

## WINTER 2011 GRADUATE COURSE OFFERINGS

### **PHIL\*6150 Contemporary European Philosophy II**

**INSTRUCTOR: J. Lampert**

#### **Brief Course Synopsis:**

This course concentrates on the philosophy of Theodor Adorno. A major figure in critical theory (Frankfort School), Adorno was a brilliant original philosopher whose work does not fit easily into any category. We will focus on four of his major contributions: his political philosophy, tied to critical theory's loose appropriation of Marxism; his critique of popular culture and the culture industry; his conceptualization and defense of new classical music (from Schoenberg to Stockhausen); and his powerful interpretation and negative twists on Hegel's dialectic. Adorno's writing style is oddly organized, fragmented but carefully interwoven, and his thinking and writing is dialectical down to the structure of individual sentences. Part of our goal in this course is to learn to think and write dialectically in Adorno's fashion, and to assess how to make use of his version of critical theory as resources for our own philosophizing about politics, culture, and art.

#### **Texts:**

Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*

Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*

Adorno, *Philosophy of New Music* and some related essays

Horkheimer, *Traditional and Critical Theory*

### **PHIL\*6200 (x4390) Problems of Contemporary Philosophy**

**INSTRUCTOR: D. Dedrick**

#### **Brief Course Synopsis:**

This course is a course in and on experimental Philosophy (EP). EP is a recent "movement", largely but not entirely within analytical philosophy. It seeks to clarify, and to inform certain philosophical issues by appealing to the results of surveys designed to determine people's attitudes to, and applications of, concepts of philosophical interest. In one famous example of this research, the experimenter (namely the philosopher) manipulated a variable to determine the extent to which moral reasoning (by non-philosophers) is utilitarian.

Other studies have investigated concepts of knowledge, consciousness, the ascription of moral responsibility—there is a long list. Class is twice a week. In the Tuesday class, there will be a lecture on some aspect of EP, as well as an evaluation and criticism of the EP paradigm. On Thursday, students will engage in the planning and construction of an EP study, with the assistance of the instructor.

#### **Course requirements:**

1 assignment on readings

1 collaborative study in EP

#### **Textbook(s):**

Anthony Appiah, *Experiments in Ethics* (Harvard)

Joshua Knobe and Shaun Nichols, Eds., *Experimental Philosophy* (Oxford)

## **PHIL\*6210 Metaphysics**

**INSTRUCTOR: P. Loftson**

### **Brief Course Synopsis:**

In this course we will explore different facets of personal identity. Some of these issues include:

- 1) what various philosophers have supposed that personal identity is, in both 'thick' and 'thin' versions of the concept of a person;
- 2) what the relationships may be between being a person, being a human being, being a living thing, being a bodily thing, and being a conscious or thinking being; and
- 3) whether being a person *matters*, and, if so, why.

### **Texts:**

(1) Mark Johnston, *Surviving Death*. Princeton University Press, 2010.

(2) TBA

**Assignments for the course:** a class presentation (15%), three short papers (45%), and a term paper (40%).

## **PHIL\*6240 Biomedical Ethics**

**INSTRUCTOR: K. Houle**

### **Brief Course Synopsis:**

In this course we will explore a set of closely-related human phenomena: blood donation, bone marrow donation, fetal tissue donation, sperm and ova donation, embryo donation, adoption, organ donation, cadaver donation. In the bioethical literature, these kinds of practices and acts are typically heralded as among the most noble, unselfish acts human beings are capable of.

Yet, as Derrida asserts in *Given Time*, "for there to be a gift, there must be no reciprocity, no return, exchange, counter-gift or debt." If there is giving and receiving, he goes on to say, no gift, no real generosity, no altruism will have taken place; rather, some kind of exchange will have occurred. We will work from such recent critical philosophical conversations on gifts and generosity (post-structuralist, phenomenological and feminist perspectives) to ask: Are these acts of (as Rosalyn Diprose names them) 'corporeal generosity' immune to Derrida's critique, or further instantiations of the impossibility of the gift? What is at stake in challenging the narrative of generosity which undergirds these practices? What other dimensions of ethicality are expressed in these acts which go beyond the question of generosity?

**Note:** Students in the course are expected to participate in a hands-on workshop in the Gross Human Anatomy lab, on January 17<sup>th</sup>, and any other off-shore field trips arranged in conjunction with this course.

**Textbook(s):** If known

*The Gift of Death* Jacques Derrida. Translated by David Wills. University of Chicago Press, 1995.

Selections from *Fetal Subjects: Feminist Positions* (Lynn Morgan and Meredith Michaels, eds); *Corporeal Generosity* (Rosalyn Diprose);

*The Logic of the Gift: Toward an Ethic of Generosity* (Alan Schrift, ed);

*The Primacy of Perception* (Maurice Merleau-Ponty);

various articles from journals. These articles will be made available to students.

**PHIL\*6310 (x4400) Plato (The Trilogy: *Theaetetus*, *Sophist*, and *Statesman*)**

**INSTRUCTOR: K. Dorter**

**Brief Course Synopsis:**

The *Theaetetus*, *Sophist*, and *Statesman* are among Plato's most important dialogues both individually and as a group. For example, the *Theaetetus* is the first discussion of knowledge as justified true belief; the *Sophist* explores the possibility of falsity and the concept of Being (Heidegger wrote a book length commentary on it); and the *Statesman* introduces the concept of the golden mean. As a group the dialogues follow the *Parmenides*, in which a very young Socrates explains his theory of forms to Parmenides, who apparently demolishes it with a series of refutations. The significance of this, and the way the trilogy responds to it, is a major issue for understanding Plato's philosophy as a whole. The course will examine the three dialogues through a mixture of lectures and seminars.

**Textbook(s):** *Plato, Complete Works* (edited by Cooper and Hutchinson) ISBN 0-87220-349-2

**Course requirements / evaluation:**

Two exegeses, either essays or seminars depending on enrollment.

**PHIL\*6340 Modern Philosophy**

**INSTRUCTOR: P. Sheridan**

**Brief Course Synopsis:**

This course will focus on 17<sup>th</sup> century rationalism. We will be focusing on two major thinkers of this period: Descartes and Spinoza. By devoting substantial attention to their work, we will aim to draw lines of influence from Descartes to Spinoza, as well as significant points of departure. We will focus our attention on Descartes's *Meditations*, and the replies, as well as his work *Passions of the Soul*. For Spinoza we will concentrate our attention on his ambitious work, *Ethics*, along with other selected writings. This course will also integrate secondary literature into our discussions. A complete and detailed list of required texts will be forthcoming.

**PHIL\*6900 Reading Course**

**INSTRUCTOR: TBA**

**Brief Course Synopsis:**

This course is intended as an intensive course of reading chosen by the student in consultation with a faculty member.

**Restriction(s):**

Instructor consent required

**PHIL\*6950 MA Research Seminar**

**INSTRUCTOR: J. Harvey**

**Brief Course Synopsis:**

A seminar course in which students work on developing a range of academic skills for doing professional philosophy. The structure of the course and sequence of the units are timed in coordination with a student's progress through the MA degree program. Units to be covered in the first half of the course will include: grant writing; teaching skills (including discussions of pedagogy and practice teaching sessions); and strategies for formulating and framing philosophical research projects (including workshops on writing thesis proposals). The second half of the course will be geared towards organizing, participating in, and staging a student-run philosophy conference. Units to be covered will include: research skills (including literature reviews and preparing an annotated bibliography); and writing a paper for a philosophy conference (including workshops on paper writing, peer commentaries, attending philosophy

talks, and oral presentation and moderating skills). This course is pass/fail and is mandatory for all incoming MA students (note: students must register for it in both fall and winter semesters).

**PHIL\*6960 PhD Research Seminar**

**INSTRUCTOR: J. Hacker-Wright**

**Brief Course Synopsis:**

A seminar course in which students work on developing a range of academic skills for doing professional philosophy. The structure of the course and sequence of the units are timed in coordination with a student's progress through the PhD degree program. Units to be covered in the first half of the course will include: grant writing; teaching skills (including discussions of pedagogy and practice teaching sessions); and preparing for the job market in philosophy (including job searches, writing cover letters, and developing a CV). The second half of the course will be geared towards preparing students for the Oral Qualifying Exam (OQE). Units to be covered will include: preparing for the OQE (including writing and critically evaluating thesis proposals, preparing an annotated bibliography, and giving a mock OQE); and research skills (including literature reviews, writing a philosophy paper for publication, and learning to be a philosophical interlocutor). This course is pass/fail and is mandatory for all second year PhD students (note: students must register for it in both fall and winter semesters).

**PHIL\*6990 Guided Research Project**

**INSTRUCTOR: TBA**

**Brief Course Synopsis:**

A guided research project undertaken by students doing an MA by course work, under the supervision of a faculty member.