

Philosophical Investigations Master Syllabus

Cluster

Wisdom, Faith, and the Good Life

How do faith and reason help us to know what is good and true? What does faith have to offer reason, and what does reason have to offer faith? Faith opens new horizons for reason, and reason challenges faith to greater understanding and refinement. *Theology* is the free, rigorous, and methodological study of God's self-revelation in the person of Jesus Christ encountered in community. *Philosophy* is the free, rigorous, and methodical use of logic and argument in search of truth. The courses in this cluster introduce students to the experience of doing philosophy and theology, both where they converge and where they diverge. The experience of doing philosophy well is of discovering new, surprising, wonderful, and sometimes baffling depths and complexities to existence, our lives, and our beliefs. The aim of theology is the good life as informed by the critical study of sacred scripture, the lives and ideas of people who search for God, and the moral investigation of the personal and common good. Theology integrates the methods of many disciplines such as philosophy, history, literature, and science. This cluster plays a special role in the Catholic mission of King's College to transform minds and hearts with zeal in communities of hope.

Core Goals Served in this Category

Goal 2: To lead students to become conversant with the Catholic intellectual tradition.

Goal 3: To enable students to recognize, formulate, and address matters of moral significance and concern

Core Learning Outcomes

A student successfully completing a course in Philosophical Investigations will be able to

1. Construct and defend an argument on wisdom, faith, or the good life (Core Goal 2.4)
2. Construct, evaluate, and defend moral arguments about matters of contemporary and perennial importance (Core Goal 3.4)

Catalog Description / Introduction

An exploration of one or more of the main areas of philosophy: ethics, metaphysics, epistemology, logic, political philosophy, or aesthetics. The courses offered in this category are intended to build upon the introductions to the main areas of philosophy that students receive in the first philosophy course. *Prerequisite*: none, but PHIL 101: Introduction to Philosophy is strongly recommended.

Intangibles / Aspirations / Other Category-Level Elements

In addition to the outcomes assessed in this category, other Core outcomes might be developed and addressed by various courses Philosophical Investigations. Skills, competencies, and dispositions relevant to the subject of philosophy might also be cultivated in this category.

- To help students develop the foundational skills and competencies of written communication, critical inquiry and analysis, and technological competency and information literacy (Core Goal 1)
- Identify and explore ideas of faith, reason, and meaning (Core Goal 2.1)
- Critically analyze some of the Catholic intellectual tradition's major texts, themes, concepts, figures, and histories (Core Goal 2.2)
- Demonstrate a basic knowledge of philosophical and Christian ethics (Core Goal 3.1)
- Analyze moral arguments about matters of contemporary and perennial importance in view of differing moral perspectives locally and across culture (Core Goal 3.2)
- Develop self-awareness about core moral convictions and a capacity for self-criticism and scrutiny (Core Goal 3.5)

Teaching Methods and Assessment

1. Core learning outcomes 1 and 2 will be assessed using a rubric with a 4-point scale to grade an essay on an exam or a paper.
2. The course-level outcomes will be assessed by methods of the instructor's choice, for example exams and papers.

Texts

Each instructor may choose a text or texts best suited to his or her pedagogical goals and individual teaching style.

Additional Information / Resources for Instructors

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Courses

PHIL 170: Introduction to Logic (3)

The principal aim of logic is to develop a system of methods and principles that may be used as criteria for evaluating the arguments of others and as guides in constructing arguments of one's own. This course emphasizes both formal and informal logic.

PHIL 171: Popular Culture and Philosophy (3)

This course explores fundamental questions of human existence through the lens of popular culture. While a good deal of popular culture is undoubtedly shallow and ephemeral, some is substantive and enduring. Popular but high-quality films (e.g., Star Wars and The Matrix), television series (e.g., House), and books (e.g., Harry Potter and The Lord of the Rings) often

raise big questions in compelling ways. Although particular topics and readings in this course will vary from semester to semester, likely topics include: the limits of human knowledge, the nature of reality, the possibility of free will, ethical decision making, individual liberty versus state authority, the meaning of life, and life after death.

PHIL 172: Environmental Ethics (3)

An exploration of ethical issues and theories relating to the natural environment. The topics addressed include biodiversity, population, pollution, energy, human attitudes toward nature, and animal rights.

PHIL 173: Ethics and the Good Life (3)

This course explores fundamental questions about the moral life and its relation to meaning and human fulfillment. Those questions include: How do we determine which actions are morally right? What kind of person should we become? If we do choose to commit to living a moral life, is this likely to inhibit or to enhance our well-being? This course will examine answers given by historically influential thinkers and consider how their answers apply to contemporary moral issues.

PHIL 174: Bioethics (3)

It has been proposed that bioethics is what angels — disembodied and immortal — would not have. More precisely, bioethics concerns issues and problems that arise in virtue of the bodily nature we human beings have: issues and problems around conception and birth, health and sickness, aging, dying, and the research we conduct and the technologies we have developed to ameliorate and enhance the human condition. Like bioethics itself, this course is concerned with moral theory as well as practice. Possible topics include the appropriate “ends” of health care, the provision of health care, and the many controversies over different healthcare practices and procedures.

PHIL 175: Social and Political Philosophy (3)

Social institutions, like marriage and the family among countless others, and political institutions, like departments of motor vehicles and police departments and the many other apparatuses of the state, profoundly shape our lives in ways both subtle and pronounced. But with what justifications? How should our common life be organized? What does justice demand? This course investigates such topics as the common good, the proper role of government, the relationship of citizen and state, human rights, right relations among states, marginalization and oppression, and social and economic justice.

PHIL 176: Eastern Philosophy (3)

This course is a survey of Eastern philosophy. The topics addressed may include ethics, death, reality, self, and knowledge. The schools of Eastern philosophy studied may include Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism. In studying Eastern philosophy students will be exposed to, and learn appreciation for, different perspectives on traditional philosophical issues. Students will develop and refine their ability to offer criticism of philosophical positions and will develop the ability to form their own educated views on philosophical issues.

PHIL 177: Death and the Meaning of Life (3)

Any person who is conscious of death has wondered: How should we think about death? How is death connected with the human quest for meaning? And will I continue to live in some way after I die? These questions have occupied humankind from earliest times and perhaps penetrate the issue of self more deeply than any other. This course will examine a number of issues that arise once we begin to reflect on our mortality. What does it mean to say that a person has died? Are we, in some sense, immortal? Would an immortal life actually be desirable? Is death an evil, something to be feared? Is there some objective, overarching meaning to life? Or is it the case, as nihilists claim, that human existence is “absurd” and has no meaning at all?

PHIL 178: Mythology, Tragedy, Philosophy (3)

We often mark the beginning of the western philosophical tradition with thinkers like Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. Loving wisdom, however, extends much further back than these famous men and this tradition is rich in stories that form the foundation of what we typically think of today as philosophy. In this course we will examine this tradition and pay particular attention to myth and tragedy, with an eye to how the Socrates of Plato’s dialogues emerges against their background. We will be particularly interested in how these different texts engender ways of knowing and discerning the truth about the relationship between chaos and order, different types of justice, the importance of family, the sacred and the profane, self-knowledge, and what, ultimately, wisdom really is and what it is to love it.

PHIL 179: Faith and Reason

PHIL 180: Justice

PHIL 181: Feminist Philosophy

This course provides a broad survey of the problems, theories, and critical tools developed by feminist thinkers from a philosophical perspective and is organized around two questions: what does philosophy have to contribute to feminism and what does feminism have to contribute to philosophy? With respect to the first question, possible topics may include the relationship between sex and gender, nature and culture, the materiality of bodies and the social processes of normalization, as well as forms of structural injustice and oppression at the intersection of sex, gender, sexuality, race, and class. With respect to the second question, possible areas of inquiry may include Feminist Ethics, Feminist Epistemology, Feminist Aesthetics, and Feminist Theories of Agency.

PHIL 182: Philosophy, Science, and Religion (3)

Are religion and science opposed to one another? Does science show that religious beliefs are unwarranted or irrational? Was the universe created? Does the universe have a purpose? Is life ultimately reducible to chemistry? Do recent developments in physics provide support for traditional religious beliefs? Are there inherent limits to what science can tell us about the nature of reality?

Phil 183: The Creative Vision of Alfred Hitchcock (3)

This course explores fundamental questions of human existence through the films of Alfred Hitchcock. The films we will consider include Shadow of a Doubt, Rope, Rear Window,

Vertigo, The Birds, and North by Northwest. Among the topics we will consider are the nature of good and evil, the meaning of life, the nature of love, and appearance and reality.

Phil 184: Scientific, Pseudoscientific, and Medical Reasoning (3)

This course will begin with the basis of scientific reasoning: abduction or “inference to the best explanation.” We will learn why scientific reasoning is needed and works, why scientific experiments are designed the way they are, and why science is our most reliable guide to knowledge of the human body and the physical world. Throughout the semester, numerous reasoning methods and scientific skills will be developed, many of which are relevant to the health sciences. In the end, the student will also be able to recognize pseudoscience, understand the limits of scientific reasoning, and appreciate its value for living the good life.