

### **Course Descriptions for Rotating Courses Philosophy Fall 2018**

In addition to its regular courses given every semester, the philosophy department is offering the following courses that full requirements for the major and electives for the minor in the fall semester of 2018.

#### **PHI 214-01 Environmental Ethics - Margaret Smith**

Environmental Ethics will explore the moral obligations of human beings to nature and nonhuman animals, but will focus primarily on moral obligations to other persons and communities of persons. In this lab-based course, students will use mapping software to investigate the post-industrial ecological changes and their implications for communities around the world. Specifically, PHI 214 students will map the ecological impacts of changes in population concentrations, the fuels we use and the food we eat. Using ArcGIS software, students will be able to make maps of current data worldwide and anticipate or predict future ecological changes. With maps to explore and visualize environmental stresses, students will consider activist responses and potential solutions to increase sustainability and protect those who are vulnerable to these changes.

#### **PHI 214-02 Environmental Ethics - Karsten Struhl**

This course will explore the moral obligations of human beings to nature and nonhuman animals. Students will learn and apply various ethical theories to a consideration of nonhuman animals, inanimate objects, ecosystems and nature as a whole. Potential topics include but are not limited to: What sort of (moral) value do natural objects have? Do ecosystems and not just individual organisms matter morally? What are the obligations of present generations to future generations of human beings? This course will examine these and related questions in the context of the present ecological crisis (and especially the way in which global warming/climate change intensifies the crisis) which threatens not only whole ecosystems and species – within the next thirty years, we may lose 50% of all the earth's species – but also the continued existence of human life. We will also consider the political and legal implications of this crisis, raising such questions as the following: Should other species and natural objects have legal standing? Can the ecological crisis be adequately resolved with the parameters of global capitalism? What would an ecologically sustainable society be like?

#### **PHI 235 Philosophy of Science - Matias Bulnes Beniscelli**

This course focuses on the difference between science, non-science, and pseudoscience. It introduces students to the fundamental features of scientific thinking, including the logic of induction and confirmation, falsification, and statistical generalization. Students will learn how to assess the quality of scientific studies, in particular the way that scientific studies are reported in the media. Students will also consider the role science can and should play in shaping public policy as well as their personal moral beliefs.

### **PHI 238 Philosophy of Comedy - Michael Brownstein**

This course uses a diversity of tools—historical, psychological, philosophical, and more—to consider the nature of comedy as a form of creative expression. Understanding comedy requires considering questions such as: what makes something funny? When is it okay (and not okay) to laugh at a joke? Why do we laugh at all? Can comedy be used as a tool for pursuing social justice?

### **PHI 343 Existentialism - John Pittman**

“This course surveys nineteenth and twentieth-century philosophers associated with existentialism, an intellectual movement centered on issues of individual responsibility, “radical freedom,” and political engagement. Contextualizing it as a reaction against the optimism of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment, we explore existentialism’s focus on human experience in a world seemingly emptied of rationality and meaning. Topics include anguish, thrownness, bad faith, and the analysis of the concrete situation. Readings for this implementation of the course will be drawn specifically from Weber, Nietzsche, Unamuno, Sartre, de Beauvoir, and Fanon.

### **PHI 377 Metaphysics - James DiGiovanna**

Metaphysics is the study of being, especially the being of such interesting objects as *persons, truth, freedom, causation, change* and *reality*. We’ll address all of these topics, and focus especially on persons. We’ll ask why persons count as the same when they undergo some changes (slow replacement of cells, loss and acquisition of memories) but not others (death, sudden replacement of all cells). We’ll investigate candidates for personhood, including non-human animals, space-alien and powerful computers. And we’ll look at how the concept of personhood has changed and expanded, and how artificial intelligence systems provide new perspectives for discussions of being and identity.

### **PHI 402 Senior Seminar in Metaphysics and Epistemology - Mary Ann McClure**

Drawing upon classical and contemporary texts, this course will consider the nature of being and knowing. We attempt to delineate the difference between mind-independent and mind-dependent entities. We will ask if knowledge is possible and if we can ever speak truly of reality itself.