

## Past Vanderbilt Philosophy Department Graduate Seminars

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Spring 2021

### **PHIL 5900: Aristotle**

Professor Dobbs-Weinstein | T 3:10

### **PHIL 5903: Kant's Theoretical Philosophy**

Professor Wuerth | W 6:10

### **PHIL 5905: History of Normative Ethics**

Profs. Congdon & Heney | W 3:10

### **PHIL 5922: Democracy**

Professor Talisse | R 3:10

### **PHIL 5665: Racial Justice Lab**

Profs. Taylor, Radke, & Gorman | TR 9:35a

### **PHIL 9020: Gender, Power, & Justice**

Professor Threadcraft | T 12:10

Fall 2020

### **Maimonides and Friends**

Lenn Goodman | 9010 (H2) | M 3:10

This seminar focuses on Maimonides' *Guide to the Perplexed* and on the Muslim authors Maimonides read in seeking to reconcile scriptural ideas with philosophical thinking as represented by the work of his Muslim predecessors – al-Fārābī, the Brethren of Purity (Ikhwān al-Safā'), Avicenna, al-Ghazālī, Ibn Bājjah, and Ibn Tufayl.

We'll be reading selections from these authors alongside the *Guide* in the new translation/commentary prepared by Professors Goodman and Phillip Lieberman. Problems to be considered represent ethical and political philosophy; negative theology; the problem of evil; cosmology and philosophy of science (e.g. operationalism vs realism); civil, criminal and ritual law; mystical experience, revelation, poetics and exegesis

## **Wittgenstein**

Michael Hodges | 9010 (H5) | T 3:10

A careful reading of the *Tractatus* and the *Philosophical Investigations*. The aim will be to understand both works for themselves but also to try to understand the transition between the two and how that turn informed what it is to do philosophy in the second half of the 20th century and beyond. As time permits we will also read either *On Certainty* or *Culture and Value*. The students will choose.

## **Philosophical Anthropology**

Karen Ng | 9010 (H6) | W 3:10

This course is an intensive introduction to philosophical anthropology, focusing on German thinkers from the eighteenth-century to the present. Although we will consider a number of different approaches to the topic, a definition that helpfully sums up the distinctively philosophical approach to a study of the human life-form is the following: it is an “inquiry into the unchanging preconditions of human changeableness.” Figures to be discussed may include Herder, Kant, Hegel, Feuerbach, Marx, Dilthey, Scheler, Plessner, Gehlen, DuBois, Merleau-Ponty, Robinson, and Honneth. We will also take up contemporary debates concerning philosophical concepts of human nature. The aim of the course is to provide students with an overview of a neglected but important philosophical subdiscipline.

Spring 2020

## **Adorno**

Idit Dobbs-Weinstein | 9010 (H5) | Th 6:10-8:30

## **Pragmatism and Value**

Diana Heney | 9010 (H6) | W 3:30

This seminar will consider value and valuation in the tradition of American pragmatism from roughly 1860-1960. While we will be interested in value and valuation in general, we will more specifically investigate the elements of ethics present in pragmatist writings. This will include competing accounts of the summum bonum of human life and competing guiding normative notions. Along the way we will ask what, if anything, makes the family of pragmatist approaches to ethics during this time frame distinctive. In order to achieve that breadth of perspective, we will read widely, engaging with texts from some or all of the following thinkers: Charles Peirce, William James, Jane Addams, W.E.B. Du Bois, John Dewey, Ella Lyman Cabot, George Santayana, Josiah Royce, George Herbert Mead, Alain Locke, and Clarence Irving Lewis. Evaluation: seminar participation, weekly reading notes, final paper (in phases).

## **Kant's Ethics**

Julian Wuerth | 9010 (H3) | W 6:10-8:30

In his 1788 Critique of Practical Reason, Kant observes that “Two things fill the mind with ever new and increasing wonder and awe, the oftener and more steadily we reflect on them: the starry heavens above me and the moral law within me.” But what is this moral law, how do we know it, and what role, if any, is played by feelings, such as those of wonder, in coming to know the moral law or in the undertaking of living in accordance with it? To answer these questions, this course begins with a brief overview of some vital but neglected context for Kant’s mature ethics: the context of his underlying account of the self, including his account of feelings and desires; and the context of the development of Kant’s view on ethics in the decades leading to his 1785 Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals – from a pre-critical allegiance to moral sense theory, to a rejection of this in 1769, partly on the basis of the wonder we feel at the moral law. The course then turns to Kant’s landmark 1785 Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals. Here we examine Kant’s arguments for the categorical imperative and the fascinating manner in which the steps of these arguments recapitulate the stages of Kant’s own development. Constructivist readings of Kant’s ethics, as presented by John Rawls, Onora O’Neill, and Christine Korsgaard, are then evaluated. We next focus on Kant’s more detailed account of our various moral obligations as presented in his 1797 Metaphysics of Morals, paying close attention to the important role in this account of feelings, desires, and character.

## **Epistemology of Disagreement**

Scott Aikin | 9020 (T3) | T 3:10-5:30

Disagreement is a common feature of our social and cognitive lives. This seminar will be devoted to the epistemic significance of this phenomenon. We will proceed in three stages. First, we will assemble the necessary philosophical tools for competent work in this social dimension of epistemology, so an overview of notions of justification, defeat, knowledge, and argument will be in order. Second, we will address the focused question of the significance of peer disagreement – disagreement between two subjects who are roughly in equally good epistemic position with regard to the issue. Third, we will address the question of the significance of what is called deep disagreement – disagreement between two subjects with no shared epistemic resources for resolution. Meta-philosophical questions will also be asked (since there’s plenty of disagreement in philosophy!). Two short (2-3K) papers, two brief quizzes.

## **Moral Psychology**

Matthew Congdon | 9020 (T2) | M 3:30

This is an intensive introduction to moral psychology from the mid-twentieth century to the present, engaging with philosophers from Aristotelian, Humean, Kantian, Hegelian, and other traditions. Moral psychology is rooted in the ancient Greek idea that an understanding of the human soul (psyche) is a prerequisite for the study of ethics. The aim of moral psychology is to clarify fundamental ethical concepts by exploring how psychological elements like desire, emotion, habit, and reason interact to produce action. Topics will include the internal/external reasons debate; intention; the role of pain, desire, and other bodily experiences in ethical life; moral perception; reactive attitudes, emotions, and practices of blame; freedom and normative constraint; and akrasia. Towards the latter half of the course we will expand our discussion to consider some moral psychological dimensions of ideology, oppression, and social movements. We will read a combination of classic texts in twentieth century ethics (for example, by Anscombe, Williams, Strawson, Murdoch, and Foot), more recent work in moral psychology (Manne, Fricker, McDowell, Korsgaard, Moody-Adams), as well as work in critical social philosophy that intersects with moral psychological issues (Shelby, Haslinger, Gooding-Williams, Mills). Our aim is to develop a sophisticated understanding of this branch of ethics through an appreciation of the connections between diverse perspectives.

Fall 2019

## **Bioethics**

John Lachs | 9020 (T2) | M 3:10-5:30

## **German Idealism**

Karen Ng | 9010 (H4) | M 6:10-8:30

This course explores the philosophical movement known as German idealism. We will consider German idealism from several interconnected perspectives: as a post-Kantian philosophy that sought to resolve and respond to problems that arose in the wake of Kant's critical project, and in particular, Kant's Critique of the Power of Judgment; as an attempt to construct philosophy as a comprehensive system of science (Wissenschaft); as an attempt to reconcile freedom and nature in a philosophy of the "absolute"; and finally, as an attempt to both describe and vindicate the distinctive features of modern, self-conscious subjectivity. We will focus on key texts by Kant, Fichte, Hölderlin, Schelling, and Hegel, with a particular emphasis in the second half of the course on Hegel's Science of Logic. Together, these thinkers comprise one of the richest and most productive periods of Western philosophy, representing a modernist philosophical enterprise that is arguably unrivaled in both ambition and scope.

## **Gaslighting**

Kelly Oliver | 9020 (T5) | T 3:10-5:30

The term "Gaslighting" originated with Patrick Hamilton's 1938 play *Gaslight* (known in the United States as *Angel Street*). It was made into a British film in 1940, and the more famous 1944 American film (directed by George Cukor and starring Ingrid Bergman, Joseph Cotten, and Charles Boyer). Decades later, the term *to gaslight* became a verb, meaning to intentionally manipulate someone to make them think they're crazy. More recently, feminist philosophers, particularly those working in social epistemology, have analyzed gaslighting in relation to gender norms. Increasingly, gaslighting is being used to describe the ways in which oppressed and marginalized peoples are manipulated into not trusting their own feelings, beliefs, or what they know to be true from their own experience. Beginning with the play and films, we will work our way up to contemporary philosophical literature that analyzes gaslighting, with special attention to psycho-social gaslighting, racial gaslighting, epistemological gaslighting, political gaslighting, medical gaslighting, and affective gaslighting.

## **Critiquing 'Philosophy'**

Lucius T. Outlaw, Jr. | 9010 (H6) | W 3:10-5:30

## **Philosophy of Race**

Paul C. Taylor | 9020 (T4) | W 6:10-8:30

This class will explore recent work by a few of the outstanding figures in philosophical race theory. The aim of this course will be to give participants an opportunity for deliberate, sustained study of some state-of-the-art contributions to the field.

## Teaching & Research Methods

Paul C. Taylor | 8000 | T 11:00-1:00

Spring 2019

## Hellenistic Philosophy

Scott Aikin | 9010 (H1) | M 3:10-5:30

This seminar will be a survey of the four main schools of thought in the Hellenistic period of Western Philosophy: Cynicism, Stoicism, Epicureanism, and Skepticism. Focus will be on the competing accounts of nature, ethics, and knowledge. Primary readings from: Diogenes Laertius, Epicurus, Lucretius, Seneca, Epictetus, Musonius Rufus, Marcus Aurelius, Sextus Empiricus, and Cicero. Secondary readings from: Katerina Ierodiakonou, Kristen Kennedy, Martha Nussbaum, Katja Vogt, Julia Annas, Gail Fine, and Miriam Griffin. Two papers (3K words each).

## Spinoza

Idit Dobbs-Weinstein | 9010 (H3) | W 6:10-8:30

Few thinkers have suffered the “abuse” of their successors as extensively as has Baruch (Benedict) Spinoza. Fewer still have been as misunderstood and misappropriated against their explicit intentions and injunctions. Accused of being both a dangerous atheist and a “god intoxicated” man, claimed as a predecessor by both Nietzsche, some contemporary reductive materialists, Marxists and Liberals, Spinoza’s thought remains enigmatic. Rather than attempt to evaluate Spinoza primarily in the light of subsequent (mis)appropriations, the purpose of the course is a close study of his major works. The course is divided into two uneven parts. The first part will be devoted to Spinoza’s early writings where Cartesian philosophy is directly engaged and critiqued: Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect, the preface and a few selected chapters of the commentary on Descartes’ Principles of Philosophy, including the Metaphysical Thoughts, as well as a number of selected letters. The Second, longer part will be devoted to The Ethics, selected letters and selected chapters from the Tractatus Theologico-Politicus.

## Wittgenstein

Michael Hodges | 9010 (H5) | Th 3:10-5:30

A careful reading of the Tractatus and the Philosophical Investigations. The aim will be to understand both works for themselves but also to try to understand the transition between the two and how that turn informed what it is to do philosophy in the second half of the 20th century and beyond. As time permits we will also read either On Certainty or Culture and Value. The students will choose.

## Feminist Epistemology

Hanna Gunn | 9020 (T3) | W 3:10-5:30

We will explore central issues in feminist epistemology concerning the often political and ethical aspects of knowledge. We will look at various positions in feminist epistemology concerning the relationship between gender and knowledge, including, e.g., feminist empiricism and standpoint theory. We will also look at contemporary

debates in feminist epistemology that coincide with feminist philosophy of language, and in particular, issues of epistemic oppression, epistemic injustice, and epistemic violence. The goal is to develop and understanding of how feminist philosophy contributes to and modifies traditional theories of knowledge, and to understand the social or applied topics within (broadly) social philosophy from feminist philosophers. Given the nature of these applied debates, we will venture somewhat into other issues of identity such as race, class, and other socially significant interest groups (e.g., fat studies).

## Social Equality

Robert Talisse | 9020 (T2) | T 3:10-5:30

Egalitarianism is the thesis that justice requires equality, or perhaps the elimination of inequality. One question instantly emerges: Why think that? Others follow: Equality of what? Among whom? Secured how? Towards what end? We will begin with some problems concerning equality's value (is inequality wrong or merely bad?), and then move quickly to consider longstanding debates among responsibility and relationist views of equality. From there, we will explore current issues within relational theories of social equality. Readings from (among others) E. Anderson, G. A. Cohen, R. Dworkin, R. Nath, M. Nussbaum, T. M. Scanlon, A. Sen, K. Tan, and J. Waldron. No prior work in political philosophy will be presumed, though familiarity with the classic texts will prove helpful. Students will write two short papers.

Fall 2018

## Maimonides and Friends

Lenn Goodman | 9010 (H2) | Th 3:10-5:30

This seminar focuses on Maimonides' *Guide to the Perplexed* and on the Muslim authors Maimonides read in seeking to reconcile scriptural ideas with philosophical thinking as represented by the work of his Muslim predecessors – al-Fārābī, the Brethren of Purity (Ikhwān al-Safā'), Avicenna, al-Ghazālī, Ibn Bājjah, and Ibn Tufayl. We'll be reading selections from these authors alongside the *Guide* in the new translation/commentary in preparation by Professors Goodman and Phillip Lieberman. Problems to be considered represent ethical and political philosophy; negative theology; the problem of evil; cosmology and philosophy of science; civil, criminal and ritual law; mystical experience, revelation, poetics and exegesis.

## Critical Theory

Karen Ng | 9020 (T2) | T 6:10-8:30

An intensive introduction to the tradition known as Frankfurt school critical theory, engaging with thinkers associated with its first generation to the present. Rooted in the philosophies of Hegel and Marx, critical theory is a tradition of social philosophy that combines descriptive and normative aims, where social critique has the goal of transforming society to ameliorate the human condition. We will consider texts from the first generation (for example Lukács, Adorno, Horkheimer, and Marcuse), exploring the negative approach to critique and ideology; the second generation (Habermas), exploring the problem of securing normative foundations for critique; and the third generation (for example, Honneth and Fraser), discussing theories of recognition and the critique of capitalism.

## **Julia Kristeva's New Humanism**

Kelly Oliver | 9010 (H6) | T 3:10-5:30

The scientific revolution may have displaced the authority of religion, but now the tables are turning with a virulent return to religion, in the forms of new-age and hybrid religions along with dangerous fundamentalisms. Julia Kristeva's writings not only diagnose this crisis in meaning that results from the inability of science--human or natural--to fill the void left when the scientific revolution displaced the authority of religion, but also suggest ways to feed our hunger for meaning without suicide or murder. She proposes a rebirth through the imagination, through art, literature and psychoanalysis, as a counterweight to fundamentalism. Where others have seen an abyss, she has imagined meaning as an adventurous journey, though not without its dangers and pitfalls. Taking up the question of "Why do we speak?" in all of its ambiguities, her work illuminates alternative paths to pursue the relationship of meaning to language, of language to life, and ultimately of the meaning of life itself. Julia Kristeva's hope that meaning can be fore-given through dynamic relations with others and passion for life is as important as her warning that the foreclosure of questioning leads to violence and war. If, as she says, "peace is in crisis...because we are lacking a discourse on life at the beginning of this third millennium," then Julia Kristeva provides the beginnings of such a discourse.

In this seminar, after covering some of the basics from her earlier work, we will read and discuss Kristeva's latest writings, including her work on hatred, terrorism, disability, new humanism, and the possibility of peace in our troubling times. Now, there is the question of whether or not she was a communist spy.

## **Ellison: Literary Artist as Philosopher**

Lucius T. Outlaw, Jr. | 9010 (H5) | M 3:10-5:30

Course concerns: First, to engage in close and critical reading of writings by Ralph Waldo Ellison in order to enhance appreciation of him as an intellectual and writer of short stories, novels, essays, and other pieces. This will be in preparation for pursuing a second concern: considering whether it is appropriate to regard Ellison as a philosopher. For example, Ellison regards the novel form as "a moral instrument possessing for us an integrative function..." ("Society, Morality and the Novel," *Going to the Territory*, in *The Collected Essays of Ralph Ellison*, p. 714). The moral instrumentality of the novel form is all the more significant for Ellison given the dynamic socio-cultural complexities of the United States of America, a nation-state and civilizational experiment in democracy. What can we learn about democracy, and about race, in U.S. America from Ellison's writings?

## **Aesthetics**

Paul C. Taylor | 9020 (T2) | W 3:10-5:30

This course will give students the opportunity to work through some state of the art literature in contemporary philosophic aesthetics, and to locate these readings on the wider terrain of the field. Readings will span a wide metaphilosophical range, from prominent analytic texts to influential continental readings to interestingly philosophical texts from other disciplines, like musicology, art history, and literary studies. Students who successfully complete the course should be able to identify and engage the core arguments of these texts, and to locate the texts in the broader possibility space of aesthetic theory.

## **Teaching & Research Methods**

Robert Talisse | 8000.01 | T 11:00-1:00

Spring 2018

## **The Skeptical Tradition**

Scott Aikin | 9020 (T3)

This seminar will be a survey of the skeptical tradition from the Ancient Greek and Roman programs, through the modern period, to contemporary arguments for skepticism. Additionally, we will read leading anti-skeptical thinkers, with particular focus on what is often termed the diagnostic/therapeutic tradition. Particular authors: Plato, Sextus Empiricus, Cicero, St. Augustine, Descartes, Wittgenstein, Marie McGinn, Barry Stroud, Robert Fogelin, Dana Phillips, and Ernest Sosa. We will finish the course reading Genia Schönbaumsfeld's new book, *The Illusion of Doubt*. Two short papers.

## **Marx**

Idit Dobbs-Weinstein | 9010 (H4)

Beginning with the question "what is the matter of historical materialism?" the course will focus on the dialectical relation between the critique of ideology/religion and the critique of political economy. Following careful analyses of "The Theses on Feuerbach" and "On the Jewish Question," "The Class Struggles in France, 1848-1850," and "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon," we shall focus on three major texts: *Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, *The Grundrisse*, and *Capital One*.

## **Pragmatism**

John Lachs | 9010 (H6)

A study of the classics of pragmatism, with readings from Emerson, Peirce, James, Royce and Dewey.

## **Descartes & His Critics**

Jeffrey Tlumak | 9010 (H3)

I will use a stage-by-stage discussion of the exquisitely developed *Meditations*, enriched by the most perspicuous and revealing excerpts from Descartes' other writings on each topic, to help understand and evaluate his method, system, and its key components, testing their strengths and weaknesses by influential reactions of both his own contemporaries, and several important critics since. My conclusion will be that most familiar objections fail, a few produce an apparent stalemate (why, to be diagnosed), and fewer still (by my lights) expose consequential, unanswerable inadequacies (which is why I deeply admire and retain elements from the real Descartes, but am not a systematic Cartesian). Besides a painstaking reading of the *Meditations*, we will read manageable excerpts from Descartes' *Discourse on Method*, *Principles of Philosophy*, *The Search for Truth*, *Comments on a Certain Broadsheet*, *The Passions of the Soul*, *Replies to Objections*, and *Correspondence*. Critics (immediate and more distal) will include Hobbes, Arnauld, Gassendi, Princess Elizabeth of Bohemia, Pascal, Spinoza, Locke, Leibniz, Hume, Kant, Peirce, Wittgenstein, and an especially revealing few of our own contemporaries. Main, interconnected topical areas will include epistemology, philosophy of mind, metaphysics, philosophy of religion and ethics (in the sense of good life theory). Juxtaposing these often external critics with Descartes' method and system opens one's eyes to many of the major, abiding approaches to doing philosophy, but I will make sure to explore apparent intra- systematic tensions in Descartes as well. I will provide options for satisfying the seminar's writing requirement, and can provide more detail in conversation.

## Later Heidegger

David Wood | 9010 (H5)

Why read Heidegger today? Didn't Derrida definitively deconstruct him? Wasn't he wrong about politics, about animals, about technology? In *WCT?* Heidegger writes about what it is to 'read' a serious thinker. We can 'go counter to them' or 'go to their encounter' - engaging them fundamentally. Heidegger deserves such treatment. In *Being and Time* (1926), following Nietzsche and ushering in Foucault and Derrida, he relaunched philosophical inquiry, shedding humanistic assumptions, without being anti-human. He voices profound anxiety about our historical engagement. His later writing attempts a further displacement of Man, looking first to language, and poetry as sources of renewal, in the face of technology and machination. Think Hölderlin: "Where the danger is, also grows the saving power." His later work explores possibilities of human transformation and resistance to modernity. Still relevant today? His main concern – world (and earth) 'commodification' – is highly topical. Consider climate change: our current path – unregulated global free-trade - is unsustainable. But how to address the problem at the level needed? Will technology save us? A new economic order? Dwelling anew? Heidegger asks just these questions. Readings include: *Question Concerning Technology*, *Letter on Humanism*, *Building Dwelling Thinking*, and *Origin of the Work of Art*.

## Kantian Constructivism & the Starting Point of Ethics

Julian Wuerth | 9020 (T2)

This course examines the fascinating attempts of Kantian constructivists John Rawls, Jürgen Habermas, Christine Korsgaard, and Onora O'Neill to provide new foundations for ethics and/or political theory. These new foundations promised the benefits of a full-blooded moral realism without moral realism's alleged costs. The course begins with background readings in 20th century metaethics that shaped Kantian constructivists' sense of the metaethical challenges at hand. We then turn to the various Kantian constructivisms and explore crucial problems with these accounts, both philosophically and as alleged interpretations of, or descendants of, Kant's ethics.

Fall 2017

## Teaching & Research Methods

Jeffrey Tlumak | 8000

The Teaching & Research Methods proseminar aims to introduce new graduate students to the faculty and in some measure to their approaches to philosophy. At most meetings two faculty members will discuss representative readings with students. There will also be sessions on library research, writing for publication (and for different audiences), teaching through discussion, and teaching logic. *Required for 1st year graduate students.*

## Democracy

Robert Talisse | 9020 (T2)

Although the term "democracy" is frequently used to denote everything that is politically wholesome, democracy is actually a dubious proposal. It is the claim that you rightfully may be forced to live according to rules that you reject, simply because they are favored by others (who might be ignorant, irrational, or depraved). Seen clearly, democracy is hard to love, even at its best. After briskly surveying the philosophical terrain, we will take up current work at the intersection of epistemology and democratic

theory. Readings from Elizabeth Anderson, Jason Brennan, David Estlund, Helene Landemore, Fabienne Peter, Philip Pettit, and others.

## **Derrida's Death Penalty Seminar**

Kelly Oliver & Ellen Armour | 9010 (H5)

We will read volume II of Derrida's Death Penalty Seminar, along with the texts he analyzes there, especially Kant's justification for the death penalty in the *Metaphysics of Morals*, and texts by Robespierre, Freud, Heidegger, and the nineteenth-century Spanish Catholic thinker Donoso Cortés. Challenging the logic that justifies the state's right to take a life, Derrida develops a powerful argument against capital punishment.

## **Epistemic Injustice**

José Medina | 9020 (T3)

Under the rubric of epistemic injustice we will study those forms of unfair treatment that relate to issues of knowledge, understanding, and participation in communicative practices. These issues include a wide range of topics concerning wrongful treatment and unjust structures in meaning-making and knowledge producing practices, such as the following: exclusion and silencing; invisibility and inaudibility; having one's meanings or contributions systematically distorted, misheard, or misrepresented; having diminished status or standing in expressive practices; unfair differentials in authority and/or epistemic agency; being unfairly distrusted; receiving no or minimal uptake; having one's voice coopted or instrumentalized; etc. We will read books and essays by Miranda Fricker, Linda Alcoff, Kristie Dotson, Charles Mills, Gaile Pohlhaus, and José Medina, among others.

## **Aristotle**

Lenn Goodman | 9010 (H1)

Close study of Aristotle's chief works and select modern studies – the *Organon*, *Physics*, biological and meteorological writings, *Metaphysics*, *De Anima*, *Nicomachean Ethics*, *Politics*, *Rhetoric*, and *Poetics*. Topics discussed include: logic, monism and determinism; inference, induction, and discovery; substance and the forms; moral and intellectual virtue; political ideals and reality; reason and persuasion; tragedy and experience. Besides discussions of Aristotle's ideas and arguments, students will make presentations and will prepare, present, and revise seminar papers engaging a philosophical topic chosen in consultation with Professor Goodman. Given Aristotle's protean interests, participants from disciplines beyond philosophy are encouraged to join the seminar.

## **Race**

Lucius T. Outlaw, Jr. | 9020 (T4)

The focal objective of this course is to engage in shared, historically-informed, analytical and critical explorations of notions of race as strategies with which to understand, identify, characterize, distinguish, construct, valorize, and manage relations within, between, and among descent-conditioned, geographically situated, bio-social collectivities of human beings who share similarities (of embodiment, comportment, enculturation...) construed as salient through conceptualizations and valorizations of these similarities, construals conditioned by various practices (socio-cultural, economic, political). An abiding and guiding question for our explorations is the following: What is the anthropological significance, if any, for human existence and well-being of descent-conditioned, enculturated/enculturating, bio-social groupings of persons regarded as importantly "similar" and/or "related"?

Spring 2017

### **Kant's Ethics**

Julian Wuerth | 9010.01 (H3)

### **Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* and its Inheritors**

Karen Ng | 9010.02 (H4)

This course is dedicated to a close study of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*. The aim of the course is to understand and assess the concept of ethical life in order to determine its philosophical and contemporary significance. Alongside the reading of Hegel, we will also read relevant texts by Fichte, Marx, and Honneth, who are some of Hegel's most important allies and critics.

### **Phenomenology**

Lisa Guenther | 9010.03 (H5)

### **French Readings of Nietzsche**

Kelly Oliver | 9020.01 (T5)

In this seminar, we will consider Nietzsche's profound influence on Contemporary French philosophy, including Deleuze, Foucault, Derrida, Irigaray, and Kofman.

### **Bioethics**

John Lachs | 9020.02 (T2)

The seminar will consider moral problems in medicine with a view to preparing students to teach bioethics and to publish in the field. Topics will include euthanasia, persistent vegetative state, organ sales and universal healthcare.

### **Thinking, Acting, & Valuing & Their Place in Nature**

Jeffrey Tlumak | 9020.03 (T3)

The seminar brings together arguably interconnected issues in philosophy of mind, metaphysics, and value theory (with focus on the metaphysics of morals, but also with an eye to the case for the irreducible value of meaning in life), specifically whether consciousness and (forms of) intentionality, free agency, free will, moral responsibility, and moral value, can each fit into a coherent, plausible, thoroughgoing naturalistic conception of the world (alert to the varieties of both methodological and ontological naturalisms). We will instigate our inquiry by tracing the dialectic of the free will debate – about the nature, significance, and reality of free will – since in both its history and contemporary incarnation its implications for the other metaphysical and value-theoretic issues emerge, and when explicitly mapped, typically foreshadow still broader systematic commitments (or their explicit repudiation).

Fall 2016

## **Teaching & Research Methods**

Jeffrey Tlumak | 8000.01

The Teaching & Research Methods proseminar aims to introduce new graduate students to the faculty and in some measure to their approaches to philosophy. At most meetings two faculty members will discuss representative readings with students. There will also be sessions on library research, writing for publication (and for different audiences), teaching through discussion, and teaching logic. *Required for 1st year graduate students.*

## **W. E. B. DuBois**

Lucius T. Outlaw, Jr. | 9010.01 (H5)

Close readings and critical examinations of selected writings by William Edward Burghardt Du Bois. Exploration of his arguments for particular approaches to: the identification, characterization, and understanding of African and African-descended people; the elimination of various forms of oppression, and of problems related to the oppression, of African-descended people in the United States, especially, in Africa and the African diaspora more generally; and of Du Bois' critical analyses of the historically significant persons and peoples in the United States of America and of the nation's situation and prospects.

## **Adorno**

Idit Dobbs-Weinstein | 9010.02 (H5)

Beginning with Adorno's Radio Address "Why Still Philosophy," reformulated into the question "Why Adorno Now," the course will seek to make manifest the importance of negative dialectics, a historical, non-teleological dialectic, as an active political resistance to the barbarism at the heart of culture both in its explicit form as violence and, more important, in its insidious form as utopia or myth. The proximity of Enlightenment and myth in concrete historical forms in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* will make possible an understanding of Adorno as a radical materialist heir to the questions of the relations of aesthetics and politics, theory and praxis, thinking and acting. Reading Adorno's writings 'after Auschwitz,' from *Minima Moralia* to *Negative Dialectics*, and against spite about Adorno the mandarin, it will become evident that these works are singly focused upon the political consequences of the devaluation of thinking purportedly for the sake of praxis. Finally reading the *Philosophy of New Music* as the third excursus to the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, a dialectic of extremes between Schoenberg (and Cage) and Stravinsky, the question of "Why Still Philosophy" will finally emerge as the question of the possibility of experience now, a question at once aesthetic and political.

## **Animal, Life, Nature**

Davide Wood | 9010.03 (H6)

The present situation: 'Life' (and nature, and the animal) are hot topics. The Sixth Extinction, Climate Change, biological warfare, genetic research, and artificial intelligence each put 'life' in question.

Contemporary biopolitics addresses healthcare, incarceration, immigration, racism, gender, refugees, terrorism, suicide bombing, genocide. The proliferation of animal studies, environmentalism, and the microbiome project all make us ask: "What is life?" Or better: "How is life (organized, controlled)?" And can we finally avoid reproducing an uncritical humanism? Should we? Has philosophical reflection on life and nature, simply legitimated a privileged understanding of Man?

Books I am reading: On animals - analytic (Singer, Regan); continental (Heidegger, Haraway, Derrida). On plants - Miller, Marder, Nealon). Plants are the new animals, the latest marginalized other. Tim Morton's *Ecology Without Nature*, and *New Materialism* – books by Jane Bennett (*Vibrant Matter*), William Connolly and Adrian Johnson - drawing on Spinoza, Nietzsche, Whitehead and Deleuze.

Classic philosophical positions on Life and Nature include teleology, mechanism, pantheism, evolutionism, naturalism, vitalism, and now 'new materialism'. Central figures in the tradition: Aristotle, Descartes, Spinoza, Kant, Nietzsche, Whitehead, Bergson, Merleau-Ponty, Heidegger, Foucault and Deleuze. We look at some of these.

## **The Imagination**

José Medina | 9020.01 (T1)

This seminar will cover central philosophical problems concerning the imagination in Philosophy of Mind, Aesthetics, Ethics, and Political Philosophy. Topics will include: representational versus embodied ways of imagining, the role of affect in the imagination, conscious and unconscious imaginings, personal and collective aspects of the imagination, the values embedded in our imaginings, ethical and political responsibilities with respect to the imagination, and imaginative engagements in and through literature and film. Although the seminar will start with classical texts on the imagination and the social imaginary (from Aristotle, Hume, Freud, and Castoriadis), our discussions will focus on the debates on the imagination in the 20th and 21st centuries.

## **Philosophy of Law**

Larry May | 9020.02 (T2)

This course examines some of the main philosophical questions concerning law: What is the nature of law and how do laws differ from other rules? How does morality affect law? Is there a natural law? How much discretion should judges have? Is there an international law? etc. We will first look at a few historical texts from Aquinas and Austin. We will then spend multiple sessions on Hart's *The Concept of Law* and Fuller's *The Morality of Law*. Then we will look at the most recent writings on the nature of international law, especially international humanitarian law.

## **Liberalism & Its Critics**

Robert Talisse & W. James Booth | 9020.03 (T5)

Modern political philosophy has largely been devoted to developing, assessing, defending, and criticizing a distinctive approach to political theory known as *liberalism*. In this seminar, we will explore the central varieties of liberalism on currency and consider the ways they can be criticized. In particular, the seminar will focus on the concept of neutrality that is often taken to lie at the heart of liberalism. Paying special attention to the ongoing debate regarding the place of religious conviction in liberal politics, we will examine both the current internal debates among liberals (for example, between "comprehensive" and "political" liberals), and external debates between liberals and various alternatives, including civic republicanism.

Spring 2016

### **Kant: What is a Human?**

Julian Wuerth | 9000.01 (H3)

### **Later Heidegger**

David Wood | 9000.02

In his magnum opus, *Being and Time* (1926) Heidegger argues that Western philosophy since the Greeks is marked by the forgetfulness of (the question of) Being. To re-open this question, he suggests, we need to rethink the relation between Being and human temporality. In his later work he gives a more prominent role to language (“Language is the house of Being”), but the question of time never goes away. (In 1962 he wrote the essay “Time and Being”.) In the mid 30s (Contributions to Philosophy) he attempts an experimental engagement with his time in which philosophy would performatively enact transformative change, not merely write about it.

In our own age, with the announcement of the Anthropocene (in which human time goes geological), the relation between fundamental questions (such as the meaning of Being), time, and human history, has taken on an unprecedented material urgency. This course will address this urgency by bringing together in a critical way key texts from Heidegger’s later writings, after first touching base with *Being and Time*, showing how they cast light on the challenges of our present condition.

### **German Idealism**

Karen Ng | 9000.03 (H4)

This course explores the philosophical movement known as German idealism. We will consider German idealism from several interconnected perspectives: as a post-Kantian philosophy that sought to resolve and respond to problems that arose in the wake of Kant’s critical project; as an attempt to construct philosophy as a comprehensive system of science (*Wissenschaft*); as an attempt to reconcile freedom and nature in a philosophy of the “absolute”; and finally, as an attempt to both describe and vindicate the distinctive features of modern, self-conscious subjectivity. We will focus on key texts by Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel, but we will also explore some important texts in the closely related movement of German romanticism, with which the idealists were closely acquainted. Together, these thinkers comprise one of the richest and most productive periods of Western philosophy, representing a modernist philosophical enterprise that is arguably unrivaled in both ambition and scope.

### **Moral Emotions**

Robert Talisse | 9020.01 (T2)

An investigation of views holding that emotionally-charged interpersonal reactions (resentment, contempt, disgust, appreciation, gratitude, etc.) are the foundation of moral theorizing. We’ll begin with some background readings from Elizabeth Anscombe, Michael Stocker, and Susan Wolf. Then we’ll turn to P. F. Strawson’s landmark “Freedom and Resentment” and the contemporary literature it has inspired

(including work by Rae Langton, Gary Watson, R. Jay Wallace, Stephen Darwall and Macalester Bell). Contact instructor for further details.

## **Pragmatism, Expressivism, & Inferentialism**

Scott Aikin | 9020.02 (T1)

This course will be a survey of four masterworks in the extremely broad category of analytic pragmatism: Wilfrid Sellars's "Empiricism and Philosophy of Mind," Richard Rorty's *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, Robert Brandom's *Making it Explicit*, and Huw Price's *Naturalism Without Mirrors*. Primary focus will be on what issues in semantics and epistemology drive the programs and what criticisms loom.

## **The Refugees**

Kelly Oliver | 9020.03 (T5)

Fall 2015

## **Marx**

Idit Dobbs-Weinstein | 9000.01 (H4)

Beginning with the question "what is matter of historical materialism?" the course will focus on the dialectical relation between the critique of ideology/religion and the critique of political economy. Following careful analyses of "On the Jewish Question," "The Class Struggles in France, 1848-1850," and "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon," we shall focus on two major texts: *Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right* and *Capital* One and parts of Two and Three.

## **Hume**

Jeffrey Tlumak | 9000.02 (H3)

Hume sought to explain and so understand as simply and generally as possible everything important in human affairs – thought, action, passion, valuation, language, society, etc. – rigorously restricting himself to experience, and exposing the limits on success. How we read Hume depends mainly on how we understand and evaluate the interplay and implications of the three transformative aspects of his philosophy – his skepticism, his empiricism, and his theory of human nature. (Every major interpretation of Hume can be deeply classified in terms of their stances on these three variables.) He is certainly skeptical of the excessively speculative claims and non-experimental methods of the dogmatic rationalists; how much more broadly skeptical he is, is less clear. He certainly announces and regularly applies principles which restrict legitimate ideas, uses of language, and knowledge-claims to those based on experience, but how broadly he conceives experience and the basing-relation, and how inviolably prescriptive vs. revisably descriptive he treats the principles, is less clear. And he clearly centrally aims to study the various dimensions of the human mind in ways similar to and as successful as the ways natural scientists study other natural phenomena (be the Newton of the mind), and then use the resulting theory of human nature as needed foundation for sciences of morality, politics, inquiry and criticism, but how much success he takes himself to achieve (and he in fact achieves), is less clear.

So our discussions will include Hume's still influential accounts of the representational capacities of the human understanding, of reason, imagination and passion as they relate to action, morality, and religion, of the nature and role of causality, belief, personal identity, etc., aiming throughout to trace the general theoretical framework and methodological commitments that govern these various accounts, and considering some of their potential problems and prospects, in part by relating them to notable historical competitors (especially Descartes, Locke, and Kant), but also to some contemporary debates, anticipating Rob Talisse's Spring 2016 seminar on Moral Emotions (its largely instigative figure, P.F. Strawson, was a neo-Humean naturalist on almost every issue).

## **Ralph Ellison**

Lucius T. Outlaw, Jr. | 9000.04 (H5)

Close and critical readings of writings by Ralph Waldo Ellison in order to enhance our appreciation of him as an intellectual and writer of substantial philosophical significance.

## **Just War Theory**

Larry May | 9020.01 (T2)

This course begins with several weeks on the historical background to the Just War tradition, including excerpts from: Augustine, Aquinas, Grotius, and Vattel. The second section of the course will consider the two most prominent books in the last 30 years: Michael Walzer's "Just and Unjust Wars" (Basic Books, 1977) and Jeff McMahan's "Killing in War" (Oxford, 2009). The third part of the course investigates two challenges to the Just War tradition, cosmopolitan humanitarianism and pacifism. We will read Cecile Fabre's "Cosmopolitan War" (Oxford, 2012) and selections from my new book "Contingent Pacifism" (Cambridge, 2015).

## **Biopower & Biopolitical Resistance**

Lisa Guenther | 9020.02 (T5)

Foucault defines biopower as "the power to make live and let die," in contrast with the sovereign power to kill and let live, and with disciplinary forms of power that seek to produce docile subjects. The target of biopower is not the individual but the population; biopower normalizes the aggregate through risk management, actuarial prediction, and other forms of administrative power designed to foster the overall health and prosperity of the population. Foucault argues that the biopolitical cut between those who "must live" and those who "may die" is made by racism, broadly conceived as a "racism against the abnormal." Ultimately, racism is the mechanism through which some lives come to matter more than others, and some are seen as threats or obstacles to the flourishing of others.

In this seminar, we will explore Foucault's account of biopower in his later work, including *The History of Sexuality*, "Society Must Be Defended," *Security, Territory, Population*, and *The Birth of Biopower*. We will also study work by some of Foucault's most powerful readers: Giorgio Agamben, Ladelle McWhorter, Alexander Weheliye, and others. Throughout the seminar, we will critically interrogate the concept of biopower in relation to concrete issues and sites of biopolitical management, such as genocide, eugenics, the carceral state, and immigration politics. And we will explore possible strategies for biopolitical resistance, including the Black Lives Matter movement, Black feminist discourses of reproductive justice, prison abolition movements, and so on.

## **Race & Epistemic Harms**

José Medina | 9020.03 (T4)

This seminar will bring together race theory and social epistemology, focusing especially on contemporary discussions of epistemic injustice and discussions of the racial imagination in social epistemology and critical race theory. We will discuss Nella Larsen's *Passing* and some classic and contemporary films (such as *Do the Right Thing*) in order to explore the literary and cinematic racial imagination in relation to different epistemic harms such as silencing, social invisibility, stereotyping, sexual stigmatization, "white ignorance", etc. Primary readings will include texts by W.E.B. Du Bois, Fanon, Patricia Hill Collins, Charles Mills, Alexis Shotwell, Miranda Fricker, José Medina, and Dan Flory, among others.

## **Bioethics**

John Lachs | 9020.04 (T2)

In the past twenty years, ethical considerations have established themselves as vital elements of healthcare. Through readings, discussions and visiting medical faculty, the seminar will place participants at the heart of current controversies. Of particular interest will be the way in which philosophical issues intersect with medical practice and public policy.

Spring 2015

## **Skepticism**

Scott Aikin | 353.02 (H6)

This will be a survey of the varieties of skepticism and anti-skepticism, starting with ancient traditions, through the modern period, and into contemporary epistemology. Historical readings will be from Xenophanes, Plato, Cicero, St. Augustine, Sextus Empiricus, Montaigne, and Hume. Contemporary readings will be from David Lewis, Ernest Sosa, Barry Stroud, Keith Lehrer, Brian Ribeiro, Baron Reed, O.K. Bouwsma, and P.F. Strawson. We will pay particular attention to the structural features of skeptical arguments and variety of anti-skeptical responses.

## **Plato**

Lenn Goodman | 353.01 (H1)

The tradition of philosophy in the West has been called a series of footnotes to Plato. Participants in this seminar will engage in a close reading of Plato's chief dialogues with a view to assaying the abiding worth of Plato's philosophical thinking. Besides brief presentations on specific dialogues, each member of the seminar will prepare a paper addressing a specific question in Platonic philosophy, to be read in advance and commented on by all and then revised after receiving the feedback of the seminar members.

## **Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit***

Karen Ng | 353.03 (H4)

This course will be dedicated to a close reading of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807), one of the most enigmatic yet influential texts of the Western tradition. Among its many contributions, the text presents, above all and through Hegel's dialectical method, the meaning of historical self-consciousness

and freedom in modernity. In this course, we will read Hegel's text in connection with the following concerns: the nature of knowledge and self-consciousness; sociality and recognition; reason and science; spirit (Geist) and its relation to nature; ethical life (Sittlichkeit) and morality; tragedy and theories of action; historical progress and cultural formation (Bildung). Throughout, we will pay close attention to Hegel's relation to Kant, as well as take up a selection of prominent interpretations that speak to the breadth and depth of Hegel's influence for contemporary philosophy.

## **Feminism, Psychoanalysis, and Film Theory**

Kelly Oliver | 352.01 (T1)

This course is divided into two parts. In the first part, we will study classical texts in psychoanalysis on sexual identity, sexual difference, and sexuality (Freud, Lacan, Kristeva). In the second part, we will see how psychoanalysis and its feminist uptake have informed classic texts in Feminist Film Theory (e.g., Mulvey, E.A. Kaplan, Modelski, Doane, among others).

## **Heidegger: Being and Time**

David Wood | 353.04 (H5)

This course is devoted to a transformative reading of Heidegger's classic work *Being and Time* in the light of its critics and our contemporary concerns. Heidegger himself moved on from *Being and Time* but it remains one of the most influential books of 20th C philosophy, and the questions it raises are still alive: human temporality, earth and world, the question of the animal, being towards death, and the de(con)struction of the western metaphysics.

## **Kant's Ethics**

Julian Wuerth | 353.05 (H4)

Kant's ethics is commonly regarded as one of the leading approaches to ethics in Western philosophy, along with utilitarianism and virtue ethics. Despite this, fundamental questions persist about the manner in which Kant argues for the foundation of his ethics - his Categorical Imperative. Most importantly, is this argument a constructivist or moral realist one? This course traces the evolution of Kant's ethical thought from his earliest works, in which he defends a moral sense theory, to his mature view, paying special attention along the way to developments in his theory of self. We then examine Kant's famous *Groundwork* arguments against the patterns of arguments found in his earlier works. Finally, we consider the overall shape of Kant's ethics in his remaining work and the important roles assigned, within this ethics, to our emotions, desire, and character.

Fall 2014

## **Aristotle**

Idit Dobbs-Weinstein | 353.01 (H1)

Although Aristotle's canonical status is indisputable, it is rarely acknowledged that his reception in the Latin west and subsequent appropriation into the western philosophical canon was determined, to a great

extent, by theologico-political prohibitions, rather than philosophical considerations. This course is devoted to careful readings of Aristotle's works against this grain, informed by a suppressed materialist Aristotelian tradition and focusing upon the natural dwelling of the human soul and the role of desire in both knowledge and action.. We shall first consider the centrality of experience and dialectics to all philosophical inquiry with a focus on Posterior Analytic and Topics, 1. Subsequently we shall read the Physics, De Anima, and Nicomachean Ethics in order to appreciate the manner in which each is an inquiry into nature in a different respect, from the general to the specific. We conclude with a brief consideration of the Politics.

## **17th Century Social and Political Thought**

Larry May | 352.05 (H3)

This course examines key philosophical texts of the beginning of modern political and social thought. We will focus on: Hugo Grotius, *De Jure Belli ac Pacis* (On the Law of War and Peace); Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*; John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*; and Samuel Puffendorf, *De Jure Naturae et Gentium* (On the Law of Nature and Nations). We will begin by considering selection from Francisco Suarez, *De Triplici Virtute Theologica: III. Charitate* (On the Three Theological Virtues, part III On Charity) and we will also consider selections from two of the most important English jurists of the 17th century: Edward Coke and Matthew Hale.

## **Landmarks of Analytic Philosophy**

Jeffrey Tlumak | 352.01 (H5)

A discussion of the nature, impact, trajectory, and prospects of Analytic Philosophy in its early (Frege, Russell, Moore), middle (Carnap, Ayer, C.I. Lewis, Quine, Strawson, Grice, Sellars, Black, Chisholm, Frankena), and later (Davidson, Rorty, Rawls, Gettier, Plantinga, Mackie, David Lewis, Kripke, Searle, Nagel, Parfit) periods. I will use competing conceptions of proper philosophical method (of the nature of philosophical analysis itself) as a central organizing issue to trace selected, often interconnected debates in philosophy of language (especially on the nature of meaning and reference), philosophy of mind (especially on the nature of the self, consciousness and intentionality), ethics (especially on the nature of and relation between rightness and goodness), metaphysics (especially on the nature of freedom, necessity and identity), and epistemology (especially on how to approach questions about the nature and possibility of knowledge). Our typical format will be orientational and instigative lecture followed by sustained discussion. You may fulfill course writing requirements either with 1) two 6-page and one 10-page paper, 2) four 5-6 page papers, 3) two 10-12 page papers, or 4) six 2-4 page papers. The nature of the papers will be explained in class.

## **Wittgenstein and the Imagination**

José Medina | 352.04 (T1)

This seminar will focus on Wittgenstein's philosophy of mind and more specifically on his reflections on the imagination. We will read *The Philosophical Investigations*, *On Certainty*, and *Last Writings on the Philosophy of Psychology*. We will also read contemporary debates at the intersection of aesthetics and philosophy of mind (Stanley Cavell, Tamar Gendler, Richard Moran, etc). We will investigate how the imagination works in relation to: sense and nonsense, identity, community formation, sensitivity and insensitivity, etc.

## **The Art of the Moral Essay**

John Lachs | 351.01 (T2)

This seminar is focused on the philosophical essay as an art form with a moral purpose. A part of the purpose is to reach an audience beyond professional philosophers and engage them on issues of personal and social significance. We will read and discuss recent essays ranging in topic from the meaning of life to progress, war, discrimination and abortion. We will pay particular attention to the interplay between rhetoric, facts and philosophical arguments. Instead of a term paper, each student will write a moral essay and prepare it for publication.

### **Race, Gender, and Punishment**

Lisa Guenther | 352.02 (T4)

The US incarcerates more people than any other country in the world. A disproportionate number of these are people of color, and a rapidly-growing number are women. In this course, we will grapple with the philosophical and political implications raised by mass incarceration in the US, focusing on issues of race and gender. Topics may include: slavery and the convict lease system; civil rights and the New Jim Crow; reproduction behind bars; the policing of queer, trans, and gender-nonconforming subjects; racialization, criminalization, and social death; felon disenfranchisement and civil death; biopower, state racism, and mass incarceration; hunger strikes and other forms of prisoner resistance; critical pedagogy and the School to Prison Pipeline; and prison abolition. Readings will include work by currently- and formerly-incarcerated intellectuals such as Angela Davis, Huey Newton, and Susan Rosenberg, as well as non-incarcerated intellectuals such as Michel Foucault, Beth Richie, Ruth Gilmore, Dean Spade, and Loïc Wacquant. Throughout the course, we will reflect on the relevance of philosophical methods and concepts for critical discussions of mass incarceration.

### **Critical Theory**

Lucius T. Outlaw, Jr. | 352.03 (T5)

The seminar will be devoted to a reconstruction and critique of the emergence, institutionalization, and evolution of a twentieth century neo-Marxist, cross-generational, transcontinental (Europe, USA) tradition of theoretical philosophical praxes concerned with matters social and shaped by particular individuals working in concert via a shared (more or less) agenda.

Spring 2014

### **Derrida's Death Penalty Seminar, Volume I**

Kelly Oliver & Ellen Armour | 352.01 (T5)

This course is devoted to reading the first volume of Derrida's Death Penalty Seminar, the latest published volume of his posthumous works. We will read Derrida along with some of the texts with which he engages, including Kant, Hugo, Genet, and Camus. While our focus will be on the philosophical issues at play, we will also attend to the theological dimensions of this seminar. (That the United States is "one of the last Christian-inspired democracies to resist abolition" is significant to Derrida's analysis.)

### **Bioethics**

John Lachs | 352.02 (T2)

Discussion of some of the major moral problems of medicine. Topics covered include patient autonomy, justice in health care, medical experimentation, abortion, medical futility, and persistent vegetative state. Periodic visits by medical practitioners.

### **Contemporary Issues in Moral Philosophy**

Marilyn Friedman | 352.03 (T2)

This course will provide a whirlwind survey of selected concepts, theories, and issues in moral philosophy. The topics will be chosen from the areas of normative ethics, metaethics, and practical (applied) ethics. In normative ethics, likely topics include: deontology, moral rights, consequentialism, virtue ethics, and care ethics. In metaethics, likely topics include: moral realism, ethical naturalism, anti-realist expressivism, and practical rationality. In practical ethics, student interest will help to determine the topics. Possible choices in this area include: racism, abortion, privacy, (non-human) animals, and international justice.

### **Descartes and His Critics**

Jeffrey Tlumak | 353.01 (H3)

I will use a stage-by-stage discussion of the exquisitely developed Meditations, enriched by the full range of Descartes' other writings on each topic, to help understand and evaluate his method, system, and its key components, testing their strengths and weaknesses by influential reactions of his own contemporaries, and several especially important philosophers since. I will also trace how his unified account of reason, will, and emotion developed into a novel ethics. My conclusion will be that most familiar objections fail, a few produce an apparent stalemate (to be diagnosed), and fewer still (by my lights) expose consequential, unanswerable inadequacies (which is why I deeply admire the real Descartes, but still am not a Cartesian).

Besides a painstaking reading of the Meditations, we will largely read (sometimes only relevant excerpts) from Descartes' Discourse on Method, Principles of Philosophy, The Search for Truth, Comments on a Certain Broadsheet, The Passions of the Soul, Replies to Objections, and Correspondence (all included in the Cottingham et. al., Cambridge edition, three-volume The Philosophical Writings of Descartes). Bigger-name critics (immediate and more distal) will include Hobbes, Arnauld, Gassendi, Pascal, Spinoza, Locke, Leibniz, Hume, Kant, Peirce, and Wittgenstein (and I encourage you to add to this list), but some revealing concerns come from lesser luminaries (ranging from Princess Elizabeth of Bohemia in Descartes' own time, to some (few) of our own contemporaries, and, as we grapple with the texts, ourselves. I will provide options for satisfying the seminar's writing requirement, and can provide more detail in conversation.

### **Levinas and His Readers**

Lisa Guenther | 353.02 (H5)

This course provides an introduction to the thought of Levinas through one of his key texts, Totality and Infinity. In this text, Levinas formulates his account of the face as the originary site of ethical obligation, understood as a command to infinite responsibility for the Other. Through a close reading of Totality and Infinity in relation to critical responses by Derrida, Irigaray, and others, we will explore the implications of Levinas' ethics for political theory, philosophy of language, ontology, and other areas of philosophy.

### **Ancient Political and Social Thought**

Larry May | 353.03 (H1)

This course provides an in depth treatment of some of the classic texts in Greek and Roman thought. We will begin with some selections from Thucydides and several plays: Oedipus Tyrannus, Antigone, and Eumenides. We then will discuss Plato's Apology, Crito, and Republic, along with selections from the Laws. We will then discuss Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics (Books 3 and 5), the Politics, and selections from the Athenian Constitution. We end by discussing selections from Cicero's On Duty and Seneca's essays on Anger and Mercy, as well as a few short pieces by Tertullian. A final term paper will be required.

Fall 2013

### **Hate Speech**

José Medina | 352.01 (T1)

How can people be harmed in and through language? And how can we appropriately respond to cases of symbolic harm in order to prevent them from happening again and in order to repair the damage they create? This seminar will explore the intersection between philosophy of language (esp. speech act theory) and political philosophy through the examination of the pornography debates and of recent discussions of sexual and racial slurs. We will read Gloria Anzaldúa, Judith Butler, Mark Lance and Rebecca Kukla, Rae Langton, and Catherine McKinnon, among others. Readings will include mostly journal articles, but also the following books: Judith Butler's *Excitable Speech* (1997), Mark Lance and Rebecca Kukla's *Yo and Lo!* (2009), and the anthology *Speech and Harm* (2012) edited by Ishani Maitra and Mary McGowan.

### **Epistemology**

Scott Aikin | 352.02 (T3)

This seminar will be a survey of central issues in contemporary epistemology. We will have 6 focal questions: (1) Is knowledge closed under known entailment? (2) What is the solution to the skeptical regress problem? (3) Can global skepticism be answered? (4) Is there a priori knowledge? (5) Is justification internal or external to the subject? (6) What are the norms of alethic peer disagreement? Core readings for the course will be from Steup and Sosa's *Contemporary Debates in Epistemology*, but each class will have additional assigned reading from recent journal publications. Two papers (first 2000 words, second 3000 words).

### **Egalitarianism**

Robert Talisse | 352.03 (T2)

Egalitarianism is the thesis that justice requires equality. One question instantly emerges regarding this thesis: Why think that? Others follow quickly: Equality of what? Equality among whom? Secured how and by what institutions? Towards what end? Then second-order questions arise: What counts as a good answer to any of the first-order questions? In what order should they be taken up? What role should empirical data play in such investigations? And so on. In this seminar we will examine the most influential answers to these questions on offer from contemporary egalitarians (and some of their critics), including Elizabeth Anderson, Richard Arneson, G. A. Cohen, Ronald Dworkin, Susan Hurley, Martha Nussbaum, Amartya Sen, and Kok-Chor Tan. We will be focused in particular on two ongoing debates: One between

welfarist, resourcist, and capability accounts of what justice is supposed to equalize; the other between “luck egalitarians” and “democratic egalitarians” concerning the point of equality. Should time and interest permit, we will also explore related questions concerning global justice and cosmopolitanism. Students will write two short (4,000 words each) argumentative papers.

## **Race: A Philosophical Investigation**

Lucius T. Outlaw, Jr. | 352.04 (T4)

A critical investigation of long histories of emergence of various conceptualizations of raciality as strategies by which to understand, identify, characterize, distinguish, construct, valorize, and manage descent-conditioned collectivities of human beings with similarities construed as salient by the conceptualizations and as important for mobilizing the collectivities in situations of competition and conflict with other descent-conditioned collectivities regarded as significantly dissimilar.

## **Spinoza**

Idit Dobbs-Weinstein | 353.01 (H3)

The past few years have witnessed a strange literary phenomenon in the form of publications in English of a surprising number of books devoted to Spinoza, a philosopher whose enigmatic status in the history of philosophy is evident in the ebb and flow that characterize the afterlife of his works from the 17 century on. No philosopher has been simultaneously embraced and rejected for as many reasons as has Spinoza. The same “heresies,” for which he has been denounced by some philosophers and theologians, are the ones celebrated by others; the same elements that have led to his description as a “God intoxicated man,” gave rise to the accusations of pantheism and, most frequently, heresy. And, at the same time as Spinoza was read as a rationalist, he was also read as a mystic. Who was this elusive philosopher and why did he generate responses as passionate as they were diverse? Was Spinoza a critical follower of Descartes, but a follower nonetheless, or a precursor of German idealism? Was he a significant forebear of Nietzsche, Freud, and Marx or a precursor of contemporary cognitive psychology and neuroscience?

Notwithstanding the great diversity of interpretations there is a significant consistency among them that the Ethics is a metaphysical treatise. Thus, not only do they fail to answer the obvious question “why the Ethics is an ethics,” but also thereby they (1) circumvent the fact that in the Ethics Spinoza derides metaphysicians and lumps them together with theologians, and (2) ignore Spinoza’s major “metaphysical” claim, namely that no thing exists *meta ta physica*, i.e., outside nature, a claim whose political implications sets Spinoza as far apart from modern political theory as is possible. For, to the same extent that Spinoza insists that there is nothing outside nature, and there can be no dominion within a dominion, to that same extent he considers the civil state (*status civilis*) as co-extensive with the natural state (*status naturalis*).

The course will first consider Spinoza’s early writings where Cartesian philosophy is critically engaged in order to show the relation between the epistemological and ethical-political concerns. The second and major part of the course will examine the continuity of the ethico-political project from the radical critique of metaphysics in The Ethics to the critique of religion in the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*. Time permitting, we shall conclude with a brief consideration of the unfinished political project of the *Political Treatise*.

## **Late Heidegger**

David Wood | 351.01 (H5)

This seminar focuses on Heidegger's strange book, *Contributions to Philosophy (of the Event)* [Beitrage zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis), 1936-38], sometimes referred to as his second magnum opus (after

Being and Time). We are using the Wojciewicz and Vallega-Neu translation (Indiana UP, 2012). There will be some reference to other texts indispensable to understanding this difficult, experimental and deeply 'personal' book, such as Country Path Conversations. (Book should be ordered direct from the publisher/Amazon etc.)

## **Maimonides and Friends**

Lenn Goodman | 353.02 (H2)

In this seminar we engage in a close reading of Maimonides' celebrated Guide to the Perplexed and a small number of his related writings, against the backdrop of the works of Islamic philosophers that Maimonides read – figures such as al-Razi, al-Farabi, the Brethren of Purity, Avicenna, al-Ghazali, and Ibn Tufayl. The course fulfills the graduate distribution requirement in medieval philosophy and provides a good entry point into Jewish and Islamic philosophy, comparative philosophy, and hermeneutics. Student presentations and seminar papers are designed to facilitate entry into professional life as a philosopher regardless of the specific area and philosophical problems that your future work may explore. Seminar students will have access via OAK to the draft translation of the Guide that Professor Goodman and Professor Ackerman-Lieberman are now undertaking for Stanford University Press.