Department of Philosophy’s Course Descriptions for Spring 2017 Undergraduate Level Courses

(If marked with **, this is the instructor’s revised description of the course content; all others are the general descriptions provided from the UG catalog.)

NOTE: Courses, rooms, times and instructors are subject to change; please see Timetable of Classes on HokieSpa for current information

PHIL 1204: Knowledge and Reality
MW 12:20p-1:10p (Lecture)       Instructor: Kelly Trogdon
(Recitations:)
CRN: 16636 – F 1:25p-2:15p
CRN: 16639 – F 9:05a – 9:55a
CRN: 16640 – F 10:10a-11:00a
CRN: 16641 – R 6:30p-7:20p
CRN: 16642 – F 12:20p-1:10p
CRN: 16643 – W 4:40p-5:30p
CRN: 16644 – R 5:00p-5:50p
CRN: 16646 – F 12:20p-1:10p
CRN: 16647 – R 5:45p-6:35p

Examines the questions: What is the nature of reality? How do I know what is real and what is misleading appearance, error, or illusion? What is knowledge? How do I find out who I am and how I relate to the world around me?

PHIL 1204: Knowledge and Reality
CRN: 16637 - TR 8:00a-9:15a          Instructor: Ted Parent
CRN: 16638 – MWF 11:15a-12:05p          Instructor: Ted Parent
CRN: 16645 - TR 2:00p-3:15p          Instructor: Nathan Rockwood

Examines the questions: What is the nature of reality? How do I know what is real and what is misleading appearance, error, or illusion? What is knowledge? How do I find out who I am and how I relate to the world around me?

** (CRN 16645) This course is about the nature of the world and how we can come to know about the world. Theories of knowledge try to answer questions such as “What sorts of things can we know?” and “How can we come to know them?” Theories of reality try to answer questions such as “What kinds of things exist?” and “What are those things like?” In this course we will look at prominent answers to these questions, and students will develop the critical thinking skills needed to evaluate these theories for themselves.
PHIL 1304: Morality and Justice
MW 1:25p-2:15p (Lecture)  Instructor: Daniel Wodak
(Recitations:)
CRN 16648 – F 1:25p-2:15p
CRN 16649 – W 4:40p-5:30p
CRN 16650 – W 5:45p-6:35p
CRN 16652 – F 10:10a-11:00a
CRN 16653 – F 8:00a-8:50a
CRN 16654 – F 11:15a-12:05p

(Large lecture, with recitation sections Wed. or Fri., as noted on the timetable)

**We face philosophical questions about morality and justice in our everyday lives. Are you morally obligated to give away a large portion of your income to charity, or to stop eating meat? Is it morally permissible to abort fetuses? Should the state stop redistributing wealth from the rich to the poor? These are some of the familiar questions that we will consider in this course, along with prominent theories that seek to systematize and justify our reflective judgments about these issues by appealing to utility or rights.

This course also aims to teach you the skills to understand, evaluate, and develop philosophical arguments, and to have you apply those skills to see whether and how particular views about morality and justice can be justified.

In this course you may well find that you start out with strong commitments that do not stand up to critical scrutiny. You may even find that it hard to reconcile your answers to what seem at first glance to be quite separate questions. This is all part of the challenge (and the fun!) of philosophy. Our central goal is not to reach a consensus or to settle any of these matters decisively; it is to better understand some of the central questions in moral philosophy, and learn how to use philosophical tools to address them.

PHIL 1304: Morality and Justice
CRN: 16651 – TR 9:30a-10:45a  Instructor: Sukaina Hirji
CRN: 16655 – MWF 9:05a-9:55a  Instructor: Gregory Novack

A critical survey of theories concerning human nature, the meaningful life, and the moral evaluation of actions, persons, and institutions. Theories will be applied to such issues as abortion, justice, and moral problems faced by professionals.

**(CRN: 16651) Is affirmative action just? What do we owe to the disabled? Is lying always morally wrong? Should speech be regulated? Is it morally permissible to eat animals? These are some of the ethical questions we face in everyday life. In this course, we examine the dominant ethical theories and explore how they seek to answer every day moral problems in a principled way. We will read some of the most influential thinkers in the history of Western philosophy, and consider the consequences of various moral theories for pressing moral problems.
PHIL 1504: Language and Logic
MW 1:25p-2:15p (Lecture) Instructor: Gregory Novack
(Recitations:)
CRN 16656 – F 12:20p – 1:10p
CRN 16657 – F 10:10a – 11:00a
CRN 16658 – F 10:10a - 11:00a
CRN 16659 – F 11:15a - 12:05p
CRN 16660 – F 12:20p - 1:10p
CRN 16661 – F 11:15p - 12:05p
(Large lecture, with recitation sections on Fri., as noted on the timetable)

Basic concepts in logic and critical thinking: argument, validity, deduction and induction, logical form, formal and informal fallacies. Introduction to the logic of truth functions and of categorical statements. Critical analysis of arguments in ordinary language.

PHIL 2116: Ancient through Medieval Philosophy
CRN: 16662 – TR 12:30p-1:45p Instructor: Ted Parent

The main trends in Post-Aristotelian Greek and Roman philosophy and medieval philosophy, including Augustine, Aquinas, and Ockham.

PHIL 2125: History of Modern Philosophy
CRN: 16663 – TR 2:00p-3:15p Instructor: Lydia Patton

Western philosophical thought from Descartes to Hume.

PHIL 2304: Global Ethics
CRN: 16664 – MW 2:30p-3:45p Instructor:
CRN: 16665 – TR 11:00a-12:15p Instructor: Hannah Wildman-Short
CRN: 16666 – MWF 10:10a-11:00a Instructor:
CRN: 16667 - MW 4:00p – 5:15p Instructor:
CRN: 16668 – TR 12:30p – 1:45p Instructor:
CRN: 16669 – TR 12:30p – 1:45p Instructor:
CRN: 16670 – MW 5:30p – 6:45p Instructor:
CRN: 18932 – TR 11:15a – 12:05p Instructor:
CRN: 16671 (ONLINE COURSE) Instructor: Grace McGee
CRN: 18838 (ONLINE COURSE) Instructor: Hannah Wildman-Short

Ethical issues in international context. Application of the principles of moral theory to such issues as the obligations of richer nations toward poorer ones, cultural and other forms of relativism, emigration and immigration, nationalism, war, deterrence, intervention, environmental degradation, preservation of natural diversity, and responsibilities toward future generations.
PHIL 2605: Reason and Revolution  
CRN: 18310 – MWF 11:15a – 12:05p  
Instructor: Benjamin Jantzen

The study of philosophical approaches to understanding and justifying modes of human reasoning both in science and everyday life. The nature of theory confirmation and falsification.

PHIL 2964: Field Study  
CRN: 16672

Work with instructor overseeing the course to complete paperwork first. Pass/Fail only. Variable credit course.

PHIL 2974 or 2974H: Independent Study  
CRN: 16673 for 2974  
CRN: 16674 for 2794H

Work with instructor overseeing the course to complete paperwork first.

PHIL 3016/PSCI 3016: Political Theory  
CRN: 16676 (PSCI CRN: 17161) - TR 9:30a-10:45a  
Instructor:

The analysis of fundamental ideas in the history of political theory from the late 17th century to the present.

PHIL 3024: Philosophical Movements (Philosophy and Literature)  
CRN: 18311 – TR 11:00a- 12:15p  
Instructor: James Klagge

** While we are used to philosophy being written in straight, sometimes boring, prose, philosophers since Plato have also written in other styles: dialogues (Plato, Berkeley, Hume, Wittgenstein), diatribes (Nietzsche), plays (Sartre), and poems (Lucretius). On the other hand, writers who do not think of themselves as philosophers also address philosophical issues in their works: Sophocles (morality), Dostoevsky (the meaning of life), Kafka (explanation), and Coetzee (animal rights). What happens when we look at philosophical issues from literary perspectives? Find out in this class. See if you agree with Wittgenstein that “a serious and good philosophical work could be written that would consist entirely of jokes.” (This course can be used toward satisfying the 9-hour History of Philosophy requirement for the Philosophy major.)
PHIL 3314: Ethical Theory (Philosophy of Well-Being)  
CRN: 18760 – TR 2:00p-3:15p  
Instructor: Sukaina Hirji  
**What is the best possible life that a human being can live? What makes a person's life go well or badly for them? What is the difference between happiness and well-being? Is death bad for us? Does being disabled necessarily make our lives worse for us? These questions are of central importance not only for deciding how to live our own lives, but for determining the policies that affect the lives of others. In this course, we examine the nature of well-being. We begin by reviewing the main theories of well-being, from those defended by the ancient Greek philosophers to contemporary theories informed by the latest psychological research. We then explore some general theoretical issues related to well-being.**

PHIL 3414: Aesthetics  
CRN: 18313 – TR 12:30p-1:45p  
Instructor: Joseph Pitt  
**Aesthetics is the area of philosophy whose subject matter is the arts. What is beauty? What is art? Are there objective criteria by which to judge a work of art as good or bad or is it all a matter of taste? We will examine some attempts to answer these questions and try to formulate our own responses as well.**

PHIL 3454: Philosophy of Religion  
CRN: 16679 – TR 3:30p-4:45p  
Instructor: Hannah Wildman Short  
A consideration of religious belief and its justification with attention to such philosophical issues as the nature and existence of God, the problem of evil, and the notion of faith.

PHIL 3505: Modern Logic and Development  
CRN: 16680 – TR 8:00a-9:15a  
Instructor: Gregory Novack  
Logic and logical theory and the history of its development. Validity of arguments. Syllogistic logic from Aristotle to modern times. Deductive methods in truth functional and quantificational logic through the theory of identity. Translation from English into symbolic form.

PHIL 4016: Special Topics in Philosophy (TS: Wittgenstein)  
CRN: 18762 – TR 3:30p-4:45p  
Instructor: James Klagge  
**Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951) is widely considered to be the most important philosopher of the 20th Century. He produced two influential yet very different philosophies in his lifetime, and he was thought by most everyone who knew him to be a genius. Though his work is often alluded to by philosophers as well as other intellectuals, it is not easily read and understood. In this course we will carefully read and study his two most significant works, the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1921), and the *Philosophical Investigations* (1953), as well as a recent biography. Among the philosophical topics we will discuss are: the nature of language, the relationship between language and reality, the nature of philosophy and its relationship to science, the place of value, and the nature of thought and the mind. The aim is to give students an understanding of his main philosophical ideas, the place of his ideas in the history of philosophy, and the relationship between his life and his work.**
PHIL 4214: Metaphysics  
CRN: 16682 – MW 4:00p-5:15p  
Instructor: Kelly Trogdon

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.

PHIL 4224: Epistemology  
CRN: 16683 – MWF 12:20p-1:10p  
Instructor: Nathan Rockwood

** This course aims to answer the questions “What is knowledge?” and “How do we know things?” The course will cover both historical and contemporary approaches to these questions. The historical section of the course will include discussions of Plato on the definition of knowledge, Aristotle on the foundation of knowledge, and Descartes and Hume on skeptical doubts. The contemporary section of the course will include discussions of the Gettier Problem and attempted solutions, as well as the internalism-externalism about whether knowledge and/or justified belief requires having evidence. The goal of the course is to see the historical trajectory and motivations that led to the prominent theories in contemporary epistemology and to evaluate the major views concerning the nature of knowledge.

PHIL 4334: Jurisprudence  
CRN: 16684 – MW 2:30p-3:45p  
Instructor: Douglas Lind

An examination of the nature of law and legal systems with attention to traditional theories of law and to such topics as judicial decision and discretion, law and morality, the justification of legal coercion.

PHIL 4604: Philosophy of Biology  
CRN: 18766 – TR 12:30p-1:45p  
Instructor: Benjamin Jantzen

This course is designed primarily for students of biology or philosophy students with a strong interest in biology. Topics vary from year to year, but include the changing character of biology as a science, the special character of biological explanations and methods, and the place and value of reduction (e.g., of Mendelian to molecular genetics) in biology.

PHIL 4884: Advanced Philosophy, Politics and Economics  
CRN: 16685 – W 4:00p-6:45p  
Instructor: Michael Moehler

(CRN: 13299 ECON)  
(CRN: 17208 PSCI)

** This course serves as the Capstone Course for the PPE Minor at Virginia Tech and provides the final step of the students’ learning experience in the PPE curriculum. The course addresses advanced topics at the intersection of philosophy, politics, and economics, in particular topics
concerning economic rationality, utility theory, game theory, social choice theory, public choice theory, markets, justice, and democracy. The course allows senior students to synthesize their knowledge gained during their PPE studies and apply it to an interdisciplinary topic of their choice. Throughout the semester, students will work on their own research projects.

PHIL 4974 or 4974H: Independent Study
CRN: 16686 for 4974
CRN: 16687 for 4974H

Work with instructor overseeing the course to complete paperwork.

PHIL 4994 or 4994H: Undergraduate Research
CRN: 16688 for 4994
CRN: 16689 for 4994
CRN: 16690 for 4994H

Work with instructor overseeing the course to complete paperwork.