

Fall 2015 Philosophy Course Descriptions – Upper Division and Graduate

351: Political Philosophy

Professor: Max Rosenkrantz: max.rosenkrantz@csulb.edu

We will read selections from the following classic texts that discuss politics as a distinctive mode of human existence:

Aristotle, *Politics*

Hobbes, *Leviathan*

Constant, “The Liberty of the Ancients Compared with that of the Moderns”

Kant, “Idea for a Universal History with Cosmopolitan Purpose” and “Perpetual Peace.”

352: Philosophy of Law

Professor: 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 more 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, the insanity defense, free speech rights, paternalism, and the duty to rescue. Our readings will be drawn primarily from the historical development of the philosophy of law, including pieces by such philosophers as Thomas Aquinas, J.S. Mill, John Austin, H.L.A. Hart, Lon Fuller, John Rawls, 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, three written case briefs, a short paper (5 pages), a take-home examination, an in-class mid-term examination, and a comprehensive, two-hour, in-class, final examination.

TEXT: *Philosophical Problems in the Law*, David M. Adams. (4th ed.)

413/513 CONTINENTAL RATIONALISM

Professor: Lawrence Nolan: Lawrence.nolan@csulb.edu

Descartes, Malebranche and Leibniz were three of the most systematic philosophers who ever lived. They thought on a grand scale, and tried to develop philosophical systems that would

provide solutions to every conceivable philosophical problem. They are known to us today primarily for their epistemologies, especially for their shared view that reason is the primary source of knowledge and that senses are deceptive and unreliable. For this, they are known as “rationalists”. But equally important for understanding their work, and the relation between them, are their metaphysics. This course will examine both aspects of their work.

We shall begin by examining Descartes’ famous attempt to attain *scientia* or “perfect knowledge,” defeat skepticism, and ground the new mechanistic science. We will then turn to some fundamental issues in his ontology, including his account of the nature of God, human and divine freedom, the status of universals, etc. Though his work is less well known than the other two, Malebranche is an important transitional figure. On the one hand, he accepts many of the basic Cartesian doctrines, most notably that a human being is a union of two radically distinct substances—a mind and a body. On the other hand, he anticipated many of the doctrines that Leibniz later developed with greater precision and sophistication, e.g., the view that this is only one of an infinite number of possible worlds that God could have created. Malebranche and Leibniz were also very concerned with theodicy, i.e., with the effort to reconcile the presence of evil in the world with the existence of a supremely perfect creator.

Malebranche and Leibniz both offer fascinating critiques of Descartes’ philosophy on different fronts, and this will be one of the emphases in this course. As a Cartesian himself, Malebranche offers the most interesting and important “insider” criticisms of Descartes’ theory of the mind and self-knowledge, the method of doubt, the theory of innate ideas, and human and divine freedom. Leibniz develops some of Malebranche’s criticisms and then offers one of the most original critiques of the Cartesian theory of individuation, showing that Descartes is unable to account for the identity and individuality of substances. As we shall see, many of Malebranche and Leibniz’s criticisms rest on very different conceptions of the nature of God and of creation from that of Descartes.

Course requirements:

- a) Regular attendance and frequent participation
- b) Two take-home assignments
- c) Final exam
- d) Optional debates for extra-credit

Phil 416 / 516 William James Intensive

Professor: Alexander Klein: alexander.klein@csulb.edu

Semester One of (an Optional) Two Semester Sequence

Fall 2015: Mo and Wed 3:30PM - 4:45PM

Spring 2016: Date and Time TBD

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 introduction to pragmatist thinking by offering an in-depth study of one of the major thinkers in this tradition—William James. In the fall semester we will devote our attention to reading primary sources. That is, in the fall we will mainly read James's own work, along with occasional reference to other figures (such as C. S. Peirce, Alexander Bain, or William Clifford) to supply context. Students who wish to pursue James's thought in even more depth are encouraged to enroll in an (optional) companion course to be taught in the spring semester that will focus on the latest commentary and analysis of James and his milieu.

451: Race, Ethnicity and Gender in American Law

Professor: Amanda Trefethen: atrefeth@csulb.edu

This course will examine the nature of basic constitutional notions, such as liberty, justice, 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) a take-home exam, (4) an in-class essay final exam, and (5) additional points for legal briefing and in-class participation.

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, John Rawls, Alex 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.

482I: Intro to Cognitive Science

Professor: Charles Wallis: Charles.wallis@csulb.edu

This course introduces students to the basics of Cognitive Science including elements of Philosophy, Computer Science, Cognitive Psychology, Neuroscience, and Linguistics. Serving as an independent introduction to the field of Cognitive Science, the course will focus upon on the historical development, foundational philosophical presuppositions, methodologies, and results from a selection of core topics in Cognitive Science. In addition to covering the theoretical

contributions of the various disciplines of Cognitive Science, the course provides students with an introduction to the underlying theoretical framework of Cognitive Science, including its central problems, explanatory structure, and experimental methodologies. Students participate in several labs designed to promote active learning and give students a deeper understanding of the foundational presuppositions and methodology of Cognitive Science.

I focus primarily upon ways in which Cognitive Scientists explain human and animal abilities through the hypothesis of various types of cognitive architectures acting to perform cognitive tasks. A cognitive architecture combines representational structures, computational processes, and control structures to specify the information-processing capacities of a natural or artificial system. A task specification includes: (1) A characterization of the task in terms of inputs and outputs which represent the information available/utilized (inputs) and the information inferred from that initial input (outputs). (2) A characterization of computational strategy employed by the system, particularly the environmental and heuristic constraints exploited by the system in the generation of tractable, and reliable task solutions.

Upon completion of the course, should have made satisfactory progress towards the following four goals: (1) Students learn to read and evaluate scholarly journal articles from the some of the core disciplines of Cognitive Science; Computer Science, Linguistics, Neuroscience, Philosophy, and Psychology. (2) Students gain significant insight into many of the research areas, theories, and methodologies found in Cognitive Science and its constituent academic disciplines. (3) Students gain a sense of the potential impact of research in Cognitive Science upon their lives, conceptions of self, and societies. (4) Students improve their writing abilities, particularly with respect to their ability to write concise, highly organized, and self-contained expositions of theories and empirical findings. (5) Students gain familiarity with research techniques and available databases applicable to the cognitive sciences.

484/584: Philosophy of Language

Professor: Nellie Wieland: nellie.wieland@csulb.edu

In this class we talk about Santa Claus, the word 'the', then later the word 'that'. If we have time we'll talk about what languages even are anyway.

The course will cover classic work in twentieth century philosophy of language: Frege, Russell, Wittgenstein, Evans, Kaplan, Grice, Strawson, Donnellan, Perry, Lewis, and Kripke will all be there. And you'll be there too. It won't exactly be fun, but it will make everything outside of class seem really, *really* fun.

610: Proseminar

Professor: Cory Wright: cory.wright@zoho.com

Topic and description TBD

680: Special Topics in Epistemology (Color and Color Perception)

Professor: Wayne Wright: wayne.wright@csulb.edu

This course examines philosophical and empirical research on color experience and the nature of color. Much of the course will center around philosophers' handling of the issue of whether colors exist and, if they do, what they are and what we might know about them. Considerable attention will be given to the question of what a theory of color ought to look like, particularly if such a theory is supposed to be relevant to scientific research. Other topics to be considered include color constancy and color language.

Students will be required to do in-class presentations and regular short writing assignments, and will have the option of either writing a term paper or completing a comprehensive take-home final exam.