

Spring 2016 Philosophy Course descriptions – Upper division

342: Metaphysics

Patrick Dieveney: patrick.dieveney@csulb.edu

This course is an introduction to contemporary metaphysics. The central aim of the course is to provide students with a broad background in many of the central issues in metaphysics. Some of the topics that will be covered include: problems with identity and change over time, different views of necessity and possibility, agent causation and free will. Throughout the course, we will address questions such as: What is the nature of time? How can an object change over time yet remain the same object? What makes a person the same person over time? Is time travel possible? Are our actions free or causally determined? If we lack free will, can we make sense of moral responsibility?

352i: Philosophy of Law

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.

424/524: Hegel

Malek Khazae: malek.khazae@csulb.edu

Hegel is generally considered as the greatest among the German Idealists and one of the most outstanding philosophers in history.

Within this ever-changing world of appearances and representations, Hegel attempts to present a grand philosophical system that would float eternally. So, in contrast to his philosophical predecessors whose structures—like other rigid shapes and things, including architectural buildings and natural objects—have crumbled to dust, Hegel's floating system, he intends, would survive the test of time.

This course ventures on the darkest pages of Hegelian writing: the Preface to *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Written only after the completion of the book, the Preface is considered to be the author's first mature work, thus suggesting that during the writing of the book Hegel went through a rapid development. Given Hegel's contention that the main purpose of philosophy is to unite and not to divide, the Preface is set on a metaphysical flight to reach the Oneness that is the nature of the Cosmos and the ultimate goal of philosophy. We will read the Preface for the entire fifteen weeks of the semester.

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

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

455/555: Philosophical Perspectives on Sex and Love

Lawrence Nolan: Lawrence.nolan@csulb.edu

This course explores philosophical issues about love, sex, and friendship. Is romantic love a form of madness? Plato said so and it can feel that way to those in the throes of passion. If true, it would seem that love is irrational. It can neither be explained nor justified. Is this right or are there reasons for love? What is love? Is it an emotion, a complex set of emotions, an attitude, a set of dispositions to behave in certain ways toward the beloved, or something else? Do we love someone for his/her characteristics or "properties"? If so, does this mean that love is in jeopardy when the beloved changes? How does the property view explain the fact that many people remain in love even after their properties change over time and that parental love often persists despite unpleasant changes? An alternative view is that the source of love is not a person's properties but the loving relationship itself and its historical nature. But if that is right, how do we explain how people fall in love or out of love? Other subtopics on love may include exclusivity, idealization, jealousy, betrayal, and self-love.

The other main topic of the course will be the philosophy of human sexuality. What makes some acts sexual and others not? Are one's intentions important? Or are

certain acts intrinsically sexual and others intrinsically non-sexual? How does sexual desire compare to other sorts of desires (e.g., the desire for chocolate ice cream)? Most desires take some specific object (like ice cream), but Freud taught that human sexuality, by its very nature, is “polymorphously perverse,” which means that the object of human desire can vary widely. This fact makes it difficult to define or characterize sexual desire. It also raises the question of whether all sexual desires/activities are “natural.” Traditionally, many sexual practices and desires have been regarded as perverse (and therefore immoral) because they subvert the goal of sex, namely procreation. If this is correct, then everything from oral sex to masturbation is perverted—practices that many people believe are natural. But does sex even have a goal or function? If so, is there one or many goals? Are these goals malleable or given by God or human nature? If some sexual practices and desires are perverse, what makes them so? Some philosophers have argued that sex is a form of communication and that sexual perversion is a form of *failed* communication. Others have argued that perversion is merely a statistical notion: perverse acts are just those in marginal minorities. We will study various theories on this topic and also discuss the relation between sex and love. Is sexuality a necessary component of romantic love? Erotic love often issues in offspring. Is romantic love (always) beneficial to the lovers? Or does nature use us, as Schopenhauer claims, to perpetuate the species?

We will read a variety of sources and watch at least one film. Frequent class participation will be strongly encouraged. Be advised that we will sometimes have frank and explicit discussions about human sexuality that some people may find embarrassing and/or offensive. Be sure that this is the right course for you. Course requirements will include at least two take-home papers and a final exam. I welcome inquiries about the course: Lawrence.Nolan@csulb.edu

496/596: Marx and Marxist Theory

Max Rosenkrantz: max.rosenkrantz@csulb.edu

The first part of this course will be devoted to a careful reading of substantial selections from Volume I of *Capital*, supplemented with selections from the *1844 Manuscripts* and *Grundrisse*. In addition, we will read a number of works by later writers – Marxist and non-Marxist – that illuminate the issues Marx discusses. We will cover the central issues in Marxist theory: the origins of capitalism, the labor theory of value, class, exploitation, technology, “early Marx” vs. “late Marx”, economic crisis (i.e. recessions and depressions), and the relation between Marx’s thought and the theory and practice of orthodox Marxism.

620: William James Intensive

Alexander Klein: alexander.klein@csulb.edu

William James's *Principles of Psychology* has been called "an American masterpiece which, quite like *Moby Dick*, ought to be read beginning to end at least once by every person professing to be educated" (Barzun 1983). This class undertakes a sustained, systematic study of James's work, and although we will not read the (1270-page) *Principles* "beginning to end," we will begin our study with a selective exploration of this masterpiece. The work is often remembered for its articulate, even poetic accounts of human phenomenology—James coined the phrase "stream of consciousness," for instance—as well as for its scientific treatments of emotion, the self, and spatial and temporal perception, among other things.

James is not just a pioneer of empirical psychology and the theory of mind, though. In philosophy he is also remembered for a deeply controversial philosophical position he later co-developed called "pragmatism." Pragmatism involves a rejection of the traditional construal of *knowledge* as a matter of an idea *copying* or *mirroring* an object. Instead, James portrays knowledge as a matter of ideas furnishing practical guidance in handling an object. We will find that what *drove* James to such a radical rethinking of knowledge were some epistemological problems critics had revealed in his earlier psychological research.

Finally, another abiding theme in James's thought concerns the place of values (including religious values) in a scientific worldview. We will have ample opportunity to explore this dimension of James's thought as well. In short, this course provides an advanced introduction to pragmatist thinking by offering an in-depth study of one of the major thinkers in this tradition—William James. We will read both James's own work as well as more recent commentary.