

Philosophy Department

Undergraduate Courses Spring 2011

Intensive Introductory Courses

V83.0010

Central Problems in Philosophy

MW 11-12:15

Jim Pryor

This course is an introduction to the methods of contemporary philosophy, concentrating on the following questions:

1. The Problem of Other Minds: How can we tell whether animals and future computers have minds, or whether they're instead just mindless automata? How can we tell that other people have minds?

2. The Mind/Body Problem: What is the relation between your mind and your body? Are they made up of different stuffs? If a computer duplicates the neural structure of your brain, will it have the same thoughts and self-awareness that you have?

3. Life and Death: What does it mean to die? Why is death bad? Do you have an immortal soul which is able to survive the death of your body? 4. Personal Identity: What makes you the person you are? Why would a clone of you have to be a different person than you are yourself? If we perfectly recorded all the neural patterns in your brain right now, could we use that recording to "bring you back" after a fatal accident?

Sign up for one of the following sections:

V83.0010-001 Thursday 11-12:15

V83.0010-002 Friday 12:30-1:45

V83.0010-003 Friday 11-12:15

V83.0010-004 Friday 2-3:15

V83.0015

Minds and Machines

T/TH 9:30-10:45

William Starr

Throughout history, metaphors drawn from technology of the time have been proposed to understand how the mind works. While Locke described the newborn's mind as a blank slate, Freud compared the mind to hydraulic and electro-magnetic systems. In recent decades, many have followed Alan Turing's proposal to think of the mind as a kind of computer. Indeed, this idea is often said to be one of the foundational assumptions of cognitive science. What do cognitive scientists mean when they claim that the mind is a computer? What is a computer? Could a computer have a mind or be conscious? More recently, some have claimed the mind is more like a massive network of associations, like Google's database. Indeed, a few have even speculated that your brain and Google work in the same basic way. The purpose of this course is to grapple with these and related questions.

Sign up for one of the following sections:

V83.0015-001 Monday 3:30-4:45

V83.0015-002 Monday 4:55-6:10

Group I: History of Philosophy

V83.0021-001

History of Modern Philosophy

T/TH 11-12:15

Elliot Paul

This course is an introduction to some of the most influential European philosophers of the 17th and 18th centuries: Descartes, Elizabeth, Spinoza, Leibniz, Locke, Berkeley, Hume, Reid, and Kant. We will consider and critically examine the responses these thinkers gave to various questions in metaphysics and epistemology, including the following: What is the relationship between reality and our perception of reality? What is the nature of the mind and how is it related to the body? What is the nature of physical reality? Do we have free will? Which of our beliefs, if any, do we have good reason to maintain in the face of various skeptical challenges?

Sign up for one of the following sections:

V83.0021-002 Thursday 12:30-1:45

V83.0021-003 Thursday 2-3:15

V83.0021-004 Friday 11-12:15

V83.0021-005 Friday 12:30-1:45

V83.0101

Topics in History of Philosophy

MW 4:55-6:10

Japa Pallikkathayil

Prerequisite: Two courses in Philosophy, at least one in history of Philosophy

This course examines the social contract tradition in political philosophy. Views in this tradition begin by considering the kinds of problems we would face in the absence of coercive political institutions, i.e. in a 'state of nature'. In light of these purported problems, these views then employ some conception of a contract in the attempt to justify the state's use of coercion. Readings will be drawn primarily from Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau and Kant. We will focus on both understanding and critically evaluating the different ways in which these philosophers conceive of the state of nature and the contract that establishes the state.

Group II: Ethics, Value, and Society

V83.0040

Ethics

T/TH 9:30-10:45

David Velleman

This course covers three great works of moral philosophy: Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, Kant's *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, and Mill's *Utilitarianism*. It concludes with a contemporary work that applies moral philosophy to 20th-century history: Hannah Arendt's *Eichmann in Jerusalem*. Course requirements are: attendance at lectures and a recitation, five short papers and a final exam.

Sign up for one of the following sections:

V83.0040-002 Monday 9:30-10:45

V83.0040-003 Monday 4:55-6:10

V83.0040-004 Thursday 11-12:15

V83.0040-005 Thursday 12:30-1:45

V83.0042

Applied Ethics

MW 11-12:15

Japa Pallikkithayil

This course will explore contemporary debates regarding contentious ethical issues. The course has two aims: (1) to identify the moral theories and concepts shaping these debates, and (2) to use these debates to refine and evaluate these theories and concepts. Topics may be drawn from areas like environmental ethics, business ethics, and medical ethics.

Sign up for one of the following sections:

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V83.0045-002 Thursday 9:30-10:45

V83.0045-003 Thursday 11-12:15

V83.0050

Medical Ethics

T/TH 2-3:15

Matthew Liao

This course will examine ethical issues arising out of medicine and bioethics. We will begin by surveying normative theories such as consequentialism, deontology, and virtue ethics. We will then explore topics such as informed consent, confidentiality, brain death and persistent vegetative state, euthanasia, abortion, embryonic stem cell research, genetic testing and genetic engineering, and allocation of scarce medical resources and social health care policy. By the end of the course, students will learn how to analyze important, philosophical arguments in bioethics.

Sign up for one of the following sections:

V83.0050-002 Friday 9:30-10:45

V83.0050-003 Friday 12:30-1:45

V83.0051

The Idea of Law in the West

T/TH 2-3:15

Anthony Kronman

The most basic question one can ask about the law concerns the nature and source of its authority. Why am I bound by the law's commands? Many other questions flow from this one. What, for example, is the relation between legal and political authority? Between law and morals? Between law and the order of the natural world? Very broadly speaking, in the long history of philosophical and theological reflection on this subject in the West, two different answers have been given to the question of law's authority. One grounds the authority of law in reason and the natural order of the world that reason discloses to us. The other grounds the authority of law in will, to begin with the will of God, and then later the will of human agents. The Western tradition of legal philosophy may be described, in the broadest terms, as an encounter between these two conceptions of law, the rationalist and the voluntarist. The aim of my course is to help students recover this background and to grasp the intimate connection of this disagreement about the authority of law to a deeper disagreement about the nature of divinity itself—one defined by the fault line that Tertullian marked centuries ago when he asked, "What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?" The course will not only prepare the students for a richer and more satisfying engagement with issues of contemporary moral and legal philosophy, but acquaint them with a central, organizing motif of Western thought in general.

V83.0102

Topics in Ethics and Political Philosophy

T/TH 4:55-6:10

Peter Unger

Prerequisite: Two courses in Philosophy, including either V83.0040, V83.0041, V83.0045, or V83.0052.

Even as compared to what he or she can do, almost all well-to-do people do little, or nothing, over the course of their lifetime, to prevent the early deaths and great suffering of people in the poorest parts of the world. Is it wrong for a well-to-do person to behave like this - perhaps about as horribly wrong as committing negligent homicide, as with fatal drunken driving? The course will center on this question, though it will also involve us in many other moral questions. In about equal measure, this will be a course in both normative ethics and in applied ethics. (By contrast, little will be said about metaethics and, most likely, not much about political philosophy, either.)

Group III: Metaphysics, Epistemology, Mind, Language, and Logic

V83.0070-001

Logic

MW 9:30-10:45

Jonathan Simon

Logic is the science of reasoning correctly. It is a set of tools that will help you clarify and disambiguate what you want to say, help you evaluate pieces of reasoning, and get you comfortable with the standard of rigor operative in mathematics, philosophy, computer science and other precise theoretical endeavors. As we learn how to use the tools in this toolkit, we will consider deeper philosophical questions raised along the way, questions like: What is it for one proposition to be a *logical consequence* of other propositions – for it to be *impossible* for the one to be false if the others are true? And what is it for some things that you have thought, written or said to be *proofs* of other things that you have thought, written or said? And what is it to give a formal theory of some domain, like number theory or geometry? Finally, time and interest permitting, we will use our logical tools as a standpoint from which to look into the great valley of questions *about* logic itself: what is the relationship between truth and proof, or between understandability, and logical definability?

V83.0070-002

Logic

T/TH 4:55-6:10

Melis Erdur

Introduces the techniques, results, and philosophical import of 20th century formal logic. Principal concepts include those of sentence, set, interpretation, validity, consistency, consequence, tautology, derivation, and completeness. This course satisfies the logic requirement for NYU Philosophy majors.

V83.0070-003

Logic

MW 11-12:15

Jeff Sebo

Introduces the techniques, results, and philosophical import of 20th century formal logic. Principal concepts include those of sentence, set, interpretation, validity, consistency, consequence, tautology, derivation, and completeness. This course satisfies the logic requirement for NYU Philosophy majors.

V83.0072

Advanced Logic

T/TH 12:30-1:45

Rachael Briggs

This course serves as an introduction to the non-classical extensions and alternatives to classical logic, and the philosophical debates surrounding them. Topics include modal logic (the logic of possibility and necessity), conditional logics (connected to debates about causation), many-valued logics (in which propositions can be both true and false, or neither true nor false), intuitionistic logic (closely related to provability in mathematics), and relevance logic (whose proposed applications include a superior theory of argumentative reasoning and theories of truthmaking). Our textbook will be the second edition of Graham Priest's "An Introduction to Non-Classical Logic".

Sign up for one of the following sections:

V83.0072-002 Friday 12:30-1:45

V83.0072-003 Friday 3:30-4:45

V83.0076

Epistemology

MW 2-3:15

Colin Marshall

This course will be about what, if anything, makes a belief good (in a broad sense of 'good'). We'll address this issue on both a general level and a more specific level. On the general level, we'll look these questions: Are all beliefs equally legitimate, or are there standards that make some better than others? What's the difference between merely believing something and knowing it, and is there anything we really know? On the more specific level, we'll look the following questions: Should you change your beliefs when you find out that well-informed people disagree with you, and if so, how? Do you know that the external world exists, and if so, do you need to be able to show you're not dreaming? Time permitting, we may also discuss self-knowledge, perceptual knowledge and radical relativism.

Sign up for one of the following sections:

V83.0076-002 Thursday 12:30-1:45

V83.0076-003 Thursday 2-3:15

V83.0080

Philosophy of Mind

MW 3:30-4:45

Thomas Nagel

The course will concentrate on the recent history of debate over the mind-body problem in the analytic literature.

Sign up for one of the following sections:

V83.0080-002 Thursday 9:30-10:45

V83.0080-003 Thursday 11-12:15

V83.0080-004 Friday 12:30-1:45

V83.0080-005 Friday 2-3:15

V83.0085

Philosophy of Language

T/TH 11-12:15

Ted Sider

“No politician from Belgium has ever worn exactly 2,001,576 hats.” You have never seen that sentence before, yet you understood it. How? Presumably: you know i) what its words mean,

and ii) how the word-meanings combine to generate the meaning of the whole sentence. But what exactly is involved in i) and ii)? What kinds of things do words mean? How do words get their meanings? And how exactly do word-meanings determine sentence-meanings? We will study classic articles by Frege, Russell, Kripke, Putnam, Quine, Davidson, Lewis, Grice and others, on such topics as semantic compositionality, descriptions, quantifiers, proper names, natural kind terms, propositional attitudes, conversational implicature, logical positivism, analyticity, truth and meaning, meaning and use, and the indeterminacy of translation. Sign up for one of the following sections:

V83.0085-002 Tuesday 2-3:15

V83.0085-003 Tuesday 3:30-4:45

V83.0103

Topics in Metaphysics and Epistemology

T/TH 2-3:15

Kit Fine

Prerequisite: Two courses in Philosophy, including either V83.0076 or V83.0078.

Metaphysics is the philosophical inquiry into the general nature of reality. We shall attempt to deal with some questions within metaphysics - such as the nature of cause and the existence of universals; and we shall also attempt to deal with some questions about metaphysics - such as the distinction between appearance and reality, and the nature of reduction. Readings will be taken from 'Metaphysics: An Anthology', eds. J. Kim and E. Sosa (Blackwell, 1999) and may be supplemented with other material. Students will be expected to make a short class presentation and to hand in both a mid-term paper and a final paper.

Cross-listed Courses:

V36.0450-003/V83.0157

Topics in Environmental Values and Society

T/TH 2-3:15

Ben Sachs

What problems are caused by population expansion? Is there any way to avert these problems without trampling over peoples rights? This is the topic for the course. We'll begin by familiarizing ourselves with the debates among demographers and economists over the causes and consequences of population expansion. Next we will explore what a morally acceptable goal for a population policy would look like, before turning to the question of who would be wronged if we fail to achieve that goal. The rest of the course will consist in trying to determine how our goal might be achieved. We will try to determine, first, whether there are individual obligations to contribute to this goal by modifying ones reproductive activity. Finally, we will ask whether and how the state may permissibly use its power to suppress population expansion.

Honors Courses:

V83.0200-001

Junior Honors Pro-Seminar

T 4:00-6:00
Beatrice Longuenesse

V83.0202
Senior Honors Research

See description under **Honors Program**, below.

Philosophy Department – New York University

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REQUIREMENTS FOR THE MAJOR:

The Department changed the major requirements last spring, by increasing the number of courses needed from 9 to 10. However, the new requirements will only apply to students entering NYU in September 2005 and after.

Requirements for students who began at NYU before September 2005:

A major in philosophy requires **nine** 4-point courses in the department, with numbers higher than V83.0009 (so that Introduction to Philosophy and Ethics & Society do not count). These nine courses must include (1) Logic, V83.0070; (2) History of Ancient Philosophy, V83.0020; (3) History of Modern Philosophy, V83.0021; (4) Ethics, V83.0040; or Nature of Values, V83.0041; or Political Philosophy, V83.0045; (5) Belief, Truth, and Knowledge, V83.0076; or Metaphysics, V83.0078; (6) Minds and Machines, V83.0015; or Philosophy of Mind, V83.0080; or Philosophy of Language, V83.0085; and (7) Topics in the History of Philosophy, V83.0101; or Topics in

Ethics and Political Philosophy, V83.0102; or Topics in Metaphysics and Epistemology, V83.0103; or Topics in Language and Mind, V83.0104. No credit toward the major is awarded for a course with a grade lower than C.

Requirements for students who began at NYU in September 2005 and thereafter:

A major in philosophy requires **ten** 4-point courses in the department, with numbers higher than V83.0009 (so that Introduction to Philosophy and Ethics & Society do not count). These ten courses must include (1) Logic, V83.0070; (2) History of Ancient Philosophy, V83.0020; (3) History of Modern Philosophy, V83.0021; (4) Ethics, V83.0040; or Nature of Values, V83.0041; or Political Philosophy, V83.0045; (5) Belief, Truth, and Knowledge, V83.0076; or Metaphysics, V83.0078; (6) Minds and Machines, V83.0015; or Philosophy of Mind, V83.0080; or Philosophy of Language, V83.0085; and (7) Topics in the History of Philosophy, V83.0101; or Topics in Ethics and Political Philosophy, V83.0102; or Topics in Metaphysics and Epistemology, V83.0103; or Topics in Language and Mind, V83.0104. Of the three honors courses, only the first two—the Junior Honors Proseminar and the Senior Honors Seminar—may be counted towards the ten courses required. No credit toward the major is awarded for a course with a grade lower than C.

Recommendations on course sequence:

Students considering a major in philosophy are encouraged to begin with one of the Intensive Introductory Courses, or with one of the following: History of Ancient Philosophy, V83.0020; History of Modern Philosophy, V83.0021; Ethics, V83.0040; or Belief, Truth, and Knowledge, V83.0076. Logic, V83.0070, should be taken as soon as possible. The Topics courses are the most advanced undergraduate courses, and presuppose coursework in their areas.

REQUIREMENTS FOR THE MINOR:

A minor in philosophy requires four 4-point courses, at least three beyond the Introductory Courses. One course must be History of Ancient Philosophy, V83.0020, or History of Modern Philosophy, V83.0021; one course each must come from Group 2 (Ethics, Value, and Society) and Group 3 (Metaphysics, Epistemology, Mind, Language, and Logic). (Consult the Bulletin or the Department's on-line course-list for the classification of courses in these Groups.) No credit toward the minor is awarded for a course with a grade lower than C.

JOINT MAJOR IN LANGUAGE AND MIND:

This major, intended as an introduction to cognitive science, is administered by the Departments of Linguistics, Philosophy, and Psychology. Eleven courses are required (four in linguistics, one in philosophy, five in psychology, and one additional course) to be constituted as follows. The linguistics component consists of Language, V61.0001; Grammatical Analysis, V61.0013; Introduction to Cognitive Science, V61.0028; and one more course chosen from Computational Models of Sentence Construction, V61.0024; Phonological Analysis, V61.0012; and Introduction to Semantics, V61.0004. The philosophy component consists of one course, chosen from Minds

and Machines, V83.0015; Philosophy of Language, V83.0085; and Logic, V83.0070. The psychology component consists of four required courses: Introduction to Psychology, A89.0001; Statistics for the Behavioral Sciences, V89.0010; The Psychology of Language, V89.0056; and Cognition, V89.0029; in addition, one course, chosen from Seminar in Thinking, V89.0026; Language Acquisition and Cognitive Development, V89.0300; and Laboratory in Human Cognition, V89.0028. The eleventh course will be one of the above-listed courses that has not already been chosen to satisfy the departmental components.

INDEPENDENT STUDY:

A student may sign up for an independent study course if he or she obtains the consent of a faculty member who approves the study project and agrees to serve as adviser. The student must also obtain the approval of either the department chair or the director of undergraduate studies. The student may take no more than one such course in any given semester and no more than two such courses in total, unless granted special permission by either the department chair or the director of undergraduate studies.

HONORS PROGRAM:

The Department has also made changes in its Honors Program, in particular by a) changing the credits for the senior honors courses from 2 to 4 points (per course), b) adding a third course, the Junior Honors Proseminar, and c) raising the grade point requirement (both overall and in philosophy courses) from 3.5 to 3.65. (Note: only the first of these changes applies to students who are seniors in 2005-6.) Here is the description of the new program:

Honors in philosophy will be awarded to majors who (1) have an overall grade point average of 3.65 and an average in philosophy courses of 3.65, and (2) successfully complete the honors program. This program consists in the following 3 courses. (Note: of these courses, only the first two may be counted towards the 10 courses required for the major.)

1. The **Junior Honors Proseminar**, to be taken in spring semester of junior year. This course will play the dual roles of introducing students to core readings in some of the main areas of current philosophy, and of giving them an intensive training in writing philosophy. Admission to this course usually requires a GPA, both overall and in philosophy courses, of at least 3.65, as well as the permission of the Director of Undergraduate Studies. The Department will try to make alternative arrangements for students who wish to participate in the Honors Program but who will be studying abroad in this semester of their junior year.
2. The **Senior Honors Seminar**, to be taken in fall semester of senior year. Here students begin to develop their thesis projects, meeting weekly as a group under the direction of a faculty member, and presenting and discussing their thesis arguments. Students will also select, and begin to meet separately with, their individual thesis advisors—faculty who work in the areas of their thesis projects. Entry to this seminar depends on satisfactory completion of the Junior Honors Proseminar—or on the special approval of the Director of Undergraduate Studies. It also usually requires a GPA of at least 3.65.
3. **Senior Honors Research**, to be taken in spring semester of senior year. The seminar no longer meets, but each student continues to meet separately with his/her individual thesis advisor,

producing and discussing a series of rough drafts of the thesis. The final version must be submitted by a deadline to be determined, in April. It must be approved by the thesis advisor, as well as by a second faculty reader, for honors to be awarded. The student must also finish with a GPA of at least 3.65—and here no exceptions will be made. In addition, the thesis advisors will meet after the decisions by readers have been made, and award some students highest or high honors, based on thesis quality and other factors (including GPA in philosophy courses).