Select from the drop down box to view courses from past semesters:

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| 9:30 - 11:30 | PHIL 78500 [15882] Philosophy of Religion  
  Prof. Cahn  
  Room 6494  
  PHIL 77800 [15879] Classics in the Philosophy of Art  
  Prof. Carroll  
  Room 3309  
  PHIL 77200 [15865] Topics in the Philosophy of Semantics  
  Prof. Salmon  
  (Tues/Thurs)  
  Room 7314 | PHIL 77400 [15870] Reference and Experimental Philosophy  
  Prof. Devitt  
  Room 5417 | PHIL 77000 [15860] Theory of Mind in Animals and Infants  
  Prof. Lurz  
  (Brooklyn)  
  Room 6495 | PHIL 80200 [15886] Proseminar*  
  Profs. Neale & Prinz  
  Room 7395  
  *First Year Phil Ph.D. Students only | PHIL 77200 [15865] Topics in the Philosophy of Semantics  
  Prof. Salmon  
  (Tues/Thurs)  
  Room 7314 |
| 11:45 - 1:45 | PHIL 77000 [15883] Quine and Sellars on Thought and Language  
  Prof. Rosenthal  
  Room 7102 | PHIL 76900 [15859] Philosophy of Biology  
  Prof. Godfrey-Smith  
  Room 7395 | PHIL 80000 [15885] Reference and Existence: Fiction and Perception  
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  Room 7395 | PHIL 78700 [15883] Quine and Sellars on Thought and Language  
  Prof. Rosenthal  
  Room 7102 |
| 2:00 - 4:00 | PHIL 77700 [15875] The British Moralists  
  Prof. Baumrin  
  Room 6474 | PHIL 76000 [15879] "Feminist Philosophy"  
  Prof. Schwarzenbach  
  Room 7314 | PHIL 78700 [15883] Quine and Sellars on Thought and Language  
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  Room 7102 | PHIL 80000 [15885] Reference and Existence: Fiction and Perception  
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SEE ASLO:

CSC 85011 Epistemic Logic. Prof. Parikh, Thurs., 2:00 - 4:00

Hist. 71600 The Outcome of German Classical Philosophy, Prof. Wolin, Monday, 4:15-5:15

Students may also take courses at other schools in the Interuniversity Doctoral Consortium. Choose a school from the list below to see the course schedule for the current semester (where available).

- Columbia University
- Fordham University
- The New School
- New York University
- Princeton University
- Rutgers University
- SUNY Stony Brook

The Graduate Center's Current Student Handbook has information about and instructions for registering for classes at other consortium schools.

FALL 2011 COURSE DESCRIPTIONS
Philosophy of Religion
Prof. Cahn
4 credits
Mon. 11:45-1:45

A critical examination of central issues in the philosophy of religion, including the concept of God, proofs of God's existence, the problem of evil, miracles, mysticism, faith, and religious pluralism. Readings from classic and contemporary sources, including writings of Plato, Hume, James, Alston, Plantinga, and Swinburne.

[Counts towards course satisfaction of Group A]

British Moralists
Prof. Baumrin
4 credits
Mon. 2-4

In this seminar we will focus on the moral theories of Hobbes, Clarke, Butler, Hutcheson, Hume, and Bentham but with attention paid also to Cudworth, Cumberland, Locke, Mandeville, Shaftesbury, Wollaston, Price and Smith. We will then examine the utilitarianisms of J.S. Mill and G.E. Moore, and the deontology of H.A. Prichard and W.D. Ross. We will examine the original texts and some of the important recent literature about them and the use of their theories in contemporary ethical theory.


[Counts towards course satisfaction of Group C or D-Modern]

Question of Style
Profs. Noë & Nagel (NYU)
4 credits
Mon. 4:15-6:15

This is a course about style. Co-taught with Alexander Nagel (Professor of Fine Arts, Institute of Fine Art, New York University), the course will investigate style as a cognitive phenomenon, and the concept of style as an important but neglected theoretical category for understanding fundamental cognitive phenomena such as intentionality and consciousness. The course will also explore the emergence of style as a term of art theory during the Renaissance period, its codification during the Enlightenment and in twentieth-century art history, also considering the ways in which the critique of the notion has been bound up with pronouncements about the end of the discipline of the history of art.

One of the aims of this course is to foster a genuine collaboration between art history and both philosophy and cognitive science. Students in all these disciplines are welcome.

We will read texts, and we will also look at, read, or listen to works of art. The students' performance is assessed by a mixture of oral presentation, written paper, and participation. Students are required to attend all classes. Advance notice of absence should be given to the professor.

[Counts towards course satisfaction of Group B or C]
One aim of this course is to consider some issues in epistemology of current concern. Another is to review some of the enduring problems, in order to fill any gaps in the student's background. The instructor will also assign some of his own work, published and particularly unpublished. There will be eight or so short papers to be submitted during the semester. One focus will be Nozick's sensitivity thesis (11, 13), that a thing is known only if it would not be believed if false. Sensitivity can be defended against a number of objections commonly thought fatal (6). Exploring it leads naturally to other interesting topics, including lotteries, dogmatism, skepticism, strong Moore sentences ("Descartes was French but I believe he wasn't."). gettier puzzles (8, 14), self-knowledge, even realism about value. We will also consider sensitivity vs. safety: a thing is known if (if and only if? only if?) it would be true if believed; vs. reliabilism (7): a thing is known iff believed via a reliable process. We will want to compare all such externalist views to internalism: a subject knows when his reasons for belief are sufficient. What are the prospects for a Bayesian account of evidence? I want to take up the relation of Bayesianism to two other problems: peer disagreement (5) (does the fact that smart people disagree with you affect the warrant for a belief? Or maybe as social animals we are just uncomfortable with conflict?) and the alleged inability of humans to reason probabilistically (the Linda problem) (2). Crisscrossing these issues is that of contextualism (10). Do we really count children as knowing something if they have true belief? Does context interact with closure? We will also look at a priori knowledge, knowledge of mathematics, and knowledge of other necessary truths (1, 3, 4, 12). Perhaps the idea that (knowledge of) necessity rests on (knowledge of) linguistic stipulation still has life. But how can something be made true by stipulation? Two topics I would like to take up at some point are virtue epistemology (9, 14), and secondary properties. Can we be mistaken about the color a thing appears to be? Students' backgrounds vary. Some prospective students may never have had an epistemology course, and others may know some of this material in great depth. Please email me about what epistemology you have had, what your interests are in epistemology and generally, what topics you would like to explore. The reading list is not lengthy. I have often assigned a great deal of material and not gotten around to much of it (and the depth of online sources is unfathomable). So we may have uncommitted time in which to discuss topics suggested by the group.

The works we will look at include
2. Luc Bovens and Stephan Hartmann, *Bayesian Epistemology*, OUP, 2002, chapter III.

[Counts towards course satisfaction of Group B]
Classics in the Philosophy of Art
Prof. Carroll
4 credits
Tues. 11:45 - 1:45

Classics in the Philosophy of Art is a survey of the major texts in the history of the philosophy of art in the western tradition. Authors to be covered include Plato, Aristotle, Hutcheson, Hume, Kant, Hegel, Schopenhauer, Tolstoy and Bell. Primary texts will be emphasized although commentaries by the instructor will also be made available. Since this is a seminar, students will be expected to lead some of the class discussions. A term paper is required, although it may grow out of the material covered in the student's class-discussion presentation. The aim of the course is to give the student a firm foundation in the discipline of aesthetics, to introduce her to the enduring debates in the field, and to prepare her to teach introductory courses in the philosophy of art at both the graduate and undergraduate level.

[Counts towards course satisfaction of Group C]

Topics in the Philosophy of Semantics
Prof. Salmon
4 credits
Tues. 11:45-1:45

We will study and critique some of the papers that will appear in the forthcoming collection, Saul Kripke (Cambridge University Press, 2011), edited by Alan Berger.

This collection consists entirely of essays about various aspects of Kripke's work. We will also investigate some of the most important work of Kripke's that has so far remained unpublished (e.g., on non-designating names, on the first-person Self, and more), as well as the new essays on some of that unpublished work. Seminar participants will make presentations on individual essays by Kripke or his commentators.

[Counts towards course satisfaction of Group A]

Philosophy of Biology
Prof. Godfrey-Smith
4 credits
Tues. 2:00 - 4:00

A survey of philosophical issues arising in and around modern biology, with an emphasis on evolutionary theory. Topics include: laws and models in biology; natural selection; function and adaptation; organisms and individuality; gene-centered views of evolution; species and other kinds; human nature; evolutionary explanations of social behaviors such as cooperation and communication.

[Counts towards course satisfaction of Group B]

"Feminist Philosophy"
Prof. Schwarzenbach
4 credits
Tues. 2-4

The seminar will be an in-depth study of the major varieties of contemporary philosophical feminism with primary (though not exclusive) focus on issues in ethics, social and political philosophy. We will begin with an analysis of recent scientific studies regarding 'gender
differences' in the brain with particular stress on their ethical implications. The seminar will then evaluate different feminist approaches: the most recent work in care theory (such as Slote and Held), post-modern and gender identity theorists (Butler, Rubin), racial identity theorists (Alcoff), as well as liberal political theorists (Okin, Nussbaum), radical feminists on the state (MacKinnon) and feminist socialist thinkers (Holstrom, Gould) among others. The final part of the semester will focus on ethical and political issues of international concern and ask which approach might best address these issues.

Because the New York area is rich with feminist philosophers, a number of these thinkers have been invited to the class (already Alcoff, Held, Gould, Holmstrom and Kyoo Lee have committed themselves) in order to discuss their on-going work.

[Counts towards course satisfaction of Group C]

Revising Logic
Profs. Priest & Field (NYU)
4 credits
Tues. 4:30-6:30

Especially since the rise of non-classical logics in the 20th century, there has been much debate about whether logic can be revised. This is the question which our course will address. It quickly resolves into many different questions: What does this mean? Can it indeed be done? Can it be done rationally? If so, how? If so, when and why? These will all come in for scrutiny. The course will engage us in fundamental questions in logic, semantics, epistemology (and maybe metaphysics). We will be looking critically at some well known views on the matter, and attempting to develop a new and more adequate understanding.

[Counts towards course satisfaction of Group E]

Late Medieval
Prof. Lackey
4 credits
Tues. 6:30-8:30

In 1775 Edward Gibbon wrote that the decline and fall of the Roman Empire presented "the greatest, and perhaps the most awful, scene in the history of mankind." In the history of philosophy the greatest and perhaps most awful scene is the decline and fall of the Aristotelian synthesis, which reached its pinnacle in the two magisterial summae of Thomas Aquinas in the third quarter of the thirteenth century. This course will begin with a summary of Aquinas and what he and his Aristotelian predecessors achieved, and then charts the various forces that, like wolves surrounding a stag, brought Aquinas's great system of interlocking natural kinds crashing down by the middle of the 17th century. These forces included (a) Scotus's rejection of matter as the principle of individuation (b) Ockham's exultation of divine omnipotence, and the Ockhamist doctrine that God can violate the basic laws of Aristotelian logic and undermine relations among formal causes, (c) Ockham's nominalism, and his rejection of universals that brought with it a rejection of natural kinds, (d) the rise of numerous 14th century mystical movements, for whom the difference between a man and a dog is less important than the fact that both of parts of God, (e) the rise of Platonism and Neoplatonism in 15th century Italy and its attendant anti-Aristotelian supernaturalism, (f) the rise of Lutheranism in the early 16th century and the Deus abscondit doctrine, which deprives the created world of any natural goodness, (g) the corresponding Italian rejection of natural law that brings forth the "mur'd'rous Machiavel," (h) the rise of vitalist materialism in southern Italy towards the end of the 16th century in Telesio and Campanella and other anti-Aristotelians, (i) last and perhaps least, the discoveries of modern astronomy and physics, those Jovian satellites, those new stars, that cast doubt on particular empirical theses of Aristotle, and produced corresponding metaphysical counterparts in Cusanus and Bruno.
The course will also consider various rearguard actions on the part of Aristotelians, Suarez versus the Platonists, Bellarmine versus Galileo, and so forth. Some attention will be given to 17th century anti-modernists, like the Cambridge "Platonists" (Aristotelians, actually) who thought that the New Science was hopeless as a foundation for either biology or psychology. Finally, some attention will be given to relations between philosophical movements and artistic currents, for example, the relation between Nominalism and the development of 15th century Flemish painting, between Neoplatonism and the doctrine of ideal form in Italian Renaissance art, and between 16th c. Augustinianism and the sense of the sublime in Lutheran chorales.

[Counts towards course satisfaction of Group D-Ancient]

Reference and Experimental Philosophy
Prof. Devitt
4 credits
Wed. 9:30-11:30

It is usual to think that referential relations hold between language and thoughts on the one hand, and the world on the other. The most striking example of such a relation is the naming relation, the sort that holds between 'Socrates' and the famous philosopher Socrates. Other sorts of words are best seen as having other sorts of referential relations to the world for which various terms are used; for example, 'denotation' and 'application'. Usually, philosophers are interested in reference because they take it to be the core of meaning. Thus, the fact that 'Socrates' refers to that philosopher is the core of the name's meaning and hence of its contribution to the meaning of any sentence - for example, 'Socrates is wise' - that contains the name.

The central question about reference is: In virtue of what does a term have its reference? Answering this requires a theory that explains the term's relation to its referent. Until the 70s, answers were nearly always along descriptivist lines: the reference of a term was determined by descriptions competent speakers associated with it. Then came the revolution, led by Kripke, which rejected description theories for names and some other terms in favor of some sort of causal theory. This rejection, indeed the whole enterprise of seeking theories of reference by consulting intuitions, has recently been challenged by some "experimental" philosophers, particularly by Machery et al's "Semantics Cross-Cultural Style" (2004).

This course will be concerned primarily with theories of reference for singular terms: for proper names like 'Socrates', demonstratives like 'this cat', pronouns like 'she', definite descriptions like 'the last great philosopher of antiquity', and indefinite descriptions like 'a lion'. Anaphoric reference will not be considered. Figures to be discussed include Frege, Russell, Kripke, Donnellan, Searle, Evans, Putnam, Grice, Kaplan, Wilson, Neale, Bach, Reimer. The experimentalist challenge will be addressed. Whilst experimentalists are right to look critically at the reliance on intuitions in theorizing about reference, it will be argued that their experimental response is misguided. Another experimental approach, concerned with usage not intuitions, will be urged.

This is not an introduction to the philosophy of language. Anyone wishing to take it who has not already taken a course in the philosophy of language should consult with me before enrolling.

Requirements
(i) A brief weekly email raising questions about, making criticisms of, or developing points concerning, matters discussed in the class and reading for that week. 50% of grade.
(ii) A class presentation based on a draft for a paper (topic chosen in consultation with me). The draft to be submitted before Tuesday of the week of presentation. 20% of grade.
(iii) A 2,500 word paper probably arising from the draft in (ii). 30% of grade.

Learning Goals
Mastery of the contemporary debates about reference

READINGS
The Proseminar is restricted to and required of students entering the Ph.D. program. Its purpose is to get students accustomed to graduate-level writing, seminar discussion, and presentation skills. We have chosen to work around a theme this year (realism vs. anti-realism) that has been central to many different areas in philosophy (language, metaphysics, epistemology, mind, perception, science, feminism, ethics, social, and continental). Everyone may have some expertise in some of the selected areas, but no one will be an expert in all. Thus, the emphasis is on the development of skills for critically engaging with new material, rather than on bringing prior knowledge to bear. Many of the readings were chosen because they have been foundational in the field, though some reflect newer contributions that build upon or question those foundations.

Personal Identity

The course will focus on philosophical theories of diachronic personal identity (what makes a person at a later time identical to a person at an earlier time?) and synchronic personal identity (what makes an individual a singular person at any point in time?). After exploring some general issues about identity and personhood, and surveying some classical theories of personal identity, we will consider contemporary psychological and physical theories of personal identity. We will discuss the role played by memory, spatiotemporal continuity of body and brain, core psychology, personal psychology, and unity of consciousness in the determination of personal identity. We will consider the purported implications of thought experiments involving reincarnation, brain division and transplantation, fission and fusion, teletransportation, molecular decomposition and recomposition, and the relevance of psychological studies of split-brain patients and multiple personalities. We will also consider the implications of different theories of personal identity for questions about personal responsibility and desert, and the role (if any) our own concept of our identity (or 'sense of identity') plays in determining our personal identity. If time permits, we will also look at the bearing of current psychological, social and psychiatric theories of identity on philosophical criteria of personal identity. Regular attendance is required. Duplicates will not be accepted, and fission products will be independently assessed. Multiples will be assessed once only.

Assessment will be based on a class presentation, written up as a short paper, a longer paper on an approved topic, and contribution to class discussion.
Reference and Existence: Fiction and Perception  
**Prof. Kripke**  
4 credits  
Wed. 6:30 - 8:30  

The course will deal with some of the problems involved in reference, or apparent reference, to fictional and non-existent entities, and related issues involving perception. I may modify some earlier views discussed in my unpublished John Locke Lectures (which will be available to the participants of the seminar). My opinion is still that much has been mistaken, for empty reference is in fact reference to real objects, fictional characters, whose existence depends on empirical facts. I expound and defend this idea in the course. There are analogous problems in the philosophy of perception that will be discussed using similar apparatus. Professor Ostertag has agreed to do the grading for this course.

[Counts towards course satisfaction of Group A]
[back to course schedule]

Theory of Mind in Animals and Infants  
**Prof. Lurz (Brooklyn)**  
4 credits  
Thurs. 9:30-11:30  

For over thirty years now, there has been a heated debate within comparative psychology, cognitive ethology, and philosophy over the question of whether nonhuman animals are capable of attributing mental states (e.g., perceptual states, intentions, emotions, and beliefs) to other agents. The question is generally expressed by asking whether animals are capable of mindreading or a theory-of-mind. Some researchers argue that there is now strong empirical evidence supporting the hypothesis that certain kinds of social animals (e.g., great apes, dolphins, corvids, and dogs) are indeed mind readers; however, other researchers argue that the empirical data show that animals are at most sophisticated behavior readers.

The debate over animal mindreading is rich in empirical and philosophical issues concerning the nature of mental state attribution, its evolutionary origins and adaptive value, and its relation to language, self-awareness, and objectivity. The debate is also rich in epistemic and methodological issues concerning the possibility of scientific knowledge of animal minds.

In the course, we will examine a wide range of empirical studies on animal mindreading; various theoretical arguments for and against animal mindreading; the relevance of animal mindreading to the moral status of animals; and the relevance of animal mindreading to the question of human uniqueness. The animal mindreading debate bears importantly on a similar debate in developmental psychology over whether preverbal infants are mind readers. As a result, relevant developmental studies and theoretical issues on infant mindreading will also be examined.

[Counts towards course satisfaction of Group TBA]
[back to course schedule]

Quine and Sellars on Thought and Language  
**Prof. Rosenthal**  
4 credits  
Thurs. 2-4  

W. V. Quine is well-known for arguing against any appeal to analyticity or what he sees as cognate notions in explaining the semantic aspects of language, and also for espousing "the baselessness of intentional idioms and the emptiness of a science of intention" (Word and Object, 221). Wilfrid Sellars, in apparent contrast, is known for holding that we can best understand thoughts, sensations, and other mental states as posits whose occurrence is initially established by theoretical reasoning, though they
acquire a reporting role that explains our first-person access to them. And Sellars advocated a realist, broadly functionalist view about intentional content and the semantic properties of speech.

We'll examine Quine's reasons for rejecting various traditional claims about intentionality and semantics and ask whether those reasons are well-founded. And we’ll examine Sellars' views about these matters, both to evaluate those views and to see how they fare with respect to Quine's concerns about the groundlessness of traditional views about intentionality and semantics. Do Quine's views about analyticity, indeterminacy of translation, and inscrutability of reference undermine Sellars’ theory of intentionality? If not, why not? And does Sellars' theory of meaning square with Quine's concerns? If not, who is right about these things?

We'll also examine various related issues about which Quine and Sellars clearly differ, such as how to regiment ascriptions of intentional states, whether to understand such ascriptions theoretically (Sellars) or as a dramatic idiom (Quine), the correct interpretation of quantification and its bearing on ontology, quantification in connection with the nonextensional contexts, and reference to abstract objects. And we'll also examine and evaluate the relation between Quine's theses of indeterminacy of translation and inscrutability of reference.

Of particular interest will be the relationship of thought to speech, the potentially different relationship of how we can best understand thought to how we can best understand speech, and the connection third-person ascriptions of mental states have to the first-person access we have to those states when those states are conscious.

We'll use the Graduate Center's electronic reserve system and portions mainly of these books, all available on reserve, though a few of which may be useful to purchase:

Quine: *From a Logical Point of View, The Ways of Paradox and Other Essays, Ontological Relativity and Other Essays* (all Harvard University Press)
and *Word and Object* (MIT Press).


[Counts towards course satisfaction of Group A or B]

Hegelian Ethics
**Prof. Dahbour**
4 credits
Thurs. 4:15 - 6:15

This course consists of an in-depth study of G.W.F. Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* (along with a few selections from some of Hegel's other writings), as well as a survey of reactions, elaborations, critiques, and applications of Hegel's approach to ethical theory from the 1840s to the 2000s. Emphasis will be placed on Hegel's definition of ethics as distinct from morality, and on its embodiment in a particular set of legal, social, and political institutions.

Hegel's philosophy in some ways constitutes the "missing link" between Kant and many aspects of 19th- and 20th-century philosophy, and, as a result of new translations and interpretations, the *Philosophy of Right* is itself now increasingly regarded by scholars as one of the most important works of modern ethical theory. Some emphasis will be placed on Hegel's definition of ethics as distinct from morality, and on its embodiment in a particular set of legal, social, and political institutions.

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communitarian concepts of rights and duties; the critique of Kantian ethics from the standpoint of a social theory of moral autonomy; a philosophical account of civil society and the concept of a “welfare state” appropriate to it; a theory of group representation that can serve as an alternative to democratic majoritarianism; an understanding of international justice that rejects both Hobbesian realism and Kantian moralism; and a concept of the hermeneutical legitimation of norms based on historical narrative.

Requirements for the class include a research paper delving into some of the massive secondary literature that continues to accumulate, 2 shorter essays on Hegel's main texts and on some of the historical responses to it, as well as in-class presentations of some course material.

Ideal preparation for this course would include prior acquaintance with Hegel's philosophy and/or Kantian ethics. However, the Philosophy of Right itself constitutes an excellent introduction to Hegel's work and students without prior study in this area are encouraged to enroll. Such students should, however, consult an introductory work on Hegel (Charles Taylor's Hegel is especially recommended for present purposes). All students registering for the course need to obtain a copy of Hegel's Elements of the Philosophy of Right (the Cambridge U.P. edition/Nisbet translation only!), and contact me, at odahbour@hunter.cuny.edu, about readings for the first class. Auditors are welcome, provided they do the reading and attend regularly.

[Counts towards course satisfaction of Group D-modern]

CSC 85011
Epistemic Logic
Prof. Parikh
4 credits
Thurs. 2:00 - 4:00

Epistemic concerns go back to Plato, but were revived in the 20th century with two major developments being the books by Hinittka (Knowledge and Belief) and Lewis (Convention). Computer Science entered the field in the 70's and 80's when connections were made with artificial intelligence and distributed computing.

Since then, the pace of development has been rapid. Some early work was done at IBM-San Jose, and at CUNY but now other institutions, especially in the Netherlands, have also started participating in a big way.

Topics:
- Basic concerns in epistemology
- Axiomatic systems, Kripke models, soundness and completeness
- Complexity issues
- Connections with distributed computing, common knowledge
- Aumann structures, connections with game theory
- Signaling and cheap talk
- Dynamic epistemic logic
- Justification in epistemic logic
- Social issues in knowledge transmission
- The knowledge aspects of encryption
- Other topics as appropriate

[Counts towards course satisfaction of Group TBD]
Seminar participants will include CUNY students and MSSM medical students as well as students from the MSSM Masters programs in Genetics Counseling, Clinical Research, and Public Health.

This seminar will explore the complex issues raised by human subject research. The seminar will begin with a review of some of the landmark cases of unethical use of human subjects in research, the policies that shape our current understanding of the ethical conduct of research, and the mechanisms for research oversight that have been instituted. Then, through reading a broad selection of seminal articles and papers from the recent literature, seminar presentations and discussions, we shall engage in a conceptual analysis of a number of controversial and pressing issues. We shall be discussing the moral and public policy aspects of topics such as research design, risk-benefit assessment, informed consent, the use of "vulnerable" subjects, research without consent, confidentiality, inducements, conflicts of interests, disclosure of research findings, tissue use, vaccine development, and international research. In addition to exploring the moral landscape of this rich and provocative domain, the seminar should clarify and inform participants' understanding of basic moral concepts such as autonomy and justice. It will also serve as a model for approaching other issues in applied ethics.

[Counts towards course satisfaction of Group TBD]

PHIL 77600
International Ethics
Prof. Gould
4 credits
Tues. 4:15 - 6:15

This seminar will address key issues that arise in international affairs concerning the ethics of war and peace; the recognition of cultural differences; the elimination of harms to women; and the requirements of global justice. We will consider whether the development of economic globalization, the persistence of nationalism, and the emergence of new forms of violence require reconceiving values, and whether new forms of global governance may be needed. We will first raise the question of the very possibility of morality among nation-states or peoples, and discuss the challenges to international ethics posed by both realist and relativist approaches. We will then examine traditional just war theory and consider its applicability to contemporary forms of political violence, e.g., those associated with ethnic conflicts or with terrorism (international and domestic). After analyzing the concepts of crimes against humanity and the responsibility to protect, we will go on to specifically consider violence against women. An emphasis on the expressions of this violence in forms like sex trafficking will allow us to explore the broader question of the relation between gender and culture. The importance of cultural identities and minority rights will be scrutinized, along with the troubled question of rights to immigrate. Finally, we will evaluate the impacts of economic and technological globalization in relation to three seemingly intractable issues: protecting the privacy of online information; ameliorating substantial global inequalities; and dealing with the vexing issue of climate change.

The seminar will employ alternative ethical approaches to elucidating these problems, including consequentialist theories, human rights approaches, communitarian perspectives, and feminist care ethics, and will compare their strengths and weaknesses in these contexts. In addition, we will attend to the tension between recognizing diversity in cultural practices (which may sometimes be oppressive) and the demands of cosmopolitan or universalist frameworks, e.g., of human rights (including women’s rights). Readings will include such authors as Michael Walzer, David Luban, Virginia Held, Larry May, Susan Okin, Martha Nussbaum, Iris Marion Young, Peter Singer, and Thomas Pogge.
Seminar members will be encouraged to relate the course materials to their ongoing research projects through oral presentations and analytical term papers, and will be expected to be active participants in the seminar discussions.

For more information, please contact carolcgould@gmail.com.

[Counts towards course satisfaction of Group TBD]

[back to course schedule]