Spring 2015 Undergraduate Philosophy Department Courses

PHIL-UA 1; Central Problems in Philosophy; M/W 4:55-6:10; Eli Alshanetsky

The goal of this course is to familiarize you with the methods and some of the main topics of philosophy. The questions we'll focus on include:

The Mind-Body Problem: How are mental states such as experiences, thoughts, and desires related to the physical world?

Free-Will: How could we have any real choice about what we do, if everything that happens to us is determined by physical laws? And if we don't have any choice, is there still a reason to blame anyone for anything?

Personal-Identity: What makes us the persons that we are? Would we survive if all our memories were erased, or if our neural patterns were transplanted to another body after a fatal accident?

Relativism: Are there any objective truths about reality, or is all knowledge relative to some worldview? Are there objective moral standards, or is morality relative to culture or subjective opinion?

You must sign up for one of the following recitation times:
Mihailis Diamantis: Mondays 2-3:15 and 3:30-4:45

PHIL-UA 2; Great Works in Philosophy; T/R 2-3:15; Harvey Lederman

This course is an introduction to some major philosophers of the past. We will focus on texts which address or pose a broadly skeptical problem. Is everything an illusion? Can we know anything? Can we be justified in believing anything? We will read important works by Plato, Aristotle, Zhuangzi, Nagarjuna, Sextus Empiricus, Avicenna, Al Ghazali, Averroës, Descartes, Berkeley and Hume.

You must sign up for one of the following recitation times:
Dan Waxman: Mondays 12:30-1:45 and 2-3:15

PHIL-UA 5; Minds and Machines; T/TH 11-12:15; Lisa Miracchi

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? Are computers intelligent? What are the main challenges to the idea that minds are computers? Are there genuine alternatives to thinking of the mind on the model of computers?

PHIL-UA 6; Global Ethics; T/TH 9:30-10:45; Anthony Appiah

This course aims to accomplish two things. The first is to introduce three broad traditions of normative thinking about social issues from around the globe: a Confucian tradition, one based in Islamic legal traditions, and one derived from European liberalism. The second is to address three current areas of normative debate: about global economic inequality, about gender justice and human rights. We shall explore these first-order questions against the background of the three broad traditions. Our aim will be to understand some of differences of approach that shape the global conversation about these issues that concern people around the world.

PHIL-UA 20; History of Modern Philosophy; T/R 3:30-4:45; Kristin Primus

In this course, we will study works by central figures in 17th and 18th century philosophy, including Descartes, Elisabeth, Spinoza, Malebranche, Locke, Conway, Leibniz, Berkeley, Hume, and Kant. Topics will include the relation of the self to the world, the possibility and extent of one's knowledge of the world, the nature of bodies and causation, and the role of God in nature.

You must sign up for one of the following recitation times:
Michelle Dyke: Mondays 11:00-12:15 and 3:30-4:45
Harjit Bhogal: Fridays 9:30-10:45 and 11:00-12:15

Prerequisite: one Introductory course.

PHIL-UA 24; Aristotle; M/W 9:30-10:45; Jessica Moss

Aristotle is one of the most influential figures in Western Philosophy, and also one of the most challenging. In this course we will examine various aspects of his philosophy: ethics, psychology, physics, metaphysics, and epistemology. Our aim will be both to understand Aristotle's ideas and to engage with them philosophically, through careful reading of his works and through writing and discussion.

You must sign up for one of the following recitation times:
Andy Yu: Wednesday 12:30-1:45 and 4:55-6:10

Prerequisite: one Introductory course.

PHIL-UA 30; Kant; T/TH 12:30-1:45; Anja Jauernig

It is hard to overstate the importance of Kant in the history of philosophy. Most of 19th century and early 20th century philosophy (including but not limited to German Idealism, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, phenomenology, American pragmatism, neo-Kantianism, and early analytic philosophy represented by thinkers such as Frege, Russell, Wittgenstein, Schlick, and Carnap) cannot be properly understood unless it is read against the background of Kant's philosophy. In this course, we will be working through (almost all of) Kant's Critique of Pure Reason, which is the foundation for his system.

Primary readings (required). Immanuel Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, edited and translated by Paul Guyer and Allen Wood, Cambridge University Press, 1999.

Secondary readings (recommended). Sebastian Gardner, Routledge Philosophy GuideBook to Kant and the Critique of Pure Reason, Routledge, 1999.

You must sign up for one of the following recitation times:
TBA: Fridays 11-12:15 and 12:30-1:45.

Prerequisite: one Introductory course.

PHIL-UA 45; Political Philosophy; M/W 11-12:15; Samuel Scheffler

This course will deal with central questions about the justification of political and social institutions. The primary focus will be on contemporary philosophical thought in the liberal tradition, with special emphasis on the work of John Rawls.

You must sign up for one of the following recitation times:

Chelsea Rosenthal: Thursdays 12:30-1:45 and 2-3:15
Martin Abreu: Fridays 9:30-10:45 and 11-12:15

Prerequisite: one Introductory course.

PHIL-UA 70-001; Logic; M/W 12:30-1:45; Vishnya Maudlin

An introduction to symbolic logic, including sentential and predicate logic. Its purpose is to familiarize you with certain formal methods for representing and evaluating arguments and inferences. These methods can be used not only for philosophy, but for any subject matter. Like mathematics, the methods we will learn are highly abstract, formal and symbolic.

After taking this course, one should:

• Understand the logical definition of *argument* and the difference between a *sound* argument and a *valid* argument.
• Know the meanings of important logical terminology such as *valid*, *invalid*, *sound*, *unsound*, *consistent*, *inconsistent*, *contingent*, *theorem*, *tautology*.
• Be able to translate English sentences ino the formal languages of sentential logic and predicate logic.
• Be able to construct *proofs* in formal systems for sentential logic and predicate logic.
Know how to use *semantic methods* (truth tables, countermodels) to test for valldity and related properties.

PHIL-UA 70-002; Logic; T/R 11-12:15; Dmitri Gallow

People often attempt to persuade one another by putting forward arguments. That is, they attempt to persuade one another by providing reasons to believe that some conclusion is true. For this reason, figuring out what to believe about a wide variety of subjects requires you to be able to evaluate these arguments, to figure out which are good and which are bad. In this course, we will study some popular theories about which arguments are good and which are bad. We will also learn to recognize and diagnose common informal fallacies. The successful student will leave the course with a better understanding of how, and how not, to reason their way through complicated debates.

PHIL-UA 70-003; Logic; T/R 3:30-4:45; Jeremy Dolan

Modern symbolic logic provides us with formal techniques for representing and evaluating arguments. This course will introduce students to two formal languages: sentential logic and first-order predicate logic. We will focus on learning how to translate from English into these

languages, how to ascertain the logical properties of sentences and arguments using truth tables and models, and how to construct derivations within a proof system.

PHIL-UA 78; Metaphysics; T/R 2-3:15; Kit Fine

We shall deal with some fundamental topics in contemporary analytic metaphysics, possibly including ontology (what there is), personal identity (what is a person and what makes a person the same across time), causation (what is it for one thing to cause another, why should cause matter) and the problem of universals (is everything a concrete particular or are there such things are properties or relations or numbers).

You must sign up for one of the following recitation times:
Vera Flocke: Tuesdays at 9:30-10.45 and 12:30-1:45

Prerequisite: one Introductory course

PHIL-UA 85; Philosophy of Language; M/W 3:30-4:45; Paul Horwich

"Socrates was poisoned." By making those marks on a piece of paper or by mouthing the corresponding vocal noises we can make a claim about someone who lived in the distant past. How is that possible? How do our words come to mean what they do? How do they manage to pick out or latch onto particular portions of reality, even ones with which we've never had any contact? How does language enable us to convey thoughts about everything from black holes, to the hopes of a friend, to properties of prime numbers? For that matter, what is meaning? And what is thinking? This course will explore these and other philosophical questions about language through a reading of seminal works by 20th-century thinkers, including Frege, Russell, Wittgenstein, Quine, Tarski, Davidson, Grice, Kripke, and Chomsky.

You must sign up for one of the following recitation times:
Yu Guo: Fridays 9:30-10:45 and 11:00-12:15

Prerequisite: one introductory course

PHIL-UA 93; Philosophical Applications of Cognitive Science; M/W 12:30-1:45; Eli Alshanetsky

In this course, we will explore topics in the boundary between philosophy and cognitive science. Topics covered will include: speech production and comprehension, cognitive architecture, concept acquisition and conceptual change, formats of mental representation, the nature of

reasoning, the psychology and neuroscience of emotion, models of insight and creativity, tacit knowledge, and the relation between the personal and the sub-personal levels of explanation.

Prerequisite: one Introductory course

PHIL-UA 94; Philosophy of Physics; M/W 9:30-10:45; Tim Maudlin

This class will be focused on the nature of space and time as understood in different scientific theories, starting with Aristotle's account and going to General Relativity. We will particularly consider how the postulation of a particular space-time structure can be used as part of an explanation of observable phenomena. Topics include Newton's Absolute Space and Time, Galilean space-time, Special Relativity and General Relativity. We will also read some of the philosophical disputes about the status of space and time, particularly the argument between Leibniz and Clarke. Students should be prepared to master enough of Special Relativity to do some problems that require only algebra.

You must sign up for one of the following recitation times:

Zee Perry: Fridays 11:00-12:15 and 12:30-1:45

Prerequisite: one introductory course

PHIL-UA 103-001 Topics in Metaphysics and Epistemology; T/R 9:30-10:45; Dmitri Gallow

This course will focus on conditionals, probability, causation, and what relationships might exist between them. We will begin by considering conditionals---claims of the form "If A, C". We'll study one influential theory of these conditionals---what's known as the variably strict analysis. We will then move on to consider probability. We will learn about the mathematical theory of probability and ask philosophical questions about how to interpret that mathematical theory. This will lead us to postulate two importantly different kinds of probability statements: objective probability statements and subjective probability statements.   We'll consider a popular claim about the normative relationship between these two kinds of probability statements known as the principal principle. The principal principle says, very roughly, that, if you know the objective probabilities, then you ought to set your subjective probabilities equal to them. From there, we will consider a proposed relationship between subjective probability and conditionals known as Stalnaker's Thesis. Stalnaker's Thesis says, again very roughly, that your subjective probability in a claim of the form "if A, C" should be equal to the probability that you would give C, were you to accept A. This thesis is plausible, but we'll see that there are powerful reasons to doubt it. Finally, we'll consider what relationship causation might bear to conditionals and objective probability. We'll begin with a theory according to which a kind of conditional holds the key to

understanding causal relations, and we'll then consider a theory according to which causal claims are just claims about objective probabilities.

Prerequisite: Epistemology (PHIL-UA 76) or Metaphysics (PHIL-UA 78) or Philosophy of Science (PHIL-UA 90)

PHIL-UA 103-002 Topics in Metaphysics and Epistemology; M/W 11-12:15; Jane Friedman

In this course we will look closely at some current debates in epistemology.

Prerequisite: Epistemology (PHIL-UA 76) or Metaphysics (PHIL-UA 78) or Philosophy of Science (PHIL-UA 90)

PHIL-UA 200; Junior Proseminar; M 4-6; Beatrice Longuenesse

See the description of the honors program in the "Program" section.