Philosophy Courses, Fall 2017

PHIL 11203 - Philosophy of Conspiracy Theory, TuTh 3:30PM - 4:45PM, Ralph Jenkins
This course uses the idea of conspiracy theories to explore basic issues in the theory of knowledge. Typically we think that theories are more likely to be true when they provide unifying explanations, that is, when they explain a wide variety of phenomena as the result of one cause, or law, or other explanatory principle. Reasonable people understand that theories which invoke conspiracies are likely to be false. But conspiracy theories typically provide unifying explanations. Further, there is often no obvious evidence against conspiracy theories. So why are they likely to be false? This class will include contemporary and/or historical philosophical readings, and may include topics such as belief revision and logic, skepticism, topics in philosophy of science such as confirmation and explanation, and topics in cognitive science such as cognitive bias and fallacy.

PHIL 20100 - Logical Reasoning
MoWe 11:00AM - 12:15PM, Instructor TBD
TuTh 11:00AM - 12:15PM, Instructor TBD
TuTh 2:00PM - 3:15PM, Instructor TBD
This course provides students with an introduction to the elements of logical reasoning. Basic rules and methods of assessing validity and proving arguments as they occur in natural language are introduced (such as truth tables and rules of inference). The goal of the course is to enable students to translate and evaluate arguments in natural language using the basic tools of modern logic. The focus of this course enables it to serve as an excellent form of preparation for SATs, LSATs and other standardized tests, as well as an analytic resource for further academic studies.

PHIL 20200 - Introduction to Logic, TuTh 11:00AM - 12:15PM, Elise Crull
This course introduces students to the basics of modern logic. Topics covered include truth-tables, the rules of inference for the propositional calculus, and introduction to quantification theory. It focuses both on rules for producing formal proofs, and for translating natural language arguments into logical notation. Primarily designed as a preparation for advanced logic (Philosophy 32100: Symbolic Logic), the course would also be very useful for anyone expecting to deal extensively with complex reasoning.

PHIL 20600 - Philosophy of Science Fiction, TuTh 2:00PM - 3:15PM, Massimo Pigliucci
An analysis of some of the central questions of philosophy as they are represented in science fiction (and occasionally, science fact). Selections from science fiction works will range over topics such as space and time, infinity and eternity, identity, knowledge of other minds; artificial intelligence; moral dilemmas and technology; the meaning of life.

PHIL 30500 - History of Philosophy I: Ancient, TuTh 11:00AM - 12:15PM, Chad Kidd
A survey of early Greek philosophy, centered on the figures of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. Some attention is paid to pre-Socratic philosophers (e.g. Heraclitus, Parmenides) and to at least one current of thought after Aristotle (e.g. Stoicism, Skepticism, neo-Platonism, or early Christian theology).

PHIL 30900 - Social and Political Philosophy, MoWe 3:30PM - 4:45PM, David Weissman
An analysis of the concepts and principles employed in reasoning about the social and political aspects of human life, such as social structure and function, equality and justice, property and rights, social and political obligation. A critical analysis of theories of the state of society, such as liberalism, Marxism, communitarianism, conservatism, and anarchism.
PHIL 31110 - Philosophy and the Emotions, MoWe 12:30PM - 1:45PM, Jeffrey Blustein
Emotions pervade our social, personal, and moral lives, affecting our judgments, actions, relationships, and personal wellbeing. In this course, we examine competing theories of the nature of emotion; the differences between emotions, feelings, and moods; the alleged conflict between reason and emotion; the universality of so-called basic emotions; and the relationship between emotions and values, including moral values and their corresponding moral judgments. Analysis of specific emotions and emotional states will be provided for illustration, including anger, sadness, and love. Readings are drawn from ancient, classical, and contemporary philosophical and psychological sources.

PHIL 32300 - Philosophy of Mind, TuTh 2:00PM - 3:15PM, Chad Kidd
Examination of some classical and contemporary problems relating to our concepts and theories of mind, and of psychological phenomena such as intelligence, rationality, and emotion. Topics are likely to include theories of the relation between mind and brain (varieties of dualism and materialism); self-knowledge and knowledge of other minds; psychopathology; artificial intelligence; and personal identity.

PHIL 32400 - Philosophy of Language, MoWe 9:30AM - 10:45AM, Katherine Ritchie
Examination of the relationship between thought, language and the world. The course will cover topics such as meaning, truth, reference, synonymity, necessity, names and descriptions, logical form, and pragmatics.

PHIL 32700 - Philosophy of Religion, MoWe 2:00PM - 3:15PM, Michael Garral
Critical analysis of the question: What is religion? in light of the variety of religious beliefs and practices. Examination of different approaches to religion, including faith, rational argument, sensory experience, mystical and religious experience. Exploration of the relation between faith and reason, and between morality and religion.

PHIL 33600 - Philosophy of Space and Time, TuTh 9:30AM - 10:45AM, Elise Crull
Addresses philosophical questions raised by our employment of the concepts of space and time in science and metaphysical thinking. The course will focus on topics such as individuation and spatio-temporal continuity; unities of space and time; substantial and relational theories of space; asymmetries of time; the theory of relativity; infinity and eternity.

PHIL 34905 - Biomedical Ethics
MoWe 11:00AM - 12:15PM, Jeffrey Blustein
MoWe 11:00AM - 12:15PM, Jeffrey Blustein
TuTh 11:00AM - 12:15PM, Instructor TBD
TuTh 2:00PM - 3:15PM, Ralph Jenkins
Biomedical Ethics is a philosophical overview of leading theories, principles, and problems in the field of bioethics. Ethical theories and principles are examined to provide a theoretical structure for analysis of concrete ethical problems. The course considers the ethics of the doctor-patient relationship, including paternalism, informed consent, confidentiality, and truth telling, as well as larger systemic issues of social justice and access to health care. Topics in reproductive ethics, end-of-life ethics, and some of the newest developments in the field arising from genetics and neuroscience are also discussed. Extensive use is made of case studies.