



Texas State University Department of Philosophy Graduate Course Descriptions Fall 2019

Texas State University
Philosophy Department
Comal 102
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MEMBER THE TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM

If you have questions or concerns about the Master of Arts in Applied Philosophy and Ethics program, please contact:

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Applied Philosophy
PHIL 5301 CRN# 10850
TR 9:30 – 10:50 AM

Instructor: Lijun Yuan, Ph.D.

Description: This course is an upper level course and also a graduate course in applied/practical ethics. We examine many of the major issues and questions that philosophers have raised in the past 2500 years. We will be exploring on questions of human nature, the nature of the Self, the nature of justice and goodness, and various ethical issues through the contemporary debates. We will read and assess classical and contemporary ethical theories regarding how to live a good life, but we will do so through applying them in contemporary moral controversies, such as, abortion, euthanasia, animal rights, affirmative action, capital punishment, torture, same-sex marriage, drugs, pornography, immigration, humanitarian intervention, and world hunger, etc.

Dialogue
PHIL 5302
CRN#10857
TR 12:30-1:50 p.m.
CMAL 116

Instructor: Jo Ann Carson, Ph.D.

Description: Dialogue is a collaborative course that is a part of the Philosophy Dialogue Series. The class will explore dialogical and dialectical reasoning, with emphasis on both philosophical conversation and philosophical writing. Each student will research and conduct at least one dialogue and will contribute to others through discussion. There are three parts to the course: Part I: Background of dialogical and dialectical reasoning in philosophy; Part II: Open dialogues led by members of the class; Part III: Paper writing. Required Texts: Readings posted on TRACS

Format: Interactive discussion

Evaluation: 30% Dialogue; 30% Quizzes; 30% Papers; 10% Class Participation

Professional Ethics
PHIL 5322 CRN # 13534
Online class

Instructor: Robert O'Connor, Ph.D.

Description: Ethics is the branch of philosophy that addresses issues of right and wrong, good and bad, and virtues and vices. In this class we will address perplexing ethical issues affecting professional life, especially the moral responsibilities and virtues of professionals in a broad range of fields. This class will begin by introducing students to the leading ethical theories in the Western tradition, including utilitarianism, Kantianism, and virtue ethics. Then we will apply these theories of moral agency to your responsibilities and rights as a professional in general and as a member of a particular profession. As a professional within a particular profession, besides the common issues that all professionals face, you will face certain special issues in relation to your work. The same basic principles apply, but the cases we will study should help you see with greater clarity how they do.

Traditionally, professional ethics focused on a few professions, especially engineering, health care, law. Today, not only has it expanded into many other fields, such as business, counseling, and journalism, but also most companies have ethics policies covering such topics as sexual harassment, discrimination, confidentiality, and informed consent. We will cover many of these fields and topics. Finally, although we will focus on professional ethics, the concepts that we learn apply to your personal life as a moral agent.

Environmental Ethics
PHIL 5323 CRN# 15333
MW 2 – 3:20 pm
Comal 116

Instructor: Vincent Luizzi, Ph.D.

Description: Exploration of major issues in environmental ethics concerning what the environment is along with what our ethical and social obligations are.

Meaning of Life
PHIL 5324 CRN# 18146
MW 12:30-1:50 p.m.
Comal 103

Instructor: Binita Mehta, Ph.D.

Description: Investigation of major theories of the meaning of life in Western and Eastern philosophies.

Seminar in Ethics
PHIL 5328 CRN#18157
MW 3:30 – 4:50 p.m.
Derrick 326

Instructor: Vaughn Baltzly, Ph.D.

Description: “Obligations to Future Generations”

Many of us believe we have obligations to future generations. But a few moments' reflection raises a number of questions concerning these obligations. In this course we will investigate three areas of philosophical interest related to our obligations to our descendants.

The first area of philosophical interest concerns those most immediate of our descendants: our offspring—those future individuals that we can directly impact (e.g., by bringing them into existence). Questions relating to this area of interest fall under the heading of what's often called “procreative ethics,” and we will likely begin our term with a quick tour of this field.

The deepest and most fundamental philosophical puzzles we'll consider, though, concern our obligations to more distant generations (e.g., those persons who will be conceived only after our deaths)—those individuals we are able to impact only indirectly. The most pressing questions relating to this area of interest fall under the heading of what Derek Parfit has famously called the “Non-Identity Problem.” For consider: the collective and individual decisions we make today will impact, not just the well-being of members of distant future generations, but also the very identity of (the individuals composing) those generations. But if that's the case, then it becomes difficult to understand how anything we do (or fail to do) today can be thought in any sense to harm these future generations. For example: suppose we fail to curb CO₂ emissions, thereby bequeathing to future generations an over-heated climate. What complaint could future individuals possibly have in this regard? For consider again that their very existence depends upon our very failure: had we done otherwise, and successfully curbed CO₂ emissions, those individuals would never have been born (though others would have been). Nevertheless, many of us still find it intuitively compelling to think that we ought, for the sake of future generations, to curb CO₂ emissions. Figuring out just how to resolve this puzzle thus becomes a central task in working out a coherent philosophical account of our obligations to future generations—even leaving aside the question as to the content of those obligations.

But of course: the proper content of these obligations is a matter of philosophical interest as well. So the third area of philosophical interest we'll explore in this course—one quite befitting our program's emphasis on applied philosophy—concerns what we ought actually to do, here and now, with regard to our descendants (assuming that we can find some satisfactory resolution to the Non-Identity Problem). In the semester's final few weeks, we will consider several recent books that set forth alternative visions for what we owe future generations.

Philosophy of Education

PHIL 5351 CRN#37188

TR 9:30 – 10:50 a.m.

Comal 116

Instructor: Jo Ann Carson, Ph.D.

Description: In this course we will examine the nature, goals, and methods of education, with emphasis on the dynamics of learning and teaching. Although the primary focus will be on philosophical problems and themes that have influenced educational theory and practice, we will take an interdisciplinary approach, and will explore issues involving cognitive and developmental psychology, educational ethics, sociology, language acquisition, and social-political theory.

Philosophy Theory of Science

PHIL 5355 CRN#18158

MW 3:30 – 4:50 p.m.

Derrick 241

Instructor: Burkay Ozturk, Ph.D.

Description: In this course, we will study the demarcation problem in philosophy of science: What is, if anything, the difference between science and non-science? We will discuss various descriptive solutions to this problem that have dominated philosophy of science during the better part of the 20th century. Then we will turn our attention to the possibility of an alternative: Among the beliefs that are traditionally seen as scientific, is it possible to distinguish between those that are worthy and unworthy of belief? In our investigation, we will examine the reward system and the authority structure by which the scientific community regulates itself and the conduct of individual scientists. We will also discuss some illuminating examples of the reward system working properly, albeit in surprising ways. We will also study cases of scientific fraud, and other localized attempts at circumventing the reward system and the authority structure. Then we will turn our attention to some larger-scale problems, including pathological science, p-hacking and other abuses of statistical testing, and the ways in which behavioral and life sciences generate large numbers of false positives.

Ethics and Dementia

PHIL 5360A CRN# 15583

Online class

Instructor: Olga Gerhart, Ph.D.

Description: This is a fully-online course, in which we will cover ethical dimensions of dementia. The goals of the course are that students

1. Understand and apply ethical theory
2. Recognize some important ethical dilemma individuals and care partners face with the diagnosis and progression of dementia
3. Resolve some of these dilemmas by applying ethical theory

Specific applied topic include telling the truth to people living with dementia, support after diagnosis, driving, sexuality, caring for family members, caring for professional care partners, decisions about withdrawing treatment for an incompetent patient, physician-assisted suicide, and the art of dying.