

SPRING 2008

PHILOSOPHY ADVANCED UNDERGRADUATE AND GRADUATE COURSE OFFERINGS

Philosophy 4214: Metaphysics

Examination of some of the central problems of metaphysics. Topics may include: existence, necessary truth, the problem of universals, causation, the identity of the self through time, free will. Attention will be given both to the historical development of these problems and to contemporary philosophical responses to them.

Instructor: D. Parker

CRN: 17054 Lecture: 2:00p-3:15p T Th

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: 16457 Lecture: 2:30p-3:45p M W

Philosophy 4604: Philosophy of Biology

Philosophers are interested in biological science in large part because many issues in biology occupy a place of central importance in our lives -- such as whether race is a biological property, or whether our genes program us to behave in certain ways, what constitutes "human nature, and whether Darwin's theory of Natural Selection undermines our ability to rationally hold religious beliefs. In this class we will use the tools of philosophy to understand race, genes, human nature, religion, and life in general from the perspective of contemporary biology.

Instructor: C. Haufe

CRN: 14532 Lecture: 9:30a-10:45a T Th

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

It is a truism that computers have changed the face of contemporary society, and thus raises a host of questions of sociological concern. But is the use of computers philosophically interesting? This course will examine, from a distinctly philosophical perspective, the import of computers for philosophical problems, especially those of an epistemological nature. We will particularly focus on the role of computer simulations in contemporary science, and how such simulations are to be understood within the traditional dichotomy between theory and experiment.

Instructor: D. Parker

CRN: 14536 Lecture: 7:00p-9:45p Th
(Crosslisted with CRN 15119 – STS 5306)

Philosophy 5344: History of Ethics

(Description forthcoming)

Instructor: M. Gifford

CRN: 14452 Lecture: 6:00p-8:45p M

Philosophy 6204: Advanced Topics in the History of Philosophy Meaning and Intentionality in Modern Philosophy

This course looks at intentionality and meaning in the moderns, from Descartes to Hume. (Time permitting, we might also look at Mill.)

Other figures to be discussed include Hobbes and Locke. We will explore how such issues as the nature of the proposition, the function of words, and the resources of mental representation affect metaphysics and epistemology.

Instructor: W. Ott

CRN: 14543 Lecture: 2:30p- 5:15p T

Philosophy 6324: Advanced Topics in Ethics and Politics: Democratic Theory

The course examines the recent growth in the philosophical literature on democracy. Topics include participatory and representative democracy, democratic legitimacy in the domestic and international spheres, the idea of a popular will and social choice theoretic criticisms of populism, epistemic, deliberative, and agonistic theories of democracy, partisanship and the ethics of citizenship, the constraints of public justification in a democracy, majoritarianism, and the legitimacy of judicial review. Authors may include Rousseau, Mill, Pateman, Dahl, Riker, Manin, Rawls, Cohen, Gutmann and Thompson, Mouffe, Christiano, Arneson, Richardson, and Waldron.

Instructor: Simon May

CRN 16446 Online

Philosophy 6334

Advanced Topics in the Philosophy of Science Epigenesis, Preformation, Genetic Determinism, and Biological Explanation

We will begin by examining some debates (from the 18th C. forward) between supporters of epigenesis and of preformationism about the nature of organisms and related issues. (Epigenesis, as understood by Aristotle, held that embryos gradually make adult organs and establish their natures only as they assimilate material from the environment; they do not start out fully preformed.) The debates in question influenced both philosophy and biology. (Example: before ~1950 many embryologists rejected genetics as preformationist; remnants of this issue are still debated.)

The detailed content of the course will depend on the interests and backgrounds of the students enrolled, but after surveying debates over epigenesis vs. preformation we will turn to contemporary philosophy and biology (in both of which issues involving nature vs. nurture are still very much alive). Among the issues we are likely to examine: freedom and determinism, teleology as distinctive of organisms, the nature of scientific explanations, whether genetics is preformationist, whether it is consistent with embryology, and how to think about the relationships among environment, evolution, heredity and self-determination. Although we will deal with issues in current biology (and students with appropriate backgrounds will have the opportunity to pursue them in detail), the course will *not* presuppose a technical background in biology. Students from biological sciences, philosophy, and STS will be able to work on course-relevant topics related to their particular interests and projects. With specific prearrangement and an appropriate term paper, the course may be used to satisfy the Philosophy core requirement in Philosophy of Science or to substitute for one of the STS core courses in Philosophy of Science and Technology.

Instructor: R. Burian

CRN: 17056 Lecture: 2:30p-5:15p W
(Crosslisted with CRN 17057 – STS 5306)