

**Department of Philosophy
Information about Philosophy Courses
Spring 2010**

Stevenson 412

438-7665

- **The notation # indicates that this course is in the General Education Program, followed by the Core Group in which it belongs.**
- **You may also access our course descriptions on our website: www.philosophy.ilstu.edu**
- **Instructor and section information is available through the on-line registration catalog <http://www.ilstu.edu/home/catalog/>**

#101 Basic Issues in Philosophy [OC-KD/H]

This course is an introduction to a wide variety of philosophical issues. We will engage problems in metaphysics (the theory of reality), ethics and politics (the theory of right and good), and epistemology (the theory of knowledge). And we will consider the development of these issues in the history of philosophy.

A variety of class formats is central to the course. While there will be some lecture (as is appropriate), there will also be class discussion, possibly "Roundtable" discussions, panel debates or oral presentations. Required graded assignments include several argumentative papers and one or two exams. As with most humanities courses, grades in this course are largely earned through careful completion of written assignments.

Students are expected to be serious about learning something and open to becoming involved in significant philosophical inquiry.

104 Ideal of Democracy [MC-ICL]

The purpose of The Ideal of Democracy is to think seriously and critically about the nature and moral justification of democracy and democratic institutions. Conceptions of democracy that are explicit or implicit in the civic traditions and diverse cultures in the United States will provide the primary basis for discussion, though some attention will also be paid to the origins and history of democracy and to its practice in other societies. Students will be introduced to the methodology of moral reasoning and to various conceptions of the person and of human nature that underlie ethical ideals relating to democracy. They will also see how to interpret and integrate work done in a variety of disciplines (e.g., law, economics, political science, history) that bears on the resolution of the fundamental moral questions concerning the justification of democracy that provide the unifying focus for the course. They will also be expected to think in a reasoned way about what their own responsibilities are as citizens in a democratic society.

112 Language, Logic and Math [MC-QR]

This is a course in modern symbolic logic. The fundamental objective of the course is to provide you with the abilities with which to understand and to apply the principles of formal reasoning. Not only are these principles essential to rational discourse, they are the basis of both mathematical reasoning and (symbolic) computation. Among the issues to be explored are: the nature of arguments, statements, truth, and formal systems; the relation between language (formal and natural), signs, and the world; logical relations and properties; deduction vs. induction; and techniques for evaluating arguments.

#202 Sex, Values, Human Nature [OC-DKCC/H]

This course gives students an opportunity to examine in detail some contemporary issues surrounding sex, gender and sexuality. The course begins by exploring how two quite different approaches to human nature—biological determinism and social constructionism—set about explaining facts about sex, gender and sexuality. So we will raise such questions as whether, for instance, men are biologically determined to be more sexually aggressive than females, or if gender differences like this one can instead be explained by facts about how our society is structured. Having examined two quite different theories about these matters, we will then go on to see how they might affect our answers to some normative questions about sex, gender and sexuality. Should there be gay marriage? What should we do to prevent sexual violence? Should there be legal restriction of pornography? What kinds of sexual activities should be considered immoral? We will explore how accepting a particular theory of human nature might influence the answers we give to normative questions like these.

208 Buddhist Philosophy (Satisfies Global Studies Graduation Requirement)

In this course we will examine the origins and development of Buddhist thought. The Buddha made three substantial claims about the nature of the world: that all human existence involves suffering, that there is no such thing as a self, and that everything that exists is impermanent. We will begin by analyzing these claims, assessing the arguments advanced in their support, and examining their bearing on the Buddha's proposed solution to the problem of suffering, the path to Nirvana. We will then investigate several later developments in Buddhist philosophy, including the two major schools of Indian Mahayana Buddhism, as well as Zen Buddhism. We will examine the answers given by these schools to further questions about the ultimate nature of reality and how knowledge of reality is obtained. A major focus of the course will be the following question: Why do Buddhists take doing philosophy to be crucial to solving the problem of suffering?

210 Symbolic Logic

This is a course in which we explore the details of argument structure by learning how to diagram the statements which make up an argument and how to work with those diagrams to find out what statements in fact follow logically from them. There will also be some discussion of the limitations of such diagramming techniques and some consideration of the general characteristics which any successful diagramming techniques ought to have. Grades will be based on tests, quizzes, and home-work problem sets.

222 Philosophy and Christian Theology

When language is used to profess a Christian world view, the resulting statements are Christian theology. A great many different Christian theologies have been produced by different people. In this course we will take a philosophical look at some of the common ideas and themes found in these Christian statements. Our goal will not be to decide which are the best, or which are true. Rather, the goal will be to explore how philosophy can shed light on theology, and how philosophical analysis can raise important issues about theology. For example, we can look at how some versions of Christian theology imply that non-Christian religions are worthless, while other versions do not have that implication. And, we can explore the question of what Christian theology might be based on.

#224 Meaning & Religious Belief [OC-DKCC/H]

Each normal adult person at a given time has a set of attitudes towards life—ways of seeing his or her place (or lack of it) in the grand scheme of things—ways of thinking or refusing to think about mortality. These attitudes, or ways of thinking, do not operate merely at the intellectual or cognitive level, but rather constitute both a basis for cognitive understanding of the world as well as a way of being—an overall ethos, if you will.

In this course we will examine in detail the general character of *religious* ways of thinking in relation to religious ways of being—that is, religious ethos—and explore how one might responsibly think about and evaluate such ways. We do *not* explore in any substantial way various world religions, but rather we examine how to think about religious perspectives, how to understand their complexity and force, how to look at a religious perspective “from the inside”, how to begin to evaluate what point of view—religious or antireligious—it would be reasonable to take. Thus, in this course, we examine one of the most central aspects of life for a human being.

233 Contemporary Western Moral Theories

This course is intended to provide students who are familiar with the major figures in the history of Western moral philosophy (Aristotle, Kant, Mill, etc.) with a survey of the central thinkers and developments in this field since 1900. The course is divided into two broad sub-topics: recent work in normative ethics (that part of moral philosophy concerned to

develop specific theories of right conduct and value) and recent work in meta-ethics (that part of moral philosophy concerned with systematic philosophical reflection on the nature of morality and its relationship both to other branches of philosophy and to other fields of human knowledge beyond philosophy).

234 Business Ethics

Current business practices raise interesting questions of ethics and especially of justice. We will read a mix of philosophical works on the nature of justice and historical and journalistic works on business and business behavior, and we'll see how much or how little justice we find in the prevailing and accepted business practices of our own time, and we'll think about what justice really requires from businessmen and businesswomen and whether there are any plausible alternatives to the status quo that would afford greater justice.

#238 Rights and Wrongs [OC-DKCC/H]

This is a course in *applied* ethics. That means we emphasize the application over the interpretation, defense, and criticism of ethical principles. We are thus freed up to consider more complicated ethical issues than usual, more complicated situations to which ethical principles apply. In this course we concentrate on ethical issues concerning social or distributive justice (as opposed to criminal or retributive justice). These are issues concerning the justice of our basic institutions and practices--the state, the law, and the economy. We will focus on economic institutions: so-called "free" markets, free trade, corporate capitalism. And on the mainstream media--television, newspapers, and magazines. Each of these institutions, or their current practice, raises serious questions about the justice of our society.

250 Philosophy of Science

In this course, we will focus on several fundamental issues concerning the nature, practice, and limits of science. Topic will include: (1) the demarcation between science and pseudoscience; (2) the ontological status of theoretical entities; (3) the nature of scientific explanations, laws, and theories; (4) the confirmation and acceptance of theories; (5) reductionism; (6) the nature of scientific progress; (7) historicism and the structure of scientific revolutions; and (8) the aftermath of historicism: constructivism and the feminist critiques of science. Format: Lecture and discussion.

#251 Visions of the Self [OC-KD/H]

Human beings have an insatiable desire to understand the universe around them. Yet what is the nature of the cognitive agent who is capable of these inquiries? For thousands of years poets, philosophers, and theologians have drawn on the introspective data of experience in order to understand the nature of "self". In the Modern period, we know there are rich and complex mechanisms lying well below the surface which introspection reveals. Thus the study of the self has emerged as a major enterprise incorporating a huge variety of data, data drawn from both the "inside" – what it "feels like" to be a person–, and the "outside" – from external points of view such as those characterizing the social and physical sciences. This course is an in-depth study of philosophical issues surrounding these various modes of inquiry. We will draw upon philosophically relevant data arising in fields as diverse as cognitive, experimental, and clinical psychology, literature, psychiatric medicine, neurophysiology, computer science and artificial intelligence, and philosophy itself. This inquiry will confront students with puzzling questions that have wide-ranging practical implications, both personally and socially, including: What is the Mind? Is it a kind of mental stuff, is it physical or is it fundamentally computer software? What is the proper theory of "personal Identity"? What makes the 80 year-old woman "the same person" as the three year old toddler? What is the philosophical significance (ethical, metaphysical, etc.) of certain mental and physical disorders (e.g. multiple personality, dementia, body-alienation, commissurotomy)? What properties must something possess to be a "person"? Could a machine or an animal or an alien be a person? Are "persons" self-contained, atomistic agents or does the integration of the self so depend on connections to other

selves that the drawing of boundaries between selves becomes problematic? To what extent do the various conceptions of the self lead to different accounts of our moral and social responsibility to ourselves and others?

255 Modern Philosophy

In this course we will examine the origins and development of the three major movements that dominate modern philosophy in the 17th and 18th centuries--rationalism, empiricism, and Kant's transcendental philosophy. We will look at the intellectual and cultural backgrounds of these movements, for instance the way in which the growth of modern science influenced the developments of these philosophical traditions. Our chief focus, though, will be on the philosophical systems themselves, and the answers they give to a range of questions in metaphysics and epistemology. We shall be subjecting the arguments of such major modern philosophers as Descartes, Hume, and Kant to intensive analysis and criticism. Out of this should emerge a clearer understanding of the philosophical underpinnings of our modern view of what the world is like and how we come to know anything about it.

PHI 305 Topics 20th Century Philosophy — Metaethics

Section 1	Dr. Todd Stewart	STV 343	438-3757
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This course is an advanced survey of 20th century metaethics. Metaethics concerns various abstract questions about ethics: what do the words right or good literally *mean*? Do ethical statements attempt to describe a realm of facts? Are there ethical facts, and if so, what are they like metaphysically? How does moral judgement relate to reasons for action and to practical rationality? Students will be exposed to a wide variety of metaethical positions and gain familiarity with the structure of various debates within metaethics.

PHI 305 Topics 20th Century Philosophy — Philosophy of Language

Section 1	Dr. Harry Deutsch	STV 323E	438-7298
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This is a course in very contemporary philosophy of language and metaphysics, with roots in the work of Frege, Russell, Quine, Kaplan, Kripke, Montague and Strawson. The primary focus will be on basic philosophy of language since Frege, but we will also study various issues in metaphysics and philosophical logic that overlap with philosophy of language--such as the puzzles of coincidence (e.g. identity through change). There will be no focus whatsoever on epistemological issues except to see that the issues before us are not epistemological in nature. We will be reviewing a good deal of my own work in these areas.

#IDS 121.54 Texts and Contexts: Historical Varieties of Skepticism (MC-LH)

Section 1	Dr. Liane Stillwell	STV 323A	438-2730
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A study will be made of skeptical thought (and defenses against skepticism) by working through skeptical, and anti-skeptical, ideas in humanities texts - specifically, philosophical works and literary works - and in film. The texts (readings) we will study come from the ancient, the medieval, and the modern periods. The course's films are creations of the 20th Century. May not be taken under the credit/no credit option. Prerequisites: ENG 101; COM 110 or concurrent registration.

#IDS 265: Introduction to Cognitive Science: Computers, Minds, Brains, and Robots

Section 1

Dr. David Anderson

STV 323H

438-7175

This course will introduce students to the interdisciplinary field of cognitive science, a research area dedicated to explaining how minds and other kinds of intelligent systems work. This field draws on work from computer science, neuroscience, psychology, philosophy, linguistics, anthropology, robotics and education. Contemporary developments in cognitive science have provided exciting new ways to explore fundamental questions about the nature of minds (human and animal) and how they work. It is also at the center of research into artificial intelligence and robotics.

Cognitive science provides an excellent opportunity for expanding students' understanding of human knowledge and learning, for providing insights into numerous technological breakthroughs that are changing our world, as well as providing a context in which to explore philosophical questions related to issues of "personhood" and the moral and social consequences of cognitive science research. These questions include: How can you tell if a creature has a mind? How does the brain "learn"? Can a machine be a person? How do we "perceive" the world? Why is language a special feature of creatures with minds? Could your mind be "transferred" into a robotic body? Does artificial intelligence research pose dangers comparable to those of atomic bombs?

This course will include guest lectures from several different fields, probably to include computer science, biology, psychology, and linguistics. The primary instructor is from the Philosophy department. Students will benefit from a good deal of hands-on experience working with artificial intelligence programs, conducting psychology experiments, using online virtual labs, interacting with robots, and much more. Come join us for an exciting semester!