Fall 2010
Philosophy Department Course Descriptions

PHIL 101 Philosophical Problems—Johnson
MWF 10-10:50 180 PLC
Living a human life poses certain problems for each of us: Who am I? Is there some meaning to my life? How should I act? Using short philosophical readings, we will reflect on issues such as the role of reason in our lives, the nature of religious belief, whether human existence makes any sense, how our personal identity is shaped, and how we construct meaning in our lives. 4 credits (3 lectures plus discussion section). Grades based on written essays and discussion participation.

PHIL 102 Ethics—TBA
MTWR 9-9:50 105 PETR
The aim of this course is to introduce students to a variety of writings in Western philosophical ethics. Beginning with ancient sources, the course will subsequently move to consider some of the most significant figures in philosophical ethics during the modern period, and will conclude with an examination of some important philosophical work of the recently completed century. These works will be critically presented and examined both with attention to the social/historical/political contexts in which they were developed, and for their current relevance and viability. Students should thus expect to gain both an awareness and understanding of a broad range of philosophical work on ethics, and an increased capacity to effectively examine ethical concerns.

PHIL 110 Human Nature—TBA
MTWR 9-9:50 204 CHA
Consideration of various physiological, cultural, psychological, and personal forces that characterize human beings, taking into account issues of class, gender, race, and sexual orientation. From a variety of viewpoints, this course takes up the question, “what does it mean to be a human being, and who's asking, anyway?” Perspectives considered include genetics, psychoanalysis, classical Indian philosophy, Euro-American philosophy (including feminism, as well as Latin American thought. Problem areas include the nature of sexuality, racial identity, embodiment, intersubjectivity, and projects of personal meaning. Typical assignments include in-class exams, short papers, and 1 revision. Class time involves interactive lecturing and dedicated discussion sections.

Phil 211 Existentialism—TBA
MTWR 16-16:50 303 GER
Basic ideas of the Christian and atheistic divisions of the existentialist movement; some attention to the philosophical situation that generated the existentialist rebellion. The course begins with a consideration of the historical origins of existential thought in the writings of Kierkegaard and then continues with readings from existential thinkers of the twentieth Century, from Karl Jaspers, Martin Heidegger and Gabriel Marcel to Albert Camus, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir. We will have occasion to discuss the pervasive presence of existential themes in contemporary literature and film. We consider the existential criticism of the rationalist philosophy and science as these dominate the modern era. The course continually concerns itself with the basic experiences taken up within existential writings: anxiety, the absurd, hope, freedom, mortality, presence, love.
Phil 216 Philosophy and Cultural Diversity—Pratt
MWF 11-11:50 180 PLC
In this course students will investigate some of the philosophical issues raised by the recognition of the culturally diverse character of American society from the perspective of a number of philosophical traditions in America: European, African, Asian, Islamic, Latina, and Native. In the process of the investigation, students will also be introduced to the practice of philosophy where philosophy is understood, in part, as a mode of inquiry that can contribute to the resolution of social conflict. At the beginning of the last century, W. E. B. Du Bois asserted “the problem of the Twentieth Century is the problem of the color line.” To the degree that America at the beginning of the Twenty-first Century still faces the problem of how to be a culturally diverse society, philosophy provides a means to address the problem. The course can be applied to the Arts & Letters group requirement and the University multicultural requirement (as an "AC" or American Culture course).

PHIL 307 Social & Political Philosophy—Koopman
TR 12-13:20 125 MCK
TITLE: "Liberalism and Its Critics"
Liberalism has long been the dominant theoretical tradition in contemporary political philosophy in both North America and Europe. It is therefore unsurprising that liberalism has been subjected to severe criticism over the decades. In this course we will explore: 1) some of the major theoretical and cultural origins of modern liberalism; 2) some of the foremost work in contemporary liberal theory; and 3) some of the most influential and troubling criticisms of liberalism that have been voiced over the past few decades. For (1) we will begin with a brief tour through John Stuart Mill’s (1806-1873) classic statement of liberalism, exploring how Mill saw himself as reconciling the twin imperatives of romanticism and utilitarianism central to nineteenth-century British culture. For (2) we will focus primarily on John Rawls’s (1921-2002) political liberalism, with additional attention to Friedrich Hayek’s (1899-1992) constitutionalist and Richard Rorty’s pragmatist (1931-2007) liberalism. For (3) we will consider canonical Marxist, Anarchist, Communitarian, Genealogical, and Feminist criticisms of liberalism before concluding with considerations of Pluralist contributions to liberal democratic theory. At the end of the course we will consider ways in which the quintessential liberal concepts of public and private can be (and possibly are being) transformed today.

PHIL 310 History of Philosophy Ancient-Medieval—Warne
MWF 15-15:50 101 LLCS
PHIL 310 offers an introduction to Ancient Greek philosophy, primarily through a reading of selections from the texts of Plato and Aristotle. We will also look at other Greek philosophical figures, such as Parmenides and Heraclitus. The course also considers the emergence of Western philosophy in relation to tragic narratives, like those of Oedipus and Antigone. In this regard, Socrates is considered both as a foremost philosophical question and as a possible tragic figure.

PHIL 315 Introduction to Feminist Philosophy—Mann
MWF 12-12:50 111 LIL
This course examines basic concepts and important texts in feminist philosophy. We will talk about what the great philosophers have said about women’s ability to do philosophy, what it means to do philosophy as women, how feminism has challenged the most basic assumptions of the Western philosophical tradition, and contemporary issues in feminist philosophy. This course is a prerequisite for some upper division courses in feminist philosophy.
PHIL 332 Philosophy of Film—Brence  
MWF 14-14:50 166 LA & U 19-2050 110 WIL  
In its relatively brief history (scarcely more than a century), film has arguably developed into the most significant art form and medium for the origination and transmission of culture in our time. Perhaps because of the brevity of this history, or perhaps due to its dismissal as merely “popular” culture (a form of cultural production often deemed unworthy of serious reflection), it has received relatively little attention from philosophers. When, however, philosophers have attended to film, they have commonly sought only to adapt accepted “philosophical” problems to their study of the subject (traditional metaphysical and epistemological problems concerned with the relationship between experience and reality, for example, take the form of the examination of the relationship of film to reality), or worse still, they have regarded film as capable only of shallow, but perhaps more accessible illustration of already charted philosophical ground (regarding “The Truman Show” as crudely illustrative of Plato’s Cave Allegory). This course, premised upon the view that philosophy is a disciplined practice of criticism and does not have its own particular subject matter, will, instead, endeavor to examine films philosophically. That is to say, the films themselves will be regarded as subject matter for philosophical analysis. They will be allowed to raise their own problems, advance their own claims, and propose their own solutions, all to be carefully examined, interrogated, and evaluated.

PHIL 339 Introduction to Philosophy of Science—Zack  
MWF 13-13:50 111 LIL  
We will examine theories of scientific practice, rationality, objectivity, values in science, and the role of science in society. Science is the leading source of knowledge in our times. Yet, humanities majors are often innocent of its methods and content, and scientists are often unaware of how their facts are related to their theories, the nature of scientific truth and the question of whether they are studying the real world or an artifact of their practice. Readings will consist of brief writings by scientists and philosophers of science. Work will consist of short papers.

PHIL 344 Introduction to Philosophy of Law—Ryan  
TR 10-11:20 105 ESL  
This is an introduction to legal thinking and the philosophical problems it raises. We deal with issues that are important to everyone, but the course will be especially useful to those contemplating going to law school. The course is oriented around specific legal issues, all of them contemporary. These include: issues of discrimination and equality; personal freedom and privacy; the status of legal agreements; the problem of criminal punishment. The readings are mainly Xeroxed materials — legal cases and philosophical essays on them. Grading is based on in-class exams and short papers.

PHIL 350 Metaphysics—Vallega-Neu  
TR 10-11:50 307 VOL  
This course will focus on metaphysical concepts of truth. We will examine main definitions of truth in the Western tradition, namely in texts by Plato, Aristotle, Aquinas, and Descartes. This will lead us to consider as well metaphysical issues like the soul, ontology, God, thought and language in relation to things and ideas, as well as the traditional distinction between mind and body. We will end the course by looking briefly at Nietzsche’s and Heidegger’s critiques of the metaphysical concepts of truth with an outlook on how these critiques underlie contemporary critiques of metaphysics in Continental philosophy.
PHIL 407/507 Advanced Symbolic Logic Seminar — Pratt
R 10-11:50 314 PLC
This course will review propositional logic using proof “tableaux,” modal logic, strict implication, and relevant logics. The text for the course is Graham Priest, *An Introduction to Non-Classical Logic* (Second Edition). The course will meet for two hours each week to work problems and discuss the material. Readings will include some short articles on problems in the philosophy of logic.

Grades on all assignments are P/NP. The course can be taken for 2 credits; P/NP only

PREREQUISITE: PHIL 325, Logic, Argument, and Inquiry or Equivalent.

PHIL 415 Continental Philosophy—Zambrana
MW 16-17:50 353 PLC
The main philosophical concern of first-, second-, and third-generation Frankfurt School Critical Theory has been giving an account of the very possibility of critique. If a theory of society is implicated in its object of study, how can we comprehend the structures generating social injustice and unearth resources for their overcoming? Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno famously struggled to give a positive answer to this question. In response to the pessimism of his teachers, Jürgen Habermas transformed the philosophical concern into a task of justification of reference points for critique. Based on his notions of communicative rationality and discourse ethics, Habermas provided an optimistic response to the challenge of critique. However, Habermas’ approach has been charged with the formalism of Kantian morality. Axel Honneth has attempted to revise the formalism of his teacher by arguing that reference points for critique are social-historical institutions, which he understands as spheres of action structured by relations of recognition. The notion of recognition, then, allows us to give a critical analysis of social injustice in modern societies. In this course we will trace this trajectory of Frankfurt School Critical Theory by examining the work of Horkheimer, Adorno, Habermas, Honneth, and Nancy Fraser. We will also consider the notions of rationality, justification, justice, and equality in the texts of these thinkers.

PHIL 433/533 Descartes & Locke—Zack
MW 14-15:50 123 LLCN
Contrasts between Descartes and Locke along rationalist vs. Empiricist lines will be the main focus.

Readings will include Descartes’ *Meditations* and *Passions of the Soul*, and Locke’s *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. The main comparative topics will be issues of metaphysics, epistemology and the identity of persons. Work will consist of short papers.

PHIL 453/553 Marx—Ryan
TR 14-15:50 303 GER
Marx is one of the most influential political philosophers of modern times, but few people today read him first hand; their knowledge of Marx is often second hand, gleaned from 20th century thinkers influenced by him. The main aim of this course is to introduce students to the philosophical/political views of Marx himself, by reading Marx’s own work. We will do readings in later Marxist-influenced thinkers, relating Marx to contemporary issues of justice, exploitation, and race and gender. Main assignments are a take-home midterm and a final paper.
PHIL 463/563 Husserl—Valleja-Neu
TR 12-13:50 146 HED
With the maxim “back to things themselves,” Husserl’s phenomenology has opened decisive paths towards rediscovering the world of manifold phenomena without remaining trapped in the neo-Kantian division of mind and world. Husserl has had a major influence on many decisive 20th century philosophers. The course will consist in a close reading of one of the last major works of Husserl, the Cartesian Meditations. In this work, which has had a major impact on Merleau-Ponty, Husserl addresses the problem of intersubjectivity by making recourse to the body. Our aim will be not only to understand what Husserl writes but also and above all to learn to think phenomenologically. Prior familiarity with Descartes’ Meditations is expected.

PHIL 607 Proseminar Feminist Philosophy—Mann
MW 16-17:50 112 WIL
Feminist philosophy is philosophical thought that emerges out of social movements for women’s emancipation. It works toward the recuperation of women’s and feminist thought in the history of philosophy, an understanding of the human condition as it is lived by women, an articulation of women’s ways of knowing in relation to epistemologies that have implicitly or explicitly excluded women, and interrogating political and ethical practices from a feminist perspective. Though we commonly think of “feminist philosophy” as a recent development, scholars agree that philosophical work that exhibits a feminist sensibility has been a critical counter-voice to the mainstream Western tradition since its inception. Nevertheless, philosophy today is sometimes referred to by feminists as “the physics of the humanities” since it remains the most male dominated field in the humanities. Yet feminist philosophers have been passionate in their claims that the discipline of philosophy prepares us to ask the questions we need to ask and address the problems that we confront—even as philosophy is transformed in the process. The purpose of this course is twofold: 1) to give students an opportunity to reflect on what it means to study and practice philosophy as a woman, i.e. from a position of alterity in relation to the dominant traditions in Western philosophy and 2) to introduce students to basic texts and basic topics in feminist philosophy. These are some of the questions we will explore in the course: How does feminist thinking both appropriate and change the practice of philosophy? What questions are opened up by feminist philosophical inquiry that are not opened by more traditional approaches? How does feminist philosophy invite us to challenge some of our most deeply held assumptions about knowledge, human nature, and political and ethical practices?

PHIL 607 Latin American Philosophy Seminar—Valleja
MW 12-13:50 206 FR
Remarkable Delimitations: Contemporary Latin American Philosophy

Over the last thirty years Latin American thought has become a powerful voice in world philosophies as an alternative space contributing to overcoming the Western philosophical tradition’s hegemonic power and control over our ways of understanding the limits and possibilities of conceptual knowledge, its sources and actors. At the same time this turn has also been the occasion for a transformative and creative reception of the tradition. This is an intensive seminar on Latin American thought covering some of the most important conceptual issues, currents, and figures behind these developments. The central aim of the course is the study of Latin American philosophy on its own terms. A pivotal point for the seminar will be the transformation of the understanding of the task of philosophy that results from expanding the horizons of thought. This occurs as one begins to rethink the concepts and dispositions of Western European and North
American philosophies in light of Latin American thinkers who give new and transformative articulations to philosophical concepts out of their Latin American situations and experiences. The seminar will focus on three specific moments: 1. The turn towards a Latin American philosophy and world philosophies in the Philosophy of Liberation. 2. The development of the concept of coloniality (of power, knowledge, and being) and of modalities of decolonization, and how these affect philosophy. 3. The reception of deconstruction, post-structuralism, hermeneutics, and post-Marxist critiques in Latin American Subaltern and Postmodern Studies.

The seminar will include lectures that situate each reading in its conceptual-historical contexts. Some of the figures discussed will be Enrique Dussel, Aníbal Quijano, Ramón Grosfoguel, Walter Mignolo, Santiago Castro-Gómez, Nelson Maldonado-Torres, Linda Alcoff, Nelly Richard, Alberto Moreiras, Idelber Avelar, Ofelia Schutte, Ernesto Laclau, and the Letters and Communiqués of Subcomandante Marcos and the EZNL.

**PHIL 620 American Philosophy—Koopman**  
**TR 18-19:50 353 PLC**  
**TITLE:** "Pragmatist Pluralism and Contemporary Political Philosophy"

This course will present a survey of a key set of debates in contemporary political philosophy concerning moral pluralism and political pluralism. These debates are often discussed under the broad banner of 'value pluralism'. The purpose of the course is two-fold. A **first aim** is to provide a detailed survey of the role of pluralism in a variety of different traditions in contemporary political philosophy: these include our primary focus on pragmatist moral and political philosophy (where we find a conception of pragmatist pluralism), Rawlsian analytic liberalism (where the emphasis is on reasonable pluralism), radical political philosophy (where the emphasis is often on agonistic pluralism), and historicist-analytic liberalism (where the emphasis is generally on deep pluralism).  

A **second aim** is to explore together the ways in which philosophical pragmatism can make a contribution to contemporary debates about pluralism, both in terms of its critical relation to other philosophical interpretations of value pluralism and its own philosophical contributions to moral and political philosophy. While we will be reading broadly in the literature on value pluralism, we will begin and end our investigations with pragmatist pluralism. This will enable you to understand the current debates as they have shaped up over the past few decades and to gain a sense of the possibilities for a pragmatist intervention into these debates. Authors we will be reading include: James, Dewey, Rorty, Bohman, Rawls, Mouffe, Connolly, Berlin, and Williams.