Winter 2021
Philosophy Department Course Descriptions

Philosophy 101 Philosophical Problems—GE Ralda
MTWR 1100-1200 REMOTE
To what extent is philosophy relevant anymore? Is it relevant at all? If so, how? This course provides an introduction to philosophical thinking by means of investigating philosophical conceptions of the body, its status in the world and connection with broader philosophical topics. The body as a starting point will allow us to explore and incorporate gender, race, politics, and history, and hopefully demonstrate the immediate relevance philosophical thinking brings to your everyday life. We will explore these topics through careful reading of select philosophical texts, as well as discussion and written reflection on the themes and arguments of those texts. By the end of the course, students will identify relevant elements of philosophical arguments, critically assess those arguments, and begin to develop original philosophical responses in both written and oral form.

Philosophy 102 Ethics—Professor Alvarado
WEB lecture with REMOTE discussion sections
Ethics, or moral philosophy, is the branch of philosophy that tries to understand and justify concepts of right and wrong in human conduct. It also tries to identify rules or principles that will both allow people to recognize right and wrong courses of possible action and encourage them to adopt the right one. In this course, we will cover a number of foundational texts within the Western ethical tradition, along with several more recent elaborations and criticisms of those texts. We will also examine a number of concrete ethical issues, chosen for their contemporary relevance. The trajectory of the course starts with an introduction through meta-ethics, offers a review of key normative ethical theories, and then spends the entire second half of the term in applied ethics, investigating questions surrounding free speech, sexual morality, terror and torture, political resistance and responsibility, and racial justice.

Philosophy 103 Critical Reasoning—GE Simon
MTWR 1100-1200 REMOTE
“The heartbeat of critical thinking is the longing to know—to understand how life works”, writes feminist and dissenting writer and thinker bell hooks. Critical thinking as a longing to understand life cannot be, as is often the case, a set of disjointed skills that we throw at each other to make a point. If critical thinking is part of life, if, as Hannah Arendt puts it, "to think and to be fully alive are the same", then critical thinking has to be a community affair. The question is then: what forms does critical thinking take in our lives and what does it make possible? In exploring this question, we will understand critical reasoning as encompassing three broad skills:

a) Writing: the identification, reconstruction, assessment and response to the arguments we encounter.
b) Reading: the engagement with the philosophical issues associated with the activities of thinking and reasoning.
c) Facilitating: the creation of ways to share the critical thinking skills we built with our communities.

We will build these skills by working through, together, a critical thinking textbook by William Hugues et al. titled Critical Thinking: An Introduction to the Basic Skills, the work of 20th century political philosopher Hannah Arendt and her text The Life of The Mind: The Ground-breaking Investigation on How to Think and bell hooks' Teaching Critical Thinking: Practical Wisdom.

Philosophy 110 Human Nature—Professor Vallega
TR 1215-1345 REMOTE
What does it mean to be human? What makes us “human”? What is the place of humans in the world? This course will explore influential traditional, modern, and contemporary approaches to human nature. Thinkers examined include Plato, Hobbes, and Foucault. The course will consist on a close reading of Plato’s Republic in contrast with other ancient, modern, and contemporary ways of understanding the many senses of being human (Hobbes, Foucault, contemporary decolonial theory and Latin American popular and indigenous thought).

Philosophy 130 Philosophy and Popular Culture—Professor Brence
WEB lecture with REMOTE discussion sections
This course enables students to engage in the critical reflection central to the discipline of philosophy--that which would facilitate living an “examined life” -- about, in, and through popular culture. What is popular or mass culture? Is it something merely “manufactured” by special interests, or is it still in any way genuine culture, the product of free and spontaneous human interaction? Are the products of popular culture (movies, music, games, sports, etc.) merely sources of entertainment or distraction, or might they serve other purposes such as providing for a sense of community and identity? Do they serve merely to bypass (or even undermine) reflection to inculcate particular perspectives or values into those who are exposed to or who participate in them? Might they rather, upon scrutiny, provide the basis for the kind of critical reflection commonly regarded as facilitated only by “high” culture? By way of testing the last of these perspectives, the capacity for popular culture to facilitate genuinely critical reflection, a range of products of popular culture will be
examined alongside texts that seek to illuminate and reveal the ideas at work in them, and in relation to some works of classical philosophy, ancient and modern. As a result, students should expect to develop an enhanced capacity for intelligent reflection upon popular culture and upon a range of central issues that have been the subject of considerable philosophical examination.

**Philosophy 170 Love & Sex—GE Gamble**  
MTWR 0930-1030 REMOTE  
Love and sex are so central to human life that many would argue that our intimate relationships are the key to self-esteem, fulfillment, even happiness itself; in fact, our intimate relationships are probably more important to our sense of well-being than our careers. Yet we spend remarkably little time thinking about love and sex, even as we spend years preparing ourselves for the world of work. In this course you will be asked to reflect on the most intimate sphere of human existence. We will draw on historical, sociological, religious, feminist and philosophical work to shed critical light on a variety of questions, including: What is love exactly? Why do we continually associate love and sex with happiness and pleasure when they often make us so utterly miserable? Is there, or should there be, an ethics of love and sex? What is moral, what is normal, and who gets to decide? What happens to sex when it is associated with “scoring” (the conquest model of sex)? How are our understandings of masculinity and femininity tied in with what we believe about love and sex?

**Philosophy 211 Existentialism—Professor Warnek**  
MW 1015-1145 REMOTE  
In the 1950s, Existentialism was a cutting-edge perspective on the world (European nihilism after World War II), a lifestyle for intellectuals (in smoke-filled coffee houses), and a glamorous corner of academic philosophy itself (Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir). But the origins of Existentialism go back to at least the nineteenth century in the Western tradition—Dostoevsky, Nietzsche, and Kierkegaard. Is existentialism relevant today? Yes, if there are philosophical truths about human life that have to be lived, if individual subjectivity is important, and if we are responsible for our lives. The course will survey all of the figures just mentioned, and more. Our main work will be to address questions such as: Am I free? Is it my fault? Does life have a purpose? What does death mean? All required reading will be from Existentialist Philosophy, ed. Oaklander, 2nd ed. Prentice Hall isbn 0-13-373861-2 pbk. Work will consist of reading (about 30 pp a week) student participation (despite a large class) and 5 very short (2pp) papers out of a choice of 10.

**Philosophy 216 Philosophy & Cultural Diversity—GE Ospina**  
MW 1415-1545 REMOTE  
This course provides a philosophical engagement with cultural diversity through engaging with texts from the Western philosophical canon as well as postcolonial and decolonial literature. We will contextualize the history of our modern concept of cultural diversity, as well as notions such as culture, difference, race, racism, and (white) privilege. Additionally, we will reflect on the ways in which recognition or misrecognition of one’s cultural identity/difference can have deleterious effects—in terms of both material welfare and the development of positive conceptions of self-identity. Furthermore, we will be grappling with border epistemologies and indigenous epistemologies, paying attention to the ways in which social positionality matters when it comes to the development of knowledge and engaging with non-western works that grapple with these questions. This framework will allow us to explore and incorporate gender, race and politics, and hopefully demonstrate the immediate relevance philosophical thinking brings to understanding and rethinking cultural diversity. We will explore these topics through careful reading of selected philosophical texts, as well as discussion and written reflection on the themes and arguments of those texts. By the end of the course, the goal is for the student to be able to identify the relevant elements of philosophical arguments, critically assess those arguments, and begin to develop original philosophical responses in both written and oral form.

**Philosophy 220 Food Ethics—GE Sinclair**  
MW 1415-1545 REMOTE  
Every time we eat, we either eat in a way that coincides with other ethical commitments we have about the environment, animals, and other humans, or we eat in a way that contradicts these commitments. This course will examine a variety of food related issues from animal welfare to labor justice and challenge students to examine their own ethical commitments and choices. This course will introduce the moral theories of virtue ethics, utilitarian ethics, deontological ethics, pragmatist ethics, and care ethics and apply these theories to a range of issues related to what, who, and how we eat.
Philosophy 308 Social & Political Philosophy—Professor Brence
MW 1415-1545 REMOTE
Major historical and contemporary social/political theorists. Inquiry into such ideas as freedom, ideology, identity, social/political reconstruction and revolution. We will focus primarily upon the social/political dimension and consequences of problems confronting human agency. How do we act in a world as organized, complex, and controlled as our own? Is there any possibility for meaningful self-determination in a globalized and technologically managed economy? Can we regard contemporary free-market capitalism as still democratic without a positive answer to that question? What is the nature of contemporary ideology such that these questions and their answers are often obscured?

Philosophy 309 Global Justice—GE Portella
MW 1215-1345 REMOTE
What is globalization? What was nationalization? What does the transition from one of these to the other imply? This course is intended as an introductory discussion of central philosophical problems of globalization and justice. Key philosophical problems here include: issues in distributive justice pertaining to global poverty and inequality, justice matters concerning global citizenship and global human rights, issues concerning global identity and the politics of multiculturalism, issues in retributive justice concerning transnational criminal tribunals, and thematic concerns including new global contexts of war, terrorism, environmentalism, and health care. This course will count as an upper division elective and satisfy the Gender, Race, Class and Culture requirements in the Philosophy major. As a course that will satisfy the University multicultural requirement, Global Justice will consider international cultures in the contest of the issues of race and ethnicity, pluralism and monoculturalism, and prejudice and tolerance. Rather than studying a single culture in depth, this course will look at the intersections of national and ethnic cultures around issues of justice. These intersections raise questions of differences, as well as helping to identify commonalities that can serve as means for understanding and resolving conflict. By explicitly taking up the relationship between cultural differences and justice, the course will consider issues of prejudice and tolerance and the resources for critically engaging the development of justice in international contexts.

Philosophy 311 History of Philosophy: Modern—Professor Stawarska
MW 1215-1345 REMOTE
This course is the second of a three-course introduction to the history of western philosophy. The purpose of this course is to examine the history of western philosophy in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as well as to consider the importance and relevance of the history of philosophy for us today. The course will focus on three key subjects relevant to the history of philosophy in this period. Primarily, we will engage with readings from canonical figures in the modern traditions of Rationalism (selections may be from Descartes, Spinoza, or Leibniz), Empiricism (selections may be from Hobbes, Bacon, or Hume), and the mediation of these two traditions that can be found in the Transcendental philosophy of Kant. Additionally, we will also consider works from figures not normally in the canon (most notably early modern women philosophers) who played a more central role in the development of these philosophical traditions than is often acknowledged.

Philosophy 315 Introduction to Feminist Philosophy—Professor Mann
MW 1015-1145 REMOTE
This course examines basic concepts and important texts in feminist philosophy. We will talk about what the great philosophers have said about women’s ability to do philosophy, what it means to do philosophy as women, how feminism has challenged the most basic assumptions of the Western philosophical tradition, and contemporary issues in feminist philosophy. This course is a prerequisite for some upper division courses in feminist philosophy.

Philosophy 323 Moral Theory—GE Showler
TR 1215-1345 REMOTE
In this course we will explore fundamental questions in moral theory. In particular, we will examine the role and significance of metaethical commitments—to well-being, rationality and/or virtue—that underlie major moral theories. The course will also focus on understanding foundational principles related to consequences, duty, and character that help guide moral judgment in different moral theories. We will end the course by examining an important distinction, seldom disentangled in major moral theories, between a moral life, a meaningful life and a good life.
In this course we will study questions and concepts in Medical Ethics with an emphasis on three topics: disability, technology, and incarceration. Concerning disability, we will consider resonances and dissonances between Medical Ethics discourse, Critical Disability Studies, and Disability Justice frameworks. Concerning technology, we will consider ethical questions pertaining to wearable medical technologies and medical documentation technologies. Regarding incarceration, we will consider the imbrication of medical and prison industrial complexes in a US-context with a particular focus on COVID-19 in Oregon prisons and jails.

Philosophy 407 Feminist Theory Seminar—Professor Mann

MW 1415-1545 REMOTE

Course description pending

Philosophy 420 American Philosophy: Philosophy of Resistance—Professor McKenna

TR 1200-1400 REMOTE

This course is an historical survey of American philosophy from the 1890s through the present. The course begins with the hypothesis that a significant strand of the American tradition developed as a philosophy of resistance against ideas inherited from Europe and against a social, political, and economic system whose practices led to oppression through assimilation or exclusion. As a consequence, these philosophies share a common interest in the nature of pluralism, agency, and liberation. While the various strands of this tradition of resistance share some concerns and methods, they also differ. John McDermott writes: “Historically considered [the American] tradition was faced with an ever-shifting scene, characterized by widespread geographical, political, and social upheavals. These crises were built into the very continuity of the culture, and it was thereby fitting that basic . . . categories of understanding were transformed. The meaning of the reflective experience is to point precisely to the fact that such a transformation had its basis in the willingness of the culture, over a sustained period of time, to listen to the informing character of experience.”

This tradition, while critical of established views and practices, is more focused on reconstruction than deconstruction. Rooted in a desire to understand particular experiences, and imagine ways those experiences could be transformed to make future experiences better or more fulfilling in any number of ways, this is a tradition that holds the problems of the world front and center. We will explore a variety of voices in this tradition.

Philosophy 421/521 Ancient Philosophers: Plato—Professor Warnek

R 1615-1915 REMOTE

This course is devoted to a careful reading of Plato's dialogue, The Republic. The course will proceed as a seminar, and the emphasis will be on developing an interpretation of the dialogue as we proceed in discussion. We will also be asking general questions that concerns the unique challenges presented in reading a Platonic dialogue. What is philosophical important about a dialogical text? How do the mythic and dramatic aspects of the texts bear upon the dialogue as it is presented? We will also consider how different interpretive assumptions lead to different conclusions concerning what this dialogue reveals. Is the account of the “best city,” for example, meant to be taken programmatically, as a political project, or does it instead reveal something about the limits of philosophical discourse in being able to address the concerns of political life? What is the relation between the concern with the life of the individual as a psyche and the life of the community as a polis? Does the dialogue challenge us to think differently both about the nature of the political in general and about the political dimension of philosophical inquiry?

Philosophy 451/551 Native American Philosophy—Professor Pratt

MW 1615-1745 REMOTE

The purpose of this course is to provide students with an introduction to North American Indigenous philosophies. In the first section of the course, we will consider the context of genocide in the Americas and the "Pan-Indian" philosophical tradition that emerged as part of the resistance to white American attempts to acquire native lands and eliminate native culture in the late 19th century and early 20th centuries. The second section examines the work of major American Indian philosophers of the last three decades of the twentieth century including Vine Deloria, Jr. (Standing Rock Sioux), George Tinker (Osage), and Gerald Vizenor (Chippewa). The third section takes up the work of recent thinkers including Leanne Betasamosake Simpson (Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg), Glen Coulthard (Yellowknives Dene), Brian Burkhart (Cherokee), Dina Gilio-Whitaker (Colville Confederated Tribes), and University of Oregon professors Kirby Brown (Cherokee) and Leilani Sabzalian (Alutiiq). The methodology of this course will involve close reading of primary texts, online discussions and presentations, written work, and guest lecturers.
We will approach some central themes of Nietzsche’s philosophy by exploring how they emerge within the movement of his thinking: Self-overcoming, eternal return, will to power, transfiguration of values, and genealogy. The emphasis will lie not simply on what Nietzsche says but on how he writes and puts into question principles of reasoning and beliefs pertaining to lineages he himself embodies. Class time will consist in close reading and interpretations of primary texts as well as in discussions emerging from the readings, with some historical and contextual lecturing and references to various lineages of thought informed by Nietzsche.

This course is offered for philosophy graduate students who are also in their first year of service as graduate teaching fellows. The course runs for the entire year, each quarter offering a different core focus. All three quarters provide opportunity for reflection on pedagogical technique and philosophy of education. The first quarter offers ample opportunity for consideration of these themes. The second quarter also includes attention to curriculum, course design, and syllabus construction. The third quarter extends to a wider range of issues in the philosophy of education. Throughout the year, the goal is to improve teaching effectiveness and to provide new teachers with a forum for discussing some of the challenges they face in the classroom. Note that this is a one credit course that meets weekly and involves a few additional assigned meetings outside of our regular meetings (for example, class observation visits that can be scheduled to fit each student's calendar).

Research in the life sciences raises numerous ethical issues about the use of human cells and non-human animals in experiments; about the potential harms associated with development of biotechnologies such as CRISPR-Cas 9; about synthetic biology and the production of genetically modified organisms. This course will explore in detail the bioethical issues surrounding human gene editing and whether humans, by deploying such technologies, can alter their evolution. Given that Francoise Baylis is the 2020-21 Wayne Morse Chair of Law and Politics (UO), we are not only fortunate to read carefully her recent book *Altered Inheritance* (Harvard UP 2019), but also to explore with her some of the topics that she identifies as central to the debate on human gene editing.

The readings for this seminar have been chosen based on the idea that we are currently living through the United States’ third “racial reckoning” (where Reconstruction is understood as the first and the Civil Rights Era as the second). The focus will therefore be on anti-Black racism and resistance, rather than race and racism more broadly conceived. I have chosen two very recent texts – *Begin Again* by Eddie Glaude and *Backlash* by George Yancy – that I hope will help us analyze the current moment, which we might expect to be described in the future as the Black Lives Matter Era. I have also chosen a slightly older text – *The Racial Contract* by Charles Mills to serve as a brief overview of some of the main concepts in current Philosophy of Race. During the course, students will be invited to supplement this admittedly narrow focus by choosing, investigating, and presenting on other classic (or contemporary) texts in Philosophy of Race, including those not centered on the Black experience (and not written by cis-gendered men).