Spring 2017 Philosophy Course Descriptions

PHIL 001-01 and 001-02 - Introduction to Philosophy
This course introduces students to problems in metaphysics and epistemology through close reading of several classical texts of Western Philosophy. Metaphysics is the study of the fundamental nature of reality. We will focus on the following metaphysical questions: What are we? Are we immaterial things, bodily things, some combination? What happens to us when we die? Does God exist? Do we have free will? Epistemology is the study of knowledge. How could we ever come to know the answers to these metaphysical questions? What is knowledge and how do we get it? Is knowledge even attainable? Throughout our examination of these questions, we will also consider questions about values and what we should do. For example, what attitude should we take toward death? If we can't be certain that some of our most fundamental beliefs are true, would it matter? If we don't have free will, does that mean that everything that we do is pointless? Great philosophers have proposed sophisticated answers to these questions. We will read their works, consider their theories, and analyze and evaluate their arguments, with the objective of coming closer to our own answers, however tentative, to some of life’s biggest questions.

Offered each term. (May be used to satisfy the second half of the college writing requirement by students with credit for ENG 1.)

PHIL 001-03 and 001-04 - Introduction to Philosophy
Prof. Monica Wong Link
In this course we will take up three broad philosophical topics. The first topic is the nature and structure of morality. How should we treat other human beings? What principles ought we to use in deciding when an action is right or wrong?
Next we will turn to questions about knowledge and reality. Can we be certain that we exist? That God exists? Are the mind and the brain identical? What is conscious experience and can it be described in physical terms?
Lastly, we will discuss free will. What is it, and do we have it? Is it compatible with the idea that everything in the universe is determined? Is free will a necessary condition for holding people morally responsible for their actions?
Readings will be drawn from both classic and contemporary philosophers.

PHIL 001-05 - Introduction to Philosophy
Prof. Jody Azzouni & Prof. Jeff McConnell
This section is an introduction to philosophy, with a focus on metaphysics and epistemology. Metaphysics is the study of the ultimate character of reality. Epistemology is the study of what we know and how we know it. We will study these topics by reading several influential philosophers, and evaluating their arguments: Plato, Descartes, Hume, and Quine. We'll examine questions like: Can we know anything? Does God exist? What is causality? By attempting to answer these questions and evaluating the answers of others, you'll sharpen your
analytical skills and your ability to articulate and argue for your claims. Requirement: five short essays on assigned topics.

**PHIL 001-01-06 – Introduction to Philosophy**
**Prof. George Smith**
This Section of Philosophy 001 focuses on the role of argument in philosophy, specifically its use not as instrument of persuasion, but as an instrument of inquiry. We will read Plato’s *Meno*, selections from his *Republic*, Descartes' *Meditations*, Berkeley’s *Three Dialogues*, and, from more recent times, Wittgenstein’s *On Certainty*. The central concern in the reading, and in the written papers on the reading, will be with whether the arguments put forward by the various authors manage to shift the burden of argument onto those who disagree with their conclusions – this instead of merely begging the question. The six required short papers will accordingly have somewhat the flavor of legal briefs. The final grade will be based, in lieu of an exam, on re-writes of any four of these papers, to be handed in at the end of the semester.

**PHIL 001-07 through 09 – Introduction to Philosophy**
**Prof. Lydia Amir**
This introduction to philosophy focuses on the great ideals of Western civilization, such as flourishing, peace of mind, salvation, redemption here and now, self-realization and authenticity, and therapy. Beginning in ancient Greece's ideal of flourishing, we will follow its demise by the ideal of peace of mind in Hellenistic and Roman times, explain how both ancient ideals were replaced by the ideal of salvation in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, and then by the ideal of redemption here and now in the Enlightenment. We will continue with Romanticism's ideal of self-realization, the existentialist's ideal of authenticity and the psychological ideal of therapy in the 20th century. Whilst political and sociological factors contributed to the creation of new ideals in history, they are still all relevant to our epoch and represent different ways in which people today choose to live their lives. Apart from texts of core philosophers, the readings will include texts from important religious reformers as well as from the father of modern psychology, Sigmund Freud.

(May be used to satisfy the second half of the college writing requirement by students with credit for ENG 1.)

**PHIL 001-10 - Introduction to Philosophy**
This course introduces students to problems in metaphysics and epistemology through close reading of several classical texts of Western Philosophy. Metaphysics is the study of the fundamental nature of reality. We will focus on the following metaphysical questions: What are we? Are we immaterial things, bodily things, some combination? What happens to us when we die? Does God exist? Do we have free will? Epistemology is the study of knowledge. How could we ever come to know the answers to these metaphysical questions? What is knowledge and how do we get it? Is knowledge even attainable? Throughout our examination of these questions, we will also consider questions about values and what we should do. For example, what attitude should we take toward death? If we can't be certain that some of our most fundamental beliefs are true, would it matter? If we don't have free will, does that mean that everything that we do is pointless? Great philosophers have proposed sophisticated answers to these questions. We will read their works, consider their theories, and analyze and evaluate
their arguments, with the objective of coming closer to our own answers, however tentative, to some of life’s biggest questions.

Offered each term. (May be used to satisfy the second half of the college writing requirement by students with credit for ENG 1.)

**PHIL 006 – Reasoning and Critical Thinking**  
**Prof. Susan Russinoff**  
Introduction to the analysis of arguments as they occur in everyday legal, moral, and academic contexts. Topics include identifying fallacies in reasoning, elementary logical principles, standards of evidence, and constructing and evaluating arguments. Suitable for those who wish to develop their reasoning skills without taking a course in formal logic. Cannot be taken for credit if student has already taken PHIL 33.

**PHIL 016 – Philosophy of Religion**  
**Prof. Elizabeth Lemons**  
(Cross-listed as REL 6.) Introduction to the philosophical analysis of major religious concepts, such as God, human nature, freedom of will, immortality, and the problem of evil through a study of representative types of religious philosophies.

**PHIL 024-01 – Intro to Ethics**  
**Prof. Monica Wong Link**  
What makes an action right or wrong? What responsibilities, if any, do we have to people other than ourselves and those most close to us? How should we balance competing interests? These are some of the questions that will be addressed as we study the fundamentals of various ethical theories including relativism, consequentialism, duty-based ethics, virtue ethics and social contract theory.

With this background, we will discuss how these ethical theories can help us analyze real-world dilemmas and make justified decisions. Two class lectures each week will be devoted to studying the philosophical theories, and one day a week will be reserved for analyzing relevant case studies. We will consider a wide range of topics pertinent to choices that an individual might face (e.g., physician assisted suicide, loyalty to family, and vegetarianism), as well as to decisions that affect larger communities (e.g., the death penalty, censorship and immigration.)

Prior experience in philosophy is not necessary; this course is intended for students interested in acquiring and sharpening their oral and written skills in order to construct, analyze, object to, and revise arguments.
PHIL 024-02 – Intro to Ethics
Prof. Lydia Amir

This course introduces the main ethical theories and examines their pros and cons. Its aim is to understand the relevance of ethical issues in everyday life, to evaluate the arguments which were given in defense of ethical theories and to assess their weaknesses. It hopefully helps the student choose an ethical theory to live by as well as understand the possible justification of her choice.

We begin by clarifying the grounds for moral responsibility, without which the field of ethics is meaningless. We continue by examining the main ethical theories Western philosophy has devised. There are several ways in which ethical theories can be classified. In this course, act-based theories are differentiated from virtue-based and emotion-based theories. As part of act-based theories, we first examine ethical and cultural relativism, followed by consequentialist theories (ethical egoism and utilitarianism) and deontological theories (Immanuel Kant and W.D. Ross). We follow with virtue-based theories, which include Aristotelianism as well as modern formulations of virtue ethics. Finally, emotion-based theories is a vast category, which includes the moral sense philosophers, ethics of compassion (Christianity, Buddhism, Arthur Schopenhauer), and Nel Noddings’s care ethics as well as other feminist ethics.

The question of the scope of ethics is raised by environmental ethics and animal rights philosophies. Finally, Friedrich Nietzsche’s criticism of the very idea of morality is introduced.

PHIL 0025 – Food Ethics
Prof. Sigrun Svavarsdottir

In this course, we will wrestle with ethical questions concerning food production and food distribution. There is no prerequisite other than a commitment to approaching these questions in an open-minded and intellectually responsible manner. Although the readings will be mostly drawn from the philosophical literature, the intent is to reach students across the university, interested in ethical questions concerning how food is produced and distributed.

Food is central to our lives. Are we to live, we will have to eat. There is no way around that. However, access to food varies. Whereas some have ample choices regarding what to consume, others have poor access to life-sustaining nutrition. Is it morally obscene that some people sit down at fancy restaurants for a $100 meal, while others starve? How ought we to respond to problems of starvation and poor nutrition within our own society and across the globe?

Our current methods of food production have an environmental impact that will shape the lives of future generations. Does this pose ethical strictures on how food is produced today? Do we have obligations to people who are not yet alive? Are there ethical strictures on how to till the land or otherwise treat inanimate nature? What gives something a moral claim to be treated one way or another? Does it have to be a human being? Does it have to be a rational or a sentient being?

*This course satisfies the introductory course requirement of the minor in Food Systems and Nutrition, offered within the Environmental Studies Program.
PHIL 033 – Logic
Prof. Susan Russinoff
(Cross-listed as LING 33). An introduction to fundamental concepts of modern formal logic, including sentence logic, quantification theory, and identity. Emphasis on the application of formal methods to reasoning in philosophy, mathematics, and everyday affairs. Please note: only one of PHIL, LING 33 and 103 may be taken for credit.

PHIL 039 – Knowing and Being
Prof. Avner Baz
The course focuses on forms of philosophical skepticism—claims to the effect that we can never know, or can never really know, something that we tend to think we do know, or at least may know. We will examine three forms of skepticism and the relations among them: skepticism about the external world, skepticism about other minds, and skepticism about God. Our primary concern, in each case, will be to ask not so much whether what the skeptic says is true, but rather whether it is clear what exactly the skeptic is seeking to assert, or deny, and hence whether the skeptic's "discovery" and its significance are what he takes them to be. The skeptic typically presents himself as interested in knowledge; but a consideration of the various skeptical arguments gives us an opportunity to think deeply and systematically not merely about what we can and cannot know, but equally about issues such as the following: What does 'world' mean? What is our relation to the world and, in particular, can we truly conceive of ourselves apart from that relation? What is our relation to our body and, in particular, can we make sense of the idea that we might not have a body, or have a different body? What is our relation to other people and to their 'inner lives'? In particular, can we conceive of ourselves apart from a relation to others? In what sense might feelings, thoughts, experiences, etc, be said to be 'inner' or 'private'? What does it mean to believe, or not to believe, in God? Thus, throughout our discussion, questions that originally present themselves as epistemological questions (questions about knowledge) will turn out to be just as much metaphysical questions (questions about being). And all of those questions will involve us in reflections on language.

The primary texts in this course will be Descartes' Meditations on First Philosophy, Shakespeare's Othello, and Hume's Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion. In addition to the primary texts we will also use texts by Hilary Putnam, Barry Stroud, Max Scheler, Stanley Cavell, Franz Rosenzweig, and Kierkegaard.

PHIL 042 – Western Political Thought II
Prof. Dennis Rasmussen
(Cross-listed as PS 42.) Central concepts of modern political thought. The views of those writers who challenged the dominance of Christianity: Machiavelli, Descartes, Hobbes, and others. Some of the main transformations of political thinking that characterized the Enlightenment: the possibility of scientific thinking and reasoning as the basis for human freedom. Nietzsche's critique of the Enlightenment, and the ability to find political principles that are genuinely true or liberating.
PHIL 043 – Justice, Equality, and Liberty  
Prof. David Denby  
This is a lower-level introduction to political philosophy. It presupposes no previous acquaintance with philosophy.

We will focus on five topics: the state of nature; the justification, if any, for state power; utilitarianism; distributive justice; liberalism and its critics. A number of other topics will come up along the way, including the nature and justification of free speech, free markets, and private property. All these topics are linked, and many bear on one of the fundamental questions of political philosophy: how should a state distribute power and material goods?

Our approach will be problem-centered rather than historical, and the emphasis will be on clarity and rigor rather than on scholarship or sensitivity to historical context. Our discussions will concern fundamental principles more often than particular issues of contemporary concern. The reading is drawn from early modern, nineteenth century, and contemporary sources and is moderate to heavy in quantity. It will include selections from Hobbes, Locke, Mill, Marx, Berlin, Rawls, Nozick, Dworkin, Sandel, Cohen, and others.

PHIL 052 – Aesthetics  
Prof. Stephen White  
In the tradition of Anglo-American philosophy, aesthetics has played a largely marginal role. (Possible explanation: German romanticism was the product of philosophers; their closest British counterparts were poets.) There is good evidence that this situation is currently undergoing a profound change. Fundamental problems in aesthetics, long believed to be of relevance only to specialists in the philosophy of art, are rapidly emerging as central to a range of issues at the heart of contemporary philosophy of language, philosophy of mind, and cognitive science. The problems of aesthetics include the nature of the expression of feeling in art and correlative issues in our understanding of the emotions, the notions of projection and identification in the context of the psychology of film spectatorship, and the nature of narrative. Central issues in philosophy include the problem of other minds, the problem of the definition of normative terms in meta-ethics and the problem of the characterization of human action, and the problem of grounding linguistic meaning in the concept of use. The issues in cognitive science are those surrounding the debate between proponents of the so-called "theory theory" of mental ascription and proponents of the competing simulation theory. I have special interests in the paintings of Caspar David Friedrich, Georgio De Chirico, and Edward Hopper, in the photography of Bill Brandt and Lee Friedlander, in the films of Werner Herzog, Terence Malick, and Andre Tarkovski, in the cinematography of Vitorio Storaro and Christopher Doyle, in film noir, and in the films of such recent Korean "new wave" directors as Kim Ki-Duk (Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter... and Spring; Three Iron).
PHIL 092 – Special Topics: From Bacteria to Bach and Back
Prof. Daniel Dennett
Special Topics. A close reading of Prof. Dennett’s new book, along with critical commentary and supporting material drawn from various fields, including biology, psychology, computer science and anthropology.

PHIL 114 – Topics in Logic: Modal Logic
Prof. Dilip Ninan
The traditional subject matter of modal logic is the logic of necessity and possibility. But the tools of modal logic can be used to study a wide variety of ‘modalities’: temporal, epistemic, and deontic operators, for example, have all been studied using the framework of modal logic. This course is an introduction to that framework. We will begin by studying the proof theory and model theory of propositional modal logic. Topics here may include the logic of necessity and possibility, temporal logic, and deontic logic. We will also cover various metatheoretical results concerning these systems (e.g. soundness and completeness). We will then move on to some further extensions and applications of the basic framework. Topics here may include quantified modal logic, conditional logic, and two-dimensional modal logic. The basic technique of possible worlds semantics will be used throughout the course. Assessment will consist of problem sets and exams.

PHIL 120 – Metaphysics
Prof. Brian Epstein
Metaphysics addresses fundamental questions about the existence and reality of what there is: What kinds or categories of things are there? Are there, for example, mental objects as well as physical objects? Properties as well as things having properties? Abstract objects in addition to concrete ones? Leibniz said that whatever is, is one. What are the conditions under which something is one thing rather than two? Can one thing share all of its properties with another? How can a thing change and remain one and the same?

Beginning with an introduction to some ways in which philosophers have dealt with such questions, this course will focus upon those concerning unity and identity, especially over time: How is it that a thing remains one and the same object or individual when it undergoes more or less radical change? How can a butterfly have been a caterpillar when no butterfly is a caterpillar? How can someone with the feelings and thoughts of a child be the same person as one who is now a student at Tufts? What, if anything, is essential to an object or individual?

Readings: will be drawn from classical and contemporary sources: McTaggart, Williams, Lewis, Kripke, Parfit, and others.

Recommendations: PHIL 1 and 33, or permission of instructor.
PHIL 121 – Ethical Theory
Prof. Sigrun Svavarsdottir
This is a course on general issues within normative ethics with special attention to what utilitarians, pluralistic deontologists, and Kantians have to say about these issues. What makes an action right or wrong? What is the primary object of moral evaluation: actions, motives, character traits, practices, or institutions? What value(s) ought to inform our actions? How exactly ought that value (those values) to inform our actions? Are there moral requirements that have nothing to do with value(s)? What is the relation between moral and rational action? Does morality require impartiality of us? Do moral duties arise out of relationships that we have with some but not all people? What role should or could moral principles play in our lives? How are moral principles to be discovered or justified?

PHIL 124 – Bioethics
Prof. Valentina Urbanek
This course has four parts. In the first part, we focus on ethical issues involved in ending human life. Is it ever permissible for a health care practitioner to kill their patient? Could it even be morally required? Is there a moral difference between killing someone by lethal injection and letting them die by not resuscitating them? Is it permissible to end the life of a human fetus, for example, by aborting? Is it permissible to conduct stem cell research, which, like abortion, involves the destruction of the embryo?

New technologies, including cloning, in vitro fertilization, and genetic engineering, have raised a host of new ethical questions about creating human life. In the second part of the course, we turn to them. Is it permissible to clone human embryos for reproductive purposes? How much discretion should parents have in deciding what their future child is like -- is it permissible to select for sex? Deafness? Intelligence? Is it permissible to genetically engineer intelligence? We will also ask, in general, whether creating human life can ever benefit or harm the person who's created, and whether it could, at least sometimes, be morally wrong to procreate.

In the third part, we discuss the patient-health care practitioner relationship, asking how involved the patient should be in his or her health care. Should advance directives always be followed? Should the health care practitioner always tell the patient the truth? What's the meaning of informed consent, and is informed consent even ethically important? If a healthy individual consents, after being informed, to amputation, should a health care practitioner perform the operation?

Finally, we will turn to ethical issues raised by allocating scarce lifesaving resources. On what basis should we decide who gets what? Age? Lifestyle/merit? Quality of life?
PHIL 133 – Philosophy of Language
Prof. Dilip Ninan
(Cross-listed as LING 133). “In an effort to reduce the number of collisions between camels and vehicles, Saudi Arabia has recently begun importing synthetic wolf urine from Sweden.” Although you have probably never encountered this particular sentence before, you can probably work out what it means. Furthermore, there are indefinitely many sentences which you have never before encountered, but which you can immediately understand. What accounts for your ability to do this? A traditional approach to this question in the philosophy of language involves the hypothesis that to understand a sentence is to know the conditions under which it is true. We will examine this hypothesis by discussing a number of linguistic items in detail, including proper names (“Barack Obama”), definite descriptions (“the king of France”), and indexicals (“I”, “now”). We will also discuss how the meaning of a sentence relates to our purposes in conversation, how words get their meanings, and whether we should be skeptical about the very idea that words have determinate meanings. Readings from Frege, Russell, Kripke, Grice, Wittgenstein, and others.

PHIL 141 – Global Justice
Prof. Lionel McPherson
(Cross-listed as PJS 141.) A philosophical study of justice in a global context. Topics selected from the following: nationalism, identity and group rights, political resistance and revolution, the conduct of war, human rights and duties of aid, population control, and environmental justice. Theoretical discussions of cultural pluralism and the requirements of justice, universalism vs. relativism, and the limits of partiality. Recommendations: Junior standing, or one course in philosophy, or permission of instructor.

PHIL 151 – Ancient Philosophy
Prof. Christiana Olfert
(Cross-listed as CLS 151.) The philosophers of Ancient Greece and Rome asked some of philosophy’s most enduring questions: What does it mean to be happy? What are the fundamental constituents of reality? What is knowledge, and how do we come to have it? And what makes for a just and healthy society? This course will introduce you to Presocratic philosophers, to Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, and to Hellenistic schools of philosophy, all of whom attempt to answer these challenging questions. In texts like Plato’s Phaedo, Republic, and Meno, as well as in Aristotle’s Metaphysics and Nicomachean Ethics, we will discover that from the Ancient perspective, questions about what is fundamentally real are deeply connected to questions about what it means to live a good and happy life. After a look back to the Pre-Socratics and their influence on the Classical thinkers (Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle), we will then turn to the Hellenistic period and the debate between the Stoics and the Ancient Skeptics, who develop even further, sometimes surprising, insights into the nature of reality, the possibility of knowledge, and human well-being.
PHIL 168 – Newton’s Principia
Prof. George Smith
This is the second part of a two-semester course on the Newtonian Revolution, and on the question, how did we first come to have high quality evidence in any of the sciences? The first part was devoted to 17th Century developments in astronomy and mechanics that formed the historical context in which Newton wrote his Principia. The second part is devoted to reading this book cover-to-cover and then in the final weeks to its reception over the course of the 18th century. Our emphasis throughout will be on what each Proposition contributed (1) to the book as a whole, (2) to physics at the time, and (3) toward the emergence of the high quality evidence in question during the century and a half after Newton died. The course will require a single research paper on a topic of the student’s choice, with approval and guidance from Prof. Smith. The first semester course is not a prerequisite for the second semester, but students taking only the second are encouraged to notify Prof. Smith in order to obtain access to material from the first semester that they can review over the semester break and, as needed, during the course of the second semester.

PHIL 192-01 - Seminars in Philosophy: Nothingness
Prof. Stephen White & Prof. Charles Inouye
What do the negative spaces of certain traditions of Japanese painting, the concept (from Buddhism and the thought of Nagarjuna) of nothing (mu), and the animism of Shinto have in common? And what do they share with the nihilism of Yukio Mishima and the Zen arts of kendo, flower arrangement, and the tea ceremony? In this course we will look at the multivalent concept of Nothingness in these and other Japanese cultural contexts through comparisons with concepts drawn from a variety of European philosophical traditions including Kantian and post-Kantian German Idealism, British Romantic literature, Phenomenology and Existentialism, and the philosophy of Wittgenstein. Chief among the concepts on the European side will be that of the experience of the sublime, variously understood as the experience of: the ground of being prior to the division of the self and nonself; that which is unrepresentable because a condition of the possibility of representation; and that, the embrace of which, in our ability to face our own immanent destruction, makes us truly agents.

This last dimension of Nothingness, tying together as it does the work of Mishima and Kojeve, Hegel, and Sartre, reveals the moral and political underpinning of a complicated metaphysical story. We will look at arguments that we must inhabit a dynamic and meaningful world more like the animistic world of Shinto or of the Guttai Manifesto than the disenchanted world of Max Weber. And we will look at Paul Schrader’s suggestions (in Transcendental Style in Film) as to how such a world is given (the revelation of the invisible in the visible) in the work of Bresson and Ozu. The course is co-taught by Inouye (Japanese literature and visual studies) and White (Philosophy, aesthetics, and film).
**PHIL 192-02 - Seminars in Philosophy: Aspect Perception**

**Prof. Avner Baz**

Wittgenstein introduces the topic of what he calls 'aspect perception' by noting the experience of 'aspect dawning', which he describes as an experience in which 'what you see has not changed, and yet you see it differently', and illustrates with the example of being struck by the likeness of one face to another. In his final years, Wittgenstein wrote hundreds of remarks on aspect perception, and was clearly struggling to come to a satisfying understanding of the topic and its philosophical ramifications. The course will focus on Wittgenstein’s remarks, and will connect them with Kant’s account of perception, judgment, and beauty, with phenomenology, with contemporary philosophical work on perception, with ethics and the philosophy of action, as well as with issues in philosophical methodology.

**PHIL 192-03 – Seminars in Philosophy: Race, Racial Solidarity, and Progress**

**Prof. Lionel McPherson**

This research seminar will be focused on major themes addressed in the book manuscript-in-progress The Afterlife of Race. These themes are: the idea of race and mixed race; the legitimacy and nature of racialized political solidarity; the usefulness of integration and forgiveness in response to historical injustice and its legacy; and practical prospects for Black American socioeconomic progress in a legally post-racial society. In addition to draft chapters of the manuscript, readings will include Appiah, Taylor, Haslanger, Zack, Shelby, Outlaw, and Anderson.

**PHIL 192-04 - Seminars in Philosophy: Skeptics, Stoics, and Hedonists**

**Prof. Christiana Olfert**

The Epicureans were hedonists who believed that “death is nothing to us.” The Stoics believed that the universe is a living animal and that it’s worse to hold false beliefs than to eat your own children. Perhaps it’s not surprising, then, that the Pyrrhonian Skeptics argued that we would be better off avoiding any beliefs at all. Our course will examine these three major “schools” in Hellenistic (post-Aristotelian) philosophy, with a focus on how each is a way of life: all three put forward systematic arguments for their views and proposals, but as we will see, these arguments are ultimately about, and part of, a distinctive way of living and living well.

**PHIL 192-05 - Seminars in Philosophy: Law and Institutions**

**Prof. Brian Epstein & Prof. Erin Kelly**

The study of responsibility in ethics focuses on the nature of agency, accountability, blame, punishment and, crucially, the distribution of responsibility for complex moral problems. Work in social ontology examines the nature of entities such as groups, corporations, money, and law, and what it is for certain social entities to have intentional states and to act. Emerging research at the intersection of these fields of study explores both normative dimensions of work in social ontology and metaphysical assumptions and implications of ethical theorizing about collective responsibility. We will examine this subject matter with special attention to philosophy of law. What ontological claims about the nature of organizations and agency are involved in legal practices? What normative questions and assumptions underpin legal attributions of agency? Readings by Hobbes, Bentham, Austin, Hart, and several more contemporary philosophers.
PHIL 192-06 - Seminars in Philosophy: Things, Similarities, and Worlds  
Prof. David Denby  
This is a course on topics in contemporary analytical metaphysics, with a particular focus on the work of David Lewis. Lewis was one of the most brilliant and influential philosophers of the late twentieth century and his work is required reading in several areas of contemporary philosophy. We will read and critically evaluate many of his most important contributions to metaphysics, especially his work on ontology, causation, laws, time, and modality. But our approach will be problem-centered; it will not primarily be a matter of Lewis-exegesis. Our procedure will be to consider some metaphysical problem, Lewis’s engagement with it, and the debates in the contemporary literature.

To get a sense of these issues, consider that, on the face of it, the world consists of things having (essential and accidental) properties and standing in various relations, including causal relations, and being governed by various natural laws. So what exactly are things? What are properties and relations? What is it to have a property or relation essentially or accidentally? And where do causation and laws fit into the picture? Most of these issues have always been central to metaphysics. First, we will look at things. We will focus on questions about their nature, constitution, and perhaps their persistence. Then, we will look at properties and relations. We will focus on whether there really are such things in addition to the things that have them. Next, we will look at causation and laws. Finally, we will discuss essences and modality generally. Other issues, e.g., whether the world is prior to its constituents rather than the other way round and the debate over truthmakers, will come up along the way.

I hope that by the end of the course we will understand and be in a position to evaluate many of Lewis’s philosophical contributions. I also hope that we will better understand key areas of contemporary analytic metaphysics. And I hope we will solidify our grasp of basic philosophical techniques and methodology; Lewis’s work is a model of good philosophy. Finally, I hope we’ll have fun. Lewis writes beautifully, and many of the readings display his characteristically limpid and disciplined prose. And many of the ideas are brilliant and gripping. I also hope the class will prove a genial forum for philosophical debate.

In addition to reading Lewis, we will read some background material, often from the early or mid-twentieth-century, followed by recent discussions from the late nineties and early twenty-first century. Authors may include: Armstrong, Fine, Haslanger, Hawthorne, Hoffman and Rosenkranz, Kripke, Markosian, Paul, Plantinga, Quine, Russell, Schaffer, Sider, Stalnaker, Szabo, Thomasson, and Zimmerman.

I will make all the readings available online. If you are interested in a preview, a good place to look would be Lewis’s Papers in Metaphysics and Epistemology or his On the Plurality of Worlds.

This is an upper-level class and students should have had logic and one other philosophy class.

PHIL 292-01 – Graduate Seminar: Advanced Epistemology  
Prof. Epistemology  
This will be a course focusing on some topics in epistemology. Included will be scepticism, the role of burden of proof in debates, the relationship of logical possibility to the possibilities used
to challenge knowledge claims (in sceptical scenarios, particularly), and the possibility of isolating sources of knowledge, such as sense experience, reasoning, memory and testimony, from one another.

I am currently at work on a book on this topic. Readings will be from this manuscript-in-progress as well as from Descartes, Moore, Stroud, Williams, Pryor, and other philosophers.

PHIL 292-02 – Graduate Seminar: On the Origins of Punishment
Prof. Patrick Forber

In this research seminar we will focus on the philosophical issues surrounding punishment and its evolutionary origins. There will be two facets to the course. First, we will review recent philosophical literature on the evolution of cooperation, and investigate whether we need to revise standard evolutionary accounts about the origins of morality, norms, and punishment. Second, we will explore the consequences that taking an evolutionary perspective may have for human cognition and morality, and evaluate contemporary versions of the different philosophical views on punishment expressed by Nietzsche, Rousseau, and Hobbes. Some familiarity with philosophy of biology is preferable but not required.