

SUNY Buffalo State Philosophy Course Offerings SPRING 2020

PHI 101: Introduction to Philosophy

CRN 1256 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 2868 10:50am- 12:05pm TR

Dr. John Torrey

This course is designed to introduce students to different philosophical approaches to value theory and social and political philosophy. The primary question driving this course is, "How should we live together?" This notes, in particular, questions of justice, freedom, morality, and human nature through the work of various thinkers, including Plato, Hobbes, Locke, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Patricia Hill Collins. In addition, the course will challenge students to be proactive in shaping and forming their own worldview. In order to achieve these aims, students will learn the skills to create and evaluate arguments.

Required Course Text: *No Textbook Required*

PHI 103: Intro to Logic

CRN 1768 1:00pm - 1:50pm 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 2437 11:00am – 11:50am 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.

Required Course Text: *No Textbook Required*

PHI 110: Meaning of Life

CRN 2904 11:00am - 11:50am MWF

CRN 2903 12:00pm – 12:50pm 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 2582 3:05pm – 4:20pm TR

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 112: Ethics for Business

CRN 4252 3:05pm – 4:20pm TR

Dr. Dennis Ryan

The overall goal of this class is to give students more refined critical thinking skills with which to identify and effectively resolve a range of moral problems that routinely arise in business and professional life. Topics include the nature of moral reasoning; concepts of productive and distributive justice; the strengths and limitations of capitalism; corporation structures, with emphasis on emerging corporate forms focused on creating a responsible capitalism; the practice of ethical leadership; business responsibilities to the public, the environment and consumers; the rights and duties of employees; and cross-cultural conflicts in international business. Classes typically involve discussion of one or more business cases in which students apply the concepts under study to the problems presented in the case situations

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PHI 300: Happiness

CRN 2734 3:00pm – 5:40pm

W

Dr. Kimberly Blessing

This course will examine the philosophy of happiness, drawing from the works of classic historical figures from antiquity. We will compare these ancient philosophical conceptions of happiness with popular and non-philosophical conceptions of happiness. Thinkers we will study include Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, as well as Hellenistic schools of philosophy including the Cynics, Stoics, Epicureans, and Skeptics. Time permitting we will consider pagan and Christian philosophy in the Roman Empire, e.g., Plotinus, Augustine, and Boethius.

Required Text: Adamson, *Philosophy in the Hellenistic and Roman Worlds* (Oxford, 2015), Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* (Hackett), Additional readings will be posted on Blackboard.

PHI 304: Philosophy of Law

CRN 3903 9:25am – 10:40am

TR

Dr. John Draeger

This course will explore a variety of questions. Why should we obey the law? Why should laws have authority over us? How are law and morality related? How are law and economics related? What is the difference between civil and criminal law? What is the relationship between legislators and the courts? This course will not resolve any of these important questions. However, in considering them, we should have a better understanding of the law as a complex social institution that helps govern our lives.

Required Course Text: TBA

PHI 308: Love and Sex

CRN 3904 10:50am – 12:05pm

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

Required Course Text: TBA

PHI 310: History of Ethics

CRN 2691 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.

Required Course Text: TBA

PHI 389: Africana Philosophy

CRN 4118 1:40pm – 2:55pm

TR

Dr. John Torrey

Philosophical thought across the African diaspora. Both historic and contemporary responses to issues specific to the black experience across the globe, such as understanding freedom, rationality, and humanity from the position of the formerly enslaved and/or colonized, and analysis regarding the intersections of race, gender, and white supremacy.

Required Course Text: TBA

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PHI 401: Sex, Gender, and Feminism
CRN 3915 3:00pm – 5:40pm M

Dr. Julian Cole

Feminisms share two features: i) they recognize that a specific group of people are systematically disadvantaged in certain societies, and ii) they advocate for changes that will minimize or eliminate this group's disadvantages within certain societies. Traditionally, the disadvantaged group has been identified as women, where 'woman' refers to a gender role. More recently, some feminisms have been concerned with the group whose sex is female, others with the group who gender identify as women, and yet others have sought to deconstruct the whole idea of sex/gender. We will begin by exploring the notions of 'sex', 'gender role', 'gender marker', 'gender expression', and 'gender identity' sufficiently to be able to identify the various disadvantaged groups that are of interest to feminists. Next, we will briefly survey the history of feminisms. Finally, we will explore two topics: i) the extent to which the features of society that feminists have argued disadvantage women/females are features of contemporary western society and ii) various proposals for combating the disadvantages faced by women/females in contemporary western society.

Required Course Text: Lorna Finlayson, 'An Introduction to Feminism' (Routledge 2016) and Margaret Walters, 'Feminism: A Very Short Introduction' (Oxford 2005)

REL 104: Introduction to Religious Studies
CRN 3910 8:00am-8:50am MWF

Dr. Elizabeth Lenegan

This is a general introduction to religious studies. We will examine what is important in religions generally, ethics, basic questions, philosophy, beliefs about good and evil, the afterlife, and why they work as they do. The emphasis is on religions in general rather than analyzing a specific religion

REL 105: Introduction to Christian
CRN 2571 10:50am – 12:05pm TR

Dr. Joseph Marren

This course looks at the formation of early Christian thought (patristics) and intersections with scholasticism and its Thomist critics. Parallels are drawn between the theoretical base and modern interpretations in areas such as literature, ethics, civil religion, etc., in the Western World.

Required Course Text: TBA

REL 321: World Religions
CRN 1359 4:30pm – 7:15pm W

Dr. Elizabeth Lenegan

This course is designed to introduce the student to the major religions of the world- Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, Shinto, Judaism, Christianity and Islam. The values, rituals, doctrines and practices of these traditions will be explored.

Required Course Text: *Molloy, Experiencing the World Religions (7th Edition)*