

## Course Descriptions for Selected Electives in Spring 2020 Semester

### **Philosophy 333 (same course as Gender Studies 333): Theories of Gender and Sexuality - Professor Amie Macdonald**

Gender Studies is a field that has been formed in and through theories originating in women's studies, queer theory, masculinity studies and their intersections with race and class. In this course students will learn how gender studies theories have reconceptualized gender and sexuality as products of the interactions among historical, representational, racial and cultural constructs. Readings and discussions will focus on a series of themes and issues such as rage, bodies, gender performance, family, consumerism and political rights.

### **PHI 340: Utopian Thought - Professor John Pittman**

Since the publication of Thomas More's *Utopia* in 1519, utopian novels have presented a number of visions of the best or ideal society, while dystopias have imagined worst-case, horrific societies. These visions show forth philosophical conceptions of the best human life, along with related social and political ideals. Utopias and dystopias raise questions about the human condition, the nature of power, of freedom, and the possibility of a fully cooperative, non-coercive society. In this course we will explore a variety of utopian and dystopian novels and stories and look at some philosophical inquiries addressing utopia's relation to philosophy, and to ethical and political theories in particular.

### **PHI 351-- Classical Chinese Philosophy - Professor Kim Baxter**

This course examines the classical philosophical traditions of Chinese civilization that arose during the "Spring and Autumn" (770-476 B.C.) and "Warring State" (475-221 B.C.) periods, and set the foundation for discourses in ethics, political philosophy, and metaphysics in Chinese civilization over the next two millennia. This course introduces a broad range of classical thought, exploring its philosophical, religious, and social dimensions in historical context. We will study primary sources in translation, including Sun Tzu, Lao Tzu, Chuang Tzu, Confucius and Mencius, supplemented by a selection of secondary literature. Through the discussion of these thinkers and traditions, we will remain sensitive to the hermeneutic problem of reading a text translated from a language and imbedded in a world view which is vastly different than ours. But we will also consider the relevance of classical Chinese philosophy for some issues posed by contemporary western philosophy and for coping with our modern world.

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### **Philosophy 354: Africana Philosophy - Professor David Wills**

This course will engage with close readings of works by figures from across the African Diaspora such as Aimé Césaire, WEB DuBois, Édouard Glissant, Jamaica Kincaid, Audre Lorde, Toni Morrison, VY Mudimbe, Lucius Outlaw, and additional philosophers to engage with questions of language, identity, poetics, aesthetics, politics, and ethics. In a far-reaching and transnational analysis, this course will contemplate the Africana world and *blackness* from a variety of perspectives and along intersectional axes such as gender and sexuality to think about the relationship of the African Diaspora to global life.

### **PHI 374: Epistemology — Professor Matias Bulnes-Beniscelli**

This course offers you a chance to drastically improve your understanding of how you form beliefs about the world and when that process goes well. We will explore these questions through various debates, some traditional and some recent, involving the two key aspects of the belief-formation process: perception and reasoning. Among the traditional debates, we will discuss those surrounding the question of how our perceptual beliefs get their justification and how their justification gets passed along to other beliefs through reasoning. We will also consider the related question of which of our beliefs constitute knowledge and which mere opinions. Along the way, we will pay special attention to famous skeptical arguments to the conclusion that we don't have any knowledge. But we will also consider related yet less-trodden questions such as: Can I know that I know? Among the more recent debates, we will explore some surrounding questions such as how knowledge gets passed along among people (e.g. when can we rely on the testimony of others?) and how institutions (e.g. science, government, social media) affect our beliefs and their justification.

### **Philosophy 423: Topics in Justice - Professor Enrique Chavez-Arvizo**

This is an advanced senior-level seminar focusing on the topic of justice and utilitarianism, both theoretical and applied. One of the major objections to utilitarianism is that it fails to accord with our intuitive convictions about justice. The seminar will address the alleged incompatibility between justice and utility, as well as attempts to reconcile justice and utility. In this seminar we shall critically assess some recent (and some older but still powerful) philosophical attempts to construct utilitarian and other consequentialist theories of ethics. The seminar is divided into two parts. In the first part we will discuss such topics as: the nature of morally right action, happiness, pleasure, desires, and justice. In the second part we will discuss some of the most pressing ethical issues that relate to justice including climate change, globalization of trade, national sovereignty, humanitarian military intervention, our obligations to the absolutely needy, and the plight of refugees.