

COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

Summer 2020

Phil 0007-SA (Online): **Introduction to Philosophy** David Denby

In this course, we will focus on four issues: the mind-body problem; the nature and existence of God; knowledge and skepticism; and freewill and determinism. Other issues will arise along the way. The aims are fourfold. First, to develop a sense of how puzzling, fascinating, and problematic some of these traditional issues in philosophy really are. Second, to gain some acquaintance with, and understanding of, the various positions taken and methods employed by some of the greatest philosophers on these issues. Third, to develop the ability to think rigorously and critically both in philosophy and beyond. Finally—something that is often thought to be impossible in introductory courses—really to do some philosophy ourselves.

The readings come from ancient, modern, and contemporary sources. We will read Plato's *Apology* and *Meno* in full, and most of Descartes' *Meditations*. We will also read selections from Sextus Empiricus, Anselm, Leibniz, Locke, Berkeley, Hume, Ryle, Ayer, Chisholm, and Armstrong. Although we will look at these in their approximate chronological order, the approach in this course will be problem-centered rather than historical: we will concentrate on live philosophical problems rather than studying intellectual history.

(May **NOT** be used to satisfy the second half of the college writing requirement by students with credit for ENG 1.)

Phil 0033-SA (Online): **Logic** David Denby

Everybody reasons. In this course, we will master some highly effective methods for distinguishing good reasoning from bad, including how to translate our reasoning into "formal" languages and how to manipulate these translations to reveal logical connections. Despite their simplicity, these methods are surprisingly powerful. Perhaps even more surprising are their limitations. We will discuss their scope and their limits. And we will discuss what all this reveals not just about reasoning, but also about the structure of thought and language quite generally. Our topics will include -- in the jargon -- sentential logic, first-order predicate logic, identity theory, definite descriptions, trees, natural deduction, and topics in metatheory. The main text will be Jeffrey's "Formal Logic". The course requires no specific background and no special ability in mathematics (though it satisfies the quantitative reasoning distribution requirement).

**Phil 0091-SA:
What is a Person?
Nicolas Garcia Mills**

What is a person? Are persons different from other animals or machines? If so, in what respect are persons different? Are persons free in ways that other animals and inanimate objects are not? What is it to have a mind? Do other animals or even machines have minds? Can they think? Am I the same person as I was at ten years old? When does one become a person, anyway, and what moral difference does that make? For example, if fetuses are not yet persons, does that mean it is morally acceptable to kill them? If so, under what circumstances exactly? In this course, we will think about these and other related questions. In doing so, the course will provide a general introduction to different areas of philosophy, such as metaphysics, philosophy of mind, ethics, and political philosophy. Readings will include Locke, Nagel, Churchland, Parfit, Frankfurt, Thomson.

**Phil 0002-SB:
Intro to Philosophy
Stephen White**

The major types of philosophical thought and the central problems of philosophy are presented through study of some classic texts of the great philosophers. Offered each term. (May be used to satisfy the second half of the college writing requirement by students with credit for ENG 1.)

**Phil 0003-SB:
Language & Mind
Stephen White**

Implications of recent work on language for our understanding of the human mind: consciousness, human intention, paradoxes, computers as models of mind, rules and conventions, metaphor. Readings drawn from classic and contemporary texts.

**Phil 0024-SB:
Intro to Ethics
Stephen White**

An introduction to moral judgment--and the reasoning it is based on--by a detailed study of current issues such as abortion, vegetarianism, and responsibility for war crimes, and the application to such problems of ethical theories, such as egoism, utilitarianism, and the doctrine of rights.

**Phil 0054-SB:
Philosophy & Film
Mario De Caro**

Introduction to the study of film as a philosophical medium. Centers on film's capacity to bring out the ethical dimensions of the problem of distinguishing reality from illusion. A classic or contemporary film paired with a philosophical text each week.

Phil 0091-SB:

Philosophy & Revolution

Susan Hahn

Can we look to philosophy for answers to real political problems? This course explores how philosophical theories and intellectual ideologies have impacted actual events and real world practices. We will give a philosophical grounding and justification of some concepts at the intersection of theory and practice: Beginning with enlightenment concepts, such as truth, power, personhood, property, labor, liberty, human rights, and equality. Then we will explore the legacies of philosophical and intellectual history, by bringing these concepts to bear on pressing challenges facing citizens of democratic societies now. Through modern case studies, we will explore what role, if any, philosophical ideas have played in bringing about society-wide changes in moral-political attitudes. We will ask: Have philosophical ideas influenced the conceptual and institutional dimensions of moral-political revolutions? Or have institutional practices preceded ideational reforms, bringing philosophers into compliance with them?

Phil 0092-SB:

Existentialism

Jeffrey McConnell

What is the meaning of life? Why is there anything at all? What should we do? Questions like these are the focus of the existentialist tradition. This course is a study of that tradition, focusing on Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir, as well as several contemporary writers. We will explore accounts of why the universe exists, why each of us human beings exists, what the meaning of life is, how we can live our lives meaningfully, how we should feel about death, and what we should do with our lives, distinguishing an existentialist's approach to these questions from other approaches. In addition to works of philosophy, our readings will be drawn from plays, novels and nonfiction works outside philosophy.