

Philosophy Course Descriptions – Fall 2022

CRN	Course	Sec	Crd	Course Title	Faculty	Days	Times	Prerequisite
10273	PH215	01	3	Business Ethics	Roark	TR	9:30-10:45	

This course will critically examine the role of ethics within a business environment. We will examine both ethical relationships within a business such as employers and employee relations and well as ethical relationship between business and broader society such as business and consumer relations. The course will be structured around the following five topics: corporate social responsibility, rights and obligations of employees and employers, justice and fair practice, distributive justice, and advertising, marketing, and the consumer. These topics will be examined by considering both historical and contemporary texts and case studies.

10276	PH215	02	3	Business Ethics	Roark	TR	12:30-1:45	
10488	IN251	05						

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10277	PH305	01	3	Philosophy of Law	Money	MWF	2:00-2:50	
10283	PO305	01						

The first unit of the course will focus on theories of constitutional interpretation within the legal system of the United States. Our primary focus will be on the theory of constitutional interpretation known as “originalism.” We will read proponents as well as critics of originalism. We will consider a range of important theoretical issues, including: How should judges interpret the constitution? What role (if any) should moral principles play in their interpretation? What is the role of judges in relation to democratically elected legislatures? In “hard cases,” do judges create law (“legislate from the bench”) or do they work to discover the correct legal answer to the case before them?

The second unit of the course will focus on a range of general philosophical issues regarding the nature of law. Our primary focus will be on the theory of legal positivism as expressed in H.L.A. Hart’s classic work, *The Concept of Law*. We will also read selections by critics of legal positivism.

The third and final unit of the course will focus on Peter Suber’s fictional work, *The Case of the Speluncean Explorers*. We will use this text to continue and extend our examination of legal philosophies and theories of legal adjudication. Students will role-play as a member of the Supreme Court of Newgarth and write a judicial opinion in which they determine the fate of the defendant.

Consider the following:

- What if you possessed a magical ring that gave you the power to act in ways that could not be detected by others? If you possessed this ring, would you have any reason to act morally or justly?
- What if a powerful demon (or computer program...think *The Matrix*) was actively working to deceive you? Would there be anything that you could know with certainty?
- What if you knew absolutely nothing about your social status, race, ethnicity, gender, basic life plan, or prospects? Under these conditions, what political conception would you choose to live under?
- What if you were kidnapped and knocked unconscious? When you awake, you discover that the circulatory system of a world-famous violinist has been attached to your own. You also are told that the only way the violinist can live is by remaining attached to your circulatory system for a defined period of time, but that if he is detached before that period of time elapses, he will die. Would you have an obligation to remain attached?
- What if a medical procedure could be performed in which Mary's brain was removed and Julia's brain then combined with Mary's body? Who would survive such a procedure? Would such a procedure be best described as a brain transplant or a body transplant?

As philosopher David Shoemaker points out, "Philosophers love thought experiments. Many of us deploy them as our version of the scientific method. They isolate some feature of our experience and evoke intuitions about it, and these revealed verdicts enable us to adjust relevant theories in light of what we find."¹ In this course, we will pursue this love affair by examining a diverse set of influential thought experiments in order to engage in philosophical thinking and reflection. Students will locate a favorite thought experiment of their own, write a philosophical reflection on it, and present a summary of their reflections to the class.

¹ <https://blog.oup.com/2015/04/thought-experiments-philosophy/>