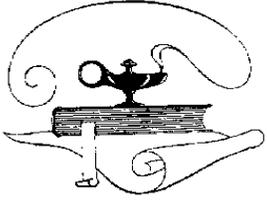


The Lantern

UNIVERSITY of
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Philosophy Newsletter for Students

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What is Philosophy?

Every student begins their college education having direct experience of history, literature, the physical sciences, and other disciplines that they encountered in high school. But most freshmen do not have an opportunity to take a philosophy class before coming to college. So students might see philosophy classes in the Schedule of Classes—classes like Introduction to Philosophy, Critical Thinking, and Introduction to Ethics—and ask themselves, “What exactly is this class about? What *is* philosophy?”

There is no single right answer to that question. The definition of philosophy is something that philosophers themselves philosophize about! Even UWG’s own philosophy faculty members think of their discipline in different ways. For example, Dr. Janet Donohoe describes philosophy as “the critical inquiry into anything ranging from mundane everyday things to the eternal questions. What is important is asking the questions, digging down beneath

the surface of things and of our perspective on things to reveal that which is beneath the appearances and hidden in our own presuppositions. This kind of questioning helps us to grapple meaningfully with human existence, responsibility, our place in the world, and our relationship to others.”

“I prefer to define philosophy was a form of

inquiry or truth-seeking,” says Dr. Robert Lane. “It’s the attempt to find true answers to some of the most important and fundamental questions that matter to all human beings, questions about God, right and wrong, knowledge, free will, and even about truth and reality themselves. So philosophers ask questions like: Does God exist? What is the right way to live? What is knowledge, and how do we know when we have it? Are human actions ever genuinely free? and What does it mean to say that a statement is true or that something is real?”

Dr. Walter Riker also defines philosophy in terms of the questions that philosophers ask. On his view, those questions “fall into two main areas: What is the world like? What is our place in it? We aren’t special in this regard, as others ask questions in these areas. To distinguish philosophy, then, we might add a few qualifiers. Philosophers often ask questions that don’t have empirical answers. This doesn’t mean the empirical situation never matters to philosophers. Sometimes it matters a lot. It just means that empirical facts don’t, or don’t easily, solve many philosophical problems. For instance, what is worth doing? Facts matter here, but it’s not clear which facts, or how they help. Philosophers also tend to be interested in fundamental classes of things rather than particulars. For example, as a political philosopher, I am less interested in whether or not some particular act of civil disobedience is morally justified and more interested in the moral nature of civil disobedience as a social practice. As a person and citizen, of course, I am very interested in particular acts. My own mother has been arrested protesting at a nuclear power plant! But as (continued on p. 2)

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PHILOSOPHY HONORS SOCIETY

The Georgia Iota chapter of Phi Sigma Tau is West Georgia's philosophical link to the world of honor societies. The chapter consists of students who have demonstrated outstanding academic achievement and a sincere interest in philosophy. Founded to recognize and reward philosophical scholarship, the chapter provides both an academic and a social environment for its members.

Criteria for Membership:

- ◆ a 3.0 overall GPA,
- ◆ the completion of at least two philosophy courses,
- ◆ a GPA higher than 3.0 in all Philosophy courses taken,
- ◆ the completion of 45 hours of coursework.

For more information, go to <http://www.westga.edu/~pst> or contact Dr. Riker (wriker@westga.edu) if you are interested in applying for membership.

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a philosopher, I think of this act as an example of a class of actions, and I study the class.”

“To ask what is philosophy is already to philosophize, i.e. to ask the question, ‘what is...?’ This is the view of Dr. John Garner. On his view, “to seek a definition of philosophy is already to philosophize. It is already to inquire into the very source of a discipline or practice. Furthermore, when we ask ‘what is...?’ we operate as if a response can emerge; and thus philosophizing is always done in the hope that the original source can come to light in the inquiry. Happily, this kind of inquiry can be undertaken for any kind of discipline or practice. For example, psychology studies psychical life; but philosophy pauses and asks, ‘what is the psyche?’ This does not mean other types of approaches are not philosophical. Any field becomes philosophical so long as it also inquires originally into the source of its authority. This is why the originator of any field is often a student of philosophy (look it up!).”

Philosophy majors also have different ways of thinking about their chosen field of study. According to Amara McNeish, “philosophy poses the question of what ‘is,’ while providing answers that encourage further questions and answers. Philosophy questions the ‘world’ we take for granted in the pursuit of truth and actuality, as well as analyzing the experience of life itself and the possible implications of such analyses.” According to Alex Clark, “Philosophy is thinking about a difficult topic long enough to arrive at an educated and informed opinion about it, and using logical argumentation to defend the opinion you’ve arrived at”, whereas Daniel Stanfield defines philosophy as “the process of questioning the world around us, in order to discover ways for that same world to be improved.” And Ryan Washington emphasizes the open-ended nature of philosophical questioning when he defines philosophy as “the never-ending task of seeking Truth; truth about us, our world, how we talk about it, how we talk about how we talk about it. Philosophy is boldly asking ‘why’ with the understanding that we may never get an answer, much less The Answer.”

So philosophy itself can be defined in diverse ways. But what all philosophy *classes* have in common is that they challenge students to think, write and speak clearly and critically about deep and important ideas. This is one of the reasons why earning an undergraduate degree in philosophy can help prepare students for the rigors of graduate school in several different areas, including law, business, library science, psychology, and philosophy itself. Graduates of our Philosophy Program have gone on to pursue graduate degrees at institutions including Harvard University, Duke University, Boston College, Emory University, the University of Alabama, the University of Georgia, the University of Tennessee, and at UWG. For more information about our degree and our classes, visit <https://www.westga.edu/phil> or contact Dr. Riker, the Director of the Philosophy Program, at wriker@westga.edu.

SPRING 2017 COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

- Phil 2010-01: Introduction to Philosophy, Dr. Josh Dohmen** **MW 9:30-10:45 p.m. Pafford 305**
 My aim is to introduce you to some main areas of philosophy (metaphysics, epistemology, social and political philosophy, ethics, aesthetics, and the philosophy of religion), by studying five major figures whose thought encompasses many of these fields. By doing so, we will see the ways in which our different philosophical beliefs are intimately connected. First, we will read two of Plato's dialogues to investigate what philosophy is, why we should practice it. Second, we'll move on to discuss René Descartes's *Meditations*, in which he questions what we are, what we can know, and whether or not we are justified in believing in God(s). Third, we will consider Karl Marx's writings to see the ways in which our understandings of humans, of history, and of politics are importantly related. The fourth figure we will consider is W.E.B. du Bois who considers knowledge, identity, and history throughout his writings. Fifth, we will turn to Simone de Beauvoir to consider how her existentialist views and her appeals to history and biology are inseparable from her political ideal of women's liberation. By thinking about the connections between these thinkers and the aspects of their thought, we will be better able to understand our own lives and ideas in relation to the various questions philosophers ask. Required for philosophy or religion majors and minors. May count for credit in Core area C2.
- Phil 2010-02: Introduction to Philosophy, Dr. Josh Dohmen** **MW 11:00-12:15 p.m. Nursing 110**
 Same as above.
- Phil 2010-03: Introduction to Philosophy Dr. Josh Dohmen** **TR 11:00-12:15 p.m. Pafford 109**
 Same as above.
- Phil 2010-04: Introduction to Philosophy, TBA** **TR 3:30-4:45 p.m. Callaway 145**
 A historically framed introduction to philosophy, high-lighting major developments that have defined Western philosophical inquiry. Required for philosophy or religion majors and minors. May count for credit in Core area C2.
- Phil 2020-01: Critical Thinking, Dr. John V. Garner** **MW 9:30-10:45 p.m. Pafford 109**
 This course provides an introduction to logical reasoning and critical thinking. In division one, we will study the power of Socratic questioning and Aristotelian logic. We will discern the differences between deductive and non-deductive reasoning, the temptations of argumentative fallacies, and the clear and unclear uses of language. In division two, we will engage in open, critical discussion about controversial ethical and socio-economic questions, including the demands of charity, the purpose of a business, and the ethics of practices like marriage and voting. In division three, students will present their own work on a topic of their choice relating to the class. Overall, this course helps us understand whether we should be persuaded by others' arguments, by the media, or by our pre-existing beliefs. It helps us to reason better, to be self-questioning, to make better arguments, and to evaluate more accurately the arguments of others. Required for philosophy or religion majors and minors. May count for credit in Core area B1.
- Phil 2020-02: Critical Thinking, Dr. John V. Garner** **MW 11:00-12:15 p.m. Pafford 109**
 Same as above.
- Phil 2020-03: Critical Thinking, TBA** **MW 12:30-1:45 p.m. Pafford 109**
 An investigation of logical fallacies and patterns of valid reasoning in primarily oral by also written discourse. Required for philosophy or religion majors and minors. May count for credit in Core area B1.
- Phil 2020-04: Critical Thinking, Dr. Josh Dohmen** **TR 9:30-10:45 p.m. Callaway 120**
 This course aims to introduce students to two different, but related, types of critical thinking skills. The first are formal skills that help us identify and evaluate arguments. The second are more personal, emotional, and social skills to help us better share our ideas and arguments with others and to help us be more critical of our own beliefs. These skills will be largely introduced by the textbook, *Intellectual Empathy*. In the end, I hope you will not only be better able to think critically in the sense of understanding arguments, but also in the sense of engaging in self-evaluation while also evaluating others' arguments and beliefs. Required for philosophy or religion majors and minors. May count for credit in Core area B1.
- Phil 2020-05: Critical Thinking, TBA** **TR 3:30-4:45 p.m. Callaway 205**
 An investigation of logical fallacies and patterns of valid reasoning in primarily oral by also written discourse. Required for philosophy or religion majors and minors. May count for credit in Core area B1.
- Phil 2030-01: Introduction to Ethics, Dr. Walter Riker** **MW 12:30-1:45 p.m. Pafford 308**
 This course introduces students to moral philosophy. We will consider some questions in metaethics: Are there moral truths or objective moral facts? What is the relationship between God/religion and morality? Is morality relative to cultures? We will consider questions in normative ethics: Is morality based on the consequences of our actions, or is it about doing the right thing, regardless of the consequences? Does morality really require us to sacrifice ourselves for others? Is morality primarily about rules or about good character? We will consider some questions in applied ethics: What do different moral theories tell us about issues like: assisted suicide; new reproductive technologies (e.g., cloning or genetic modification or improvement of fetuses); the rights and privileges of prisoners (should we make prisoners work on chain gangs? Should prisoners have access to televisions or law books?). We will also consider some feminist approaches to ethics as well as some work in philosophy of race. Required for all philosophy and religion majors. Counts toward the philosophy minor and the religion minor. May count for credit in Core area C2.
- Phil 2030-03: Introduction to Ethics, TBA** **TR 2:00-3:15 p.m. Callaway 146**
 An introduction to the central concepts in ethics and an exploration of such contemporary ethical issues as abortion, genetic engineering, euthanasia, and capital punishment. Required for all philosophy and religion majors. Counts toward the philosophy minor and the religion minor. May count for credit in Core area C2.
- Phil 2030-25H: Introduction to Ethics, Dr. Robert Lane** **TR 11:00-12:15 p.m. Pafford 309**
 Everyone has beliefs about morality, and to some extent we all agree about what actions are right and wrong; for example, we all agree that murder is wrong and that helping those less fortunate than us is right. But there are many moral questions about which people disagree: is abor-

tion immoral? what about physician-assisted suicide? is it wrong to spend money on expensive cars and homes when people in other parts of the world are dying from malnutrition? do non-human animals have rights? This course will enable you critically to evaluate your own beliefs about concrete ethical issues like these. We'll also be dealing with more theoretical questions, such as: where does morality come from? (God? society? or somewhere else?); what makes an ethical argument good or bad?; and what general rules or principles ought we to live by? No prior experience in philosophy is necessary, so if you want to start thinking critically about morality, this course is a great place to begin. Required for all philosophy and religion majors. Counts toward the philosophy minor and the religion minor. May count for credit in Core area C2. This class is restricted to Honors students.

Phil 2130-01: Introduction to World Religions, Dr. Rosemary Kellison

TR 9:30-10:45 p.m. Pafford 109

This course revolves around two central questions: how has the world shaped religion(s), and how have religions shaped the world? As we move through an introductory survey of some of the world's major religious traditions, including indigenous religious traditions, Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and selected new religious movements, we will pay special attention to the ways in which these traditions have been shaped by historical, political, and geographical changes in the world—and will also consider how these traditions and their communities have influenced these changes. Over the course of the semester, we will seek both to understand the significance and relevance of religion in world history and to begin to grapple with some of the important philosophical questions addressed within religious communities as well as by those who study them. Required for religion-track majors and minors.

Phil 2130-02: Introduction to World Religions, Dr. Rosemary Kellison

TR 2:00-3:15 p.m. Pafford 109

Same as above.

Phil 3110-01: Modern Philosophy, Dr. Robert Lane

TR 9:30-10:45 p.m. Humanities 205

An examination of such seventeenth- and eighteenth-century European philosophers as Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz, Locke, Berkeley, Hume, and Kant, with special attention to their metaphysical and epistemological theories. Required for all philosophy majors. Counts toward the philosophy minor.

Phil 3120-01W: American Philosophy, Dr. Robert Lane

TR 2:00-3:15 p.m. Humanities 205

What is truth? What is the best way for me to form beliefs about the world? Is absolute certainty possible, or must we be satisfied with beliefs that are not certain? What is philosophy, and what is its relationship with science? This course tackles those questions and others by examining how they were treated by the thinkers who founded pragmatism, America's distinctive philosophical tradition. In particular, we will study the works of three classical American pragmatists: Charles Peirce, William James, and John Dewey. We will also study the ideas of the neo-pragmatist Richard Rorty. Counts toward the philosophy major and the philosophy minor.

Phil 3220-01: Christian Thought, Dr. Rosemary Kellison

TR 11:00-12:15 p.m. Humanities 205

In this course, we trace the development of important historical trends in Catholic and Protestant Christian thought. Some of the specific areas covered include theology, ethics, mysticism, and political theory. Two areas of special focus will be (1) the role of the body in Christian thought and (2) historical and contemporary Christian attitudes regarding poverty and wealth. Another major emphasis of this course is the influence Christian thought has had on Western philosophy more generally. This course has no pre-requisites, fulfills a requirement for religion-track majors, can be used more generally for the philosophy major or minor.

Phil 4120-01: Professional Ethics, Dr. Walter Riker

MW 9:30-10:45 p.m. Pafford 308

This class focuses on moral problems common to the "professions," i.e., to occupations such as physician and lawyer. Members of the professions often serve clients—people who visit professionals in order to purchase expert advice or treatment. We will consider a variety of moral problems that arise in this context. For instance, should a physician or politician ever deceive their client (a patient or the public) for the good of the client? More generally, are professionals ever morally required to do things that would be considered immoral in ordinary circumstances? Clients are supposed to have the final say in what happens to them, but to what extent is informed consent possible, given that professionals know a lot more than the clients who seek them out? Why should lawyers, physicians, or priests keep their client's secrets? Should they ever violate a client's confidentiality and reveal what they learn about a client? Do professionals ever have a duty to deliberately violate a client's privacy? What role should a professional's personal moral views play in their work qua professional? For instance, should pharmacists be permitted to refuse to fill prescriptions they consider immoral? What is integrity? What does it mean to stand for something? Counts toward the philosophy major and the philosophy minor.

Phil 4220-01W: Hermeneutics, Dr. Janet Donohoe

MW 12:30-1:45 p.m. Humanities 205

Hermeneutics is the philosophical discipline investigating the process of textual interpretation. How do we know how to interpret what we read? Is the meaning of a text what the author intended? How would we know what an author intended? Should we understand a text within a historical context? This course addresses the development of the hermeneutic tradition through the primary texts of such influential philosophers as Friedrich Schleiermacher, Martin Heidegger, Hans-Georg Gadamer, and Paul Ricoeur. We will also look at applications through legal hermeneutics and biblical hermeneutics. Counts toward the philosophy major and the philosophy minor.

Phil 4285-01W: Special Topics: German Idealism, Dr. John V. Garner

MW 2:00-3:15 p.m. Humanities 205

The critical philosophy of Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) sparked powerful responses in the philosophies that immediately followed him, known today as German Idealism (approx. 1780s-1830s). This course starts near the end of Kant's career, focusing on his attempt to account for the power of art and for seeming purposes in nature, and on his attempt to solve the apparent conflict between being free and being determined by one's historical epoch. We then explore several radical responses to these same issues, including Schiller's attempt to solve the tension between the pleasure-drive and reason through "aesthetic education"; Fichte's attempt to save freedom through the concept of an "ego" that posits itself as its own foundation; Schelling's attempt to naturalize the human experience of freedom through a teleological conception of nature; and, finally, Hegel's audacious effort, in one of the most astounding philosophy books ever written (1807's *Phenomenology of Spirit*), to account for all of human nature, culture, and religion in terms of the stages of the development of a single, free, all-encompassing, and utterly rational "spirit." Grasping the concepts of German Idealism is essential for understanding how this tradition provoked responses in almost all branches of later modern philosophy, including Marxism, existentialism, American pragmatism, and analytic philosophy. Counts toward the philosophy major and minor.

Registration is nearly here!

Remember, if you are a philosophy major, you are required to meet with your advisor before you will be able to register for classes next spring. You may have already heard from your advisor, but if you haven't, you may want to swing by his or her office to see if you can sign up for a time for advising. The registration schedule is listed below, so be sure to meet with your advisor before your time to register.

Spring 2017 On-Time Registration Dates for CURRENTLY* enrolled students:

Current Seniors & all Graduate level students – October 24
 Current Juniors ss# ending in 00-49 – October 25
 Current Juniors ss# ending in 50-99 – October 26
 Current Sophomores ss# ending 00-49 – October 27
 Current Sophomores ss# ending 50-99 – October 28
 Current Freshmen ss# ending 50-99 – October 31
 Current Freshmen ss# ending 00-49 – November 1

*Currently enrolled students are those taking courses in the current term, Fall 2016.

Open Registration
 Begins November 7
 (Students that are currently serving a one-term suspension, are readmitted, or are admitted as a transient must wait until Open Registration to register.)

IMPORTANT

See your advisor before your assigned date to register, and your advisor or department will remove your advisement hold.

PHILOSOPHER'S WISDOM

“It is manifest that behind the so-called curtain which is supposed to conceal the inner world, there is nothing to be seen unless we go behind it ourselves, as much in order that we may see, as that there may be something behind there which can be seen.”

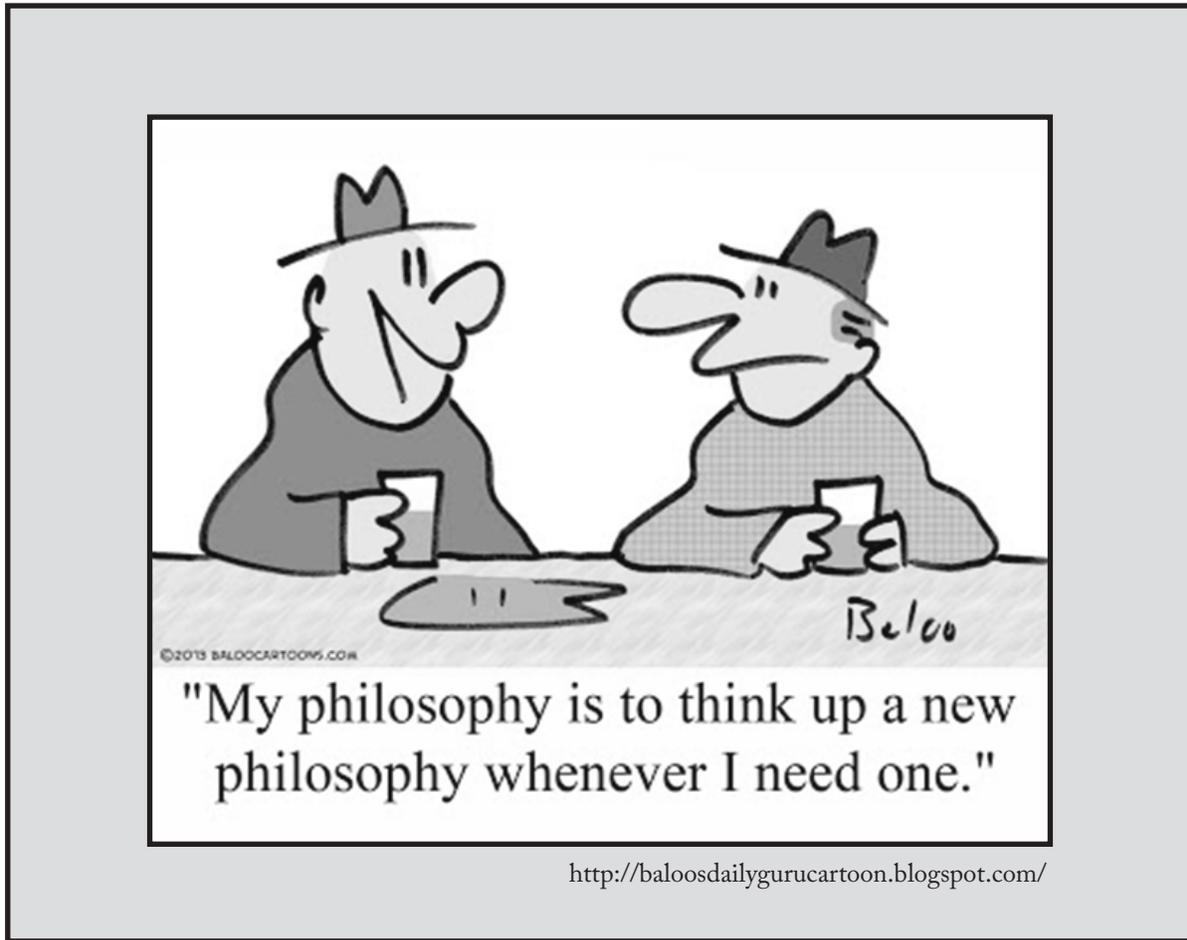
~G.W.F. Hegel
Phenomenology of Spirit

INTERESTED IN PHILOSOPHY?

Join the West Georgia
 Philosophical Society

Interested in philosophy? Enjoy open discussions on every imaginable topic? Then you should join the West Georgia Philosophical Society. The Society is a registered student organization that typically meets every other week for lively discussions of philosophical topics. Discussion topics in the past have included, among others, feminism, disability, gun politics, and issues related to trans identity. Members of the society have also been involved in canned food drives, bake sales, and trivia nights at local restaurants. All students, regardless of their background or experience, are invited to join. Specific meeting dates are announced via email and Facebook.

If you would like more information about the Society, check out our Facebook page at:
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/136625026403394/>.



Look out for Movie Night!

Did you miss the movie night this semester? On October 12, 2016 around twenty-five philosophy students, former students, and professors gathered to watch and discuss the 2011 film *The Adjustment Bureau*. The conversation afterwards was lively and profound, touching on issues of our desire for security, the prospects for human free will, the audacity of true love in spite of destiny. Keep your eyes peeled for more opportunities to do philosophy through film!

