

**PHILOSOPHY DEPARTMENT**  
**COURSE DESCRIPTIONS**  
**FALL 2016**



**Phil 3105      Landmarks in the History of Philosophy**

Section MW3    Class Number 14408

Instructor: Daniel Campos

Email: [dcampos@brooklyn.cuny.edu](mailto:dcampos@brooklyn.cuny.edu)

Philosophy means the “love of wisdom.” In its ancient Greek conception, it is a form of love. But what is love?

In this course, we will read classical and contemporary philosophical works on the nature of love and its relevance for ethics and politics. We will investigate conceptions of love as a virtue, an emotion, and a sentiment.

Our main texts will be Plato’s Symposium and Martha Nussbaum’s Political Emotions: Why Love Matters for Justice. Thus we will have a classical Greek and a contemporary American discussion of love at the core of our discussions.

We will supplement these works with texts such as Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics (Book VIII), Charles Peirce’s essay “Evolutionary Love,” and C.S. Lewis’s The Four Loves.

Methodologically, we will place special emphasis on reading, comprehending, analyzing, and criticizing philosophical texts.

**Phil 3121      Modern Philosophy**

Section TY3    Class Number 14108

Instructor: Justin Steinberg

Email: [jsteinberg@brooklyn.cuny.edu](mailto:jsteinberg@brooklyn.cuny.edu)

This is a survey of seventeenth and eighteenth century philosophy, focusing on how thinkers of this period sought to reconcile human agency with new developments in science. We will examine how philosophers of this period conceived of nature, asking such questions as: What does it mean for one thing to be the cause of another? Is the physical world causally determined? What role does God play in the course of natural events?

Our main preoccupation, however, will be with how we fit into this picture. Are our bodies as determined as the rest of nature? What about our minds? Given that our minds causally interact with the physical world, how exactly are we to conceive of the mind’s place in nature? Are human freedom and moral agency compatible with physical determinism? Are they compatible with divine omnipotence?

In the final part of the course, we will turn to the conception, prevalent in the modern period, of philosophy as therapy. Philosophy promised to provide tools for self-perfection, enabling us to clarify our intellect and gain control over wayward emotions and desires so that we could become more virtuous and happier. We will explore the efficacy and limitations of the philosopher’s toolkit, investigating just how much control we have over our own happiness.

Among the figures that we will study in this course are: Descartes, Princess Elisabeth of Bohemia, Malebranche, Spinoza, Locke, Leibniz, Du Châtelet, and Hume.

**Phil 3130      American Philosophy**

Section MW2    Class Number 33249

Instructor: Daniel Campos

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“American philosophy” refers to the various philosophical traditions that have emerged in the United States as a result of distinctively American history, culture, and experiences.

Classical American philosophers such as Ralph Waldo Emerson, Charles Sanders Peirce, William James, Josiah Royce, John Dewey, and George Herbert Mead, and subsequent generations of their followers and critics, have engaged the major historical issues of philosophy from distinctive vantage points, and have developed original views such as transcendentalism, pragmatism, and naturalism.

In this course, we will study the historical development of American philosophy, centering our attention in the transcendentalist and pragmatist traditions. We will pay special attention to the ways in which American philosophers have responded to problems that emerged in Modern European philosophy regarding the dualisms or oppositions reason/will, intellect/sense, mind/matter, reality/appearance, transcendence/immanence, theory/practice, belief/action, fact/value, and individual/community. We will see how they have developed philosophical concepts, and in one notorious case, a philosophical system, to completely reconfigure our understanding of philosophy, its tasks and problems.

By the end of the semester, the student should understand American philosophy as a distinctive response to Modernity that is not, however, riding the “postmodern” bandwagon.

**Phil 3142      Existentialism**

Section MW11    Class Number 16190

Instructor: Samir Chopra

Email: [schopra@brooklyn.cuny.edu](mailto:schopra@brooklyn.cuny.edu)

Rare is the philosophical doctrine that straddles literature and philosophy as effortlessly as existentialism. Sometimes thought to be a purely French twentieth-century phenomenon, existentialism is both a philosophical position with a long pedigree and a literary movement with global presence and presence. In this class, we will examine some classic works—philosophical essays, short stories, and novels—in the existentialist tradition, looking at both literary and philosophical works in an effort to unpack existentialism’s central theses, understand their significance, and evaluate the works from a moral, political and metaphysical perspective. Among other things, we will explore why existentialism is held to be an atheist philosophy, why it resonates with Buddhism, and how it avoids charges of quietism and nihilism.

**Phil 3210      Reasoning**

Section MW12    Class Number 14110

Instructor: TBD

Email: TBD

Examination and development of reasoning skills. Informal logic. Topics such as meaning, definition, the analysis of arguments, fallacies. Use of examples in reasoning to apply principles studied. Legal reasoning, support for claims about public policy, scientific and philosophical arguments.

**Phil 3305      Ethics and Personal Relations**

Section TR3      Class Number 14409

Instructor: Penny Repetti

Email: [prepetti@brooklyn.cuny.edu](mailto:prepetti@brooklyn.cuny.edu)

This is a philosophy course, the focus of which is on the study and application of ethics in relationships. We will examine both the positive and negative qualities/characteristics that are present in relationships and what makes these relationships successful or not. We will also be evaluating moral obligations to self, family, friends, etc. Some topics for the class may include: friendship, marriage, divorce, love and sex, parent-child relationships, lying, cheating, etc.

**Phil 3306      Ethics and Society**

Section TR11    Class Number 14113

Instructor: Penny Repetti

Email: [prepetti@brooklyn.cuny.edu](mailto:prepetti@brooklyn.cuny.edu)

This is a philosophy course, the focus of which is on the study and application of ethics. Students will be exposed to several ethical theories, which they will utilize in their assessment of various ethical issues that arise in the world. Students will also learn to do the opposite--that is, look at various issues that arise in the world in order to assess the plausibility of various ethical theories. This will allow students to see how well these theories stand up in concrete contexts. Students will also learn how to support their views and through the use of reasoning, become open-minded critical thinkers. Some topics that we will be examining are: abortion, euthanasia, capital punishment, etc.

**Phil 3308      Race, Justice, and Equality**

Section TR2      Class Number 14114

Instructor: TBD

Email: TBD

A philosophical examination of race and racism centered around the moral values of justice and equality. Topics addressed include race as a social category, racial identity, the nature of racism, race neutrality and race consciousness, multiculturalism, and the relationships among values such as fairness, equality, and well-being. Contrasting points of view on measures designed to counter racism, including civil disobedience, affirmative action, racial reparations, and race-based restrictions on speech.

**Phil 3309      Environmental Ethics**

Section MW11 Class Number 16192

Instructor: Michael Menser

Email: [mmenser@brooklyn.cuny.edu](mailto:mmenser@brooklyn.cuny.edu)

The 21<sup>st</sup> century has brought with it a range of environmental problems that humanity (and the rest of the earth) have never encountered so what's Brooklyn College going to do about it? Global warming gets much of the press but mass extinction, soil degradation, water scarcity, and atmospheric and oceanic pollution pose problems potentially as catastrophic and NYC is feeling the impacts especially since Superstorm Sandy. Relatedly, a global economy heavily reliant upon oil, coal and gas threaten to further destabilize the global ecology as do further processes of economic development, urbanization, and population growth. And NYC is in the midst of a rebuilding effort which will spend 10s of billions to make us safer, but what kind of city do we want to create?

Mission of this class: 1) to become familiar with a range of ethical theories including human-animal rights, participatory democracy, environmental justice, and virtue ethics. 2) to be able to apply these theories to real world environmental cases both global and local and critique them; 3) to understand the historical, cultural, political and economic dimensions of environmental issues; 4) to critically assess the role(s) of the state, market, businesses, technologies and social movements for achieving sustainable development and "resilience"; 5) to understand the meanings of key terms in the debates: ecological footprint, sustainability, resilience, environmental racism/justice, food sovereignty, global warming, climate justice; green capitalism, "organic," commons. 6/ of special focus this term will be the food system and NYC's future given climate change and so much economic inequality.

So what should be done and who should do it? This is a central question in applied ethics.

We shall be especially focused on the issue of "sustainability" and sustainable development and related issues of agriculture, food, and democracy as they apply to both rural and urban areas. Brooklyn and Brooklyn College itself will be of particular focus as we look at activities and proposals to make the campus and the borough more "sustainable" and resilient and fights over just what that means. Also, students will be required to morally evaluate their own consumption practices and construct a project to make BC more sustainable/resilient.

**Phil 3315      Communication Ethics**

Section TR9 Class Number 14130

Instructor: Dena Shottenkirk

Email: [dshottenkirk@brooklyn.cuny.edu](mailto:dshottenkirk@brooklyn.cuny.edu)

Explore issues concerning journalistic integrity, the ethical dilemmas in advertising, internet issues including privacy and governance, and the complex issues of censorship. This course addresses the concerns inherent in our written, visual, and verbal communications with one another. Pertinent philosophical texts include, among others, Kant, Rawls, Mill, and Aristotle. Learn to identify issues within the media and articulate arguments regarding them in the applied ethics course.

**Phil 3316      Medical Ethics**  
Section TR2      Class Number 33250  
Instructor: Christine Vitrano  
Email: [cvitrano@brooklyn.cuny.edu](mailto:cvitrano@brooklyn.cuny.edu)

As biomedical technology progresses, new challenges to our traditional moral beliefs and practices are emerging. Medical ethics is the study of the moral issues and problems associated with the practice of medicine and the pursuit of biomedical research. Medical ethics deals with a broad spectrum of concerns that affect patients and their families, physicians and researchers, society as a whole, and even the unborn.

In this course, we approach these ethical issues through an examination of real cases, and we cover topics that range from the familiar (abortion, suicide, euthanasia) to the more obscure (assisted reproduction, stem cells, reproductive cloning). We shall also discuss the ethics of treating impaired babies, using animals and humans in research, allocating artificial and transplantable organs, and committing psychiatric patients involuntarily.

If you have any questions or would like to talk about this course, feel free to email me at [cvitrano@brooklyn.cuny.edu](mailto:cvitrano@brooklyn.cuny.edu) or stop by my office hours, which are on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 12:15 – 2:15 in room 3315 Boylan Hall.

**Phil 3318W      Computers & Ethics**  
Sections EM6      Class Number 15866      Instructor: Joseph Thurm (CISC)  
Section TR11      Class Number 15867      Instructor: Robert Zwick (CISC)  
Section MW11      Class Number 16189      Instructor: Robert Zwick (CISC)

From college bulletin:

Analysis of ethical issues pertaining to computers and the workplace, anonymity and privacy, copyright and patent law (as applied to software), computer crime, security, unauthorized use, codes of conduct for computer professionals, access and availability of computing technologies. Application of theoretical frameworks such as virtue ethics, deontological theories and utilitarianism to the ethical problems encountered in computing technologies. This is a Writing Intensive course. (This course is the same as Computer and Information Science 2820W.)

**Phil 3319      Ethical Issues in Electronic Mass Media**  
Section T3      Class Number 33269      Instructor: Barbara Lewis (TVRA)

From college bulletin:

Analysis and discussion of ethical issues related to television and radio. Case histories and role playing provide value judgments concerning entertainment, information, and advertising functions of mass media. (This course is the same as Television and Radio 3223.)

**Phil 3331      Happiness and the Meaning of Life**

Section TR9      Class Number 14132

Instructor: Christine Vitrano

Email: [cvitrano@brooklyn.cuny.edu](mailto:cvitrano@brooklyn.cuny.edu)

This course will center on two philosophical topics: happiness and the meaning of life. The first part of the course will focus on the concept of happiness, where we examine its nature, source and value. We begin with a review of the role played by happiness in the history of ethics, and then explore how it continues to play a role in contemporary moral debates. We shall also incorporate current empirical research on happiness into our discussions. The questions we examine include: What, after all, is happiness? Is it necessary for a worthwhile life? Is it sufficient? Does happiness depend on one's state of mind, one's circumstances, or both? Can a person be immoral, yet happy?

The second part of the course will focus on questions relating to what makes life meaningful or worthwhile. As Albert Camus explains, "Judging whether life is or is not worth living amounts to answering the fundamental question of philosophy." We shall investigate the meaning of life by considering a theistic approach, non-theistic alternatives, and an approach that questions the meaningfulness of the question.

If you have any questions or would like to talk about this course, feel free to email me at [cvitrano@brooklyn.cuny.edu](mailto:cvitrano@brooklyn.cuny.edu) or stop by my office hours, which are on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 12:15 – 2:15 in room 3315 Boylan Hall.

**Phil 3401      Metaphysics**

Section TY9      Class Number 16191

Instructor: Saam Trivedi

Email: [trivedi@brooklyn.cuny.edu](mailto:trivedi@brooklyn.cuny.edu)

Metaphysics, broadly understood as the study of reality, is often described as being at the abstract heart of Philosophy, with important connections to other branches of Philosophy ranging from Epistemology to Logic to the Philosophies of Mind, Science, and Language to Ethics to Aesthetics. In this class, we will discuss some central issues in contemporary analytic metaphysics such as: ontology; identity and individuation; properties; and causation. Both classic and contemporary readings will be used.

**Phil 3410      Knowledge & Belief**

Section MY9      Class Number 14134

Instructor: Robert Lurz

Email: [rlurz@brooklyn.cuny.edu](mailto:rlurz@brooklyn.cuny.edu)

What are the limits to human knowledge and understanding? Can we know and understand anything? Can we distinguish appearance from reality? Are there things that we cannot (or should not) know or understand? What are they and why? This course is intended to introduce students to a number of important philosophical issues and theories on the nature of knowledge and rational belief. Issues such as – skepticism, foundationalism, coherentism, and kinds of knowledge – are examined and discussed

from classical and contemporary philosophical perspectives. This is an excellent course for students who are interested in philosophy, philosophy of mind, philosophy of psychology, and philosophy of science.

**Phil 3423      Philosophy and Artificial Intelligence**

Section TR11    Class Number 14136

Instructor: Anatoly Nichvoloda

Email: [nichvoloda@yahoo.com](mailto:nichvoloda@yahoo.com)

Can a machine be conscious or possess genuine intelligence? What is intelligence? Can there be a behavioral criterion for intelligence? Is there a unique capacity human minds have that cannot be replicated by technological means? Are neural processes in some fundamental way different from processes in a digital computer? What's the relationship between computational processes and physical processes? Can a software event cause a physical event? Can computational processes support semantics? What does it mean to say that a machine understands something?

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is a research area that combines computer science, philosophy and biology. This course will introduce students to philosophical thinking about AI from historical and technological perspectives and progress through a number of core topics in classical AI. We will discuss landmark essays that form the foundation of AI and engage in a philosophical examination centered around concepts such as intelligence, perception, learning, memory, understanding, language, etc. The overall goal is to enable students to appreciate the philosophical importance and successfully navigate the conceptual complexity of the topics of machine intelligence and human-computer interaction.

**Phil 3512      Philosophy of Music**

Section TR2      Class Number 33256

Instructor: Saam Trivedi

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What is music? How is it related to sound, noise, and silence? Are musical works created or discovered? How are they related to performances and recordings? What is the value of music? What accounts for music's power? How can purely instrumental music be heard as sad or happy, considering it is devoid of life and mental states? Can music arouse mental states in us? Is there a distinct musical aesthetics of classical, rock, jazz, and non-Western musics? Using a variety of contemporary readings and musical examples, this class will deal with such philosophical questions. The class is cross-listed with the Music department and so gets both undergraduate and graduate students from both Philosophy and Music.

**Phil 3530      Philosophy of Language**

Section TR11    Class Number 33255

Instructor: Dena Shottenkirk

Email: [dshottenkirk@brooklyn.cuny.edu](mailto:dshottenkirk@brooklyn.cuny.edu)

Introduction to the main topics in philosophy of language, (a central field in contemporary philosophy), including notions of truth, reference, and meaning. The course will emphasize a historical analysis beginning with the late 19th century's Frege, and continuing into the 20th and 21st centuries' concerns with the study of meaning (Russell, Carnap, Tarski, Quine, Kripke, Stalnaker, etc.), including truth



conditions of sentences, formal languages versus natural human languages (the latter includes possible world analyses). This course does not presuppose any prior knowledge of philosophy of language. It is the definition of fun.

**Phil 3703      Political Philosophy**

Section MY12    Class Number 14137

Instructor: Samir Chopra

Email: [schopra@brooklyn.cuny.edu](mailto:schopra@brooklyn.cuny.edu)

In this class, by way of a close reading of several classical texts of political theory, we will examine many central questions of political philosophy. In particular, the nature and foundations of political power, the sovereign state, political resistance and revolution, conservatism, democracy, constitutional government, civil liberties, inequality, justice, the relationship between politics and law etc.

**Phil 3740      Philosophy of Law**

Section MW12    Class Number 14411

Instructor: Anna Gotlib

Email: [agotlib@brooklyn.cuny.edu](mailto:agotlib@brooklyn.cuny.edu)

This course explores the issues that arise at the intersection of questions about law and justice. We will critically analyze the nature and sources of law and legal institutions from the perspective of moral and political philosophy. Specifically, we will focus on topics such as equality and discrimination, the nature and sources of rights, the relationship between liberty and social (and governmental) control, the justification for punishment (including the death penalty), and the nature of, and approaches to, terrorism. We will engage with texts in legal history, legal philosophy, social and political philosophy, and court decisions.

**Phil 3805      Philosophical Issues Concerning Animals**

Section MW11    Class Number 33252

Instructor: Robert Lurz

Email: [rlurz@brooklyn.cuny.edu](mailto:rlurz@brooklyn.cuny.edu)

This course examines the philosophical issue on the mental and moral status of nonhuman animals.

Some of the issues that will be covered are:

- What kinds of thought and consciousness are animals capable of?
- Can animals think, have thoughts, beliefs, reasons?
- Can animals reason?
- Are animals capable of having knowledge of their own minds and the minds of other animals?
- Is it even possible for us to ever know what an animal is thinking or feeling? Can science ever tell us these things?
- Do some animals have free will?
- Are animals capable of doing things for moral reasons?
- What kinds of moral obligations do we have to animals, and why?
- Do animals have natural rights?
- Should we give some animals legal rights? Which animals? Which rights?

These issues will be examined through classical and contemporary writings in philosophy. This is an excellent course for philosophy majors and minors, students in psychology and biology, and students generally interested in examining these issues.

**Phil 3920      Internship in Philosophy 1 / Phil 3921 Internship in Philosophy 2**

Section VS1      Class Number 14138      /      Section VS1      Class Number 33254

Instructor: Dena Shottenkirk

Email: [dshottenkirk@brooklyn.cuny.edu](mailto:dshottenkirk@brooklyn.cuny.edu)

**NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS:**

1. ECPAT (anti-human trafficking org)
2. HOPE (job training organization)
3. Habitat for Humanity
4. NYC Fellowship for Affordable Housing (secures housing for HIV patients)
5. US Participatory Budgeting Project (direct democracy funding project)
6. Room to Grow (support for disadvantaged mothers/children)

**LEGAL:**

Various lawyers' offices

**BUSINESS AND PHILOSOPHY:**

Students can be placed in a particular business, and study in depth how business intersects with ethics.

**ART AND PHILOSOPHY:**

Students interested in art can intern in a gallery or museum while studying issues in contemporary aesthetic theory.