

SPRING 2006
PHILOSOPHY ADVANCED UNDERGRADUATE
AND GRADUATE COURSE OFFERINGS

Philosophy 4224: Epistemology

This course is designed to give the student a solid grounding in the main areas of debate in contemporary epistemology. Topics will likely include the analysis of justification and knowledge, externalism and internalism, naturalism, induction, skepticism, relativism, and anti-realism.

Instructor: W. Ott CRN: 15260
 Lecture: 2:00p-3:15p SQUIR 234 TTh

Philosophy 4304: Topics in Social and Political Philosophy: Ethical Pluralism in Liberal Democracy

The course focuses on the significance of ethical, cultural, and religious diversity, and disagreement for liberal democratic political theory and practice. Topics to be covered include the nature of moral disagreement and its implications for objectivity; civic friendship and social unity; religious toleration and the place of religion in the public sphere; the liberal values of autonomy, authenticity, and individuality; neutrality between lifestyles and conceptions of the good life; multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism; the proper conduct of public deliberation in a context of disagreement; and the place of civility, moderation, and compromise in political life. Authors to be studied include Aristotle, Locke, Mill, Rawls, Kymlicka, and Okin. Student participation in class discussion will be a major aspect of the course.

Instructor: S. May CRN: 15261
 Lecture: 9:30a-10:45a SQUIR 238 TTh

Philosophy 4324: Business and Professional Ethics

In this course we will investigate moral and ethical issues that arise in the context of business practices. We will begin with an overview of relevant ethical theories and a consideration of various approaches to ethics, and then spend the majority of the course discussing specific problems. We will address questions such as: To what extent should considerations other than profits determine business decisions? What rights and obligations do employers and employees have with respect to one another? What obligations, if any, do businesses have to their consumers, or to the general public? To what extent should businesses adopt affirmative action measures or other policies designed to promote diversity in the workforce? In considering these issues we will read a combination of scholarly articles and influential court cases.

Instructor: S. Daskal CRN: 15263
 Lecture: 9:30a-10:45a SQUIR 236 TTh

Philosophy 4334: Jurisprudence:**The Authority of the Law**

The course is premised on the question: what is the law supposed to be, such that we are supposed to obey it? Topics to be discussed include civil disobedience and conscientious objection; competing theories of the nature of law and its normative content; the enforcement of morality; the problem of political legitimacy and the democratic genesis of the law; the nature of rights and their importance; constitutionalism and different approaches to constitutional interpretation; equality before the law; majoritarianism and the question of judicial review of legislation. Authors to be studied include Locke, Thoreau, King, Mandela, Raz, Feinberg, Hart, Dworkin, Coleman, Waldron, and Buchanan. Philosophy 4335 is a writing-intensive class and regular philosophical "briefs" will be expected.

Instructor: S. May CRN: 15262
 Lecture: 12:30p-1:45p SHULT 109 TTh

Philosophy 5204: Topics in the History of Philosophy God, Philosophy, and Man

A systematic examination of some of the main approaches to the study of religion found in Western thought from ancient times to the present, including analytical as well as phenomenological and existentialist approaches to philosophy. Common to these approaches, which will serve as a focus of the course, is the concern with the nature of religious experience and its place in justifying religious belief or unbelief. We will also explore other related issues including, but not limited to, the traditional arguments for and against the existence of God, problems concerned with the language used to talk about God, and the problem of reconciling divine omniscience with human freedom. Patristic, medieval, as well as contemporary philosophers and theologians such as Augustine, Anselm, Aquinas, Plantinga, Tillich, Hick will be surveyed.

Instructor: R. Mayorga CRN: 15267
 Lecture: 2:30p-5:15p MAJWM225 W

Philosophy 5306: Main Themes in the Philosophy of Modern Science & Technology

This course is an introductory graduate course. It is designed to help students become familiar with three major topics prominent in recent philosophy of science and technology and to develop skill in making and evaluating arguments about these and related topics. The topics are:

(1) Can the history of science offer shed light on fundamental issues in philosophy of science and technology? Among the issues covered will be the goals of science, the nature of progress in science and technology, various ways in which contextual factors affect scientific and technological change, and the interrelations among theory, experiment, and available technology.

(2) What is the relationship between technological and scientific change? This question contains many hidden assumptions. Yet variants of this question are critical for understanding science as scientific advances ("advances?") have come to depend increasingly on experimental technologies, technological advances ("advances?") have come to depend increasingly on science, and as "scientific" technologies have come to play an ever-more central role in the dominant culture.

(3) Incorporating both the above, can we tease out a useful account of the relationship between the direction of scientific research and the health of the surrounding society?

We will employ an 'historical' approach to these topics and we will address the use of case studies in dealing with these topics. There will be short written assignments approximately every other week and a term paper. Students will have some opportunity to influence the readings employed and the issues addressed in the course.

Instructor: R. Burian CRN: 14186
 Lecture: 9:05a-11:50a MAJWM225 M
 (Crosslisted with CRN 14729- STS 5306)

Philosophy 5334: Ethics

This course will be an investigation into the process of moral reasoning. This will involve addressing a set of issues that lie at the intersection of metaethics and normative ethics, such as the following. What constitutes a reason to do something? What distinguishes moral reasons from other sorts of reasons? How does one go about determining what one has most reason to do? What moral principles, if any, are we committed to by our understanding of moral reasoning? We will proceed by working through four

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important books related to these topics, each of which offers a different perspective on the nature of moral reasoning, and reasoning more generally. These will be R. M. Hare's *Moral Thinking*, T. M. Scanlon's *What We Owe to Each Other*, Jonathan Dancy's *Ethics Without Principles*, and Elijah Millgram's *Practical Induction*.

Instructor: S. Daskal CRN: 15264
Lecture: 9:05a-11:50a MAJWM225 W

Philosophy 5506: Symbolic Logic

In this course, we will work through some of the fundamental results of 20th century logic. We will start with set-theoretic foundations, cover the central theorems about first-order logic with identity (completeness, compactness, Löwenheim-Skolem theorems), and will conclude with Gödel's incompleteness results.

Instructor: B. Epstein CRN: 15272
Lecture: 12:30p-1:45p NOR 211 T Th

Philosophy 6014: Special Topics in Philosophy Groups and Individuals: Topics in the Philosophy of Economics and Social Science

Few people today would accept Hegel's claim that nations or historical moments possess a "spirit" that guides their evolution. Even so, it's clear that nations, historical periods, and groups in general have many properties that individuals do not. We speak of a country's foreign policies, its unemployment rate, the national mood. Is group behavior an aggregation of individual behavior? Should explanations of social phenomena strive to be individualistic?

This seminar will consider some important aspects of these issues in the ontology and methods of the social sciences. A principal focus will be cases in microeconomics, where these debates have been particularly acute. Of particular interest will be the role of "rational agents" in economic explanation. Readings from Durkheim, Weber, Menger, Friedman, Rosenberg, Hausman, Cartwright, Pettit, and others.

Instructor: B. Epstein CRN: 14194
Lecture: 3:00p-5:45p MAJWM225 T

Philosophy 6204: Advanced Topics in the History of Philosophy: Philosophy and Literature in Plato

~~Plato is famous for his theoretical criticisms of the value of literature, but he is equally famous for his brilliant use of literary techniques in his philosophical dialogues. The course will revolve around this apparent tension between Plato's theory and his practice. The aim will be to understand both Plato's theory of literature and his employment of literary devices and to determine whether his practice is consistent with his theory. In the course of treating this overall question, we will also explore questions about the nature of philosophy, the nature of literature, and the respective values and disvalues of each; and in exploring those fundamental questions naturally a host of other philosophical issues, particularly in ethics and epistemology, will have to be addressed.~~

~~Instructor: M. Gifford CRN 14195 CANCELLED
Lecture: 6:05p-8:50p MAJWM532 M~~

Philosophy 6204: Advanced Topics in the History of Philosophy: Kant

Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* is arguably the most important book from the modern era of philosophy. It had a major influence on subsequent philosophical thinking and remains relevant today. Its main topic is the nature, scope, and limits of human cognition; and its main conclusion is that *a priori* knowledge, natural science, freedom, and human experience itself are possible if and only if transcendental idealism is true. The purpose of this course is to give a close, critical reading of Kant's argument for transcendental idealism in the CPR all the way from the Preface to the Ideal of Pure Reason.

Instructor: B. Hall CRN 15266
Lecture: 3:30p-6:15p MAJWM225 Th

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Philosophy 6314: History of the Philosophy of Science Special Focus: Wilfrid Sellars; Science versus Common Sense

Wilfrid Sellars (1912-1989), a major American philosopher, was one of the few 20th Century thinkers who actively sought to create a complete philosophical system. His work responded to currents in the contemporary world that created some philosophical problems not hitherto considered, or if considered, not placed in as central a position as he saw them. Among the foremost of these was his concern over the clash between two different pictures of the world we live in, one provided by science, and the other by what I call common sense, but what he called the manifest image (there *is* a difference). One way to think of the difference between these views is to think of science as dealing with items such as molecules, electrons and galaxies, while common sense is concerned with the world we live in, the world of trees, people, politics and ethical dilemmas. His goal was to create a system in which the two views achieve some sort of reconciliation. We will attempt to unravel his views on this topic as well as wend our way through a myriad of problems with which he presents us. It is our objective to determine Sellars' legacy.

Instructor: J. Pitt CRN 15265
Lecture: 2:30p-5:15p MAJWM225 M

The following STS course may be used toward the Masters degree in Philosophy and, for those students who will be taking the non-thesis option, may be used as a course in the Philosophy of Science for the purposes of the Masters examination. Interested students, please see Dr. Richard Burian (220 Major Williams, x1-6760, rmburian@vt.edu).

STS 6224: ADVANCED TOPICS IN LIFE SCIENCES AND MEDICINE: FORMATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF GENETICS

This course will deal with the historical development of genetics, with some emphasis on philosophical issues (e.g., about conceptual change in biology) raised by the history of genetics. However, the course will be shaped to meet the interests of participants and paper topics can deal with a wide range of issues, including discipline formation, funding, the impact of particular controversies, the interactions between genetics and other disciplines, the impact of particular technologies, and the relationship between genetics and eugenics. Time permitting, we will focus on at least four phases in the history of genetics. We will definitely cover (1) Mendel and the background to his work and (2) the rediscovery of Mendel and (3) the development of chromosomal genetics and the theory of the gene, plus the resistance to both. One or two additional historical phases will be chosen to suit the interests of the class; they will include some work on the molecularization and perhaps the commercialization of genetics and the changes that they have wrought. We will bring together some strikingly different approaches to the history of genetics found in historical and scientific literatures, paying close attention to scientific developments and to recent examinations of relevant historical episodes. With appropriate prearrangement and a suitable choice of term paper topic, the course can be used in most of the Ph.D. tracks in the STS program and for Philosophy of Science credit in the Philosophy Masters program. Because the selection of materials (some of which are out of print) will depend on student interests, those who think they might take the course are encouraged to contact the instructor.

Instructor: R. Burian CRN 16412

Class Meetings: Wednesdays, 1:00-3:50 PM, Lane 151