

PHILOSOPHY COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

SPRING QUARTER 2024

PHIL 107: Critical Thinking | TR 2-3:15 & 4-5:15 | BCOM GUR

Arguably, the biggest problem that humanity faces is not the problem of climate change, poverty, war, or pandemic. Arguably, the biggest problem we face is the problem of *human irrationality*, for this is what prevents us from solving all of the other problems. In order to combat human irrationality, we must learn to think slowly, to identify good and bad forms of inductive and deductive reasoning, and to investigate the nature of our biases alongside their sources. This course serves as an introduction to the art of critical thinking. In revealing cognitive illusions for what they are, we will sharpen our analytical reasoning skills and cultivate both precision and humility. (Christian Lee)

PHIL 112: Moral Issues | MWF 10-10:50 & 11-11:50 | HUM GUR

Is it wrong to eat meat? Is it wrong to prevent someone from eating meat? Is anything wrong? Are right and wrong just a matter of what society says? In this class, we explore what makes an act wrong, whether there are any true generalities about right and wrong, and whether acts such as abortion, euthanasia and capital punishment are wrong. (Frances Howard-Snyder)

PHIL 113: Philosophy of Religion | MWF 3-3:50 & 4-4:50 | HUM GUR

Is there a God? Who or what is God, anyway? Does faith in God conflict with reason? This course will equip you to think through such questions for yourself. (Dan Howard-Snyder).

PHIL 114: Knowledge and Reality | TR 12-1:15 & 2-3:15 | HUM GUR

Philosophy is the attempt to answer, through rational reflection, the most fundamental questions. In this introductory course we will explore issues involving the nature of the world around us and our ability to know what it is really like. Questions addressed may include, among others: Is the physical world all there is? Do we have free will? How might we come to know about such things? For that matter, how might we come to know anything at all? This course will equip you to think through such issues for yourself. (Dennis Whitcomb)

PHIL 115: Environmental Ethics | MW 10-1:15 | HUM GUR

This course examines a broad range of environmental issues. Primary emphasis is given to how theoretical frameworks in ethics have been applied in substantive thinking about the rightful treatment of animals, biotic communities, species in danger of extinction, and the protection, conservation, and preservation of natural resources. Emphasis may also be given to how ethical thinking intersects with issues addressed in economics, conservation biology, and other academic disciplines or how ethical perspectives have influenced social movements, public debate, and law. (Christian Lee)

PHIL 201: Logic I | TR 10-11:15 | QSR GUR

We all know that in order to argue well you have to get the *facts* straight. Less well-known is that in order to argue well you have to get the *reasoning* straight. Not all forms of reasoning are equally good; sometimes the very structure of our reasoning leads us from truth into error. Logic is the formal study of valid (or: truth-preserving) reasoning. By slowing down to think carefully and learning to assess our own patterns of thought as well as the way others reason, we stand to become better thinkers, to develop stronger and more effective arguments, and to cultivate both precision and humility. (Christian Lee)

PHIL 368: Kant and post-Kantianism | TR 2-3:15

In 1781 Kant published his *Critique of Pure Reason* in which he (allegedly) combined the very best elements of Rationalism and Empiricism while avoiding their respective difficulties and irrevocably changed the course of philosophy in the West. For the first half of this class, we will examine this revolutionary text and critically evaluate some of its central theses and arguments. In the second half of the class, we will transition from issues in metaphysics and epistemology to topics in ethics and the theory of well-being, focusing on selected essays by Schopenhauer and a critical reading of Nietzsche's, *On the Genealogy of Morality*. (Hud Hudson)

PHIL 410: Theory of Knowledge | TR 4-5:15

What is an intellectual virtue? What are the intellectual virtues? Might an understanding of answers to these questions shed new light on the old problem of epistemic circularity? We will study three books and several articles on these questions that emphasizes reading and writing *before* engaging in classroom conversation over these topics. (Dan Howard-Snyder)

PHIL 417: Seminar in Philosophy | MW 2-3:15

In this seminar we will study two contemporary epistemological literatures and attempt to bring them into conversation with one another. The first literature focuses on inquiry: the process of raising questions and trying to learn their answers. The second literature focuses on "epistemic injustice": the varied phenomenon whereby people are treated unjustly in their capacities as knowers. Theorists of epistemic injustice tend to focus on cases where a person is unjustly treated as if they didn't know something. What would analogues of these cases look like if they involved *inquiry*? That is the sort of question we will explore, after studying the contemporary literatures on inquiry and epistemic injustice. (Dennis Whitcomb)

PHIL 420: Ethical Theory II | MWF 1:50

In other ethics classes and in everyday life we are constantly asking ethical questions: "Would it be wrong to have an abortion?" "Should I give my spare cash to UNICEF?" "Is it ever permissible to tell a lie?" "Should I return the wallet?" Sometimes, it seems that we do find answers to them. For example, we may discover that it is not always wrong to lie. But this raises further questions, questions at a different level of abstraction: "What do these answers mean?", "Are any of them true?" or, "Are they perhaps not the sorts of statements that could be true?", "If they are true, what makes them true?" and "If they are true, how can we ever come to know that they are true?" These "metaethical" questions will concern us in the first half of this class. In the second half of the quarter, we will discuss the issue of inequality. (Frances Howard-Snyder)

PHIL 425: Philosophy of the Mind | TR 12-1:15

This course will be divided into two parts. In the first half, we will survey historically influential theories of the mind, including Dualism, Behaviorism, Identity Theory, and various versions of Functionalism. In the second half, we will explore currently popular questions about the mind, including “Can computers think?”, “Does neuroscience disprove free will?”, and “What do split-brain cases teach us about the nature of personal identity?” If you are interested in taking this course but do not satisfy the prerequisite (PHIL 114), contact Ryan.Wasserman@wwu.edu to ask about an override. (Ryan Wasserman)

QUESTIONS? CONTACT US AT
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