PHILOSOPHY ADVANCED UNDERGRADUATE AND GRADUATE COURSE OFFERINGS
FALL 2003

Philosophy 4224: Epistemology
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?

Instructor: L. Perini  
CRN: 95653  
Lecture: 2:00-3:15  
MCB 210  
T Th

Philosophy 4334: Jurisprudence
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.

Instructor: J. Klagge  
CRN: 95185  
Lecture: 11:00-12:15  
MCB 207  
T Th

Philosophy 4604: Philosophy of Biology
The course will examine a number of conceptual problems arising from biologists’ efforts to understand and explain living systems. Among the issues we will cover are the roles of theory (e.g. of evolution and genetics) in biology, the way “reductionist” explanations work in molecular biology (“a gene’s eye view of the organism”), and the interactions among theory, experiment, and biotechnologies in understanding the properties of organisms. We will explore a number of key concepts employed in evolutionary and molecular biology, for example, the concepts of adaptation, altruism, epigenesis, function, gene, and species. We will also explore some philosophical issues raised by work in biology, such as the question of the “emergence” of new sorts of entities with increasing complexity (organisms, thinking beings, societies) and the distinctiveness (?) of human beings.

This course may be used as a writing intensive course within the major for both Biology and Philosophy majors. It is not necessary (though it is desirable) for students with one of these majors to have had a course in the other field. Students will be guided through the writing process in a natural way as part of the ongoing work in the course. Some short papers (probably three) and a term paper will be required for this course. The main textbook will be Kim Sterelny and Paul E. Griffiths, Sex and Death: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Biology (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1999).

Instructor: R. Burian  
CRN: 95192  
Lecture: 9:30-10:45  
WHIT 349T Th

Philosophy 5305: Philosophy of Modern Science & Technology
Problems, literature, and schools in the philosophy of science and technology. Explanation and confirmation.

Instructor: D. Mayo  
CRN: 93980  
Lecture: 2:00-4:50  
MAJWM 225  
T
(Cross listed with: STS 5305; CRN 94540)

Philosophy 5334: Ethics
A study of principal theories and issues in and about morality.

Instructor: STAFF  
CRN: 95443  
Lecture: 2:30-5:30  
MAJWM 225  
W

Philosophy 5505: Symbolic Logic
Modern deductive symbolic logic and its metatheory. Logical metatheory: consistency, completeness, and decidability of logical systems.

Instructor: D. Mayo  
CRN: 95444  
Lecture: 2:00-3:15  
MAJWM 532  
T Th

Philosophy 6324: Advance Topics in Social and Political Philosophy
A systematic examination of normative ethics, the part of moral philosophy that is concerned with articulating and defending the basic principles of morality. The approach will focus on the central work of a number of prominent contemporary moral philosophers. We will consider a number of different factors that are commonly appealed to in moral judgments about the rightness or wrongness of actions, as well as various attempts to formulate generalizations about their moral relevance. Particular attention will be paid to the distinctions (i) between killing and letting die, and (ii) between harm that is intended as a means to some good end and (iv) harm that is merely a foreseen but unintended side-effect of some means taken toward a good end. We will examine attempts to formulate and to justify non-consequentialist constraints based on these distinctions, as well as the more general problem of justifying any form of non-consequentialist constraint. Along the way, some time will also be spent on more applied topics, such as just war theory and physician assisted suicide. Pursuing the debate between consequentialists and non-consequentialists, we will go on to consider the problem of justifying non-consequentialist "prerogatives" or "options", which is connected to the general question of what limits there are to the demands morality makes on our lives. In particular, we will look at some difficult puzzles about the extent of our moral duties to aid others, including distant people in need. While the course is structured largely around the above distinctions, the discussions in the literature--particularly concerning the rationales behind various positions--quickly lead to more general issues of fundamental importance, such as the nature of moral personhood and the source of human rights. The articles we will read provide a broad and sophisticated background in normative ethical theory, which can then be applied to a wide variety of issues.

Instructor: W. FitzPatrick  
CRN: 95200  
Lecture: 3:30-6:15  
MAJWM 225  
T

Check the university timetable or the department website [http://www.phil.vt.edu/courses.html](http://www.phil.vt.edu/courses.html) for updated information.