

PHILOSOPHY COURSES - SPRING 2019

Freshmen Seminars:

Freshmen Seminar 23c: Exploring the Infinite

Peter Koellner

W 12:00-2:45 PM

Infinity captivates the imagination. A child stands between two mirrors and sees herself reflected over and over again, smaller and smaller, trailing off to infinity. Does it go on forever? ... Does anything go on forever? Does life go on forever? Does time go on forever? Does the universe go on forever? Is there anything that we can be certain goes on forever? ... It would seem that the counting numbers go on forever, since given any number one can always add one. But is that the extent of forever? Or are there numbers that go beyond that? Are there higher and higher levels of infinity? And, if so, does the totality of all of these levels of infinity itself constitute the highest, most ultimate, level of infinity, the absolutely infinite? In this seminar we will focus on the mathematical infinite. We will start with the so-called "paradoxes of the infinite", paradoxes that have led some to the conclusion that the concept of infinity is incoherent. We will see, however, that what these paradoxes ultimately show is that the infinite is just quite different than the finite and that by being very careful we can sharpen the concept of infinity so that these paradoxes are transformed into surprising discoveries. We will follow the historical development, starting with the work of Cantor at the end of the nineteenth century, and proceeding up to the present. The study of the infinite has blossomed into a beautiful branch of mathematics. We will get a glimpse of this subject, and the many levels of infinity, and we will see that the infinite is even more magnificent than one might ever have imagined.

Freshmen Seminar 61d: Trying Socrates in the Age of Trump

Rusty Jones

W 3:00-5:00 PM

We find ourselves in the middle of fierce political debates. Should the common folk have political power, or should it be concentrated in the hands of an elite? Is our national interest best served by looking inward and directing our resources toward local concerns, or by thinking globally about both threats and opportunities? How do we balance concerns for economic growth, humanistic understanding, religious freedom, and scientific advancement? Our answers to such questions are enormously consequential, and even people of good will can find themselves in heated disagreement, labeling opponents as the enemy and striving to drive them and their ideas from the public square. The Athenians of 2400 years ago didn't conduct their political battles with tweets and hacks and super PACs, but they would easily recognize our battles as versions of their own, fought over much the same ground. At a particularly heated time, they used the lethal power of the courts to silence Socrates, one of their own. Our task is forensic. We'll assemble the available evidence to determine why the Athenians killed Socrates. His views were complex – certainly he doesn't align neatly with any of our own major political parties, and he's difficult to categorize even in the context of ancient Athens. So what was so offensive or threatening about him as to provoke such extreme measures? Once we've assembled our evidence, we'll formally try Socrates in absentia for ourselves. Was he guilty? And what should be done with people who spread dangerous ideas?

Freshmen Seminar 62n: Why Does Injustice Persist?

Bernhard Nickel

W 3:00-5:45 PM

A lot of people say the right things about justice, and yet injustice persists. Why? Perhaps people are disingenuous: they say out loud what others want to hear, but their actions are guided by a different set of beliefs. Perhaps people are divided within themselves: they sincerely believe in principles of justice, equality, and fairness, but their actions are driven by unconscious biases. Perhaps people are confused: they believe, at the most abstract level, that justice, equality, and fairness are important, but their views about what they require are distorted. Perhaps it doesn't matter what any one of us wants to do: the way a society is organized depends on an overarching ideology, not what any one person thinks or does. Perhaps it doesn't matter what any one of us wants to do: the way a society is organized depends on our institutions, not what any one person thinks or does. In this seminar, we'll look at approaches that focus on each of these possible explanations as they concern racial justice. We'll look at the strengths and weaknesses of each on its own terms, and whether the different approaches compete or complement each other. The seminar is an exercise in collaborative learning. The students in the class will contribute the examples we use to interrogate the different approaches and thereby shape our discussion.

Introductory Courses:

Culture and Belief 31: Saints, Heretics, and Atheists: An Historical Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion

Jeffrey McDonough

MW 9:00 AM - 10:15 AM

Does God exist? What is the nature of evil and where does it come from? Are humans free? Responsible? Immortal? Does it matter? This course will explore foundational questions in the philosophy of religion through the study of classic works by Plato, Augustine, Al-Ghazali, Aquinas, Pascal, Spinoza, Hume, Nietzsche and James. Students will have the opportunity to reexamine their own views and assumptions about religion in the company of some of the greatest thinkers of the past. (Key words: agnosticism, atheism, Christianity, faith, freedom, humanism, immortality, Islam, Judaism, meaning, Muslim, mysticism, reason, sin, soul.

Philosophy 6: Ancient Ethics and Modern Morality

James Doyle

MWF 12:00 PM – 1:15 PM

An historical introduction to ethics, from the Greeks to, roughly, now. We begin with the concept of virtue in Homer and trace its development through Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, the Stoics and Aquinas. In the modern period we look, in a somewhat skeptical spirit, at the rise of the 'moral' as a supposedly sui generis category of reasons, traits, obligations etc, as this is found in Hume, Kant, Mill and others.

Philosophy 12: Ethics of a Human Life

Lindsey Chambers

TuTh 10:30 AM – 11:45 AM

Ethical questions arise at every stage of a human life, from before a person is born until after she dies. We will explore the ethical questions that arise at familiar stages of a person's life: her conception, childhood, adulthood, death, and after her death. For example, is it bad to be born, to be a child, or to grow old? Why do we love some people and not others? What does it mean to get married? Does it matter what happens to us after we die? We will consider some surprising ways philosophers have tried to answer these questions, and we will think about how the arguments they make can help us better understand the ethical shape of a human life as a whole.

Philosophy 20: Happiness

Susanna Rinard

TuTh 12:00 PM - 1:15 PM

Should we pursue happiness, and if so, what is the best way to do it? This course will critically assess the answers to these questions given by thinkers from a wide variety of different places, cultures, and times, including Stoicism, Epicureanism, Buddhism, Daoism, and contemporary philosophy, psychology, and economics.

Philosophy 24: Ethics of Climate Change

Lucas Stanczyk

TuTh 10:30 AM – 11:45 AM

How should governments respond to the problem of climate change? What should happen to the level of greenhouse gas emissions and how quickly? How much can the present generation be expected to sacrifice to improve conditions for future generations? How should the costs of mitigation and adaptation be apportioned between countries? Should significant funds be allocated to the study of geo-engineering? We will consider these and other questions in an effort to understand our responsibilities in respect of climate change, with a special focus on the structure of the analytical frameworks that have been dominant among policymakers.

This course, when taken for a letter grade, meets the General Education requirement for Ethical Reasoning.

Philosophy 33: Ethical Issues in Social, Cultural, and Artistic Representation

Emilio Mora

MW 12:00 PM – 1:15 PM

In this course we will examine a range of issues which we might, very loosely, term questions of social, cultural, and artistic representation. For instance, the construction, deployment, and celebration of historical narratives are a familiar part of the political pageantry in the life of nations. What are the ethical constraints and imperatives relating to the representation of these national histories? How do these injunctions relate to present political norms of equality and inclusivity and the demands of social cohesion? Consider, also, representational questions that arise in relation to norms of social interaction. What, for instance, might be considered wrong with cultural appropriation? When is it wrong to allow social stereotypes to inform one's interpersonal interactions, and should this wrong be understood in primarily moral or epistemological terms? Finally, consider ethical issues relating to our engagement with (construed broadly) artistic

representations. How can we ethically enjoy tragedy? On the face of things it would appear paradoxical or else the mark of a sadist. Are pornographic representations of immoral acts wrong to consume and enjoy? Are there any special ethical constraints on what may be represented in a video game? Can we ethically represent the Holocaust in any artistic medium? Can we continue to enjoy the products of artists who have engaged in immoral actions? Although we should not expect a set of master principles to govern this range of topics, we might realistically hope that the answers we give, and the philosophical difficulties we encounter in any one topic will help illuminate our treatment and investigation of the others.

100-level Courses:

Philosophy 102: Aristotle

Jacob Rosen

TuTh 1:30 PM – 2:45 PM

According to Aristotle's classification, philosophy is 'theoretical' if it concerns things we wish to know simply for the sake of knowing, not for the sake of doing or making anything. This course will be a close reading of selected passages from Aristotle's works of theoretical philosophy, especially his *Physics*, *On the Soul*, *Metaphysics*, and his logical works. We'll build up an understanding of his overall world picture, according to which the cosmos is eternal, finite in size, harmoniously ordered, and characterized by natural teleology (that's to say, things naturally are as they are for the sake of what is good). Above all, we will seek to understand the key concepts that Aristotle bequeathed to theoretical philosophy, such as substance, accident, essence, potentiality, necessity, and priority.

Philosophy 122: British Empiricism

Alison Simmons

MWF 9:00 AM – 10:15 AM

The canonical British Empiricists (Locke, Berkeley, and Hume) take us on a journey from very sensible philosophical starting points to rather extravagant sounding philosophical conclusions. We will explore their influential arguments concerning such things as the self, the external world, mind and body, natural kinds, concepts, language, science, skepticism, and the role of philosophy itself. We will also explore Lady Mary Shephard's attempt to pull us back from the philosophical brink that the Empiricists lead us to.

Philosophy 136: Phenomenology of Lived Experience

Samantha Matherne

TuTh 10:30 AM – 11:45 AM

In this course, we will explore phenomenological approaches to lived experience, i.e., the experience we have, as embodied beings, who are embedded in a world and entangled with others. We will begin by looking at treatments of the phenomenology of lived experience in general in texts by Franz Brentano, Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty. We will then address attempts to work out the phenomenology of specific modes of lived experience in Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*, Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*, Emilio Uranga's "Essay on an Ontology of the Mexican," and Sara Ahmed's "Orientations: Towards a Queer Phenomenology."

Philosophy 138: Heidegger's Being and Time

Sean Kelly

TuTh 1:30 PM – 2:45 PM

A close reading of Martin Heidegger's *Being and Time*. Topics from Division I of the book include: In what sense, and on the basis of what, is the world we inhabit intelligible? In what sense do we inhabit such an intelligible world? And what, after all, is the relation between what is and what we understand there to be? Division II of the book addresses existential issues such as: death, guilt, authenticity, history, and temporality. We aim to read the entire book.

Philosophy 145: Modal Logic

Mark Richard

TuTh 10:30 AM – 11:45 AM

Modal logic in the first instance is the study of the logical properties of modal words like 'must', 'may', 'necessarily', and 'possibly'. The standard way of explaining the meanings of modal idioms like 'necessarily' -- in terms of "truth at a possible world" -- has been taken over by many linguists as a tool to analyze meaning in natural language (so-called 'possible worlds semantics'). It has also been used to study the nature of provability in formal systems, to analyze programs in computer science, and to model temporal processes.

This course is first and foremost a course in logic, but one that attends to modal logic's uses in philosophy and the study of language. One of the goals of the course is to introduce you to doing metatheory--proving things like completeness and soundness for logical systems. We also look in some detail some applications of modal logic and its semantics, discussing such things as: semantics for counterfactual conditionals; mutual knowledge and conversational context; the use of modal logic to model such things as computer programs and non-standard (e.g., intuitionistic) mathematical systems.

The course does not suppose that you know any logic. We do move pretty fast through elementary logic; you may find the course challenging unless you have taken and remember some of an elementary logic course like EMR17. Grades will be determined by: class attendance, four to six problem sets, a take home final. The primary text for the course is Hughes and Cresswell, *A New Introduction to Modal Logic* (Routledge).

Philosophy 156: Philosophy of Mind

Cheryl Chen

TuTh 12:00 PM – 1:15 PM

An examination of the relation between the mind and the natural world. Topics include: the mind-body problem and proposed solutions to it, consciousness, and mental representation. Readings will consist mostly of influential papers from the latter half of the 20th Century.

Philosophy 158A: Mind, Brain, and Behavior Proseminar: Inference and Memory

Susanna C. Siegel

W 12:00 PM – 2:00 PM

In this MBB proseminar we will study both philosophical and psychological theories of episodic memory. Much work in psychology analyses episodic memory in terms of inference. We will spend some time studying different approaches to inference in philosophy. Readings will include but not be limited to selections from philosophers Shoemaker, Michaelian, Martin, Campbell, and Debus, and psychologists Tulving, Schachter, and Neisser.

Philosophy 169: Nozick's Philosophical Explanations: Proseminar

Selim Berker

Th 3:00 PM – 5:00 PM

A close reading of Harvard philosopher Robert Nozick's neglected masterpiece *Philosophical Explanations*. Topics include philosophical methodology, the identity of the self, why there is something rather than nothing, knowledge and skepticism, free will and determinism, the foundations of ethics, and the meaning of life.

Philosophy 171B: Reproductive Ethics--Whose Body is it, anyway?: Proseminar

Lindsey Chambers

T 3:00 PM – 5:45 PM

We are generally prohibited from acting on the bodies of other persons. I cannot decide for you what food you will put in your body, what exercise (if any) you will do, what color you will dye your hair, or whether you will have corrective eye surgery. However, parents are generally allowed to act on the bodies of their children: they feed them, change their diapers, cut their hair, make them play sports, make major medical decisions, etc. Reproductive technology has now made it possible for parents to shape their children's bodies by creating children with specific physical traits. In this seminar, we will explore the limits of parental permission to shape the bodies of their future children. We will ask the question: whose body is it anyway? We will consider questions like the following: Is there a moral difference between making a child wear glasses and selecting for a child with good eyesight? Should parents be permitted to select for disability? Do parents have an obligation to enhance their children's physical or mental capacities? We will consider how thinking about the obligations parents have to their existing children bears on what prospective parents owe their future children.

Philosophy 176G: Groups and Political Philosophy: Proseminar

Emilio Mora

F 12:00 PM – 2:45 PM

In this course we will be examining the role and significance of groups (social, cultural, and institutional) in various areas of political philosophy. Although we will consider a variety of issues we will concentrate on two principal topics. Firstly, we will consider the significance of groups in relation to the claims and demands of social and political justice. Should social groups be thought to have a fundamental normative significance in political philosophy or must we reduce all political claims and interests to the claims and interests of individuals? What is the significance of social groups to questions of distributive justice? What sort of social groups are relevant to questions of distributive justice and why are they relevant? Are there group membership rights? What is the nature and foundation of these rights, and do these rights conflict with liberal political thought? The second dimension of the course concerns the significance of groups as subjects to the demands of justice. Is it only the political community, taken as a group, that is answerable to fundamental

principles of social justice, or do these principles also govern the individual conduct of a political community's members? Do national groups bear responsibility as a group for what the group does? Can social groups in a society be deemed collectively responsible for certain social and political outcomes? What is the nature and mechanism of this group responsibility? Finally, we will consider the moral status and responsibilities of corporate 'group agents'.

Philosophy 188: Philosophy and Literature: Proust

Richard Moran

MW 1:30 PM – 2:45 PM

The course will attempt to achieve a sense of Proust's great novel, *In Search of Lost Time*, as a whole, necessarily in an abbreviated form, but with the aim of tracing the plan that Proust worked out when he began the project. The bulk of the reading will be in Proust's text, but there will be regular secondary readings in philosophy and in the critical literature on Proust. Philosophical themes to be emphasized will include: the nature of subjectivity and the problem of other minds, the strategies of solipsistic desire, freedom and dependence, *amour-propre* and the desire for approbation, the nature and limits of the will (including 'involuntary memory'), personal identity and artistic vocation, the will to knowledge and self-deception.

Graduate Seminars:

Philosophy 202A: Aristotle

Russell Jones and Jacob Rosen

Tu 9:00 AM – 11:45 AM

A close study of Aristotle's conception of modality and its employment across philosophical contexts.

Philosophy 222: British Empiricism

Alison Simmons

MW 1:30 PM – 2:45 PM

A companion course to Phil 122 for graduate students, we will explore the same material as Phil 122 but will add to both interpretive debates in the secondary literature and pedagogical exercises directed to teaching this material.

Philosophy 229: Kant's Theory of the Imagination

Samantha Matherne

M 12:00 PM – 2:45 PM

In this course, we will explore the role the imagination plays in Immanuel Kant's philosophical system, including his account of perception, cognition, beauty, sublimity, metaphysics, and morality. We will look at major works from the Critical period, including the *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781/87) and the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (1790), as well as his lectures on anthropology and metaphysics from the 1770s and 80s,

"What Does it Mean to Orient Oneself in Thinking" (1786), *Religion within the Bounds of Mere Reason* (1793), and the *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* (1798). Our goal will be to see whether Kant defends a unified theory of imagination across these various texts.

Philosophy 247A: Topics in Philosophy of Language

Mark Richard

W 3:00 PM – 5:45 PM

Propositions are supposed to be the primary bearers of truth and falsity as well as the objects of psychological and illocutionary states such as belief, fear, desire, assertion, promising, etc. A standard view of meaning has it that a sentence's meaning should be theorized in terms of propositions, with the meaning of sentence S a rule that determines the proposition expressed by a use of S.

In this seminar we will look at historically important and contemporary work on the notion of a proposition in philosophy and semantics. Topics discussed may include: debates about the nature of and the need for propositions; debates about the nature of propositional attitudes and the extent to which they are or are not tied to language; debates about 'fineness of grain' of propositions.

You don't need a background in philosophy of language to take this course. But it is intended for graduate students in philosophy, and so philosophical sophistication is expected; students from other disciplines should consult with the instructor before taking the course.

Course requirements are: active participation in class, a class presentation, and a final paper. We will meet once a week for about two and a half hours.

Philosophy 279: Topics in Political Philosophy

Lucas Stanczyk

W 3:00 PM – 5:45 PM

An examination of selected topics in political philosophy. Topics will vary from year to year. In 2018-19, the seminar will focus on questions of justice in the organization of production, and alternative ways of understanding the significance of inequality for distributive justice.

History 2326: Adorno's Aesthetic Theory

Peter Gordon

W 3:00 PM – 5:45 PM

This graduate-level interdisciplinary seminar will address the philosophical, historical, sociological, and aesthetic questions raised by the Frankfurt School social theorist and philosopher Theodor W. Adorno in his posthumously-published masterpiece *Aesthetic Theory* (1970). Our chief task will be to come to a better understanding of this notoriously difficult work by examining its place in past and present debates over the relationship between art and society. Topics include: the possibility of poetry after Auschwitz, the debate with Walter Benjamin over the status of the "aura", the problem of artistic political engagement, and the dialectic between the culture-industry and "autonomous art."