Fall 2020 Course Descriptions & Distribution Areas

**PHIL 401: Plato**

**Plato’s early dialogues.**

**Distribution requirement: Ancient, Ethics/Social-Political**

**Dr. Freya Möbus**

In this course, we will investigate the question “What is Socratic philosophy?” To this end, we will read several of Plato's early, Socratic dialogues, most of which are centered around one specific question: "What is courage?" (*Laches*), “What is piety?” (*Euthyphro*), “What is temperance?” (*Charmides*), “What is a friend?” (*Lysis*), “Can virtue be taught?” (*Protagoras*), and “What is the fine?” (*Hippias Major*). While examining how Socrates does philosophy in these dialogues, we will also try to identify Socrates' philosophical core beliefs about the good life, human psychology, and the generation of our actions.

**PHIL 438: Topics in Continental Philosophy**

**Michel Foucault: The Subject and Power  
Distribution Requirements: Ethics/Social-Political, Continental**

**Dr. Johanna Oksala**

In this course we will study Michel Foucault’s philosophy by reading his genealogical works from the 1970s. We will read his most influential books *Discipline and Punish* and *The History of Sexuality, vol.1,*as well as study a selection of shorter texts including interviews, essays, and recently published lectures. The course is intended for both students who are new to Foucault’s thought, as well as for those already familiar with it. It aims to offer a thorough and up-to-date understanding of Foucault’s genealogy, as well as the possibility to deepen one’s knowledge of his philosophical ideas and influences. The topics covered will include: productive power, biopower, discipline, the subject, subjectivation, sexuality, and governmentality.

**PHIL 468: Topics in Ethics**

**The Philosophy of Well-Being**

**Distribution Requirement: Ethics/Social-Political, Analytic**

**Dr. Richard Kim**

While the topic of well-being has ancient roots, it continues to be a source of deep disagreement among philosophers today. This course aims at providing an up-to-date understanding of the central issues within contemporary philosophy of well-being. Among the possible topics of discussion are:

* The concept of well-being and its connections to related notions such as happiness, flourishing, and the good life
* Contemporary theories of well-being: hedonism, desire theory, objective-list theory, and nature-fulfillment theory
* Well-being and eudaimonia
* Well-being and virtue
* Well-being and moral psychology
* Well-being and friendship
* Contemporary science and well-being

To address these topics we will read some highly influential articles and book chapters that have shaped contemporary well-being discourse. Through these readings we will gain a firm grasp of the basic threads underlying contemporary debates surrounding well-being.

**PHIL 468: Topics in Ethics**

**Philosophical Questions in Human Rights**

**Distribution Requirement: Ethics/Social-Political**

**Dr. Joy Gordon**

This course addresses a variety of philosophical issues within human rights.  We will start with some texts that point to different approaches in conceptualizing human rights, as well as an overview of the major human rights instruments in international law and global governance.  We will look at such questions as the concept of rights, and its empirical and Marxist critics; the shift over the last decade in the ethical framework for understanding torture; interpretive issues that emerge in human rights treaties; the different ways that gender comes into play within human rights; the thorny problem of how to determine intent in cases of genocide; and issues of sovereignty when countries seek to assert extraterritorial jurisdiction over human rights violations that take place in other parts of the world.

**PHIL 480: Social-Political Philosophy**

**Political Phenomenology**

**Dr. Jennifer Gaffney**

**Distribution Requirement: Continental, Ethics/Social-Political**

Phenomenology, from its inception, has been a movement oriented by crisis. The purpose of this course is to consider both the promise and risks of phenomenology for understanding *political* crisis. We will begin by considering the political stakes of Martin Heidegger’s efforts to think phenomenology not with reference to a transcendental ground, but instead in terms of the groundlessness of factical existence. This factical turn in phenomenology provides a new basis to critique the metaphysical assumptions of western political thought no less than the increasing political violence incurred through instrumental rationality. Yet, as we shall see, Heidegger’s discovery of facticity also suggests methodological risks with far-reaching political implications. The focus of the course will be to provide a survey of some of the most important subsequent contributions to political phenomenology in light of this decisive but ambiguous legacy in Heidegger’s thought. This will include readings from figures such as Hannah Arendt, Edouard Glissant, Jean-Luc Nancy, and Giorgio Agamben. The course will thus offer students an introduction to central figures and themes in political phenomenology, while preparing them to enter into current debate about the scope and limits of the phenomenological method for engaging political crisis today.