

Spring 2024 Course Descriptions & Distribution Areas

PHIL 402: Aristotle

Key Ideas in Aristotelian Metaphysics

PhD/MA in Philosophy distribution area: Ancient, Metaphysics/epistemology

MA in Social Philosophy distribution area: N/A

Dr. Joshua Mendelsohn

Tuesdays 2:30pm-5:00pm

This course will provide an in-depth introduction to some key ideas in metaphysics that trace back to Aristotle and resound throughout subsequent philosophical and theological traditions, such as the distinctions between substance and accident, form and matter, and potentiality and actuality, and the concepts of essence, God as self-thinking thought, and the soul as the form of the living body. Readings will be drawn principally from Aristotle's *Categories*, *Metaphysics* and *De Anima*. They will also include some later commentary on and/or appropriations of these ideas. Students will benefit from previous studies in ancient Greek philosophy and related areas, but the course is designed to be accessible to those with no special background.

PHIL 407: Medieval Philosophy

Jewish, Christian, and Islamic Philosophy in Dialogue

PhD/MA in Philosophy distribution area: Medieval, Metaphysics/epistemology

MA in Social Philosophy distribution area: N/A

Dr. Blake Dutton

Thursdays 2:30pm-5:00pm

This course will introduce major themes of Jewish, Christian, and Islamic philosophy during the Middle Ages. Its focus will be the status of reason and philosophical inquiry within the three great Abrahamic traditions, all of which are founded on a claim to historical revelation. In addition, we will look at the way in which several particular issues were treated in these traditions, including the nature and attributes of God, the origin and structure of the cosmos, the human soul and its faculties, prophetic knowledge and teaching, and providence and miracles. Although we will read a variety of texts from a variety of authors, the course will center on three texts by three authors: Al-Fārābī's *The Virtuous City*, Maimonides' *Guide of the Perplexed*, and Aquinas' *Summa Contra Gentiles*. Of particular interest will be the way in which these texts can be seen in dialogue with one another and with the Greek philosophical tradition from which they borrowed.

PHIL 417: Classical German Philosophy

PhD/MA in Philosophy distribution area: Modern, Metaphysics/epistemology

MA in Social Philosophy distribution area: N/A

Dr. Naomi Fisher

Tuesdays 10:00am-12:30pm

In this course, we will focus on the ideals of grounding, unity, and systematicity in German Idealism, reactions and counter-movements in the early Romantic movement. We will therefore begin with the “Spinozism Controversy” ignited by Friedrich Jacobi in 1785, turn to the reception of Kant in that context by Reinhold and Fichte, and then the development of early German Idealism and Romanticism in Jena, through figures such as Schelling, Schiller, Goethe, Schlegel, and Hegel. Students will become conversant with the major projects and schools of thought in the wake of Kant’s Critical Philosophy.

PHIL 419: Aesthetics

Art and Morality

PhD/MA in Philosophy distribution area: Analytic, Ethics/social-political

MA in Social Philosophy distribution area: Moral

Dr. Mario Attie Picker

Thursdays 10:00am-12:30pm

How do art and morality relate to each other? The present course is an extended exploration of this question. We begin by asking whether morality plays (or should play) a role in our engagement with and evaluation of art. Are works of art susceptible to ethical assessment? And if they are, what is the relationship between their moral merits and their aesthetic ones? Is immoral art bad art? Or can a work be better by virtue of its immorality? We then reverse the equation and ask whether art plays (or should play) a role in our ethical lives. Can art communicate moral truths? Are there insights that only art can reveal (or that it is best positioned to reveal)? Or is knowledge simply irrelevant when it comes to art? Moving beyond knowledge, we ask the more general question of whether art is good for us. Can it make us better persons? Can it make us worse persons? Does it simply reflect (or distort) the world? Or can it change it? Finally, we ask if there is an intrinsic relation between the good and the beautiful. Is virtue beautiful? Is vice ugly?

PHIL 485: International Ethics

PhD/MA in Philosophy distribution area: Analytic, Ethics/social-political

MA in Social Philosophy distribution area: Moral, Social

Dr. Carol Gordon

Mondays 4:15pm-6:45pm

This course is intended to give students an overview of the theoretical frameworks for thinking about ethical questions within the international arena, as well as some of the critical issues in this field. Some would argue that ethics is simply irrelevant in international affairs—that states and non-state actors simply pursue their interests, and that’s all that can be expected of them. But even in war, there has long been a set of articulated principles about constraints on warfare, and what moral duties are owed even to an enemy in combat.

The twentieth century saw the emergence of institutions of global governance, which addressed ethical violations in warfare, as well as human rights; and which also established means for enforcing international law against states and individuals. But many have raised questions about their focus and adequacy: are there ways in which international law reflects a gender bias? Why are economic rights treated as secondary, when the human damage from poverty can be far greater than the destruction that is done in warfare? Should there be measures of accountability that are binding on institutions of global governance themselves?

PHIL 490: Current Philosophical Issues

Philosophical Perspectives on Climate Change

PhD/MA in Philosophy distribution area: Analytic, Continental, Metaphysics/epistemology

MA in Social Philosophy distribution area: Social

Dr. Johanna Oksala

Wednesdays 4:15pm-6:45pm

There exists extensive philosophical literature on climate change in the field of normative moral theory, but the implications of climate change for other areas of philosophy are still relatively undertheorized. In this course, we will investigate climate change as a philosophical problem focusing particularly on its existential, metaphysical, and political implications.

- We will consider the ways that climate change is forcing philosophers to question deeply held metaphysical background beliefs about nature, politics, history, necessity, and freedom.
- We will study how climate change as a political problem is challenging many of our traditional liberal political ideals such as economic growth, individualism, human rights, and national sovereignty.
- We will investigate the difficulties people experience in orienting themselves existentially and in adjusting their basic lifeworld assumptions in the rapidly warming world.

The texts studied will include some foundational texts in environmental philosophy, as well as a broad range of recently published philosophical articles and book chapters on climate change.