

SUNY Buffalo State Philosophy Course Offerings

Spring 2018

PHI 101: Introduction to Philosophy

Dr. Kimberly Blessing

CRN 2766 1:40 pm - 2:55 pm TR Freshman only
CRN 2588 3:05pm - 4:20 pm TR Deans Honor Program

This course is specifically designed for first-year freshmen who are looking for an *intellectually rigorous and challenging course*. This course will introduce students to some of the major figures and issues in Western Philosophy. We shall consider various topics in metaphysics (the study of reality), epistemology (the study of knowledge), and ethics (the study of morality). Some of the Big Questions we'll consider include: What is the point of education?; Are things always as they seem?; What is real and what is not?; Does God exist?; Am I free or ruled by fate?; Is there an afterlife?; Do I have a moral obligation to help strangers, such as children in Africa who are dying of starvation?; What is happiness?; Am I living a good life?; Who am I and what do I value?; What is the meaning of life?; What is the nature of friendship?; Etc. Emphasis will be placed upon reading philosophical texts and recognizing and evaluating arguments. Students will also develop and enhance critical thinking skills and apply them in reading and discussing philosophical texts. Students who successfully complete this course should develop a deeper understanding of yourself, and a heightened sense of wonder about the world in which we live. Maybe even a love of wisdom. Students who do well in this course enjoy reading and writing, and they relish being challenged intellectually.

Required Course Texts: Frankfurt, *On Bullshit* (Oxford); Plato, *Five Dialogues* (Grube, trans.; Hackett); Voltaire, *Candide* (Wooton, trans., Hackett); Warburton, *A Little History of Philosophy* (Yale University Press, 2011).

PHI 101: Introduction to Philosophy

Dr. Leigh Duffy

CRN 1310 10:00am-10:50am MWF
CRN 2765 1:00pm-1:50pm MWF

This course will take a thematic approach to some basic philosophical topics including the nature of knowledge, God/religion, the nature of mind, and morality. This course will expose students to basic philosophical issues and develop their ability to think critically about such issues. This exposure will probably challenge some basic beliefs, so an open mind and a willingness to consider other beliefs are necessary.

Required Course Text: *Introduction to Philosophy: Classical and Contemporary Readings*, 7th Edition, John Perry, Michael Bratman, and John Martin Fischer, eds. (Oxford University Press)

PHI 103: Intro to Logic

Dr. Julian Cole

CRN 1963 2:00am-2:50am MWF

Every day we are bombarded with information that attempts to persuade us to act in various ways. This information includes material from newspapers and magazines, political broadcasts, pamphlets on various causes, television ads, details of investment opportunities, and many other sources. The primary aim of this course is to provide students with some of the intellectual tools that are available for evaluating this information. Specifically, we shall be considering a number of common fallacies to which arguments in these media often fall prey. A secondary aim of this course is to aid students in clearly understanding, representing, evaluating, and writing arguments, particularly arguments found in everyday contexts.

Required Course Text: *No Textbook Required*

PHI 107: Intro to Math Logic

Dr. Julian Cole

CRN 3063 1:00pm – 1:50pm MWF

This class will introduce two types of mathematical models for assessing the formal correctness of reasoning. In particular, Venn diagrams will be discussed as geometric models for assessing categorical syllogisms, while sentential and monadic predicate logics will be discussed as algebraic models for assessing the types of arguments associated with these logics.

No texts required

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PHI 111: Ethics for Scientists
CRN: 4056 3:00pm – 4:15pm MW

Dr. Jason Grinnell

PHI 111 Ethics for Scientists is the descendant of courses I team-taught with Associate Professor of Biology Amy McMillan in 2010 and 2013. It is specifically designed to appeal to the academic interests and needs of students majoring in the sciences. We shall study ethics by focusing on scientific issues, problems, and controversies. Among other things, we will explore scientific reasoning and skepticism, Darwinism, egoism, altruism, some traditional ethical theory, and a range of particular topics in applied ethics. As of now, I plan to use *Human Nature After Darwin: A Philosophical Introduction*. I'll supplement that text with a variety of specific articles from classic and contemporary sources.

Required Text: *Human Nature After Darwin: A Philosophical Introduction*. Janet Radcliffe Richards (200

PHI 204: Philosophy of Religion
CRN: 4055 3:00pm – 5:40pm W

Dr. Kimberly Blessing

Philosophy of religion is the branch of philosophy that applies philosophical reasoning and methodology to matters concerning God and religion. This course will focus attention on God and religion as presented in the Judeo-Christian tradition, mainly Christianity. We shall read selections from philosophers including: Anselm, Aquinas, Pascal, Voltaire, Hume, Kierkegaard, Bertrand Russell, etc. We shall touch upon various topics and issues in philosophy of religion including, traditional proofs of God's existence and critiques of these proofs; the problem of evil and various responses to this problem; alternatives to the traditional proofs; critiques of religion, etc. This is a WEB-ENHANCED COURSE: class requires access to web-based material. Course pre-requisite: CWP 102 the successful completion of at least one course in philosophy.

Required Course Texts: Hume, David, *Dialogues on Natural Religion* (Hackett Publishers): Kreeft, Peter. *Christianity for Modern Pagans* (Ignatius Press): Robinson, T. *God* (Hackett): Voltaire. *Candide* (Wotton, trans.; Hackett Publishers).

PHI 300: Left and Right in European History
CRN: 9:25am-10:40am TR

Dr. John Abromeit

In this reading seminar we will examine some of the main currents of left, liberal, conservative and fascist political thought in Europe from the French Revolution and to the post-WWI period. Some of the topics we will address include the French Revolution and the conservative reaction to it; the development of anarchism and socialism (in both its utopian and "scientific" forms); the transformation of liberalism in the 19th century; the rise of conservative nationalism and imperialism; left and right responses to the rise of a new mass politics toward the end of the 19th century; and the rise of fascism in Italy and Germany. This course will be run as a seminar, not a lecture, so you will be expected to keep up with the reading and to participate actively in class discussions. The best way to do well in the class is to keep up on the reading. Any readings not included in the required books, will be posted on the Blackboard site.

PHI 300: 20th Century European Intellectual History
CRN: 10:50am- 12:05pm TR

Dr. John Abromeit

The complexity of European intellectual history in the 20th-century defies any attempt at comprehensiveness in a one-semester survey course. Accordingly, this course will focus selectively on a few important intellectual, political and cultural movements, and will examine how these movements and thinkers developed, influenced and contested one another over the course of the century. The first half of the course will address the origins and development of psychoanalysis, the historical avant-garde, and the critical social theory of the "Frankfurt School." In the second half of the course we will discuss existentialism, feminism, decolonization, the "New Left" in the 1960s, post-structuralism in the 1970s and 1980s. A number of themes will run through the course as a whole, including questions of social psychology and the formation of subjectivity within social constructed notions of race, class, gender and sexual orientation. We will also examine different debates about the relationship of art to society, politics and individual consciousness. The course will be run as a seminar, not a lecture, so you will be expected to keep up with the reading and to participate actively in class discussions. The best way to do well in the class is to keep up on the reading. Any readings not included in the required books, will be posted on the BLACKBOARD site.

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PHI 308: Love and Sex
CRN 3745 9:25am – 10:40am

TR

Dr. John Draeger

This course explores the nature of intimate interpersonal relationships with friends, family, and romantic partners. For example, what is the difference between a friend and a lover? Is it the sex or is it an alternative form of love? In the process of considering how to characterize intimate relationships, we will examine a variety of related ideas, including love, trust, sex, and compassion

PHI 309: Knowledge and Justification
CRN 4034 11:00am – 11:50am

MWF

Dr. Julian Cole

This class will be concerned with the nature of knowledge and justification. We shall begin by investigating the circumstances under which perception, consciousness, and reason endow us with epistemically justified beliefs and knowledge. We shall go on to investigate the architecture and nature of epistemic justification and knowledge. We shall finish the class by considering the issue of external world skepticism. Pre-requisite: *Upper-division status or one or more course in philosophy*. **Required Course Text**: Audi, Robert (2011), *Epistemology: A Contemporary Introduction to the Theory of Knowledge*, 3rd Edition, Routledge Contemporary Introductions to Philosophy Series, New York, NY.

PHI 310: History of Ethics
CRN 6:00pm – 8:40pm

M

Dr. John Abbarno

Historical study of the writings of great Western philosophers as they examine ethical questions about self-interest, freedom, duty, and happiness in regard to the moral life. This course will include assignments that demonstrate the impact of these theories on contemporary moral problems. Includes Plato, Aristotle, Kant, Mill, and Hume.

PHI 401W: Seminar – The Self
CRN 2150 3:00pm – 5:40pm

T

Dr. Leigh Duffy

What does being the person you are from yesterday to today consist in? It seems obviously true that you are a “different person” than you were when you were five, but it also seems obviously true that in another sense you are the *same person* who has gone through changes. What are the necessary features that make-up that self, which continues on from birth to death and goes through those changes? What changes can a self-survive and what changes would make you no longer you? Is there a lasting self at all or are we a conglomeration of parts in constant change? These are the central philosophical questions of personal identity that we will address in this seminar. We will examine different accounts of personal identity or “self” given from the ancients through contemporary times, and we will consider both traditional Western views as well as some Eastern philosophical views. Writing intensive.