

Winter Session 2019 Course Descriptions

All sessions are online and 3 credits

101: Logic, Reasoning & Persuasion

90: (*B. Burgis*) Logic is the study of the relationship between the premises and conclusions of arguments. In this class we'll practice constructing good arguments, and also look at a lot of ways that reasoning can go wrong. That involves both the study of logical fallacies--specific ways in which arguments can fail to establish their conclusions--and a hard look at various subtle factors that can lead us to too easily accept dubious ideas.

91: (*J. Derstine*) 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.

103: Introduction to Philosophy

91: (*D. Payton*) We will survey topics in ethics, the philosophy of mind, metaphysics (free will and determinism), and epistemology (the study of knowledge). This will be an intense and fast-paced course: Students will be required to contribute to weekly online discussion posts, as well as complete three short papers and a final exam.

90: (*A. Rabinowitz*) We will survey key questions in the major fields of philosophy. The course is divided into five week long modules: Logic, Epistemology, Ethics, Metaphysics, and Miscellaneous. We will explore questions that impact our daily lives, including the nature of consciousness, the self, God, and moral responsibility. You will learn how to better argue for your positions and better challenge the arguments of others through online discourse.

105: Current Moral & Social Issues

90: (*T. McCrossin*) *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)

We face a dizzying array of morally controversial social issues. How free are we really, we wonder, individually or collectively, to express ourselves, to arm ourselves, to choose the time and manner of our own procreation, of our own deaths, to punish even to the extent of killing the guilty, to wage war even at the expense of the innocent, to protect the environment even at the expense of commerce, to select only a few of the array's most conspicuously dizzying.

Our proceedings will be devoted to developing a systematic perspective in response to the question central in each such case, which is *what rights may we exercise in the conduct of our personal lives, having agreed, implicitly or explicitly, to live in society with others who may disdain such exercise, for their own sake or the sake of the common good?* In particular, we'll investigate a series of landmark perspectives developed since the

middle of the last century, working in each case to move these perspectives forward as far as possible. We will do so together in the sense that our proceedings will be as participatory as possible, based on the idea that philosophy is best done as interactively as possible. In order to facilitate this, our syllabus will be organized, in large measure, around overt and covert debates between a variety of figures, “major” and otherwise. In addition to anticipating being actively involved in the different dimensions of our on-line interactions over the course of the winter session, participants should anticipate completing a series of on-line assessments, and an optional extra-credit writing opportunity.

107: Introduction to Ethics*

90: (*J. Piven*) Ethics is the attempt to understand moral concepts and justify moral principles. What should I do? How do I determine what’s right and wrong? Is moral good in the intention or the consequence of my actions? Everyone disagrees on what people should do. Is it all relative? Should I question what I’ve been told? In this course, we’ll survey readings in ethics and moral philosophy to understand different perspectives on how moral decisions can be made. We’ll investigate topics such as virtue ethics, deontology, constructivism, objectivism, relativism, consequentialism, free will, and determinism.

109: Introduction to Formal Reasoning & Decision Making*

90: (*J. Grayot*) Students will explore what standards arguments must meet to be convincing and will learn the formal and conceptual tools necessary to evaluate when everyday arguments and pieces of reasoning meet these standards. Topics covered in the course will include the fundamentals of deductive and inductive logic, rational decision making, and how to produce argumentatively clear writing.

201: Introduction to Logic

90: (*S. Kang*) The objective of the course is to augment students' analytical and critical thinking through the study of formal logic. The students will learn philosophical concepts and introductory tools for valid reasoning and proof in modern logic.

249: Bioethics

90: (*J. Burgis*) Emerging biomedical technologies, policies, and practices raise some of the most pressing and significant philosophical challenges that we face as a society. We will begin this class by covering ethical theories and different perspectives. Then we will go on to discuss a variety of issues involved in health care. Our last two topics will be critical examinations of four widely anthologized articles on abortion and euthanasia.

**Description taken from previous semester*