The basic problems and types of philosophy, with special emphasis on the problems of knowledge and the nature of reality.

A study of the nature of moral value and obligation. Topics such as the following will be considered: different conceptions of the good life and standards of right conduct; the relation of nonmoral and moral goodness; determinism, free will, and the problem of moral responsibility; the political and social dimensions of ethics; the principles and methods of moral judgment. Readings will be drawn both from contemporary sources and from the works of such philosophers as Plato, Aristotle, Aquinas, Butler, Hume, Kant, and J. S. Mill.

A systematic and representative examination of significant contemporary moral problems with a focus on global issues such as international justice, poverty and foreign aid, nationalism and patriotism, just war, population and the environment, human rights, gender equality, and national self-determination.

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The course is designed with the educational goals of increasing students’ understandings of professional and ethical responsibilities in national, international, and cross-cultural environments, helping to anticipate and navigate issues that will likely arise in their working lives as engineers. The main concern is thus with developing the ability to apply a general ethical framework to new and unique situations, as well as an understanding of the relation between engineering and contemporary issues in global, economic, environmental, and social contexts. The course covers how this framework should be constituted and also provides practice in applying such a framework to specific issues that arise in global engineering contexts.

This course is designed to develop reasoning skills and analytic abilities, based on an understanding of the rules or forms as well as the content of good reasoning. This course will cover moral and scientific reasoning, in addition to ordinary problem solving. This course is intended primarily for students with nontechnical backgrounds.
This course is an introduction to the basic concepts and methods of modern logic, with emphasis on the construction and appraisal of complex patterns of reasoning. Some of the things expected of you will be the recognition and reconstruction of arguments in ordinary language, the translation of propositions and arguments from English into logical notation, the testing of arguments for validity, and understanding and constructing proofs. You will be expected to know the notation and the techniques of propositional (sentential) and predicate (quantificational) logic. Put less formally, you will learn what it means for a claim to follow from others, and to recognize and construct good arguments of your own.
Aristotle, a very vain imagining. sensible world is unattainable and that the reality of a realm of values is in his own way, attempts to respond to the fear that knowledge about the good to us really has value. what we perceive maps on to what there really is, and that what seems the reality and value, Parmenides.

Anaximander, Anaximenes, Xenophanes, Heraclitus, and trace the intellectual paths blazed by the first philosophers, Thales, from non parts. period of almost a thousand years.

We begin at the beginning (where else?) when philosophy emerged We will spend some time on philosophy after rich intellectual period that saw the rise of Epicureanism, Stoicism, and Skepticism--competing schools of philosophy, indeed ways of life. The post-Aristotelian philosophical movements developed through discussions and disagreements with each other, but they will be presented here as a set of intelligent responses to Aristotle and his views about the nature of human well-being. The course will proceed by lecture and discussion, and two (2) in-class essay examinations will determine the grade.
more about God, a great surprising treatment of "What is a physical object?" with two hard-nosed answers that are each guaranteed to make you feel like you've lived your life up 'till now in utter blindness, some knotty thoughts about causation and knowledge (again) that is not guaranteed to make you nervous about whether to plan ahead for Spring break, a few reflections on the un-rewarding game of backgammon, and more.

PHIL 49000  Moral Psychology & Threats to the Environment
TR 15042 1:30pm-2:45pm  BRNG 1248  Kelly, D.
A threat qualifies as 'existential' if it puts the continued existence of our species, and possibly our world, at risk. There's an old saying that if you want to save the world, you've got to know which levers to pull; in this course, we'll consider how in many cases, some of the most important of those levers might lie within ourselves. To that end we'll develop concepts to think about the philosophic and ethical facets of existential threats, with an eye toward the human cognitive, affective, and social dimensions that make them difficult to see clearly or address effectively. Our main focus will be on the distinctive kinds of challenges posed by climate change and destabilization of the global ecosystem, but we will briefly consider some other examples (the possible rise of hostile artificial intelligence, contact with aggressive extra-terrestrial life) for the contrasts they bring into relief.

We'll first look at state of the art research on the character of human moral psychology that brings together work from philosophers, psychologists, biologists, economists, and anthropologists, paying particularly close attention to our cooperative capacities and the central roles that culture, social norms and informal institutions play in shaping both individual and group behavior. We'll then look at how the threats produced by climate change engage our minds, and more alarmingly, fail to engage them. In contrast to alien invasions or an uprising of the machines, the problems linked to climate change make up a nearly perfect storm, and can appear almost custom designed to elude the grasp of our intuitive moral psychology. We will examine in more detail how key features of those problems lie behind various of our cognitive blind spots, fail to push our emotional buttons or get a grip on our motivational apparatus, and give rise to particularly difficult forms of collective action problems. Finally, we'll consider some ideas for how to get around these types of obstacles. We'll examine strategies that take into account, and often try to leverage, knowledge of the details of human cognition and sociality to more effectively address climate change and other existential threats. We'll also think about what factors might distinguish versions of such strategies that are justifiably paternalistic and ethically acceptable from "nudges" that are excessively manipulative and morally indefensible.

PHIL 50100  Studies in Greek Philosophy
M 15043 2:30pm-5:20pm  BRNG 1248  Frank, D.
In this seminar we shall focus on Plato's late epistemology and metaphysics. We commence with a brief inspection of the central books of the Republic to get a sense of Plato's pre-critical musings about the nature of knowledge and belief, and the ontological status of their respective objects. We shall then turn for the remainder of the seminar to Plato's Parmenides, Theaetetus, and Sophist, a set of deep and critical reflections on the very epistemological and logico-metaphysical presuppositions of his earlier work. As we read through these late dialogues, we will ask: Does Plato reaffirm his earlier views, or does he revise them, and if the latter, precisely how? In working through these questions we will see a brilliant philosophical mind at work, one that does not shy away from self-criticism. Seminar requirements include class presentations and a final term essay.

PHIL 50200  Studies in Medieval Philosophy
TR 15051 4:30pm-5:45pm  BRNG 1268  Brower, J.
An intensive study of some central topics in the thought of major medieval philosophers. Subject matter will vary. Philosophers most often studied are Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Duns Scotus, and Ockham.

PHIL 50600  Advanced Philosophy of Religion
W 15054 11:30am-2:20pm  BRNG 1248  Draper, P.
The theme of this seminar is "atheism and agnosticism". The following questions among others will be addressed. How should "atheism" and "agnosticism" be defined? Is there anything new or philosophically interesting about "new atheism"? Do atheists bear a burden of proof? Are there any good arguments for or against agnosticism?
PHIL 53000  Deconstructionist & Postmodernist Philosophy
TR 15055  10:30am-11:45am  BRNG 1248  Smith, D.
This seminar will examine the socio-political philosophy developed in Deleuze and Guattari’s two volume Capitalism and Schizophrenia, with an emphasis on their social typology (primitives, States, nomads, capitalism, etc.) and conceptual innovations (flow, war-machine, axiomatics, etc.). Secondary books may include Sibertin-Blanc, State and Politics; Nail, The Figure of the Migrant; Clastres, Society Against the State; Graeber, Debt: The First 5,000 Years; and Marx, Capital, among others.

PHIL 55200  Philosophy of the Social Science
TR 15060  3:00pm-4:15pm  BRNG 1248  Harris, L.
The course will focus on the nature of social explanations, not as a species of natural science, but as explanatory regimes. We will consider concepts of agency and the ontological status of groups. The primary line of divide between theories is, roughly, is between the vitalist (theoretical properties exist/maximalist) and materialist (theoretical properties as heuristic properties only/minimalist). Readings will be drawn from contemporary and classical sources. This course is traditionally associated with and satisfies the area requirement for the Philosophy of Science.

PHIL 55500  Critical Theory
TR 15062  9:00am-10:15am  BRNG 1248  McBride, W.
An analysis of either the historical development or the contemporary relevance of critical theory. Primary texts may be selected from the ‘old” Frankfurt School (Horkheimer, Adorno, Marcuse, Benjamin, Fromm) or from “new” critical theory (Habermas, Wellmer, Honneth, Benhabib, and others).

PHIL 58000  Metalogic
TR 15374  6:30pm-9:20pm  BRNG 1248  Tulodziecki, D.
A graduate-level introduction to metatheoretic studies of formal axiomatic systems. Basic set theory is developed for use as a tool in studying the propositional calculus. Further topics include many-valued logics and metatheory for modal or predicate logic. Undergraduate students may be admitted to the course with special consent of the instructor in charge.

PHIL 68300  Studies in Continental Rationalism
W 15063  2:30pm-5:20pm  BRNG 1268  Cover, J.
Buridan’s Ass, of which Buridan said absolutely nothing anywhere, suffered the misfortune of finding himself exactly midway between equally attractive bales of hay (or, as Aristotle originally posed a different animal in De Caelo, between food and drink). The beast’s death – inevitable, as any rational person can see – would be a lamentable thing. About farm animals, food, and drink Leibniz wrote almost nothing. About much else he wrote an astoundingly huge amount – perhaps 98 linear octavo-volume feet is my guess, were it to be (as it is not, by a long country mile) all printed and bound up. Leibniz published only a single book in his lifetime, the famous Theodicy, which it would be unseemly to ignore. On the other hand, it may be equally unseemly to study it without a serious interest in the so-called “problem of evil.” Having no serious interest in that so-called problem, I feel some affinity to Cover’s Ass, who suffers the misfortune of finding himself exactly midway between equally unattractive options. But as any rational person can readily infer from the fact that s/he is reading this course description, Leibniz was doubtless right when he said that “the case of Buridan’s Ass…is a fiction that cannot occur” (Theodicy §49). Cover’s Ass is nothing (and so nothing to be lamented) because, pretty evidently, ignoring the Theodicy is worse than attending to it with no serious interest in the so-called “problem of evil.” Avoiding the worst, we shall look to the Theodicy for what it can teach us about themes in metaphysics and philosophical theology that Leibniz also touches upon elsewhere. Elsewhere, Leibniz touches upon a cluster of such issues concerning the nature of God, of creatures, and of various (metaphysical, epistemic, value-theoretic) relations between them. So we’ll let the Theodicy point us – selectively in that way – to other texts where those issues receive Leibniz’s attention. Students will need to buy two books (the Huggard translation of the Theodicy and one other), attend class, do some smaller writing assignments, and write a final paper on a topic treated during the semester.