

## Fall 2016 Philosophy Course descriptions – Upper division

### **352: Philosophy of Law**

Instructor: **Amanda Trefethen**, atrefeth@csulb.edu

TOPICS: This course will introduce students to the study of philosophical topics related to law and its adjudication. Some of the questions we will address include: What is law? Why, when, and how are we constrained by the law? Is there an essential relationship between law and morality? Can there be a "right answer" in legal disputes? And what does it mean to have "liberty"? Toward this end, we will analyze the theoretical debates between legal positivism and natural law, as well as engage in a discussion of more specific legal and normative topics such as tort law, free speech rights, privacy rights, paternalism, and the duty to rescue. Our readings will be drawn primarily from the historical development of the philosophy of law, including works by such philosophers as Thomas Aquinas, J.S. Mill, John Austin, H.L.A. Hart, Lon Fuller, John Rawls, Judith Thomson, Margaret Radin, and Ronald Dworkin.

REQUIREMENTS: To meet the University requirements for IC courses, students will have a writing assignment no later than the fifth week of the semester, with sustained writing throughout the course. Requirements for the course include: significant class participation, weekly writing assignments, a short paper (5 pages), a mid-term examination, and a *comprehensive*, two-hour, in-class, final examination.

### **382: Theory of Knowledge**

Instructor: **Charles Wallis**, Charles.wallis@csulb.edu

"Is my girlfriend or boyfriend cheating on me?" "Could Alan Greenspan have failed to know that the self-interest of lending institutions would prove woefully inadequate to protect shareholders' equity?" "Are the people who still believe Obama is a Muslim the same people who still believe that there were weapons of mass destruction in Iraq?" These questions are the ponderings of our everyday lives. However, such practical questions presuppose answers to deeper philosophic questions regarding the nature, sources, structure, and extent of human knowledge; (1) "What is the nature of knowledge?" (2) "What are the sources of knowledge for humans (and others?)?" (3) "Is there a relationship or structure between individuals bits to human knowledge and if so, what is that structure?" (4) "What are the limitations of knowledge for humans (and others?)?" An adequate answer to the first question would tell us what sorts of things can be (or are) knowledge, what properties distinguish knowledge from other states (like opinions), and how (and to what extent) knowledge benefits the knower. An adequate answer to the second question would provide a basis for identifying the sources (and potential sources) for human knowledge, how these sources give us knowledge, if these sources would provide knowledge for other creatures, how we could tell if other sources were potential sources of knowledge for some creatures, etc.. Similarly, an answer to the third question would tell us what, if anything, humans cannot know, what conditions would prevent knowledge, and even what humans might find difficult to learn and know. Thus, the study of epistemology enriches our understanding of ourselves as cognitive creatures and leads, potentially to improvements in our efficacy as epistemic agents in the real world. This class looks at important answers to the philosophic questions underlying our everyday concerns about knowledge and knowing. We will survey the works of historical and contemporary thinkers from Philosophy and Psychology. The class also examines the background assumptions and methodology behind the views of these thinkers and of contemporary philosophy in general.

### **403: Medical ethics**

Instructor: **Patrick Dieveney**, patrick.dieveney@csulb.edu

In this course, we will be exploring a wide range of issues in contemporary biomedical ethics. Topics discussed in the course include ethical issues concerning the professional-patient relationship, human and animal research, physician-assisted suicide, abortion and embryonic stem-cell research, and social justice and health-care policy. The primary goal in the course is to introduce students to various ethical issues and debates surrounding the bio-medical sciences, and equip them with the analytical tools necessary to appreciate the various positions and arguments. The course should prove beneficial to those for whom this may be their only philosophy course, and it will provide a good background for those who wish to pursue further studies in philosophy.

### **405: Philosophy of Literature**

Instructor: **Nellie Wieland**, Nellie.wieland@csulb.edu

This course asks questions about literature and fiction such as:

*What is literature?*

*What is a work of fiction?*

*What is the ontology of fiction?*

*What is the logic of assertion, truth, and meaning in fictional worlds?*

*How do we psychologically participate in fictions?*

Much of the course will involve reading philosophical works that address these kinds of questions. The primary philosophical work we will use is:

*Mimesis and Make-Believe* by Kendall Walton

This will be supplemented by excerpts from other authors including material from Plato, Nietzsche, David Lewis, Amie Thomasson, and Jorge Luis Borges.

We will also read a lot of actual literature. The theme for Fall 2016 is self-knowledge. We will look at literature by St. Augustine, George Eliot, Ralph Ellison, Fyodor Dostoevsky, Saul Bellow, Marcel Proust, Milan Kundera, Henry James, Lydia Davis, and David Foster Wallace. Among the longer works (full-length novels) students are typically given a choice among several options. Nevertheless, there will be a staggering amount of reading for this course. And it will be difficult. We're not reading airport books or philosophy lite. If you don't love to read, this is not the course for you. But if you do love to read, and want to learn more about philosophical perspectives on literature, then this course will be a little painful and a little awesome.

No special philosophical or literary background is required for this course. But, in general, both kinds of background will add to your enjoyment. We will write regularly, maybe every week or so building up to an original intensive term paper.

### **414/514: British Empiricism**

Instructor: **Lawrence Nolan**, lawrence.nolan@csulb.edu

In this course we shall investigate the rich and lively philosophical debates between the three leading British Empiricists—Locke, Berkeley, and Hume—and between them and the Continental Rationalists (Descartes, Spinoza, Malebranche, and Leibniz). Topics to include the origin of ideas, the nature of the mind or self, proofs of God's existence, proofs for the existence of the external world, skepticism and the limits of human knowledge, causation, the primary-secondary quality distinction, real vs. nominal essences, and the problem of induction.

Open discussion of the philosophical issues will be strongly encouraged.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

- a) Regular attendance and frequent participation
- b) Two take-home assignments
- c) Final Exam
- d) Extra-credit option: in-class debate

Graduate Students:

- a) Two take-home assignments (or term paper)
- b) Final Exam
- c) Critique sampling of undergraduate papers

TEXTS:

Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (Penguin)  
Berkeley's *A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge* (Oxford)  
Berkeley's *Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous* (Oxford)  
Hume's *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (Hackett Publishing)

**421/521: Plato**

Instructor: **Max Rosenkrantz**, max.rosenkrantz@csulb.edu

We will read the *Theaetetus* and *Sophist*, two of Plato's most philosophically rich dialogues.

**451i: Race, Ethnicity, and Gender in American Law**

Instructor: **Amanda Trefethen**, atrefeth@csulb.edu

This course will examine the nature of basic constitutional notions, such as liberty, justice, due process, and equality, against the backdrop of an American legal history too frequently blighted by systematic and pervasive human inequality. In short, this course will examine the social construction of race, ethnicity, and gender and consider when and to what extent this construction has served as a legal sanction for perpetuating an exclusive, rather than inclusive, interpretation of "justice." In the process we will ask (and find surprising answers to) such questions as: Does Race Exist? What is Justice? Can the Sexes be Equal?

GENERAL EDUCATION: This course can be "triple-counted," as (1) 3 units of the University Interdisciplinary (IC) requirement, (2) 3 units of the University Human Diversity (HD) requirement, and (3) 3 unit credits for the philosophy major OR 3 units of C.2.b. "Philosophy" for non-majors.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS: The University IC requirements include substantial writing. To comply, the course will require (1) a 1000-word essay on the assigned readings due at the end of the fifth week, (2) an in-class essay mid-term exam, (3) weekly reader response essays, and (4) a cumulative in-class essay final exam.

TOPICS: We will begin by considering the nature of "justice," with special attention to issues of race, ethnicity, and gender. We will then consider how the law historically has identified and distinguished these groups, how these distinctions have been justified and implemented by the law, and how the law has developed to reject different treatment. We will read both philosophical texts and extensive court decisions. We will read philosophical texts by Catherine MacKinnon, John Stuart Mill, Naomi Zack, Thomas Nagel, Susan Okin, Martha Minow, John Rawls, Alexis de Tocqueville, Richard Wasserstrom,

and others. To comply with the University HD requirements, we will consider court decisions which address African-Americans, Asian-Americans, Latinos, Native Americans, and women.

TEXT: Ethical Issues in the Courts: A Companion to Philosophical Ethics (Julie Van Camp, Wadsworth Publishing, 2000) We also will use a course supplement, available at the University Bookstore in late August, e-reserve materials, and public domain readings

### **483/583: Philosophical Psychology**

Instructor: **TBD**

*[Description is TBD, but here is the topic description from a past version of the course.]*

This course addresses philosophical perspectives on fundamental issues for the scientific study of the mind and behavior. The first part of the course examines differing general perspectives on the relationship between the mental and the physical. Once that background is in place, the course turns to topics such as the connectionism/classicism debate, content and theories of mental representation, perception, consciousness, and reasoning and decision-making. A recurring concern throughout the course will be whether philosophers of psychology (a) have correctly identified issues requiring a foundational contribution from philosophers and (b) employ methods suitable for dealing with such issues. Students are expected to give careful thought to the topics covered; merely memorizing facts and terminology will not be sufficient to succeed in the course.

### **610: Proseminar**

Instructor: **Jason Raibley**, [Jason.Raibley@csulb.edu](mailto:Jason.Raibley@csulb.edu)

Description and topic are TBD

### **690: Seminar on Conceptual (Mis-)Adventures**

Instructor: **Wayne Wright**, [wayne.wright@csulb.edu](mailto:wayne.wright@csulb.edu)

This seminar focuses on Mark Wilson's (2006) Wandering Significance. In this dense, sprawling tome, Wilson sets out an account of our conceptual capacities and the behavior of our concepts that clashes with what he takes to be the dominant perspective in contemporary analytic philosophy. Using a wide range of examples from diverse fields, Wilson argues that the "classical picture of concepts" greatly overestimates our ability to conceptually package and track the unruly phenomena of the world in which we have been deposited. According to Wilson, the pervasive influence of an overly optimistic assessment of our conceptual powers has resulted in a great deal of confusion and misspent effort on the part of philosophers. Wilson's account is novel in many important respects, but it follows in the footsteps of figures such as Wittgenstein, Neurath, Austin, and Quine. While we will be principally concerned with working our way through Wilson's book (which will be quite a task on its own), we will also look at contemporary responses to it and some of the historical influences that have shaped Wilson's thinking.