

# Course Descriptions

Fall 2018



**Boston University** College and Graduate School of Arts & Sciences  
Department of Philosophy

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# Undergraduate Courses

## CAS PH 100 A1

## Introduction to Philosophy

Professor Michaela McSweeney

*Monday, Wednesday, Friday 10:10AM-11:00AM*

This course is an introduction to reading, writing, thinking, and *doing* philosophy. The theme of the course is *people*. Some of the questions we may ask are: Who are we? (In two different senses: what is it to be the same person over time? And what is it to be a *self*?) What kinds of things are we capable of? (Can we, for example, travel through time?) What can we know about the world, and should we be worried that we might not know anything at all? Our scientific practices capable of telling us anything about reality? Do we have free will? Are we responsible for our actions? What is the relationship between mental illness and moral responsibility? Are our practices of punishment justified? What is it to have a meaningful life?

## CAS PH 100 B1

## Introduction to Philosophy

Professor Michaela McSweeney

*Monday, Wednesday, Friday 12:20PM-1:10PM*

This course is an introduction to reading, writing, thinking, and *doing* philosophy. The theme of the course is *people*. Some of the questions we may ask are: Who are we? (In two different senses: what is it to be the same person over time? And what is it to be a *self*?) What kinds of things are we capable of? (Can we, for example, travel through time?) What can we know about the world, and should we be worried that we might not know anything at all? Our scientific practices capable of telling us anything about reality? Do we have free will? Are we responsible for our actions? What is the relationship between mental illness and moral responsibility? Are our practices of punishment justified? What is it to have a meaningful life?

## CAS PH 150 A1

## Introduction to Ethics

Professor Benjamin Crowe

*Monday, Wednesday, Friday 10:10AM-11:00AM*

How ought I to live? What is the good life? What are the qualities that make a person good? Are all people self-interested, or is altruism possible? How can we evaluate moral judgments? Ethics is the enterprise of disciplined reflection on questions like these. In the first half of this course, we begin by examining both classic and contemporary philosophical approaches to these topics. In the second half of the course, we will investigate skeptical and feminist criticisms of these approaches, as well a prominent non-European (i.e., Confucian) stream of moral philosophy.

**CAS PH 150 B1****Introduction to Ethics**

Professor Daniel Star

*Tuesday, Thursday 9:30AM-10:45AM*

What is morality? What does morality require of us in our daily lives? We look both at theories that specify what morality requires of us and at specific moral issues to which these theories apply. Carries humanities divisional credit in CAS.

**CAS PH 150 C1****Introduction to Ethics**

Professor Derek Anderson

*Tuesday, Thursday 2:00PM-3:15PM*

This course engages with several of the main themes of ethics, one of the major subdivisions of philosophy. Why should a person care about morality? Is there an objective fact about what is right or wrong or is morality subjective? What is it for something to be good? How must a person act in order to be moral? We will investigate several abstract theoretical approaches to these questions and discuss reasons for and against embracing them. The second half of the course will focus on non-ideal ethical theory, an approach that begins with concrete issues in social justice rather than abstract principles. The non-ideal theories we will focus are aspects of Critical Race Theory. We will then go on to explore ways in which theories of knowledge and ethics are connected from a non-ideal perspective.

**CAS PH 155 A1****Politics and Philosophy**

Professor Ian D. Dunkle

*Monday, Wednesday, Friday 1:25PM-2:15PM*

Governing differently is taken by many at the moment to mean governing better. Protecting freedom is cited in favor of everything from the most restrictive to the most permissive policies. And threats of war have become a mainstay of political rhetoric. It is a good time, then, to consider the questions: What is justice? What is political freedom? And when, if ever, can fighting a war be justified? This course introduces students to longstanding insights and controversies surrounding these questions in political philosophy. Specific topics will include political legitimacy, the social contract, the right to property, personal freedom, the value of fairness and equality, and the moral parameters of commencing, waging, and responding to war. Readings will include selections from Plato, Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, Karl Marx, J.S. Mill, John Rawls, Martha Nussbaum, and others.

**CAS PH 160 A1****Reason and Argumentation**

Professor Judson Webb

*Tuesday, Thursday 9:05AM-9:55AM*

A systematic study of the principles of both deductive and informal reasoning, calculated to enhance students' actual reasoning skills, with an emphasis on reasoning and argumentation in ordinary discourse. Carries humanities divisional credit in CAS.

**CAS PH 160 B1****Reason and Argumentation**

Professor Derek Anderson

*Tuesday, Thursday 5:00PM-6:15PM*

This course is an introduction to philosophical methods of inquiry and discourse. We will have three major aims. The first is philosophical. We aim to understand the nature of reason and argumentation; the course will serve as an introduction to logic, epistemology, and philosophy of language. The second is practical. We aim to improve our ability to reason, construct arguments, and identify fallacies. The third is social. Reason and argument are central to the process of social change. In order to achieve a more just society, we need to reason together and argue with one another in ways that facilitate change of belief in the direction of knowledge and social justice.

**CAS PH 245 A1****Philosophy and Religion**

Professor Diana Lobel

*Monday, Wednesday, Friday 2:30PM-3:20PM*

Investigates the meaning and purpose of human life, the significance of God or an Absolute, the role of contemplation and action in the spiritual quest, relationships between philosophy and religious thought, East and West. Also offered as CAS RN 245.

**CAS PH 248 A1****Existentialism**

Professor Paul Katsafanas

*Tuesday, Thursday 11:00AM-12:15PM*

The existentialists grappled with some of the most difficult and problematic aspects of the human condition. Is it possible to lead a meaningful life? Might life be unavoidably absurd? What is it to be an authentic individual? Can you be alienated from yourself? Can the way in which we are seen by others limit our freedom? Does modernity foster nihilism? Do certain emotional experiences reveal otherwise hidden features of life? In this course, we will explore the ways in which Fyodor Dostoevsky, Søren Kierkegaard, Friedrich Nietzsche, Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, and Albert Camus responded to these questions.

**CAS PH 251 A1****Medical Ethics**

Professor Russell Powell

*Tuesday, Thursday 12:30PM-1:45PM*

Explores moral philosophical issues that arise in connection with medicine and emerging biotechnologies. Examines topics such as the right to healthcare, research ethics, euthanasia, abortion, concepts of death and disease, and assisted reproductive technologies. Carries humanities divisional credit in CAS.

**CAS PH 251 B1****Medical Ethics**

Professor Victor Kumar

*Tuesday, Thursday 11:00AM-12:15PM*

The topic of this course is ethical problems that arise in modern medicine. For example, we'll examine the moral acceptability or unacceptability of genetic enhancement, abortion, and euthanasia. Many of these issues have legal or political dimensions, but our focus will be on their ethical dimensions. In general, we'll explore whether different medical practices are morally right or wrong and why. Because this is a philosophy course, we'll approach these issues through careful reasoning and argumentation.

**CAS PH 261 A1****Puzzles and Paradoxes**

Professor Judson Webb

*Monday, Wednesday, Friday 12:20PM-1:10PM*

Some of our most basic beliefs, when scrutinized, lead to absurd conclusions. For example, using only beliefs that seem uncontroversial, we can conclude that motion is impossible, that everyone is bald, and it is impossible to give a surprise exam. Carefully scrutinizing the reasoning that leads to these absurdities often yields substantial philosophical insight. In this course, we will examine a number of such puzzles and paradoxes in detail. This course fulfills a single unit in the following BU Hub area(s): Philosophical Inquiry and Life's Meanings, Quantitative Reasoning I, Critical Thinking.

## CAS PH 265 A1

## Minds and Machines

Professor Juliet Floyd

*Tuesday, Thursday 2:00PM-3:15PM*

An investigation of ethical, computational, social, political and other normative questions affecting everyday life in a hyperconnected, computationally-driven world. We will critically explore the background to Turing's theory of computation and his Turing Test; Wittgenstein's treatment of meaning; ontology of networks; accountability and algorithms; truth and journalism; AI and consciousness; social media, virtual reality, aesthetics of new media and popular culture, persuasive technology, image and self in new media. Attention will be given to philosophical problems raised by these issues.

## CAS PH 270 A1

## Philosophy of Science

Professor Tian Yu Cao

*Tuesday, Thursday 12:30PM-1:45PM*

**Prerequisite:** One year of college science.

This introductory course is designed for those with little exposure to science. Main features of the scientific enterprise will be illustrated by examples in the study of physics, biology and psychology: the aims of scientific activities (understanding, prediction and control); the nature of scientific understanding (causal explanation with general applicability); scientific procedures (by which scientific theories are formulated, tested, accepted or rejected); the structure and interpretation of scientific theories (evidential support, models and hypotheses, laws and predictions; the cognitive significance of these components); the development of science (accumulation and/or revolution). Some concepts central to the natural and social sciences, (such as space, time, forces, atom and quantum; life and evolution, structure and function; facts, value and agents) will be examined carefully. Controversies among competing schools in the philosophy of science (logical positivism, falsificationism, historicism, social constructivism and feminism) over the objectivity and rationality of the scientific enterprise will also be discussed.

## CAS PH 300 A1

## History of Ancient Philosophy

Professor Benjamin Crowe

*Monday, Wednesday, Friday 11:15AM-12:05PM*

In this course, we will survey the beginnings of the Western philosophical tradition in ancient Greece and Rome. Beginning with Plato's portrait of Socrates in the *Apology*, we will examine how the Socratic ideal of disciplined questioning and rational reflection was taken up and reformulated by Plato, Aristotle, and their Hellenistic successors (Stoics, Epicureans, and Skeptics). Topics covered will include the nature of virtue and the good life, the fundamental structure of the natural world, moral psychology, and the relationship between humanity and the divine.

**CAS PH 300 B1****History of Ancient Philosophy**

Professor Benjamin Crowe

*Monday, Wednesday, Friday 1:25PM-2:15PM*

In this course, we will survey the beginnings of the Western philosophical tradition in ancient Greece and Rome. Beginning with Plato's portrait of Socrates in the *Apology*, we will examine how the Socratic ideal of disciplined questioning and rational reflection was taken up and reformulated by Plato, Aristotle, and their Hellenistic successors (Stoics, Epicureans, and Skeptics). Topics covered will include the nature of virtue and the good life, the fundamental structure of the natural world, moral psychology, and the relationship between humanity and the divine.

**CAS PH 310 A1****History of Modern Philosophy**

Professor Aaron Garrett

*Monday, Wednesday, Friday 10:10AM-11:00AM*

A survey of philosophy from Descartes to Kant, focusing on the nature and extent of knowledge and on metaphysics. Readings will include René Descartes, Princess Elisabeth, John Locke, Anne Conway, Benedict Spinoza, G. W. Leibniz, David Hume, and Immanuel Kant.

**CAS PH 310 B1****History of Modern Philosophy**

Professor TBA

*Monday, Wednesday, Friday 3:35PM-4:25PM*

An examination of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century philosophy from Descartes to Kant, with emphasis on the nature and extent of knowledge. Readings include Descartes, Locke, Spinoza, Berkley, Hume, and Kant.

**CAS PH 406 A1 (Cross PH 606)****Aristotle II**

Professor David Roochnik

*Thursday 6:30PM-9:15PM*

A careful reading of Aristotle's *Politics*.



**CAS PH 408 A1****History of Medieval Philosophy**

Professor Diana Lobel

*Tuesday, Thursday 2:00PM-3:15PM*

Thematic introduction to mysticism and philosophy, with a focus on dynamics of religious experience. Readings from medieval Jewish and Islamic philosophy; Sufi mysticism and philosophy; Kabbalah, Biblical interpretation, Sufi poetry, Hebrew poetry from the Golden Age of Muslim Spain.

**CAS PH 422 A1 (Cross PH 622)****Analytic Philosophy**

Professor Juliet Floyd

*Tuesday, Thursday 3:30PM-4:45PM*

The first seminar given in our department on a contemporary woman philosopher: Cora Diamond. Diamond's work spans nearly every basic area of philosophy, including logic, ethics, metaphysics, theory of truth, ontology, philosophy of language, mind (including animal mind), philosophy of action, pragmatism and empiricism. We will use her corpus to survey basic texts in early analytic philosophy as well as contemporary problems of ethics, aesthetics, and truth.

**CAS PH 436 A1 (Cross PH 636)****Gender, Race, and Science**

Professor Victor Kumar

*Tuesday, Thursday 2:00PM-3:15PM*

The topic of this course is the ethics and science of race and gender. We will use philosophical analyses of racism and sexism along with research in social science to understand modern social injustices. In the first half of the course, we will explore racial discrimination, structural oppression, and racism in the criminal justice system. We will discuss #blacklivesmatter and the scientific study of implicit bias. In the second half of the course, we will take an intersectional approach to sexism. We will examine the how women are subject to harassment, violence, and silencing.

**CAS PH 453 A1****Theories of Political Society**

Professor Judith Swanson

*Tuesday, Thursday 3:30PM-4:45PM*

Focuses on philosophical subjects relevant to ethics and politics, such as virtue and happiness; human nature and reason; qualifications of leadership; aims and means of civic education; and conceptions of law (man-made, natural, divine). Texts by Aristotle, Augustine, Aquinas, Machiavelli. Meets with CAS PO 391.

## CAS PH 456 A1 (Cross PH 656)

## Topics in Philosophy and Religion

Professor David Eckel

*Wednesday 5:45PM-8:30PM*

Topic for Fall 2018: Concept of the Person. Designed to run side by side with the Institute for Philosophy and Religion's fall lecture series on the Concept of the Person. Examples are chosen from contemporary Western philosophy, the study of religion, and the religious traditions of Asia. Also offered as CAS RN 397.

## CAS PH 461 A1 (Cross PH 661)

## Mathematical Logic

Professor Akihiro Kanamori

*Monday, Wednesday 2:30PM-4:15PM*

The syntax and semantics of sentential and quantificational logic, culminating in the Gödel Completeness Theorem. The Gödel Incompleteness Theorem and its ramifications for computability and philosophy. Also offered as CAS MA 531.

## CAS PH 470 (Cross PH 670)

## Philosophy of Physics

Professor Tian Yu Cao

*Tuesday 6:30PM-9:15PM*

**Prerequisite:** Two philosophy courses, a year of college physics; or consent of instructor

An introductory survey of fascinating problems in contemporary philosophy of physics. The basic ideas and main features of physical theories, which touch upon nature at its most fundamental level and interact most crucially with philosophy in general, are outlined, so that students will have a road map of the central problems in the field. Throughout, the driving theme is the entanglement of a radical revision in our conceptualization of the world (which is forced upon us by the changes in the physical picture of the world due to major developments in modern physics) with central philosophical issues in metaphysics and epistemology. Some areas of discussion include: the nature of space and time in relativity theories; probability and irreversibility in thermodynamics and statistical mechanics; the understanding of measurement, locality, causality, reality and objectivity in quantum theory; ontology, virtual entities, and attitudes toward infinities in quantum field theory.

In-depth conceptual analysis will be carried out in a non-technical way, without requiring either a thorough understanding of the technical details of physical theories or major competence in mathematics. The course is designed primarily for those who have a deep interest in philosophy of physics, or in theoretical physics, and plan to pursue advanced study in these areas. But it is also accessible to those who are interested mainly in the ideas of modern physics, or in the relevance of physics as a testing ground for general philosophical claims.

Professor C Allen Speight

*Friday 11:15AM-2:00PM*

This seminar is intended to be a general introduction to aesthetics and the philosophy of art, stretching from the development of aesthetic ideas (the beautiful, the sublime, the ideal) to contemporary claims about the "end" of aesthetics. In examining this development, the course will place particular stress on topics such as the notions of taste and aesthetic sense and their relation to cognition and emotion; the emergence of the notion of the fine arts and the philosophical development of the relation among artistic genres; philosophical engagement with and appropriation of specific works of art (Heidegger's Van Gogh, Hegel's Antigone); the limits of aesthetics and the notion of the "end" of art; and the relation between aesthetics and ethics/politics. Readings from the history of the tradition (Baumgarten, Lessing, Kant, Hegel, Nietzsche) and contemporary philosophers of art (Danto, Carroll, Lopes, Currie, Davies, Kivy, Guyer).

# Graduate Courses

**CAS PH 606 A1 (Cross PH 406)****Aristotle II**

Professor David Roochnik

*Thursday 6:30PM-9:15PM*

A careful reading of Aristotle's *Politics*.

**CAS PH 622 A1 (Cross PH 422)****Analytic Philosophy**

Professor Juliet Floyd

*Tuesday, Thursday 3:30PM-4:45PM*

The first seminar given in our department on a contemporary woman philosopher: Cora Diamond. Diamond's work spans nearly every basic area of philosophy, including logic, ethics, metaphysics, theory of truth, ontology, philosophy of language, mind (including animal mind), philosophy of action, pragmatism and empiricism. We will use her corpus to survey basic texts in early analytic philosophy as well as contemporary problems of ethics, aesthetics, and truth.

**CAS PH 636 A1 (Cross PH 436)****Gender, Race, and Science**

Professor Victor Kumar

*Tuesday, Thursday 2:00PM-3:15PM*

The topic of this course is the ethics and science of race and gender. We will use philosophical analyses of racism and sexism along with research in social science to understand modern social injustices. In the first half of the course, we will explore racial discrimination, structural oppression, and racism in the criminal justice system. We will discuss #blacklivesmatter and the scientific study of implicit bias. In the second half of the course, we will take an intersectional approach to sexism. We will examine the how women are subject to harassment, violence, and silencing.

**CAS PH 651 A1 (Cross JD 878)****The Color Line, Resistance, and Reparations**

Professor David Lyons

*Wednesday 2:10PM-4:10PM*

This seminar examines the oppressive role of race and ethnicity in American society from the early colonial period to the present, resistance to that oppression, and the moral case for both resistance and reparations. It will focus mainly on the experiences of Native Americans, African Americans, Asian Americans, and Latino Americans. Each seminar session will begin with a presentation by a seminar member, for which a schedule will be developed after the first seminar meeting. All readings will be available on our Blackboard website and will include the instructor's "Color Line" manuscript, relevant cases and statutes, and materials from secondary sources. Grades will be based primarily on the term paper, on an approved topic, which is written after comments have been received on a polished draft; class participation will also be considered. This seminar originates in the Law School and most seminar members are likely to be upperclass law students. Philosophy graduate students will meet an additional hour each week (or the equivalent; to be scheduled) to discuss *Dark Ghettos* by Tommie Shelby (Harvard 2016).

**CAS PH 656 A1 (Cross PH 456)****Topics in Philosophy and Religion**

Professor David Eckel

*Wednesday 5:45PM-8:30PM*

Topic for Fall 2018: Concept of the Person. Designed to run side by side with the Institute for Philosophy and Religion's fall lecture series on the Concept of the Person. Examples are chosen from contemporary Western philosophy, the study of religion, and the religious traditions of Asia. Also offered as CAS RN 397.

**CAS PH 661 A1 (Cross PH 461)****Mathematical Logic**

Professor Akihiro Kanamori

*Monday, Wednesday 2:30PM-4:15PM*

The syntax and semantics of sentential and quantificational logic, culminating in the Gödel Completeness Theorem. The Gödel Incompleteness Theorem and its ramifications for computability and philosophy. Also offered as CAS MA 531.

## CAS PH 670 (Cross PH 470)

## Philosophy of Physics

Professor Tian Yu Cao

*Tuesday 6:30PM-9:15PM*

**Prerequisite:** Two philosophy courses, a year of college physics; or consent of instructor

An introductory survey of fascinating problems in contemporary philosophy of physics. The basic ideas and main features of physical theories, which touch upon nature at its most fundamental level and interact most crucially with philosophy in general, are outlined, so that students will have a road map of the central problems in the field. Throughout, the driving theme is the entanglement of a radical revision in our conceptualization of the world (which is forced upon us by the changes in the physical picture of the world due to major developments in modern physics) with central philosophical issues in metaphysics and epistemology. Some areas of discussion include: the nature of space and time in relativity theories; probability and irreversibility in thermodynamics and statistical mechanics; the understanding of measurement, locality, causality, reality and objectivity in quantum theory; ontology, virtual entities, and attitudes toward infinities in quantum field theory.

In-depth conceptual analysis will be carried out in a non-technical way, without requiring either a thorough understanding of the technical details of physical theories or major competence in mathematics. The course is designed primarily for those who have a deep interest in philosophy of physics, or in theoretical physics, and plan to pursue advanced study in these areas. But it is also accessible to those who are interested mainly in the ideas of modern physics, or in the relevance of physics as a testing ground for general philosophical claims.

## CAS PH 688 A1 (Cross PH 488)

## Topics in Aesthetics

Professor C Allen Speight

*Friday 11:15AM-2:00PM*

This seminar is intended to be a general introduction to aesthetics and the philosophy of art, stretching from the development of aesthetic ideas (the beautiful, the sublime, the ideal) to contemporary claims about the "end" of aesthetics. In examining this development, the course will place particular stress on topics such as the notions of taste and aesthetic sense and their relation to cognition and emotion; the emergence of the notion of the fine arts and the philosophical development of the relation among artistic genres; philosophical engagement with and appropriation of specific works of art (Heidegger's Van Gogh, Hegel's Antigone); the limits of aesthetics and the notion of the "end" of art; and the relation between aesthetics and ethics/politics. Readings from the history of the tradition (Baumgarten, Lessing, Kant, Hegel, Nietzsche) and contemporary philosophers of art (Danto, Carroll, Lopes, Currie, Davies, Kivy, Guyer).

**GRS PH 819 A1****Ethics**

Professor Paul Katsafanas

*Tuesday 3:30PM-6:15PM*

Some of the most interesting recent work in ethics concerns a cluster of interrelated topics: attachment, loss, regret, hope, and normative inarticulacy. What is it to care about or be attached to something? Is this the same as viewing it as meaningful or important? Are there circumstances under which we can affirm past experiences that we deeply regret? How should we make sense of the fact that we struggle to put into words many of our deepest ideals and commitments? Is inarticulacy about normative commitments something to be lamented, or might it be an ineradicable feature of genuine commitments? What happens when we make choices that transform who we are in ways that we cannot predict? Can we knowingly put ourselves in circumstances which render our previous normative commitments nonsensical? We'll explore these questions with readings from L.A. Paul, David Velleman, Adrienne Martin, Ruth Chang, Elizabeth Barnes, Charles Taylor, Jay Wallace, Sharon Street, Jonathan Lear, and others.

**GRS PH 850 A1****Ethics**

Professor Aaron Garrett

*Monday 2:30PM-5:15PM*

This seminar will provide a close reading of Hume's *A Treatise concerning Human Nature*, a work that Hume intended as a complete philosophical system including metaphysics, the theory of knowledge, the philosophy of mind, psychology, moral philosophy, and more. Although relatively neglected on publication it is today often considered the most important and influential work of Anglophone philosophy. *Many* contemporary philosophical concepts and positions have their source in this work.

In addition to *A Treatise* we will also read selections from the later *Enquiries* and *Essays*, as well as secondary sources, to get a better grasp on how Hume understood his early masterwork.

**GRS PH 881 A1****Proseminar for First-Year Graduate Students**

Professor Daniel Star

*Tuesday, Thursday 11:00AM-12:15PM*

This seminar is open only to first-year PhD students in philosophy, all of whom are required to enroll. The seminar is designed to help incoming graduate students hone several invaluable philosophical skills, including those needed for effective presentation and defense of one's ideas. Topics vary by semester.



Professor Michaela McSweeney

*Wednesday 2:30PM-5:15PM*

A workshop seminar offering advanced graduate students the opportunity to present and discuss work-in-progress (dissertation chapters, papers for job applications, journal submissions). A serious commitment to regular and continuing attendance is expected.