**PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGION COURSE DESCRIPTIONS**

**SPRING 2023**

**PHI 151**

**Intro to Philosophy**

**Dr. Michael Dearmey**

**Online**

Introduction to philosophy, its history, its fascinating questions and points of view. What is knowledge? How does science work? How can I distinguish right from wrong? What is the mind? Self? Is there a God? What makes an object an art object?

**PHI 151**

**Intro to Philosophy**

**Dr. Sam Bruton**

**T/Th 9:30 – 10:45 am**

What is real? What is it to know something? What makes me me? Do I have free will? What’s the difference between right and wrong? These are some of the classic philosophical puzzles to be explored in this class. Learn how great philosophers from the past and the best contemporary minds have answered these questions, and find out how their answers apply to real world issues we all confront daily. The class will be taught in an engaging and interactive way, and it fulfills GEC requirements.

**PHI 151**

**Introduction to Philosophy**  
**Dr. Paula Smithka**

**M/W 2:30-3:45**

Aristotle says, “For it is owing to their wonder that people both now begin and at first began to philosophize”.  
  
Philosophy begins in wonder. It’s about asking fundamental questions—questions like, “Does God exist?”; “What is the nature of reality?”; “Is what I perceive really the way things are?”; “What is a Self?”; “Am I the same person over time?”; “What makes an action morally right?”  
Study philosophy and unlock your mind!

**PHI 171**

**Ethics and Good Living**   
**Dr. Ian Dunkle**   
**Online**  
  
What is it to live well? This is one of the oldest and most foundational questions in philosophy, and for good reason: what could be more important than understanding how to live well?—Maybe, actually living well!—Granted. But how can we hope to live well unless we have at least some idea of what that is?   
Answering this question is hard, though, for several reasons, including these: First, it seems to be ambiguous (to live uprightly? to maximize self-interest?). Second, common answers are ambiguous; there are different senses in which something might be good for you. Third, popular opinions on the good life contradict one another (consider what your parents tell you about the importance and non-importance of pursuing a lucrative career). But where else can we get a footing on the question except in popular opinions?   
This course explores the central philosophical puzzles and controversies regarding the good life and introduces students to major accounts offered in both the history of philosophy and in contemporary value-theory. Throughout the course students will also develop skills of critical thinking and argument analysis.

**PHI 253**  
**Logic**

**Dr. Paula Smithka**

**M/W 11:00-12:15**

Developing good critical thinking skills is useful for clarity of reasoning and evaluating the views of others both in philosophical studies and everyday life. In Logic, you will learn the importance of having evidence or reasons to support one’s views, how to evaluate arguments for their strength and cogency, and how to construct good arguments. In addition, you will not only learn what constitutes a good/strong argument but we will examine common mistakes in reasoning. The reasoning skills that you begin to develop by taking a logic course will aid you in whatever academic or professional directions you choose to take. This course will make you a detail person!

**PHI 356**

**Ethics**

**Dr. Sam Bruton**

**T/Th 11:00 – 12:15**

Come explore what great philosophers have thought about the difference between right and wrong, virtue and vice. This class will introduce students to the timeless philosophical theories of Aristotle, the Utilitarians, and Kant, and we will consider the strengths and weaknesses of these theories by applying them to a wide range of contemporary moral issues and ethical dilemmas. This class is required for philosophy majors.

**PHI 450**

**Existentialism**

**T/Th 4:00-5:15**

**Dunkle**

So, you know what you’re supposed to do: treat others with respect, go to school, get a job, work hard, raise a family, pay your taxes, go to church, and so on. You even know why: people deserve respect, family is important, God is good… But do these reasons move you like they’re supposed to? Or do they seem alien, somehow, detached from who you are? When you do what you’re supposed to, does that reflect who you really are, your authentic self, or are you just going through the motions? Existentialism is an artistic and intellectual movement dedicated to expressing, understanding, and addressing these issues of alienation, attachment, and authenticity. It rose to prominence in philosophy, literature, and theater in Europe around 80 years ago, but its philosophical ties stretch far back and its legacy continues today. This class will plunge into these anxiety-inducing questions head-first by closely reading classic existentialist works of philosophy (including, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Camus, Sartre, and de Beauvoir), watching classic existentialist plays and films (those of Beckett, Bergman, & Frankenheimer, among others), and examining recent work engaging with these issues.

**PHI 462/562**

**Evil**

**Online**

**Dr. Michael Dearmey**

A study of wrongdoing and evildoing. Topics include Genocide, Torture, Terrorism, Slavery, and the Destruction of the earth's biosphere.

**PHI 492/IDS 370**

**Philosophy of Disability**

**Dr. Ian Dunkle**

**T/Th 1:00-2:15**

Activists and disability scholars have shaken up old (but still widespread) assumptions about how to categorize various psycho-physiological states as “(ab)normal,” “(un)healthy,” and “good (or bad) for you.” This up-shaking raises a number of conceptual questions, including: (Q1) What is a “disability”? (Q2) How does “being disabled” relate to “being healthy”? And (Q3) what impact does disability have on wellbeing? The philosophy of disability is a growing field of study dedicated to answering questions like these. The questions are attracting more and more philosophical attention because of their practical implications, their prior lack of attention, and their connection to other areas of philosophical study (e.g. what does “health” even mean? how are impacts on wellbeing to be assessed? how ought medical professionals to treat disabilities?). For the first time at USM, we are offering a full course on the philosophy of disability. This course will focus on on the three Q’s above and will be crosslisted with IDS 370. In addition to reading the latest philosophical work on these questions, we will connect our inquiry to work on disability from outside of philosophy (e.g. literature, history, and communication).

**REL 131**

**Comparative Religion**

**Dr. Timothy Gutmann**

**M/W 9:30-10:45 and M./W 11:00-12:15**

How can we talk about what matters most to people? How can we think about what is sacred to us? How can we encounter strangers in space and time on their own terms? For centuries, the term “religion” has been used to include ideas of what is sacred, what is forbidden, what is out of this world, and what is everyday, and the stories and ideas that inspire us to think these ways. This is a class for everyone curious about religion, both the religion they know and what they want to know more about.

**REL 303**

**Introduction to Islam**

**Dr. Timothy Gutmann**

**M/W 2:30-3:45**

What are Muslims all about? This course introduces Islamic traditions, devotional practice, artistic expressions, and intellectual and social history. The course begins with the study of Islamic origins and how these inform differences in belief and practice. The class is asking serious questions about what Muslims have held to be the most important parts of religious life that have held communities together, and split them apart, through history. At the same time, we will be asking about religion in daily life, popular culture, love, sex, and comedy. We’re interested in what Muslims have considered sacred and in what Muslims have considered cool.

**REL 336**

**Christian Tradition**

**Dr. Amy Slagle**

**Online**

This course provides an overview of the historical development, varieties, and modern interpretations of Christian doctrine and practice as they are understood and debated among theologians and writers representing Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy, and Protestantism. Central to our reflections will be the notion of “Tradition” itself, the constituents and necessity of which have been highly contested among Christians over the centuries. The diversity of Christian beliefs and ritual practices will be stressed. While focused on the texts at hand, we will intersperse our investigations with other non-textual examples of Christian expression such as art, architecture, ritual, film, and music.

**HUM 402/502**

**Digital Humanities Practicum**  
**Dr. Michael Fox**  
**Online Asynchronous**  
  
This follow-up course to the more theoretical HUM 501 Introduction to Digital Humanities will provide hands-on experience in digital humanities methods and tools. Through a series of weekly labs, students will gain technical and critical skills in digital editing and curation, data analytics, and the culture of computation. For the semester-long assignment, students can choose either to write a mock grant proposal for a digital humanities project of their own design or, if it can be coordinated, to work on an existing project under the guidance of both the faculty leading the project and the teacher of this course. Students will come away from the course better equipped to imagine and carry out their own digital humanities projects or to make valuable contributions to ongoing ones. No prerequisites required.