

Spring 2011 Philosophy Department Offerings

Course Offered	Professor	Description
Intro Philosophy (190.003) MW 3	Rosental	Our core text will be <i>Consolations of Philosophy</i> by Alain de Botton: an introduction to the views of several philosophers and some of the difficulties of life that they use philosophy to help remedy. This will lead us to read works by Plato, Epicurus, Seneca, Montaigne, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche and Walker Percy. Not open to seniors.
Intro Philosophy (190.004) TR 10:50	Stanescu	An introduction to reading, writing, and thinking about philosophy. Readings will come from both the Western and non-Western traditions. Emphasis will be placed on the cultivation of a philosophical attitude and the development of the art of conceptual analysis and synthesis. Not open to seniors.
Intro to Ethics (195.003) MWF 11	Loht	A survey of important frameworks for formulating ethical judgment, using seminal texts in philosophy and with application to contemporary problems in the sub-areas of biomedical ethics and the ethics of technology. Course plan consists of equal parts lecture, discussion, and critical reading, with some student presentation of material. The course content will also include reading of a post-apocalyptic novel, which will offer avenues for creative thinking about ethics in the future of humanity. Not open to seniors.
Intro to Ethics (195.004) MWF 2	Loht	A survey of important frameworks for formulating ethical judgment, using seminal texts in philosophy and with application to contemporary problems in the sub-areas of biomedical ethics and the ethics of technology. Course plan consists of equal parts lecture, discussion, and critical reading, with some student presentation of material. The course content will also include reading of a post-apocalyptic novel, which will offer avenues for creative thinking about ethics in the future of humanity. Not open to seniors.
Philosophy of Art (260.001) TR 9:25	Simson	<i>Prerequisite: FYS 101</i> This course will examine the nature of artistic expression, the role of criticism in the arts, and the place of the arts in society. The term "arts" will be construed broadly to include painting, photography, theater, film, music, poetry, etc. The following are just a few examples of questions we will discuss. What does the term "beautiful" mean? Are there other measures of aesthetic value besides beauty? Do the arts, like the sciences, offer us knowledge of the world? Do artists have a responsibility to society? Should the arts ever be censored? Is aesthetic value in the eye (or ear) of the beholder? What is the purpose of art critics? What is creativity in the arts? Does it differ from creativity in the sciences?
Socrates & Jesus (290.002) TR 10:50	Jolley	<i>Prerequisite: FYS 101</i> This course will explore the lives, deaths, and teachings of Socrates and Jesus. We will read, discuss, and write about the ways these two philosophers connect (and disconnect). We will read several gospels (the four canonical and Thomas and others) and Platonic dialogues, including <i>Apology</i> , <i>Crito</i> , <i>Phaedo</i> , <i>Symposium</i> , <i>Phaedrus</i> , <i>Republic</i> (selections). Themes to be discussed include love, ethics, politics, self, other, sex, friendship, vocation, and God. Finally, we will discuss the possibility of Jesus as a philosopher-king.
Philosophy of Sex & Love (290.003) MWF 1	Loht	<i>Prerequisite: FYS 101</i> A course evaluating both contemporary and classical ways of thinking about two of the most enduring philosophical problems in human life. The overall focus of the course will attempt to negotiate two different schools of thought on the subject: that i) on the one hand sex and love are human constructs, molded by social context with no deeper meaning, and on the other hand that ii) these ideas perennially defy rational explanation like few other concepts. Specific areas of focus: different definitions of love that have evolved historically; analytic components of sex and love; politically- and ethically-charged issues such as rape, prostitution, and pornography.
Philosophy of Law (290.004) TR 4:30	Ritchie	<i>Prerequisite: FYS 101</i> This course introduces students to legal reasoning and the various theories regarding law and legal systems. In addition to discussing the traditional schools of jurisprudence, we will examine particular issues in legal theory such as obligation (social and economic), paternalism and the role of the judiciary.
Early Modern Philosophy (314.001) MW 4:30	Rosental	<i>Prerequisite: One course in philosophy</i> An intermediate survey in the Early Modern period of philosophy which examines texts by some of the most prominent philosophers of the time, including (but not limited to) Descartes, Leibniz, Locke, Berkeley, and Hume. The course will be centered around four major issues in philosophy: philosophy of mind (what we are), epistemology (what and how we know), metaphysics (what there is and how it works), philosophical theology (what made everything).

Formal Logic (355.001) TR 1:40	Rosental	<i>Prerequisite: One course in philosophy or nine semester hours in mathematics or computer science.</i> This is a study of logic through its history. We look at various approaches to logic from ancient logic (Aristotle), Medieval, Early Modern and finishing with contemporary mathematical logic. Our focus will be two-fold: first, to understand the formal systems and learn how to use them; second, to see how logic informs and relates to issues in philosophy such as metaphysics, theology, and science.
Great Ancient: Plato (360.001) TR 3:05	Loht	<i>Prerequisite: PHI 311</i> A semester-long study of the shorter works of Plato, especially those not ordinarily covered in other department courses. Class meetings will be held seminar-style, centered on roundtable discussion with student presentation of reading materials. Themes of emphasis will be i) Plato's theory of knowledge and ii) the metaphysical features of his worldview. Attention will also be placed on the historic origins of Plato's thought and the manner in which the dialogues incorporate the insights of earlier figures such as Parmenides, Pythagoras, and Heraclitus.

The philosophy faculty teaching Spring 2011:

<p>Dr. Shawn Loht Dr. Shawn Loht received the Ph.D. in philosophy in 2009. A native of Pennsylvania, he completed his undergraduate studies at St. John's College in Annapolis and did his graduate work at The Catholic University of America in Washington, DC. In addition to teaching at Catholic University he has taught philosophy at Pennsylvania State University. Dr. Loht's research and teaching interests include ancient Greek philosophy, German philosophy, ethics, political philosophy, and phenomenology. He comes from an interdisciplinary, "great books" background, so he also has interests in subjects including literature, mathematics, and science. Some other subjects he studies in his free time and hopes to continue to explore while at Mercer University include the philosophy of film and the intersection of philosophy and community.</p>	<p>Dr. David Ritchie Dr. David Ritchie received his BA in Law, Medicine, and Public Policy from Cleveland State University. He went on to earn his JD from the Howard University School of Law in Washington, DC, where he concentrated his studies on race theory and comparative law. Dr. Ritchie also has an LL.M. from the Temple University School of Law in Philadelphia. His graduate studies in philosophy were undertaken at the University of Oregon, where he earned his Ph.D. in 2004. His areas of specialization are contemporary social, political, and legal theory. He is particularly interested in the issues of war and peace, especially theories of nonviolence and pacifism. Much of his work is influenced by continental theorists from Rousseau to Zizek, as well as the American pragmatists (particularly Dewey and Rorty).</p>
<p>Dr. Creighton Rosental Dr. Rosental originally studied contemporary analytic philosophy of mind, science and language at the University of Massachusetts Amherst but was drawn to histories of epistemology and logic. His dissertation on Thomas Aquinas was on faith and reason, and he continues to do research in late Medieval, Renaissance and Early Modern philosophy, particularly epistemology and philosophy of science. He is also interested in topical issues of contemporary philosophy, particularly philosophy of mind, religion, science, and art.</p>	<p>Dr. Marc Jolley Marc Jolley (PhD 1993) is a senior lecturer at Mercer. He has taught in higher education since 1986. At Mercer, he has taught Old Testament, New Testament, FYS 101 and 102, and, now, Ethics. His grown-up job is being the director of Mercer University Press, where he has worked since 1995. He is married and has two sons. His interests include reading, walking, art, music, literature, and film. His favorite authors are Thoreau and Kierkegaard.</p>
<p>James Stanescu James Stanescu is finishing his dissertation for the Philosophy, Interpretation, and Culture program at Binghamton University (State University of New York). His research interests come from contemporary Continental philosophy and the knowledge of non-Western, feminist, and/or queer thinkers. His current dissertation work focuses on our ethical obligations toward other animals, and the limits of any philosophical anthropology. Stanescu is also the Director of Debate at Mercer, and is therefore concerned with issues of rhetoric, informal logic, and practicing democratic disagreement. He is engaged to be married to a Mercer Alum in the summer.</p>	<p>Dr. Rosalind Simson Professor Simson came to Mercer this year with a joint appointment in philosophy and interdisciplinary studies. After receiving her B.A. and Ph.D from Yale University, she taught for many years at Hobart and William Smith Colleges in Geneva, New York and for the past four years at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio. Her main areas of interest are contemporary epistemology, aesthetics, and the intersection of philosophy with gender issues and law. She is currently working on a project entitled, "The Title IX Athletic Regulations and the Ideal of a Gender-free Society."</p>