

Philosophy Graduate Course Descriptions 2009-2010

Below are the course descriptions for the graduate seminars and upper 400 level courses in the Philosophy Department for the 2009-2010 academic year.

Fall 2009 Graduate Seminars

PHIL 501 American Philosophy Seminar (W 6-9pm)

Instructor: Vincent Colapietro

This course will be devoted primarily to the writings of C. S. Peirce (1839-1914), William James (1842-1910), and John Dewey (1859-1952), with some attention to the resurgence of pragmatism in the concluding decades of the twentieth century and the opening decade of the twenty-first (e.g., John E. Smith, Richard J. Bernstein, Richard Rorty, Hilary Putnam, Cornel West, and Charlene Haddock Seigfried).

The principal texts will be: (1) *The Essential Peirce*, volume 2 (18-1913), edited by the Peirce Edition Project (Indiana University Press, 1998); (2) William James, *Pragmatism & The Meaning of Truth* (Harvard University Press); (3) John Dewey, *Experience & Nature* [*Later Works of John Dewey* (SIU Press), volume 1] (4) Selected essays by Smith, Bernstein, Rorty, et al. (5) West's *The American Evasion of Philosophy: A Genealogy of Pragmatism* and Richard Poirier's *Poetry & Pragmatism*.

No familiarity with these authors is assumed by the instructor. The course is designed as an introduction to American pragmatism both in its inaugural phase (Peirce, James, and Dewey) and, to a less extent, its contemporary resurgence.

PHIL 553 Ancient Philosophy Seminar (T 2:30-5:30)

Instructor: Christopher Long

“Socratic Politics”

In the *Gorgias*, Socrates claims to be one of the few Athenians to practice the true political art. This course will undertake an investigation of the meaning of Socratic politics by focusing on a close reading of the *Gorgias* and the *Protagoras* dialogues against the backdrop of Athenian politics as practiced and articulated in some of the writings of Gorgias, Protagoras, Aeschylus and Thucydides. This will allow us to delineate the peculiarity of Socratic politics and its relation to the politics of his time. It will also suggest the degree to which the Socratic practice of politics, which seeks to turn individuals toward the question of justice and the good, continues to have relevance for contemporary political theory and practice.

PHIL 555 Modern Philosophy Seminar (M 6-9)

Instructor: Robert Bernasconi

This course will serve as an introduction to some of the leading figures and themes of seventeenth and eighteenth century political philosophy but it will be governed by two questions. First, why was so much of the political philosophy of the seventeenth and eighteenth century with all its focus on freedom so blind to the spread of slavery as it took place through the Atlantic slave trade? Secondly, why has that question played such a small part in the mainstream understanding and assessment of the political philosophy of that period? In order to address both these questions we will need to be familiar with both the main thrust and context of the political philosophies of that time as well as the way they have been taken up in the recent secondary literature. The course will focus on the current controversies about Locke's and Kant's relations to the slave trade, but in order to gain a perspective on those discussions we will also examine extracts from Grotius, Pufendorf, Filmer, Tyrrell, de Moirans, Montesquieu, Equiano, and Sharp, among others. No prior familiarity with the history of political thought, the history of slavery, the history of arguments about slavery, or the history of race thinking in modernity will be assumed, but students will be expected to have some acquaintance with all of them by the end of the semester.

Fall 2009 Advanced 400-level Courses

PHIL 413 Philosophy of Literature (T R, 2:30-3:45)

Instructor: Brady Bowman

Is there anything to be learned from literature? Its place at nearly all levels of the educational system seems to indicate a widely held belief in the cognitive value of literature. Moreover, influential approaches to literary theory such as Freudian, Marxist, feminist, and post-colonialist schools of interpretation are predicated on the assumption that there is a link between fiction and reality and that exploring that link will deepen our understanding of the world. Yet the notion that the reading of literature can impart any kind of knowledge above and beyond acquaintance with the literary works themselves stands in contradiction to a deeply entrenched tradition in western philosophy reaching back to Plato. According to this tradition, fiction is by definition *untrue* and hence incapable of revealing truth or of bearing witness to the way the world is. Nor does the repudiation of Platonist commitments to the concept of truth improve literature's philosophical standing in regard to cognitive value: Both the panfictionalism first championed by Nietzsche and more recently advocated by post-modern theorists, and the emotivism characteristic of large parts of the analytic tradition render the very concept of world-disclosive literary experience empty.

This course explores cognitivist theories of literary experience as a source of knowledge about the world. We will first consider Platonic, Nietzschean, and emotivist positions which deny cognitive value to literature, in order then to work through some more recent contributions to the philosophy of literature which investigate the relation between literary fiction and reality, the nature and goals of

narrative in regard to selfhood and human experience, and the role of literature in the exploration of cultural reality.

Phil 418 Ethics (T R, 11:15-12:30)

Instructor: John Christman

This course will consider major theoretical issues in ethical theory as approached in contemporary and historical literature. The material will be roughly divided into three areas: Meta-ethics (issues concerning practical reason, the nature of moral judgement, moral psychology, and moral motivation); Normative Ethics (critical analysis of standard frameworks for ethical thinking, including consequentialism, deontology, virtue, and care); Beyond Ethics? (issues concerning the limits of conventional ethical inquiry).

PHIL 438 Beauvoir and Feminism

Instructor: Emily Grosholz

Simone de Beauvoir's ground-breaking book *The Second Sex* was published in 1949. It sold tens of thousands of copies in France, was immediately translated into over a dozen languages, including a mediocre but popular English translation. And it is often credited with precipitating the feminist revolution that transformed American and European social life in the late twentieth century. In this class, we will study Beauvoir retrospectively, setting her in the context of the history of philosophy (Malebranche, Kant, Hegel, Freud, Sartre, Heidegger and Fanon); and we will study her prospectively, to see how her ideas illuminate current debates about women and social justice, selfhood, embodiment, gender and freedom. We will also ask if her approach to philosophy offers novel methods as well as ideas.

Readings

Simone de Beauvoir, tr. H. M. Parshley, *The Second Sex* (Everyman's Library, 1993)

Sonia Kruks, *Retrieving Experience: Subjectivity and Recognition in Feminist Politics* (Cornell UP, 2001)

Nancy Bauer, *Simone de Beauvoir, Philosophy and Feminism* (Columbia UP, 2001)

Toril Moi, *Sex, Gender and the Body: The Student Edition of What is a Woman?* (Oxford UP, 2005)

Emily Grosholz, ed., *The Legacy of Simone de Beauvoir* (Oxford UP, 2006)

PHIL 457 Twentieth Century Philosophy (T 6-9)

Instructor: Leonard Lawlor

"Early Twentieth Century Philosophy: Toward the Outside"

This course will have two purposes. On the one hand, it will aim to introduce, in an advanced way, the roots of Twentieth Century Continental Philosophy. On the other, it will aim to determine the root issue of Twentieth Century Continental Philosophy. In regard to the first aim, we shall read Bergson's 1903 "Introduction to Metaphysics"; Freud's 1915 "The Unconscious"; Husserl's 1929 Encyclopedia Britannica entry for "Phenomenology"; Heidegger's 1929 "What is Metaphysics?" and Heidegger's 1950 "Language"; Merleau-Ponty's 1961 "Eye and Mind"; and finally Foucault's 1966 "The Thought of the

Outside.” These seven texts contain the roots of many concepts which animate more contemporary Continental Philosophy. But, as the course’s subtitle indicates, we will be especially concerned with the development of -- toward -- the idea of the outside. The root issue of Twentieth Century Continental Philosophy is the thought of a space which cannot be formalized (it is not the exterior); the outside, as we shall see, is the informal.

Spring 2010 Graduate Seminars

PHIL 502 European Philosophy

Instructor: Kathryn Gines

In this course we will explore selected European philosophical writings on race, racism, and colonialism by Jean-Paul Sartre and his interlocutors (like Frantz Fanon, Aimé Césaire, and Richard Wright). While some of Sartre’s positions are certainly open to critique, he is still a major philosophical figure who spoke and wrote against these systems of oppression and provided a platform for the oppressed to speak on their own terms. For example, Sartre wrote against American racism in “The Respectful Prostitute” and “The Oppression of Blacks in the United States”; and colonialism in several essays, including “Black Orpheus” and prefaces to Fanon’s *The Wretched of the Earth* and Memmi’s *The Colonizer and the Colonized*.

Operating in the background of this course will be the ontological construction of Europe and European Philosophy. This will include contemplating questions like: Who and/or what is Europe and European Philosophy? How might we be inclined (or disinclined) read Richard Wright, Aimé Césaire, and Frantz Fanon as European philosophers (rather than, or in addition to reading them exclusively as “Black” or “Africana” philosophers)?

Required Texts

Bernasconi, Robert. *Race*
Césaire, Aimé. *Discourse on Colonialism*
Sartre, Jean-Paul. *The Respectful Prostitute*
Fanon, Frantz. *The Wretched of the Earth*
Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Colonialism and Neocolonialism*
Sartre, Jean-Paul. *What is Literature?*
Other selected Readings

Phil 538 Feminist Philosophy

Instructor: Shannon Sullivan

This course will focus on recent French/French-inspired feminist philosophy. We will read Luce Irigaray, Judith Butler, Julia Kristeva, and Elizabeth Wilson. Texts likely will include Irigaray’s *This Sex Which Is Not One* and *I Love To You*; Butler’s *Gender Trouble*, part of *Bodies That Matter*, and possibly also her more recent *Undoing Gender*; Kristeva’s *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* and possibly also *Strangers to Ourselves*; and Wilson’s *Psychosomatic: Feminism and the Neurological Body*. While not the only

theme in these materials, issues of embodiment run throughout these feminists' work and so that will be an important focus of the class.

Course requirements will include one or two class presentations and a term paper due at the end of the semester. The course will be a natural complement to Phil 438 Feminist Philosophy on Simone de Beauvoir, offered in fall 2009, and so students are encouraged to take Phil 438 as a lead-up to Phil 538.

PHIL/STS/HDNRE 575 Ethical Issues in Human-Environment Interactions

Faculty: Nancy Tuana (Philosophy), Klaus Keller (Geosciences), James Shortle (Environmental Economics)

This course examines ethical issues arising in the area of human-environment interactions. Ethical concepts and frameworks will be engaged through robust case studies in key areas such as: anthropogenic climate change, agri-food systems, water resources, human health, biotech and genetically modified organisms, energy use and resource depletion, sustainability and conservation. This is a core course for students in the Human Dimensions of Natural Resources and the Environment dual title degree program but is open to the broader university community.

PHIL 580 Phenomenology

Instructor: Véronique Fóti

Merleau-Ponty

The focus of this course will be on Merleau-Ponty's late thought and, in particular, on the ontological reworking of his researches in the *Phenomenology of Perception* that he undertook in *The Visible and the Invisible*, left a fragment at his death. We will also do a careful reading of his 1956-1957 lecture course on *Nature*, focusing in particular on its rethinking of animality, and of certain important late essays, such as "The Philosopher and his Shadow" in *Signs*, and "Eye and Mind." This late thought focus is not intended to bracket the importance of Merleau-Ponty's best-known work, *Phenomenology of Perception*, nor yet his unjustly neglected earlier work, *The Structure of Behavior*, but will be oriented toward a dynamic integration of his phenomenological and post-phenomenological perspectives and a mapping out of the trajectory of his thought. We will also discuss some of the recent scholarship; and my philosophy translation seminar will concurrently, and in a complementary manner, focus on some of the untranslated and highly sophisticated French Merleau-Ponty scholarship.

PHIL 589 French Translation Seminar

Instructor: Véronique Fóti

The focus of this translation seminar will be on untranslated and highly sophisticated French Merleau-Ponty scholarship.

Spring 2010 Advanced 400-level Courses

PHIL 473 German Idealism

Instructor: Jennifer Mensch

“Nature’s Spirit: Understanding Organism in Kant, Goethe, and Schelling”

This course begins by rehearsing the details and far-reaching consequences of the Pantheism Controversy. The controversy over Lessing’s Spinozism brought together at once important questions surrounding the relation of freedom to nature, the special status of the organism, and the philosophical response to scientific developments in embryology, chemistry, and plant morphology. With the stakes in place, discussion will turn to three paradigmatic replies to these questions: Kant’s *Critique of Teleological Judgement*, Goethe’s scientific studies, and Schelling’s philosophy of nature.

Kant, *Critique of Judgement*

Goethe, *Botanical Studies*; essays on “Comparative Anatomy” and “Polarity”

Schelling, *First Outline of a System of the Philosophy of Nature*

PHIL 497 Special Topics: Science, Women, and Traditional Knowledge

Instructor: Emily Grosholz

Philosophy of science in the twentieth century focussed on problems of epistemology: what are the specific features of scientific method and reasoning that make scientific knowledge distinctive, and especially effective? However, philosophers of science spent little time thinking and writing about the ethical and political dimensions of science. Twenty-first century philosophy of science is changing direction: the books on the reading list for this course are evidence of this shift. An important insight that emerges from these books is that science has for too long ignored the wisdom collected by traditional societies and dismantled by colonialism and modern technology, as well as the domestic knowledge collected by women. The current environmental and economic crises call for the novel synthesis of scientific and traditional knowledge. What would it look like? Wangari Maathai’s book offers the successful example of the Green Belt Movement. Other examples, like Will Allen’s *N. G. O. Growing Power*, devoted to urban farming in Milwaukee and Chicago, the Community Led Environmental Action Network in India, the World Agroforestry Center, and locally and globally funded projects in the Brazilian rainforest and Indonesia, show how this synthesis may develop. We hope to invite a number of Penn State faculty members from Rural Sociology, Geography, STS, and African and African American Studies to speak with us and present detailed case studies of successful or flawed examples of such attempted synthesis.

Reading List

Richard Lewontin, *The Triple Helix: Gene, Organism and Environment* (Harvard UP, 2002)

Bruno Latour, *Politics of Nature: How to Bring the Sciences into Democracy* (Harvard UP, 2004)

Sandra Harding, *Sciences from Below: Feminisms, Postcolonialities, and Modernities* (Duke UP, 2008)

Wangari Maathai, *Unbowed: A Memoir* (Anchor Books, 2007)

Website for <http://www.growingpower.org>

Course packet of case studies