Department of Philosophy’s Course Descriptions for

Spring 2016 Graduate Level* Courses

*University Honors students seeking to add a graduate level PHIL class should see the professor regarding a force add.

(If marked with **, this is the instructor’s revised description of the course content; all others are the general descriptions provided from the Graduate catalog and may be updated with the instructor’s description at a later time.)

PHIL 5214G Intermediate Metaphysics
CRN: 17451 – TR 9:30a-10:45a  Instructor: Ted Parent
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 5224G Intermediate Epistemology
CRN: 19950 – MWF 10:10a-11:00a  Instructor: Gregory Novack
The Theory of knowledge. Is all knowledge based on experience? Does knowledge have a foundation? Can knowledge of the present and the nearby give us reasons for beliefs about the future, the past, or about events far away?

PHIL 5344 History of Ethics: Aristotle’s Ethics and Contemporary Virtue Theory
CRN: 19951 – M 7:00p-9:30p  Instructor: James Klagge
**We will do a careful study of Aristotle’s central work on human character, the Nicomachean Ethics. We will discuss the nature of the good human life, happiness, human nature, the varieties of human character, the relation between reason and emotion, the ways of becoming good, the difficulties of being good, and the nature of friendship. We will also discuss the relationship between Aristotle’s views and those of contemporary virtue theories of ethics.

PHIL 5904 Project and Report
CRN: 17453  Instructor: Lydia Patton

PHIL 5974 Independent Study
CRN: (17454, 17456, 17455) will be assigned when form is completed and turned in to Mrs. Zapata;
form may be found at http://www.phil.vt.edu/ma/independentstudy.pdf

PHIL 5994 Research and Thesis
CRN 15692  Instructor: Lydia Patton
PHIL 6014 Special Topics in Philosophy
Title: Metaethics
CRN: 19122 – MW 4:00p-5:15p Instructor: Gregory Novack
Close examination of a discipline, topic, or group of questions from a major philosophical tradition. Such areas as philosophy of language, philosophy of logic, and philosophy of mathematics, and such issues as causation, the nature of space and time, mental representation, logical positivism, and the linguistic turn will be examined. May be repeated for credit, with permission and different content, for a maximum of 12 hours. Completion of at least one of the philosophy M.A. core courses required.

PHIL 6014 Special Topics in Philosophy
Title: Kant's Critique of Pure Reason
CRN: 17460 – T 3:30p-6:15p Instructor: Lydia Patton
**A seminar on Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*. We will begin with discussion of the argumentative aims of the work, and will analyze these aims in the context of earlier debates in which Kant was engaged, as well as in the context of Kant's critical philosophy overall. Topics for discussion here may include Kant's responses to Hume and to Descartes, Kant's relationship to the Leibnizian-Wolffian tradition, and Kant's account of metaphysics and how this sheds light on his goal of limiting the reach of metaphysics in order to secure its claims. Reading of the *Critique* then will focus on the main arguments of the text, and on evaluating the support they provide for Kant's transcendental idealism. The perspective of transcendental idealism is intended to support the claims of science and philosophy to constitute a system of nature. We conclude by evaluating Kant's account of the laws of nature, of the nature of regulative and constitutive principles in constructing systems of knowledge, and of the resolution of paradoxes (antinomies) generated by pure reason (infinity, the soul, and the beginning and end of time).

PHIL 6014 Special Topics in Philosophy
Title: Philosophy of Religion
CRN: 19952 – TR 12:30p-1:45p Instructor: Nate Rockwood
**This seminar will focus on accounts of miracles and the laws of nature in the early modern period. Since miracles are typically thought to be God intervening to violate the laws of nature, what one says about the laws of nature will have implications for the possibility of miracles and vice versa. One way to explore conceptions of the natural world in the early modern period, then, is through the lens of theological views concerning divine omnipotence and the possibility of miracles. The central questions we will address include: Are the laws of nature necessary or contingent? If the laws of nature are necessary, can God intervene and miraculously violate the laws of nature? If instead the laws of nature are contingent and God's will determines the laws of nature, then would God violate his own laws? Moreover, supposing that God can and maybe would violate the laws of nature, would it ever be rational for us to believe that God has actually done so? In this seminar we will explore how early modern philosophers (such as Descartes, Malebranche, Locke, and Hume) answered these and related questions, and we will see how many of their views on science and religion continue to be an attractive way to think about the world today.

*Note: Topics courses may be repeated for credit. See the course descriptions in the graduate catalog for details, including maximum number of hours allowed.*