2.1 Knowledge, Reality, and Values
3 hours, 3 credits

Philosophy’s distinctive ways of understanding and thinking about perennial human questions: “What can I know?”; “What is real?” “What is the basis of moral judgments?” Contemporary and traditional examples of philosophical analysis and criticism. (Not open to students who are enrolled in or have completed Philosophy 1.1 or Core Studies 10).
Prerequisite: None

Common Goals Addressed by Core course:
To develop the ability to think critically and creatively, to reason logically, and to express one’s thoughts orally and in writing with clarity and precision (9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16, 21).
To develop the ability to make sound moral judgments (1, 26).
To understand the arts, histories and cultures of the past as a foundation for those of the present (3, 4).
To understand what knowledge is and how it is acquired by the use of differing methods in different disciplines (2, 7, 17).
To be capable of integrating knowledge from diverse sources (28).
To produce informed and responsible citizens (8, 32)
To establish a foundation for life-long learning and the potential for leadership (29, 30).

Objectives of Core Course:
1) Students will improve critical thinking by developing skills of explaining, critically examining, and responding to philosophical theories, issues, and claims in the philosophical areas of epistemology, metaphysics, and ethics. (9, 10)
2) Students will improve writing skills by explaining, exploring, and critically examining philosophical theories, issues, concepts, and arguments relating to the philosophical areas of epistemology, metaphysics, and ethics clearly in writing. (11)
3) Students will improve communication skills by explaining orally philosophical theories, issues, claims, concepts, and arguments relating to the philosophical areas of epistemology, metaphysics, and ethics.
4) Students will improve skills of interpreting and evaluating philosophical writings. (13)
5) Students will develop an openness to having their beliefs challenged, will learn to hear and comprehend the views of others, and to entertain objections to their own views. (21)
6) Students will be able to explain several classic ethical theories, to compare and contrast ethical theories, and to apply these to justify conclusions relating to concrete moral issues. (1, 26)
7) Students will acquire a familiarity with and an understanding of some classic and contemporary philosophical literature and some fundamental philosophical issues, and will be able to explain important contributions to the history of philosophy and their relation to present viewpoints. (3,4)
8) Students will be able to explain several classic epistemological theories, and to compare and contrast theories of what knowledge is and how it is acquired. (2)
9) Students will be able to show that issues may be regarded from multiple viewpoints, and will be able to present reasons in support of each viewpoint. (28)
10) Students will improve reasoning skills and ethical decision making skills by acquiring an understanding of ethical theories and philosophical concepts that will enable them to develop their own opinions on conceptions and practices of moral interaction and democracy. (32)
11) Students will develop a conceptual foundation for future learning by exploring philosophical theories and arguments and will acquire related critical thinking and communication skills. (29,30)

**Outcomes for Core Course:**
1. Students can analyze difficult philosophical concepts and explain philosophical arguments, provide objections and respond to objections to philosophical arguments, and produce arguments to support positions on controversial issues. (9, 10)
2. Students explain, explore, and critically examine philosophical theories, issues, concepts, and arguments relating to the philosophical areas of epistemology, metaphysics, and ethics clearly in writing. (11)
3. Students explain orally philosophical theories, issues, claims, concepts, and arguments relating to the philosophical areas of epistemology, metaphysics, and ethics. (12)
4. Students reflect upon, engage with, explain and critically examine orally and in writing analyses, arguments, and conclusions of philosophical sources relating to the philosophical areas of epistemology, metaphysics, and ethics. (13)
5. Students are open to having their beliefs challenged; they hear and comprehend the views of others and entertain objections to their own views. (21)
6. Students can explain several classic ethical theories, compare and contrast ethical theories, and apply these theories to justify conclusions relating to concrete moral problems. (1, 26)
7. Students can interpret and critically examine some classic and contemporary philosophical literature, and students can identify and explain fundamental philosophical issues in and important contributions to the history of philosophy and their relation to present viewpoints. (3,4)
8. Students can explain several classic epistemological theories, and can compare and contrast theories of what knowledge is and how it is acquired, (2)
9. Students show that issues may be regarded from multiple viewpoints, and present reasons in support of each viewpoint. (28)
10. Students critically examine ethical theories and philosophical concepts and, thereby, can develop their own opinions on moral obligations, on moral responsibility, and on conceptions and practices of democracy. (32)
11. Students critically examine and explain some philosophical theories and arguments, and can apply these skills and knowledge to the exploration of philosophical theories and arguments encountered in the future. (29, 30)
Course Outline (with sample bibliography from which readings can be selected):

Weeks 1 - 5: KNOWLEDGE

1. Knowledge, belief and truth: criteria of knowledge; methods of acquiring knowledge; theories of knowledge, including rationalism and empiricism.
2. Skeptical attacks on knowledge claims

Sample readings:
Week 1- 2: C. S. Peirce, “How to Make our Ideas Clear;” Descartes: Meditations
Week 3 - 4: Locke, Essay (selections), Berkeley, A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge (selections), Hume, An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding (selections)
Week 5: John Pollack, “A Brain in a Vat”; Sextus Empiricus (selections on Pyrrhonian skepticism).

Weeks 6 - 10: REALITY

1. Arguments for and against the existence of God.
2. Traditional questions about the ultimate nature of reality: the nature of minds and bodies; monism, dualism, and pluralism; free will and determinism; personal identity.

Sample readings:
Week 7(2) - 8: Anselm, Proslogium (selections); Aquinas, Summa Theologica (selections); Hume, Dialogues concerning Natural Religion (selections), Paley (selection); Pascal’s Wager; William James’ “The Will to Believe”.
Week 10: John Perry, “A Dialogue on Personal Identity and Immortality”

Weeks 11 - 14: VALUES

1. Theories of Ethics. At least two of the following: Deontological ethics; Consequentialism; Contractarianism; Virtue ethics; Existentialist ethics.
2. Skepticism, relativism, ethical egoism.

Sample readings:
Week 12: Plato (selections); Aristotle (selections)
Week 13: Utilitarianism, Bentham (selections), J. S. Mill, Utilitarianism
Week 14: Kant (selections).

Methods of Evaluation: Midterm Examination (25%) , Final Examination(50%), Class Participation (10%), Short Papers (15%).

Methods of Assessment:
1. Students are asked to analyze an abstract philosophical concept, and to explain ambiguities in the concept.
2. Students are asked to consider a philosophical claim, and to present an argument in favor of or in opposition to this claim in a writing assignment.
3. Students are asked to give an oral presentation in which they explain a philosophical concept or issue examined in a philosophic work.
4. Students are asked to identify the premises and conclusion of an argument presented in a philosophical work, to explain how the premises support the conclusion, and to evaluate the argument.
5. Students are asked to explain a controversial issue, to explain a response to this issue presented in a philosophic work, and to present an argument supporting or an argument opposing this response.
6. Students are asked to explain and compare two different ethical theories (such as, for example, utilitarian ethics and Kantian or deontological ethics), and to explain how each theory would resolve a particular moral problem.
7. 1. Students are asked to identify and explain quotes characteristic of particular philosophical works.
7. 2. Students are asked to explain and compare the positions on a controversial issue presented in several different classic works considered in this course, and to explore the relation of these views to the view of a contemporary thinker and to their own view.
8. Students are asked to explain and to compare and contrast theories of a rationalist and an empiricist or a sceptic.
9. Students are asked to explain a controversial issue, to present their own view in response to this issue and to provide an argument supporting and an argument opposing their own view, to present an alternative response and an argument supporting this alternative response.
10. Students are asked to explain how some concepts and views of contemporary ethical theorists apply to ethical decisions in relation to human interrelations and issues and/or practices relevant to democracy.
11. Students are asked to critically examine and explain an unfamiliar passage from a philosophical work.
Sample Textbooks:

Steven M. Cahn (ed.), *Classics of Western Philosophy*, Hackett Publishing Co., Indianapolis.


Sample Bibliography:

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<tr>
<th>Author</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Plato</td>
<td>Meno</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Euthyphro, Apology, Crito (any two)</td>
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<td>Republic Books I – VI</td>
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<td>Augustine</td>
<td>Free Choice of the Will</td>
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<td>Descartes</td>
<td>Meditations (at least I-III plus one other)</td>
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<td>John Locke</td>
<td>Second Treatise on Government</td>
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<td>George Berkeley</td>
<td>Three Dialogues Between Hylas and Philonous</td>
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<td>David Hume</td>
<td>An Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding</td>
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<td>Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion</td>
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<td>Immanuel Kant</td>
<td>Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals</td>
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<td>John Stuart Mill</td>
<td>Utilitarianism</td>
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<td>On Liberty</td>
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