

Department of Philosophy
Fall 2024 undergraduate course descriptions

101 “Logic, Reasoning, and Persuasion”

David Sorensen, section 01

In this class, we will learn how to construct, criticize, and effectively deliver arguments. Unlike traditional critical thinking classes, which emphasize logical fallacies and methods in formal logic (e.g. truth tables), we will utilize argument mapping and incorporate findings and methods from fields outside of philosophy such as cognitive science, social psychology, mathematics, and behavioral economics. Using these methods and insights, we will then carefully study and evaluate recent debates in politics, ethics, and science (e.g. climate change, gun control).

Janelle Derstine, sections 02 and 05

An argument is a series of statements, one set of which (the premises) is intended to provide either logically conclusive or strong support for another statement (the conclusion). In this course, we will study of the logical structure of argumentation in ordinary language, with an emphasis on the relation of logic to practical (and controversial) affairs in politics, criminal justice, religion and ethics. We will also examine and learn to spot traditional informal fallacies— e.g., “begging the question”— which although formally valid, are still instances of bad reasoning. Discussions explore the nature of validity, truth, meaning, and evidence in relation to the evaluation of arguments.

Timothy Perrine, section 03

The modern age is full of liars, conmen, and fools. And, unfortunately, they all have access to the internet. Our job, as both individuals and members of society, is to carefully and responsibly reason so as to avoid their nonsense. This course will provide some basic tools for identifying good and poor reasoning. We’ll focus, specifically, on identifying poor reasoning and ways in which poor reasoning might masquerade as good reasoning. We’ll conclude with a brief discussion of the ways in which our communities can assist us in reasoning well.

Nicholas Maurer, section 04

The purpose of this course is to introduce you to the basics of logic, argumentation, and critical thinking. You will learn how to identify, extract, reconstruct, and map arguments; how to

determine whether an argument is 'good' or 'bad' (and what it means to say that an argument is 'good' or 'bad'); and how to properly object to and defend arguments and claims. We will also discuss formal and informal fallacies, intellectual virtues and vices, and the various ways in which our ability to reason well can go wrong. At the end of the course, you will come away having acquired new tools and practices for thinking carefully and critically about a variety of important issues.

Frederick Choo, section 06

This course aims to make you a better reasoner. We will spend time learning how to analyze, evaluate arguments and avoid errors in thinking. We will then apply and practice these skills by looking at various arguments across different domains. Note: This course will involve teamwork and active participation.

Esther Goh, section 07

With the vast amount of information available at our fingertips, it is crucial for us to be able to think critically about the content we consume. This course aims to cultivate your critical thinking skills through a blend of both individual and collaborative assignments. We will begin with basic reasoning skills, such as learning how to identify arguments and how to construct your own deductively valid arguments. Then, we will move on to identifying arguments in popular discourse, reconstructing them into good arguments, and evaluating whether they fall prey to fallacious reasoning.

Benjamin Hutchens, section 09

This course is a general introduction to the basic mechanics of critical thinking, understood to mean the systematic evaluation and formulation of beliefs by rational standards. We will learn about the important roles critical thinking plays in formulating viable study habits and in evaluating problems one encounters outside the classroom. We will master an understanding of deductions, in respect of their soundness and validity, as well as inductions, in terms of their cogency, strength and general role in empirical experience and scientific experimentation. Some time will be spent addressing the difference between formal and informal fallacies.

A great deal of the semester will be spent working with propositional logic (translation, truth tabling, and enthymemes) and categorical logic (translation, squares of opposition, Venn diagramming).

Wes Skolits, section 90

This course aims to make you a more virtuous thinker. Toward this end, you shall learn the basics of formal logic and informal fallacies, how to identify and develop the intellectual virtues

(open-mindedness, intellectual fairness, etc.), and finally, how to evaluate arguments encountered in academic philosophy and in everyday life.

Steven Kang, sections 91 and 92

Development of skills in reasoning. Consideration of what an argument is, how arguments go wrong, and what makes an argument valid. Application of techniques for clarifying meaning; evaluating and constructing arguments.

103 “Introduction to Philosophy”

Justin Kalef, sections 01 and 03

Philosophers have traditionally discussed all sorts of profound questions, such as: Does God exist? Do we have free will? Can we survive the death of our physical bodies? What, if anything, can we know? But what really distinguishes philosophy from non-philosophy is how we address those questions. To do philosophy is to approach these and other questions in a rational, fair, and open manner, giving clear reasons for our conclusions and being genuinely open to the possibility that our strongly held beliefs may be incorrect, and willing to put our convictions aside to discover the truth together.

In this introduction to philosophy, I will focus most of all on teaching you the techniques and practices of philosophical reasoning. We will discuss all four of the questions I mention above, always giving attention to those techniques and practices. In each case, I will show you how a careful examination of these classic philosophical questions helps us answer some controversial modern questions. My aim is to help equip you with the tools of good reasoning and a sense of fair-mindedness, which I hope will help you guide your life, and indirectly your community, along a better path.

Anthony Baldino, section 02

Philosophy begins in a sense of wonder – a wonder about the very world itself and our own conspicuous existence in it. This class is an introduction to the field of inquiry that arises out of this sense of wonder, and it is an invitation to the student to convert that sense of wonder into specific questions and ways of addressing those questions.

The questions we will consider focus on the possibility of truth and value, the existence of God, ethics, metaphysics, epistemology, and theory of mind. Questions like: How is knowledge possible and what justifies our beliefs? Is there a God? Do we have free will? What is the nature

of mind and how does it differ from matter? How should we treat one another, what is of value, and how should we live our lives? The ways of addressing these questions will be through reading original works of philosophy, discussing openly and impartially these works with one another, critically examining the ideas presented, and (if all goes well) developing our own thoughts about the issues under discussion.

This introduction to philosophy will have been a success if, by the end of the course, you are able to think of yourself as a philosopher – as someone open to thinking philosophically and about philosophical questions, and connecting ideas from philosophy to the things you encounter, experience, think about, and hope for in your everyday life.

Assessment: There will be two short papers (3-5 pages), three brief in-class group presentations, and three tests. Class participation will also factor into assessment.

Giuseppe Rotolo, section 04

This course introduces the major topics, problems, and methods of philosophy and surveys the writings of major historical figures in the field. Topics of discussion include the nature of philosophy; the nature and limits of human knowledge; the scope and limits of human freedom; the differences between right and wrong conduct; the nature of the good life; and the meaning and value of human existence.

Sidney Felder, sections 90 and 91

This class will explore the following questions. What meaning can be attached to the distinction between appearance and reality? What does it mean to assert the existence of matter? How should we understand the force of logical implication and the validity of mathematical propositions? What is a number? From what source does our knowledge of contingent existents ("the external world") derive? What is the character of the relationship between cause and effect? What is change, and what does it mean for something -- an electron, a rock, a tree, or a person -- to be the same over time? Does the past or future exist at the time you are reading this question? Does time "flow"? Is time travel into the past logically possible? What is Free Will, and can any coherent understanding of Free Will and any conventional understanding of Moral Responsibility be accommodated in a world in which the course of events can (in principle) be fully accounted for by physical laws?

104 “Introduction to Philosophy (Writing Intensive)”

Michael Glanzberg, sections 01 – 08

This course is an introduction to philosophy in the western tradition. It has two central goals. The first is to give you an understanding of what philosophical problems are, and how they might be solved. This will be done through consideration of some perennial philosophical problems, drawing on readings from important figures in the history of philosophy, as well as contemporary authors. The second goal is to develop your analytic and argumentative skills. Topics to be discussed include the existence of God, the nature of knowledge, the relation of mind to body, free will, and ethics and the nature of right and wrong.

Learning Goals

- Acquaint students with some of the important positions and arguments on a number of central questions in Western philosophy. Critically examine philosophical issues concerning the nature of reality, human experience, knowledge, value, and/or cultural production. [AHo]eno
- Effectively communicate philosophical ideas and arguments; evaluate and critically assess sources and use the conventions of attribution and citation correctly; and analyze and synthesize information and ideas from multiple sources to generate new insights. [WCd]
- Communicate complex ideas effectively, in standard written English, to a general audience, and respond effectively to editorial feedback from peers, instructors, &/or supervisors through successive drafts & revision. [WCr]
- Improve students’ skills at a) identifying and articulating arguments in texts, b) analyzing and criticizing those arguments, and c) explaining and defending their own philosophical views.

105 “Current Moral and Social Issues”

Janelle Derstine, section 01

What makes an action morally right or wrong? When do persons deserve to be punished for wrongdoing? For example, what is the aim of imprisonment? Is this how we ought to punish non-violent offenders? What about institutional wrongdoing? Should we be concerned about the lead found in the water of Flint, MI, even if it doesn't affect *us*? What about natural gas pipelines and drilling, like DAPL? Is this fair to the First Nations? What about campus sexual assault? Is it reasonable to make sure the alleged perpetrator has due process in a fair system? In this course, we critically examine a host of hotbed issues in the US today: gun rights, sexual

assault, free speech, voting rights, over-incarceration, through the lens of moral philosophy and normative ethical theories. We will investigate and discuss, among other topics, whether there are mitigating factors (e.g., economically disadvantaged citizens, childhood trauma, members of historically marginalized group) we ought to take into account when assessing the normative claims we typically make about others. We will be taking on some very controversial topics this semester. Get ready!

Jerry Piven, section 02

What are my moral obligations? How do I know what's right? When do I have the right, or even obligation, to intervene? Other people have moral views that I find offensive, and yet they are sure they are right too. We live in a confusing, maddening world of conflicting ideologies, violence, and injustice. Children crossing borders are separated from their parents, thrown into internment camps, and force-fed tranquilizers. Civilians are secretly arrested, thrown into prisons, and subjected to "enhanced interrogation techniques." Planes and drones drop bombs on enemy targets and lay waste to foreign civilizations. Companies spew chemical waste into our environment, despoiling the planet, killing animals, and poisoning life. Racism, sexism, and assault flourish in our societies. Holding aloft their sacred or profane moral doctrines, people murder other human beings in the name of goodness, freedom, and truth. Some clash over immigration, others over abortion, still others on what the facts are. Some even cry for the censorship of free speech, in the name of protecting freedom and democracy. It can be dizzying and infuriating. In this class we will survey contemporary moral issues and consider a diversity of perspectives, engaging in serious scholarly investigation as we exchange ideas freely and philosophically.

Trip McCrossin, section 03

... *how we think* is not just mildly interesting, not just a subject of intellectual debate, but a matter of life and death. — Howard Zinn, *Passionate Declarations*

Society's awash in morally controversial issues, obviously. To choose only the most conspicuous ones: how may we most reasonably, individually or together, express ourselves, protect ourselves, bring kids into the world, leave it ourselves, punish wrongdoers, even to the point of execution, wage war even at the expense of the innocent, enjoy affluence not enjoyed by others, and which may threaten our shared environment? Our goal as a class will be to develop a systematic approach to such issues, in light of a common concern they reflect: how best do we balance individual rights and the common good, not only lawfully, but with morally-grounded lawfulness? In this spirit, we will imagine ourselves as, "Current Social as Moral Issues."

As such, we will actively resist four common pitfalls. It is not uncommon, on the one hand, to conflate the question of what is or is not moral with the question of what is or is not legal,

hindering us in both arenas. Even once we distinguish them, on the other hand, we may still neglect the foundational role that answering the former plays in answering the latter. In addition, even once we recognize this, we may still address them in isolation, issue by issue, rather than as coalescing into overlapping arcs. Finally, even if we resist all of this, we may still neglect the richness of popular culture, as it addresses, deliberately or otherwise, with varying degrees of subtlety, a wide variety of issues. To this effect, our work together will aim at the intersection of manageable selections of watershed or otherwise provocative philosophical perspectives (in the abortion and euthanasia debates, for example, Judith Thomson's "A Defense of Abortion," Philippa Foot's "Euthanasia," and Ronald Dworkin et al.'s "Physician-assisted Suicide: The Philosophers' Brief"), legal rulings (in the abortion and euthanasia debates again, *Planned Parenthood v. Casey* and *Washington v. Glucksberg*), and popular culture (still in the abortion and euthanasia debates, say, *Juno* and *Whose Life is it Anyway?*)

We will be as conversational as possible, based on the idea that conflict resolution, philosophical and otherwise, and is best done this way. In addition to anticipating being actively involved in a semester-long conversation, participants should anticipate a series of mandatory assessments, in-class or online, and an optional extra-credit writing opportunity.

Frances Kamm, section 90

This class will begin with an introduction to ethical theory. After that it will focus on reasoning about some practical moral issues related to current affairs. Among the topics to be discussed are moral issues related to abortion, war, climate change, immigration, and pandemics. Readings will primarily be by contemporary philosophers. This class is asynchronous and two online lectures per week may be attended when they are given or viewed at any time after they are posted. Students may submit questions about the lectures and readings. They will be required to participate in on-line discussion and complete several short papers.

107 "Introduction to Ethics"

Marcin Iwanicki, section 01

This course will cover selected topics in classical and contemporary ethics, such as love and friendship, responsibility and luck, moral dilemmas, multiculturalism and feminism, moral ambiguities in *Dune*, personal happiness and altruism, absurd and the meaning of life. We will begin with the basics of the art of argument and with some historical views, which will help you to understand the subsequent readings and to articulate your own views during class discussions. You will have an opportunity to participate in the Oxford-style debate on one of the following

topics: Is friendship superior to romantic love? and should we make all people look physically the same if we could?

David Kaspar, section 02

Ethics is the study of human conduct. Its aim is not to study how humans actually conduct themselves. Instead, it studies how humans ought to act. Modern ethics focuses on how we ought to morally act. In this course we'll study prominent modern moral theories, as well as contemporary moral issues such as abortion and poverty. Near the end of the semester, we'll discuss how to bring whole-life issues into moral inquiry. Lastly, we'll examine a set of difficult contemporary moral cases and use all of our ethics tools to solve them.

Alex Skiles, section 03

Exploration of basic issues in ethical theory and metaethics. Topics may include consequentialism, deontology, virtue theory, constructivism, value relativism, the objectivity of values, value skepticism, free will, and the nature of the values and practical reasons.

Patrick Brooks, section 04

Exploration of basic issues in ethical theory and metaethics. Topics may include consequentialism, deontology, virtue theory, constructivism, value relativism, the objectivity of values, value skepticism, free will, and the nature of the values and practical reasons.

Steven Kang, section 91

This course aims at helping students to think about the moral dimensions of human existence by exposing them to (1) theoretical and (2) practical issues in ethics. Some of the questions we will ask are: how should we conduct our lives?; how can we be morally righteous and virtuous?; what kinds of ethical theories are there to help us make right decisions?; what if there are conflicting moral recommendations from different theories?; how are we to resolve differences of moral opinions?; what is the distinctive nature of moral judgment?; why should I be moral in the first place?; to what degree does religion play a role in ethical decisions?; how is ethics related to the diverse areas such as law, health care, or politics as practiced in today's society?, and so forth.

109 “Introduction to Formal Reasoning and Decision Making”

Max Bialek, section 01

Resolving differences of opinion isn't always impossible. Figuring out what you should believe is not just a matter of checking what is true. Deciding what you should do does not have to be left up to your whim. Formal tools have been (and continue to be) developed that enable us to talk very precisely about the strength of arguments and of evidence, the rationality of beliefs we have, and the value of choices we make. This course will introduce students to some of those formal tools—specifically: logic, probability, and decision theory—focusing on their application, but also looking at the limits to their application and their potential for expansion and sophistication. Assessment in the course will be based on a mixture of exams, reading/discussion assignments, and quizzes.

Yoonhee Kang, sections 02 and 04

Logic is the study of how to reason correctly. It helps us understand what it takes for the arguments and inferences to work, and clarify why they fail if they don't succeed. In this course, we will learn the basics of formal logical systems that are used to model inference and rational decision-making. We will explore the basics of deductive logic – the analysis of category related arguments, translations and analysis of truth-functional sentential logic and quantitative predicate logic – to understand the nature of valid inference. Then we will study the features of inductive inference, specifically probability and theories related to decision making. By the end of the course, the student is expected to understand the structure of systematic inference. The student is also expected to critically discuss the issues on the reasonable choice in various contexts including but not limited to moral, religious decision, computation and the function of mind, and the decision of A.I or machines.

Avi Sommer, section 03

Fundamentals of logical, probabilistic, and statistical thinking, as well as the basic principles of rational decision-making. Reasoning through data (and rhetoric) encountered on a daily basis using elementary principles of deductive logic and inference.

Justin Caouette, sections 90 and 91

Fundamentals of logical, probabilistic, and statistical thinking, as well as the basic principles of rational decision-making. Reasoning through data (and rhetoric) encountered on a daily basis using elementary principles of deductive logic and inference.

201 “Introduction to Logic”

Anthony Baldino, section 01

Logic is considered a branch of philosophy because it is part of the essence of philosophy that we try to ensure that the conclusions we draw follow from the premises we give. Logic functions in a similar way in mathematics, where the premises we state are mathematical assumptions and the conclusions we draw are theorems, and in computer science, where the premises are about states of computational systems and the conclusions are the consequences of such states. In fact, ensuring that conclusions follow from assumptions or premises is essential to all reasoning, whether in an academic setting or in everyday life.

In this introduction to logic, we will focus on describing a language for formally representing assumptions and conclusions and on determining whether the arguments constructed with these formally represented propositions are examples of acceptable reasoning. By doing so, we will be developing tools that will be of use in all our activities as rational agents.

Evan Kalkus, section 02

This course is an introduction to symbolic logic. Logic is the study of correct reasoning and symbolic logic studies reasoning using formal languages. We will begin with propositional logic. Propositional logic will enable us to represent various connective terms that will allow us to evaluate various inferences. We will focus on determining the validity of arguments and the processes involved in derivations. Then, we will turn to predicate logic. Predicate logic subsumes propositional logic but affords us additional tools to both represent terms such as “something” and “everything” and evaluate inferences.

Eno Agolli, section 03

Logic studies arguments. Arguments are, broadly speaking, chunks of reasoning in which a claim is made and support is offered for the certain truth of that claim. Arguments are extremely pervasive in human life. Not only do we give them in philosophy, we also give arguments in science, in the humanities, in mathematics (proofs are arguments), in politics and law, in everyday conversations and disagreements.

It turns out that arguments can be studied rigorously, using formal tools from mathematics. That is quite impressive. The aim of this course is to familiarize students with the formal tools employed by logicians in the study of deductive arguments. We will start with what is known as propositional logic, and then move on to predicate/quantificational logic. We will spend about

one third of the course focussing on the shortcomings of this approach to arguments, e.g. the Sorites paradox, the Liar paradox, and then take a peek at alternatives, known as non-classical logics.

It is not required that you have a background in mathematics for this course, though if you do, you may find the technical aspects easier. This course will try to focus on the philosophical aspects of logic, not the mathematics.

Alexander Skiles, section 04

This course introduces the foundations of modern formal logic, emphasizing results and techniques essential for further study in the subject and useful in the numerous academic disciplines that draw upon it (e.g. mathematics, computer science, linguistics, and philosophy). Topics to be covered include: basic notions of formal logic such as validity, soundness, the logical modalities, ambiguity, and the use vs. mention distinction; truth-functional connectives; translations into and from a formal language; the syntax, semantics, and basic metatheory of truth-functional logic and first-order logic; how to construct formal proofs using a Fitch-style natural deduction system; and rudimentary set theory.

Ben Burgis, sections 90 and 91

Introduction to formal logic, covering truth, functional propositional logic, and quantification theory. Emphasis on developing symbolic techniques for representing and evaluating arguments. Credit not given for both this course and 01:730:202.

215 “Introduction to Metaphysics”

Nicholas Maurer, section 01

Metaphysics eludes precise definition but may be roughly characterized as the philosophical study of reality and its structure. This course will serve as an introduction to this study, and will include an examination of such topics as basic ontology (What exists? Only particular individuals? Or do multiply-realizable entities, like properties, exist? What about the relations that purportedly hold between entities? And what does it even mean to “exist?”); material constitution (When, if ever, does a given collection of entities compose or constitute some further entity?); persistence (How does one and the same object persist through change?); causation (What is the nature of causation? What does it mean to say that one thing “caused” another thing to happen?); and the nature of time (Does time really pass? Or is the flow of time

somehow an illusion?). We may also take a look at a topic or two from the philosophy of mind, such as the problem of the relation between mind and matter, and we may discuss some issues that are receiving special attention in contemporary metaphysics, like grounding and fundamentality.

218 “Introduction to the Philosophy of Mind”

Jake Quilty-Dunn, section 01

If you’re reading this, you have a mind. What does it mean to say you have a mind? That a baboon has a mind? Or that an artificial intelligence (AI) model like DALL•E 2 or GPT-3 has a mind? We’ll explore these questions from a scientifically informed philosophical perspective. We will read some classic philosophy (including Kant, Kripke, and Fodor) as well as more recent readings in philosophy, cognitive science, and AI. Topics include behaviorism, necessity and related metaphysical concepts, the mind-body problem, the nature of mental representation, consciousness, unconscious thought, implicit bias, the relation between language and thought, animal cognition, recent AI approaches to perception and language, and the potential for conscious AI.

242 “Ethics of Artificial Intelligence and Other Technology”

Alex Guerrero, section 01

"Discussions of “artificial intelligence” (AI) are ubiquitous. But there is little agreement about what AI is, what it can do now and might do soon, what is hype and what is real. There is little agreement about whether AI is good or bad or neutral, whether it raises distinctive concerns for our moral, social, and political life, and, if so, what those concerns are. And, because of this disagreement, there is also little agreement about what, if anything, should be done to regulate or restrict AI.

The aim of this course is to introduce you to AI, to familiarize you with these debates and disagreements, and to help you consider the ethical, legal, social, and political challenges that AI poses. Understanding AI and understanding the ethics of AI presents us with deep and interesting philosophical questions, and we will focus our attention on those.

248 “Foundations of Medical Ethics and Policy”

Francis Barchi, section 01

This course introduces students to the conceptual foundations of medical ethics, emphasizing how particular moral traditions and theories have influenced the development of policies and practices in health care and health research over time and in different settings around the world. The course combines lectures with small-group casework to encourage students to ‘think-through’ the moral and often practical challenges that arise in the practice of medicine, and health research.

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Identify the philosophical approaches that provide the foundations for modern clinical, research, and public health ethics.
2. Illustrate how different values and belief systems influence health care and health-related research and how different stakeholders perceive these activities.
3. Trace the development of the ethics regulatory environment that guides modern-day research and the historical cases of research abuse that have shaped it.
4. Identify ethical issues in research protocol design and practical ways in which they may be resolved.
5. Apply ethical principles and regulatory requirements to case examples situated in clinical and research settings.
6. Apply critical reasoning skills to assess stakeholder interests, risks and benefits, and choose and defend a course of action.
7. Recognize ethical dilemmas and address them using enhanced communication skills and a commitment to ethical health practice and research.

254 “The Presocratic Philosophers ”

Azzan Yadin-Israel, section 01

Introductory survey of the Presocratic philosophers. Emphasizes exposure to the teachings of these thinkers through the remaining fragments, while also engaging scholarly writings that introduce and contextualize the sources. All readings are in English.

Derrick Darby, sections 01-04

Hip hop is great for partying but what can we learn if we study the rhymes?

Chuck D—pioneer from the hip-hop group Public Enemy—once said, “Rap is black America’s CNN.” In addition to gaining insight about the realities of life in America’s dark ghettos, studying rap rhymes can aid philosophical reflection and reasoning about identity, injustice, and inequality in these impoverished and racially segregated spaces. This course will feature lectures, interviews, music clips, and guest speakers including hip hop artists and prominent scholars. Our goal will be to contemplate philosophical questions raised by the existence of dark ghettos with the help of beats and rhymes. The course payoffs for students will be threefold: (1) sharpening critical reasoning skills, (2) sharing and acquiring knowledge of hip-hop, and (3) gaining deeper insight about race, racism, and poverty in America.

United States Senator Bernie Sanders courted controversy when he said, “When you’re white, you don’t know what it’s like to be living in a ghetto.” Some people took offense but the truth is that ghettos are as American as baseball and apple pie. In New Jersey, New York, Chicago, Atlanta, Los Angeles, Houston, Florida, and elsewhere, they are home to a disproportionate number of black and poor people. Why do ghettos exist? What problems do ghetto dwellers face and how should society deal with them? What do we owe ghetto residents and what do they owe each other? What lessons do ghettos offer about our racial, gender, and sexual identities? We will read widely in the humanities and social sciences but hip-hop and philosophy will take center stage to address these challenging questions.

Students from all schools and disciplines are welcome to sign up for this course. Rhymes and Reasons: Hip Hop and Philosophy can be used to meet the Core Curriculum goals Contemporary Challenges [CCD] and Arts and Humanities [AHo]

265 Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion

Timothy Perrine, section 01

God is supposed to be truly unique: an unsurpassable ultimate reality who provides human beings with their greatest happiness. It is unsurprising that this idea of God has drawn many adherents. In this course, we will explore this idea of God. Our exploration will focus around four themes: first, the nature of ultimate reality and God; second, arguments that God exists; third, arguments that God doesn’t exist; and fourth, what role religious experience plays in thinking about ultimate reality and God.

268 “Introduction to Existentialism”

Jerry Piven, section 01

What is the purpose of our existence? Why are we here on earth? What is the meaning of life? How do we endure death? Existentialism is concerned with the human condition, the purpose of life, authenticity in one's purpose and being, the attempt to find meaning amidst the absurdity and finitude of existence. Philosophers have asked how can life be meaningful in the face of the grave, and whether life matters. This course explores some of the great works of existentialism, pondering the meaning (or meaninglessness) of existence, the death of God, moral responsibility, and our struggle against fate.

301 “Socrates and Plato”

Benjamin Hutchens, section 01

This 300-level course will survey the conceptual relations between Socratism and Platonism, especially in respect of the relationships between, on the one hand, virtue and political life, and on the other, knowledge and mind. Lectures and course work will include:

A brief survey of some relevant pre-Socratic thought (Anaxagoras, Empedocles, Heraclitus and Parmenides) and some Sophists (Protagoras and Gorgias);

A sustained inquiry into Socratism and its method in the early dialogues (Euthyphro, Apology, Crito, Phaedo);

Consideration of a group of dialogues about important topics: Lysis on (friendship), Meno (on virtue and knowledge), Gorgias (rhetoric and inquiry), Protagoras (unity of the virtues), as well as Symposium and Phaedrus (love and knowledge);

Select books of Republic; and snippets from the more challenging later dialogues of Plato: (Theaetetus, Sophist, Statesman, Parmenides, Philebus).

303 “Modes of Philosophical Argument”

Virginia Sharpe, section 01

One of the few things philosophers agree on is that philosophers disagree on what, exactly, philosophy is. This makes coming to other conclusions about philosophy difficult to say the least. What exactly does a philosopher do, and how do they do it? Argumentation would seem to be central to the philosophers toolkit, but what counts as an argument, and how do different forms of argument work? This semester we'll examine several forms of argument against the backdrop of different conceptions of philosophy. We'll spend the early part of the semester thinking about what philosophy is (or might be). Then we'll examine some forms of argument in depth in the middle part of the semester, including, potentially: reductio ad absurdum, argument by analogy, and transcendental arguments. We'll conclude the semester by thinking about related topics like whether philosophy is a science and whether there can be progress in philosophy at all. Prior exposure to philosophical topics and argumentation is expected.

307 “Descartes, Locke, and the 17th Century”

Martin Lin, section 01

Early development of modern views about the nature of the physical world; relation between the mental and the physical; the nature of one's self; skepticism and certainty. Readings from Descartes, Locke, and others, such as Spinoza, Leibniz, and Hobbes.

315 “Applied Symbolic Logic”

Theodore Sider, section 01

To be able to understand contemporary philosophy, it helps to be "logically literate": to be fluent in various logical languages, and to understand what logic is all about. In this course we will study the basic techniques of logic, including syntax, semantics, proof theory, and metalogic; we will discuss some philosophy of logic; and we will study a number of logical languages, including some that go beyond intro logic, and which are important in philosophy, such as three-valued logic, modal logic, and counterfactuals.

329 “Minds, Machines, and Persons”

Mia Accomando, section 01

In this course, we will raise and seek to answer foundational questions in the philosophy of mind and cognitive science concerning the natures of minds, machines, and persons. The course will be divided into three units. In unit 1, we will consider some central questions about cognition. Is the mind a brain? A computer? What is a mental representation? In unit 2 we will turn to questions about consciousness – does understanding all of the physical facts about a brain provide an understanding of conscious experience? We will conclude in unit 3 with discussions of personal identity. Overarching themes include: the relationship between mind and brain, the possibility of machine intelligence, and the status of scientific progress in the cognitive sciences. A special focus will be on the use of models in both scientific inquiry and philosophical theorizing.

Giuseppe Rotolo, section 02

Throughout history, metaphors drawn from technology have been proposed to understand how the mind works. Locke likened the newborn's mind to a blank slate, Freud compared the mind to hydraulic and electro-magnetic systems; more recently, Turing's proposed that the mind is a computer. Why is this idea attractive? Why do we keep on comparing technological artifacts to our minds? Is it at all plausible that the cells of your brain work like an inorganic machinic being? Could a machine ever really have a mind, beliefs, emotions and conscious experiences? And what are these mysterious things anyway? Could a machine ever count as a person and make choices based on its own free will? What does it even mean to be a person? These are the main themes that we will explore during the semester.

David Sorensen, section 03

In this course, we will study competing philosophical theories about the nature of the mind and mental phenomena—intentionality, mental representations, and consciousness—and what these theories tell us about the possibility of creating machines with minds like ours. We will begin with some of the most foundational metaphysical issues in the philosophy of mind. Then, we will examine the foundations of computational cognitive science and artificial intelligence research. Next, we will look at attempts to understand and explain mental representations naturalistically. Lastly, we will discuss the metaphysical and ethical issues surrounding the possibility of mind uploading, mind extension, and the creation of super-intelligent AI.

Susanna Schellenberg, section 04

We will discuss questions such as the following. What is the mind? What is the difference between the mind and the brain, if any? Does the mind stand to the brain as a computer program stands to the hardware? What commitments are embedded in AI? What is the nature of intelligence and the difference between AI and human intelligence, if any? What does it mean to have a subjective perspective on the world? Do machines have subjective perspectives?

Sidney Felder, section 90

In this class, we will explore the range of ideas implicit in the following questions. What are the essential features of the mental? What is the relationship between mental states and physical ("brain") states? Between mind and behavioral and more general causal patterns? What conditions need to be satisfied in order to justify the attribution of thought, belief, consciousness, and personhood to something? What does it mean for something to realize a computational process, and is the classification of something as a machine or exclusively computational process consistent with its identification as a mind or person? Under what conditions, and to what extent, can the artificer determine the properties of her artifact? What characteristics constitute personal identity, specifically, what does it mean to be the same person over time? What if any robust conceptions of Free Will are compatible with a comprehensively "mechanistic" account of the world?

330 “Ethics of Harming and Helping”

Michael Otsuka, section 01

An investigation of our moral duties to come to the aid of, and refrain from harming, others. Its topic or topics might include warfare, self-defense, abortion and physician-assisted dying; effective altruism and charitable giving; the paradox of deontology, the trolley problem, the doctrine of double effect, and the non-identity problem; the ethics of imposing risks of harm; and consequentialist, deontological, and contractualist approaches to the aforementioned.

344 “Marx, Nietzsche, Freud”

Nicholas Rennie, section 01

Exploration of the work of three German writers who revolutionized modern philosophy, theology, psychology, aesthetics, social and political science, gender studies, historiography, literature, and the arts.

360 “Philosophical Aspects of Cognitive Science”

Jake Quilty-Dunn, section 01

Cognitive science is a mess, philosophically speaking. Topics like perception, thought, memory, language, and representation are foundational to cognitive science, but there is no consensus on what exactly these words refer to. We will investigate these topics and others from a scientifically informed philosophical perspective. Our readings will prominently feature work by Jerry Fodor, a longtime Rutgers faculty member and arguably the most important philosophical contributor to cognitive science. We will also investigate experimental techniques in cognitive science and try to figure out what (if anything!) they tell us about the structure of human and non-human minds.

362 “Philosophy of Literature”

Trip McCrossin, section 01

Overview:

Every sentence has a truth waiting at the end of it and the writer learns how to know it when [they] finally ge[t] there. — Don DeLillo, Mao II

Philosophy of literature is a subspecies of philosophical aesthetics, concerned in particular with what philosophy may contribute to our understanding of the literary arts, in addition to the aesthetician’s more conventional concern with the visual and auditory arts. As aesthetics is conventionally concerned with what qualifies as a work of art, for example, philosophy of literature may concern itself with what qualifies as a literary work of art, with our judgements regarding beauty and sublimity not just generally, but in literature, and so on. Philosophy of literature must also concern itself, however, with narrative and other forms of expression relatively, if not entirely unique to literature. As literary theorists assumed long ago, and

productively the mantle of addressing such questions, however, what may philosophers of literature reasonably aspire to contribute to what they already provide?

(Note: Successful completion of Philosophy of Literature (01:730:362) may partially fulfill, upon written request to, and the permission of the Philosophy Department's Undergraduate Program Coordinator, the Philosophy Major's "Two ["area"] courses [...], at least one of which must be at the 400 level" requirement (<http://philosophy.rutgers.edu/major>).

369 "Buddhist Philosophy"

Tao Jiang, section 01

Interdependence, impermanence, relativity; suffering; path to liberation; meditation; karma as cosmic justice; death and rebirth. Compassion as central ethical value. Theravada, Mahayana, and Tibetan Buddhism.

371 "Philosophy of Death and Dying"

Jerry Piven, section 01

This course is a philosophical exploration of the ways human beings have faced mortality. Socrates reputedly said that philosophy was a preparation for death. Hobbes said that the dread of death inspired religion, while Schopenhauer spoke of the afterlife as a metaphysical consolation. Ancient cultures often saw the end of life as the continuance of the cyclical death and rebirth of nature. Others created elaborate rituals to preserve the existence of the soul into other incarnations. Some have devised means of refusing death, while others have perpetuated themselves symbolically, through identification with their offspring or nature. This course bridges philosophy, psychoanalysis, sociology, and anthropology to discover the ways human beings conceive, contemplate, and deny death.

417 "Hume"

Virginia Sharpe, section 01

David Hume is a key figure in the Western philosophical tradition. He represents the culmination and ultimate expression of several important movements in Early Modern philosophy, and he made distinct and still-relevant contributions to epistemology, cognitive psychology/philosophy

of mind, metaphysics, morals, aesthetics, and political philosophy. This course treats a selection of those contributions in their context, centering Hume's own works but drawing on relevant interlocutors and secondary sources where helpful. This course is reading-intensive and centers philosophical writing, so you will be expected to write regularly and well.

420 "Philosophy of Language"

Jeff King, section 01

This course is designed to teach you about the recent history of philosophy of language and to give you a sense of where contemporary philosophy of language is headed. To that end, we will begin by spending a couple weeks on the seminal work of the German mathematician and philosopher Gottlob Frege. Frege's work was so revolutionary and significant that it changed the field of philosophy of language to the point that work prior to Frege in philosophy of language is no longer relevant to contemporary philosophers of language. As we will see, Frege had a comprehensive philosophy of language that explained the workings of quantifiers ('every student', 'some philosopher'), names ('Jeffrey King'), predicates ('is a philosopher', 'loves'), truth functional connectives ('and', 'or') and more. Virtually everything we read after Frege will involve reacting to Frege in one way or another. But the focus will be on how different expressions of natural languages (English, German, French) work. Our readings are all classics in the field and come from towering figures like Bertrand Russell, Saul Kripke, Gareth Evans, Paul Grice and Irene Heim.

424 "Logic of Decision"

Max Bialek, section 01

Formalizing the processes by which we make decisions can do a lot of good compared to, say, making all of our decisions arbitrarily or based merely on a whim. But there are fundamental issues with how such formalizations can be applied that prevent them from being a cure-all against less structured decision-making processes. This course will examine formal theories relevant to decision making—such as those of preferences, utilities, decisions, games, social choice, probability, and statistics—with a focus on the circumstances under which they seem to fail.

435 “Philosophy of History”

Trip McCrossin, section 01

Overview:

Longing on a large scale is what makes history. — Don DeLillo, *Underworld*

Concern over the philosophy of history, as opposed to the history of philosophy, goes at least as far back as the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, with notable contributions from the likes of Hume, Rousseau, Kant, Hegel, and Marx, under the general banner of what’s come to be known as “speculative” philosophy of history. Some ways into the twentieth, however, frustration with resulting perspectives thought to be overly abstract led to an alternative approach. Under the banner of what’s come to be known as “critical” philosophy of history, that is, we are to concern ourselves less with what philosophy may contribute to our understanding of the nature of human history writ large, than with what it may contribute to our understanding of the methodological choices marshalled by working historians, what they more familiarly call “historiography.”

We will explore these approaches out of chronological order. We will begin by exploring a variety of canonical sources and methods falling under the broad banner of critical philosophy of history. We will turn then to exploring whether the results of this newer approach may further illuminate those of its predecessor. In light of the succession of approaches, that is, what may critical philosophers of history reasonably aspire to contribute to what working historians already provide, and what may this tell us about the older, more speculative enterprise?

(Note: Successful completion of Philosophy of History (01:730:435) may partially fulfill, upon written request to, and the permission of the Philosophy Department’s Undergraduate Program Coordinator, the Philosophy Major’s “Two [“area”] courses [...], at least one of which must be at the 400 level” requirement (<http://philosophy.rutgers.edu/major>).

441 “Ethical Theory”

Justin Kalef, section 01

This section of Ethical Theory will be devoted to metaethics. Questions we will consider include: Is morality just a matter of opinion? If a culture comes to believe that something is morally permissible or obligatory, does that make it morally permissible or obligatory? Can morality be reduced to empirical science? How is it possible – if indeed it is possible at all – for anyone to know what is objectively right or wrong? If there are objective moral facts, then why do so many people and societies disagree about what those moral facts are? When we say that something is

morally right or wrong, are we even making a claim at all, or are we just expressing an attitude or command? Do people who don't think there's anything wrong with doing something have any reason not to do that thing? And why should anyone be moral at all, who doesn't want to?