



Graduate Philosophy Courses For Spring Semester 2009

Registration begins Oct. 20, 2008

PHIL 6010 Plato

Timothy S. Okeefe TR 9:30-10:45

This course will be an in-depth examination of the philosophy of Plato. We will look at Plato's metaphysics, philosophy of mind, epistemology, ethics, and political philosophy. We will also be looking into the unity of Plato's thought (or lack thereof)--that is, can the positions put forward in various dialogues be reconciled with one another and made consistent, or not? In addition, we'll explore methodological challenges posed by Plato's use of the dialogue form--for instance, can we confidently assume that the character 'Socrates' in the dialogues is Plato's spokesman, or does Plato sometimes deliberately have Socrates advance fallacious arguments? And what are we to make of Plato's use of literary genres like eschatological myths within his dialogues? We will most likely be looking at the following dialogues, although this is subject to change: Euthyphro, Apology, Phaedo, Gorgias, Clitophon, Republic, Protagoras, Theaetetus, and Philebus.

PHIL 6300 Metaphysics

Andrea Scarantino TR 2:30-3:45

What kinds of things exist in the world? What makes two things identical? What are material objects, persons and events? Under what conditions does one thing cause another? Are there abstract entities? What is for something to be possible or necessary? Are there other possible worlds besides ours? These are some of the questions we will struggle with in this class. Why should we care about them? Because they determine the ground rules for answering foundational questions in ethics, philosophy of religion, aesthetics, philosophy of mind, philosophy of science, and philosophy of language. Say you want to argue that God exists. Well, what is your theory of existence? Say you want to argue that water is H₂O. Well, what is your theory of identity? Say you want to argue that our thoughts cause our actions. Well, what is your theory of causation? If you successfully complete this class, you will be able to tackle philosophical problems with much greater sophistication.

PHIL 6330 Philosophy of Mind

George Graham F 9:00-11:30

What sorts of minds do human beings have? Animals? Robots? Martians? God? Is the mental distinct from the physical? What is the nature of consciousness? Self-consciousness? And of other powers of mind? What can be learned about the mind from its failures and disorders? From irrationality? From addiction? Those are just some of the questions we will explore in this course. Some guest speakers from other philosophy departments will occasionally be deployed to discuss their work. Graduate students in the course will have a special study block on the problems of consciousness and Intentionality.

PHIL 6530 Philosophy of Language

Stephen Jacobson TR 11:00-12:15

The aim of this course is to read, write, and think intensively about a variety of topics in the philosophy of language--such as meaning, reference, theories of descriptions, verificationism, "use" theories of meaning, speech act theory, Grice's program, rigid designators, natural kind terms, and so on. Special attention will be given to the bearing of issues about language on philosophical theories regarding ethics, metaphysics, epistemology, and logic.

PHIL 6690 Topics in Philosophy of Religion

Vincent Lloyd MW 3:00-4:15

We will explore the starting point of philosophical inquiry and its relation to Jewish and Christian thought. Must philosophy start with experience, with ethics, with affect, with ritual, with religion? Authors we may read include Husserl, Heidegger, Buber, Levinas, Henry, and Marion.

PHIL 6700: Ethics

Andrew I. Cohen TR 1:00-2:15

A study of some leading historical and contemporary theories of what the good is, how we can know it, and what evaluative statements mean. The figures we study may include Plato, Aristotle, Epicurus, Hobbes, Hume, Kant, Mill, and some contemporary theorists such as Moore, Hare, Mackie, Gauthier, and Rawls. Class will be discussion/lecture. Student participation will be most welcome and often solicited. Course grade will be based on two critical essays, participation in class (including in-class presentations), summaries and critical reviews of readings, preparation of discussion questions, and a cumulative final examination. Graduate students will be asked to do more of each and prepare sample final examination questions.

PHIL 6820 Philosophy of Law**Andrew I. Cohen MW 12:00-1:15**

This course explores the nature, justification, and proper scope of law. Using some case law and the works of legal philosophers, we will think philosophically about the foundations, structure, and legitimate applications of law. Topics may include: natural law and positivist theories of law; the foundation and limits of contract; political authority and the U.S. Constitution; civil disobedience and the duty to obey the law; theories of punishment; causation and theories of liability; ethical foundations to various criminal defenses; human liberty, personal privacy, and the scope of law.

PHIL 6900 Classical Chinese Philosophy**Jonathan R. Herman TR 9:30-10:45**

Careful exploration of the surviving works from the golden age of Chinese thought (roughly 550-200 BCE), addressing such issues as transcendence, human nature, ethics, ritual, law, power, and death. Readings include the Analects of Confucius, Lao Tzu's Tao Te Ching, and several works by lesser known thinkers from various philosophical schools.

PHIL 6900 Islamic Law**Fareeha Khan TR 11:00-12:15**

Introduction to the study of Islamic Law (Shari'ah). The course will cover the development of Islamic legal methodology, the legal schools, and the process of pronouncing legal opinions (both in court and as "fatwa"). We will also discuss the relevance of Islamic Law and legal reform in contemporary times.

PHIL 8060 Seminar in Modern Philosophy**Melissa Merritt M 4:30-7:00**

This course will focus on Adam Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments*. By all accounts, the work is a major contribution to moral sense theory — i.e., the view that the basis of morality lies in sentiment rather than reason. I will be especially interested to explore how Smith's approach differs from that of his predecessors in moral sense theory, such as Hutcheson and Hume. A crucial point of difference, I will suggest, can be traced to the influence of Stoic ethics on the work — a point that places strain on the idea that Smith is any ordinary moral sense theorist. Supplemental readings will include excerpts from the moral works of Hutcheson and Hume, some Stoic ethics, and recent secondary literature.

PHIL 8100 Seminar in Epistemology**Jessica Berry T 4:30-7:00**

Once upon a time, in some out of the way corner of that universe which is dispersed into numberless twinkling solar systems, there was a star upon which clever beasts invented knowing. That was the most arrogant and mendacious minute of 'world history', but nevertheless, it was only a minute. After nature had drawn a few breaths, the star cooled and congealed, and the clever beasts had to die." Our task in this course will be to draw out the implications of this parable, which opens Nietzsche's early unpublished essay, "On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense." Nietzsche is best known for his critique of morality, and not for his contributions to epistemology. But here we will read several of Nietzsche's seminal works, with heavy reference to Sextus Empiricus, to demonstrate that contemporary epistemology, threatened with its own niche-dwelling, puzzle-mongering irrelevance, stands urgently in need of being reinvigorated by "that more dangerous and harder new type of skepticism" that in fact originates in antiquity and animates Nietzsche's critical philosophy.

PHIL 8810 Seminar in Social & Political Philosophy**Andrew I. Cohen MW 1:30-2:45**

Contractarian theories root moral or political considerations in what would emerge from agreement among free and equal persons. Rawls's theory of justice is a famous example of this sort of view, but the approach has roots in Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau and Plato. Recent scholarship has puzzled over how to structure the bargaining situation, who is at the bargaining table (nonhuman animals? the disabled? children?), what motivates persons in that bargaining situation, and what if anything ought to constrain their negotiations and the norms that can be an object of agreement. Readings would range over recent scholarship on contractarian theories of justice, the connection of self-interest to contractarian approaches, and the conditions of adequacy for any contractarian theory of justice