

SUNY Buffalo State Philosophy Course Offerings SPRING 2019

PHI 101: Introduction to Philosophy
CRN 1277 1:40pm – 2:55pm

TR

Dr. Kimberly Blessing

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; they are typically students who are placed into CWP 101 in their first semester.

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 102: Introduction to Ethics
CRN 4127 9:25am – 10:40am

Dr. John Draeger

This course explores a variety of social and moral questions. Should the public good outweigh private concerns? Do we have a duty to help those in need or is it enough that we leave them alone? Should the government sanction abortion, euthanasia, stem cell research, same sex marriage or capital punishment? This course will not resolve any of these important questions. However, in considering them, we will gain a better understanding of ourselves and the world around us.

Required Course Text: No Textbook required

PHI 103: Intro to Logic
CRN 1849 11:00am - 11:50am

MWF

Dr. Julian Cole

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

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PHI 107: Intro to Math Logic
CRN 2748 1:00pm – 1:50pm

MWF

Dr. Julian Cole

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

PHI 110: Meaning of Life
CRN 4166 10:00am – 10:50am
CRN 4167 11:00am - 11:50am

MWF

Dr. Leigh Duffy

In this course, we examine the ways different thinkers throughout history have approached the question of the meaning of life. We consider philosophers who argue for meaning based on God, religion, or spirituality; those who claim that meaning can be found without religion in a variety of different ways, such as in purpose or happiness; and even some who argue that life is in fact meaningless. We discuss these different approaches and try to use the best views to answer related, applied questions, such as “how can I best live my life?”, “who would I want to be my model for living a meaningful life”, “how do I consider others when making decisions about how to live a good life?”, “is there a difference between a meaningful life, a happy life, a good life, and a purposeful life?”.

Students will be required to watch some films on their own in order to be able to discuss how the theories get applied to characters in the film.

Required Text: *The Meaning of Life: A Reader* ed. E.D. Klemke and Steven M. Cahn

PHI 111: Ethics for Scientists
CRN 2974 3:00pm – 4:15pm

MW

Dr. Jason Grinnell

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 210: Existentialism
CRN 4128 3:00pm - 5:40pm

W

Dr. Kimberly Blessing

Existentialism is a philosophical and literary movement that first was popularized in France soon after World War II by figures such as Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus. The roots of this movement can be traced back to the religious writings of Blaise Pascal in the seventeenth century and those of Søren Kierkegaard in the nineteenth century. The message of Existentialism is that every one of us, as an individual, is responsible—responsible for what we do, responsible for who we are, responsible for the way we face and deal with the world, responsible, ultimately, for the way the world is. Existentialist authors exemplify a host of psychological, philosophical, theological, and literary insights as they grapple with the main themes of life: anxiety, authentic living, meaning, love, relationships, God, and death. The course has three central aspirations: (1) to show the rise and development of existentialist thought; (2) to subject existentialist thought to rigorous critical evaluation; and (3) to encourage students to reexamine and reevaluate their own lives in relation to the challenges posed by existentialism. Among authors to be considered are the following: Pascal, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Camus, Sartre, de Beauvoir, Beckett, Dostoyevsky, and more. **Required Course Texts:** TBA

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PHI 300: Institutional Reality
CRN 3235 3:00pm – 4:15pm

MW

Dr. Julian Cole

In the last fifteen years or so, philosophers have begun to take a metaphysical interest in the aspects of reality that exist only in virtue of human agreement. In this course, we will explore John Searle's theory of this part of reality, frequently known as social reality. In order to understand this theory, we will also investigate Searle's theories of intentionality, collective intentionality, and language. If time permits, we will, in addition, explore Searle's application of his theory of social reality to political power and human rights.

Required Text: John Searle's *Making The Social World: The Structure of Human Civilization*, Oxford University Press. ISBN: 978-0-19-539617-1.

PHI 300: Race and Progress
CRN 3236 10:50am – 12:05pm

TR

Dr. John Torrey

The questions of African-American philosophy are diverse and address a number of unique issues. African-American philosophy refers here to conceptually and analytically rigorous philosophical studies of topics closely related to the social, legal, economic, historical, and cultural experiences of the descendants of African slaves in the United States. In this course, we will examine the notion of progress for African-Americans by engaging questions such as: What is progress for the African-American community? Has the concept of race changed due to progress? Does political solidarity among African-Americans promote progress? Why is the measure of progress in the African-American community often ignoring the status of African-American women? Does progress require the end of racism? Looking at how African-American philosophers have responded to these questions across history can help us investigate what progress means in contemporary times.

No texts required

PHI 310: History of Ethics
CRN 2149 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: Justification, Truth and Belief
CRN 1903 3:05pm – 5:40pm

T

Dr. Leigh Duffy

Philosophers are lovers of wisdom and as such we ought to reflect on the means by which we gain that wisdom. In this seminar, we will discuss knowledge, justification, doubt, skepticism, and truth in a general sense, but also in relation to philosophical questions in particular. We will discuss reasons to be a Rationalist, justification for a priori knowledge, the reliability of philosophical intuitions, the difference between healthy doubt or skepticism and irrational doubt or skepticism, and what justifies our beliefs in the testimony of others. We will then look at certain philosophical arguments that rely on our philosophical or modal "intuitions", especially about counterfactuals. While the focus will be on philosophical wisdom, we will also discuss what bearing these questions and concerns have on other (non-philosophical) beliefs we have and judgments we make. Reading and writing intensive.