro fertilization, and whether having children, in and of itself, could be immoral. We'll end the semester with a discussion of end of life care and physician assisted suicide.

**PHIL 223 fulfills the General Education requirement for Knowledge of the Disciplines in the Humanities, as well as the Ethics and Value Theory requirement in the Philosophy Program.**

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**PHIL 224: Ethics and Food**  
**Professor Jill Dieterle**  
**TR 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, aquaculture, food safety, locavorism, food deserts, and the global distribution of food. What should we eat? Why? What consequences do our food choices have for other humans, for animals, and for the environment?

**PHIL 224 fulfills the General Education requirement for Knowledge of the Disciplines in the Humanities, as well as the Ethics and Value Theory requirement in the Philosophy Program.**

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**PHIL 225: Philosophy & Society**  
**Professor Michael Doan**  
**TR 12:30-1:45**

This course engages in critical analysis of our society's underlying values, norms, and institutions. Major works of social and political philosophy will be considered with a view to understanding and working to overcome various forms of exploitation and oppression.

**PHIL 225 fulfills the General Education requirement for Knowledge of the Disciplines in the Humanities, as well as the Social Justice requirement in the Philosophy Program.**

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**PHIL 310W: Aesthetics**  
**Professor Jeremy Proulx**  
**TR 3:30-4:45**

In an infamous line of reasoning from Book 10 of the *Republic*, Socrates defends banning poets from the ideal state; Socrates defends, that is, the idea that people (and the state) would be better off were the artistic creations of poets not available for consumption at all. Poetry (and he has in mind mostly the tragic dramas from authors like Sophocles, Aeschylus, and Euripides) encourages us to indulge our worst tendencies, to connect with parts of us we'd be better off restraining. In other words, poetry, drama, and the arts undercut the authority of reason in the human soul and thus are a detriment to the development of the person and, by extension, the state.

In this course we shall read the history of the philosophical discipline of Aesthetics as a series of responses to this basic question of the value of art and beauty in human life. Aristotle immediately responds to Plato by identifying the value of art in its capacity for bringing about a *katharsis* in the viewer. In the late eighteenth century, Schiller, drawing on Kantian aesthetics, argues for the importance of aesthetic experience to our intellectual development and, in a direct response to Socrates, to the state. In the nineteenth century, Nietzsche turns Socrates' challenge on its head and celebrates art precisely because it conflicts with morality and because it answers a basic question

about meaningfulness in life. From here, we will explore writers like Marcuse, Benjamin, Habermas, and Lyotard in their exploration of the political value of aesthetics. And we will continue on explore recent work that explores the role that aesthetic considerations play in diverse areas like journalism, media, robotics, engineering, and landscape design.

**PHIL 310W fulfills the Ethics and Value Theory requirement in the Philosophy Program and the Writing Intensive course requirement in the General Education Program.**

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**PHIL 331W: Modern Philosophy**  
**Professor Brian Coffey**  
**MW 11-12:15**

The Modern Period (roughly 1600-1800) marks an exciting time in the history of Western Philosophy. It was a time when a modern, scientific worldview begins to emerge and challenge many of the dogmas of both religion and philosophy. Philosophers of the time were left with a choice: find clever ways to reconcile their religious and philosophical views with the emerging scientific viewpoint, or reject those old views and replace them with something new. Consequently, questions of the origins and limits to human knowledge, as well as questions about the fundamental reality of the world, loomed large.

In this course, we will carefully and closely read selections from the primary texts of many of the most renowned philosophers of this time: Descartes, Leibniz, Spinoza, Hume, Locke, Kant, etc. However, we will also be covering a number of texts from the sometimes overlooked women philosophers of the era: Princess Elisabeth, Margaret Cavendish, Mary Astell, etc.

**PHIL 331W fulfills the History of Western Philosophy requirement in the Philosophy Program and the Writing Intensive course requirement in the General Education Program.**

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**PHIL 413: 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?

**PHIL 413 fulfills the Eastern and Global requirement in the Philosophy Program.**

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**PHIL 443: 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 443 fulfills the Knowledge and Reality requirement in the Philosophy Program.**

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**PHIL 470W: 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.

**PHIL 470W fulfills the Knowledge and Reality requirement in the Philosophy Program and the Writing Intensive course requirement in the General Education Program.**

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**PHIL 481W: 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.

**PHIL 481W fulfills the Knowledge and Reality requirement in the Philosophy Program  
and the Writing Intensive course requirement in the General Education Program.**