Philosophy 4015: Special Topics in Philosophy: Wittgenstein

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.

Instructor: J. Klagge  CRN: 95549
Lecture: 11:00a-12:15p  T Th  MAJWM 225

Philosophy 4204: Philosophy of Mind

In this course we will examine several theories concerning the relationship between "mental" and "physical" properties, including dualism, behaviorism, identity theories, functionalism, and materialism. We will follow up with some more specific topics, including the nature of consciousness and experience, mental causation, and reductionism. Readings will include some classical articles and articles by such contemporary philosophers of mind as Ned Block, David Chalmers, Paul Churchland, Daniel Dennett, Jerry Fodor, Frank Jackson, Jaegwon Kim, David Lewis, and John Searle.

Instructor: R. Burian  CRN 95548
Lecture: 2:00p-3:15p  T Th  MCB 219

Philosophy 4984: Special Study: Philosophy of Science and Economic Methodology
(Also offered as PHIL 5984)

This course will be a solid introduction to the central problems of the philosophy of science and their relationships with fundamental issues of methodology in economics and other social sciences. We will begin with a study of the central topics that form the backdrop for philosophical problems in economics: Hume and the problem of induction; logical positivism and empiricism, discovery/justification distinction; confirmation theory; Popper, testability and falsificationism; Lakatos and the methodology of scientific research programs; Kuhn and scientific revolutions; problems of underdetermination, theory-laden data, Duhem-Quine theses, and relativity of science to context and values (social, ethical, policy, and economic). Midway through, we will interweave, and increasingly turn our main attention to, key contemporary views on economic methodology that have arisen in reaction to the current “crisis in philosophy of science”. We will read several papers by economists and philosophers of economics on the special problems of testing, modeling, prediction, and experimentation in economics, and will end with a discussion of the "new experimentalism" in philosophy of science, and related, current topics of interest to the participants of the course.

Instructor: A. Falcon  CRN 95551
Lecture: 2:30p-5:30p  W  MAJWM 225

Philosophy 5204: Topics in the History of Philosophy: Stoicism

This course is the first in a two-semester sequence that introduces students to the philosophy of science and technology. It focuses on 20th century analytical philosophy of science and on recent philosophy of technology. It will explore such issues as: How does science differ from other human enterprises? Are there sharp criteria of demarcation between science and related activities? What roles do observation, experiment, technological innovation, logical argument,
and theorizing play in science? How do scientific explanations work, and can we provide strong criteria for good explanations? How are scientific claims supported, and how well are they supported? Does science aim at a literally true account of our world, or does it merely provide "as if" stories that organize our knowledge, but cannot, or should not, be evaluated for literal truth?

It will also critically examine the 'spectator' view of science typically presumed by philosophers of science. On this view, philosophical accounts of science depend primarily on how scientists represent the world with their theories. Recent work in the philosophy of technology offers an alternative perspective on science that focuses on what scientists do. Questions to be discussed include: What distinguishes the perspectives of (traditional) philosophers of science and philosophers of technology? What can philosophers of science learn from philosophers of technology? Is the account of scientific theories offered by philosophers of technology consistent with the traditional philosophical models of explanation? Do technological arguments give us good reasons to believe the truth of scientific theories?

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be acquainted with 20th century philosophy of science and technology, able to understand and articulate competing positions on the relevant issues, and able to form and defend positions on them intelligently. Because the course is a graduate introduction to philosophy of science and technology, the aim is general understanding and appreciation of the philosophical issues involved, not technical philosophical expertise.

Instructor: V. Harcastle
Lecture: 11:15a-12:15p M CRN: 93931
MAJWM 225
(Cross listed with: STS 5305; CRN 94479)

Philosophy 5334: Philosophical Ethics
This seminar is a systematic examination of central topics in philosophical ethics. The focus will be on some of the most influential work by leading contemporary moral philosophers (i.e. Harman, Sturgeon, Railton, Boyd, Gibbard, Blackburn, McDowell, Wiggins, Rawls, Korsgaard, Nussbaum, Nagel, Parfit, Williams, Foot, Darwall, Raz). Some typical questions to be addressed: What kind of meaning do ethical terms have, and what is the nature of ethical judgment? In what sense can ethical judgments be said to be true or false, and what makes them so? (Divine commands? Facts about human nature? The hypothetical emotional responses of an 'ideal observer'? The very logic of agency?) Are ethical properties such as goodness or rightness objective features of the world, i.e. real properties of people or actions? If so, how are they related to the natural properties investigated by the sciences, and how do we perceive them? If not, should they be understood as rooted instead in contingent human emotions or commitments, or perhaps as necessary constructions of human reason? How is ethical justification related to political justification? What is it for there to be genuine reason for someone to do something, and can it be argued that there is always reason to act ethically? Can reason itself motivate us, independently of the operation of prior desires? Are ethical reasons always overriding, trumping other kinds of reasons a person might have for acting differently? What factors are ultimately relevant to something's being right or wrong, or valuable? To what extent are ethical values universal, and to what extent are they historically or socially dependent?

Instructor: W. Fitzpatrick
Lecture: 6:30p-9:15p T CRN 95553
MAJWM 225

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

Instructor: B. Epstein
Lecture: 5:00p-6:15p T, Th CRN: 93932
NOR 200

Philosophy 5984: Special Study: Philosophy of Science and Economic Methodology
This course will be a solid introduction to the central problems of the philosophy of science and their relationships with fundamental issues of methodology in economics and other social sciences. We will begin with a study of the central topics that form the backdrop for philosophical problems in economics: Hume and the problem of induction; logical positivism and empiricism; discovery/justification distinction; confirmation theory; Popper, testability and falsificationism; Lakatos and the methodology of scientific research programs; Kuhn and scientific revolutions; problems of underdetermination, theory-laden data, Duhem-Quine theses, and relativity of science to context and values (social, ethical, policy, and economic). Midway through, we will interweave, and increasingly turn our main attention to, key contemporary views on economic methodology that have arisen in reaction to the current "crisis in philosophy of science". We will read several papers by economists and philosophers of economics on the special problems of testing, modeling, prediction, and experimentation in economics, and will end with a discussion of the "new experimentalism" in philosophy of science, and related, current topics of interest to the participants of the course.

This course does not require any philosophical background—only the interest in acquiring one. It is intended to provide students sufficient philosophical and logical tools to (a) understand the relationship between problems in economics and those of philosophy of knowledge and philosophy of science; (b) critically evaluate work in interdisciplinary arenas of social science methodology, economic science, and foundations of scientific and statistical inference; and (c) bring a broad philosophical perspective to bear on more advanced research across the spectrum of empirical modeling and experimental methods.

Instructor: D. Mayo
Lecture: 2:30-3:45 MW CRN: 96674
MCB 210
(Cross listed with: ECON 5984 –CRN 96254 and STS 5424—CRN 96585)

Philosophy 6014: Special Topics in Philosophy: Wittgenstein
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. There will also be an opportunity for interested students to study the influence or relevance of his work to disciplines outside of philosophy, such as architecture, literary theory, sociology, science studies, and cultural studies. This course will meet concurrently with Phil 4015, but graduate students who are registered for 6014 will also meet for an additional hour each week (at a time to be determined), and will have additional readings and assignments. There will also be an opportunity for interested graduate students to study the influence or relevance of his work to disciplines outside of philosophy, such as architecture, literary theory, sociology, science studies, and cultural studies.

Instructor: J. Klagge
Lecture: 11:00a-12:15p T, TH CRN: 95550
MAJWM 225

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.