2014-15 PHIL 190 Course Descriptions:

PHIL 190-01 – Hegel’s Science of Logic (Fall 2014) - Stone
Hegel's "science of logic," the first and most fundamental part of his system, combines the traditional functions of logic and metaphysics. Its principle: "X is Y is never true unless one goes on to add that X is not Y." Course 106 or its equivalent is a helpful background for this course.

PHIL 190-02 - Philosophy of Psychiatry (Fall 2014) - Dinshaw
In this seminar we will reflect on the nature of mental disorder (the very idea of it, attempts to treat it, its ethical and experiential dimensions) and its intersections with themes in the philosophy of science and philosophy of mind such as classification, reduction, explanation, the mind-body relation, the unity and fragmentation of the mind, delusions, hallucinations and other unusual sensory experiences. Questions we will take up include: What is a mental illness? Is psychiatric classification valid? Is our concept of mental illness a valid one? What is the relation between understanding the brain and understanding people? What value judgments, if any, inform the practice of psychiatry (e.g., diagnosis and treatment)? What makes these questions pressing for psychiatry? We will also look at the anti-psychiatry movement in the 1960s, including its philosophical and political underpinnings, and consider how recent discussions in the philosophy of psychiatry can be understood as responses to this movement. Our philosophical explorations will be informed by careful consideration of particular psychiatric conditions (e.g., schizophrenia, addiction, and autism).

PHIL 190-03 – Philosophy of Psychology (Fall 2014) - Orlandi
The Philosophy of Psychology is primarily concerned with questions pertaining to the scientific status of Psychology. It investigates whether the mind can be the subject of scientific investigation and it further attempts to address the question of what form such investigation should take. In this class we attempt to address these questions while also looking at specific research areas in cognitive psychology.

We will set up the debate by focusing on the general question of whether psychology is a science and on what form it should take. In particular, we will focus on the relation between common-sense psychology, cognitive psychology and neuroscience. Common-sense psychology is often used to predict and explain what people do and cognitive psychology inherits its fundamental postulates by ascribing beliefs, desires and intentions to agents. Although this is prima facie useful, we should ask whether this type of psychology is a genuine scientific theory, and whether it should be abandoned in favor of a more precise science of the mind -- for instance, in favor of a more precise neuroscience. Positions on this issue are varied. We will read the work of the major contenders in this debate such as Jerry Fodor, Paul Churchland, Daniel Dennett and others. We will then move on to look at a selection of areas in cognitive psychology. Topics include rationality, perception, emotion, and consciousness.

The primary aim of this class is to acquaint students with some central issues in the philosophy of psychology and to train them in the methodology and style of philosophical engagement.

PHIL 190-01 – Antirealism in Philosophy of Science (Winter 2015) – Otte
This term we will study antirealism in philosophy of science, focusing on the work of Bas van Fraassen. Issues will involve topics such as:

What is the aim of science?
Should we believe in the unobservable parts of scientific theories?
Is it rational to withhold judgment on what science claims about the unobservable world?
Can an empiricist give an adequate account of science?

We will begin by reading van Fraassen’s The Scientific Image. Then we will read some critiques of his position, as well as some of his responses to those critiques.

Students will be evaluated on the basis of several short papers, a class presentation, and participation in discussion.
PHIL 190-02 – Philosophy of Biology: Classifying Persons: Philosophy, Politics, and Possibilities/Problems (Winter 2015) – Winther
In a university major where many of you learn that ONLY certain thinkers count as philosophers – e.g., Aristotle, Descartes, Hume, Locke, Kant, Mill, Quine, Davidson, Lewis, etc., and ONLY certain questions count as philosophical – e.g., “what is truth?” “what is reality?” “how do we know (caricature propositions such as “this cloth is red” or “5 + 7 =12”),” etc., some of you may wonder why “Philosophy of Race” or “Philosophy of Classifying Persons” is even philosophy, rather than, say, sociology or history or cultural studies. Why and how is your current class with me Philosophy? An immediate answer is: “go read the continental philosophers, including Nietzsche, Heidegger, Sartre, Foucault, etc.” However, even that answer is not quite sufficient. Why? First, these are really difficult thinkers, as important and brilliant as they are, and the answer for why “Philosophy of Race” or “Philosophy of Classifying Persons” is philosophy has to be simpler and closer to us. Second, one always wonders why brilliance in philosophy is so often associated with obscure prose. Sad, but often true. Third, our answer must revolve more around method than around content. So rather than focus on the ideology or substance of either continental or analytic philosophers, let us emphasize methodology. Why? Because philosophy is method.

PHIL 190-01, The Good Life (Spring 2015) – Ellis
How should I live my life? What factors should I take into account when deciding this? What makes for a meaningful life? Or a happy life? Or a “good” life? Or a rewarding or fulfilling life? What is “happiness” anyway? Or meaning or fulfillment? These perennial philosophical questions are the central questions of this seminar. The course will be divided into four parts. We will begin with the Ancient Stoics and their approach to some of these questions. We will then turn to some empirical research from psychology, especially concerning happiness. In the third part of the course, we will investigate some ideas from Eastern philosophy, primarily from the Buddhist tradition. We will conclude with the notion of meaning and the role that it plays in various answers to the central questions of the course. In each part, we will not only critically assess the ideas we study but also consider the possibility of applying them to our own everyday lives. We will also pay close attention to the relationships among the ideas discussed in the four parts of the course.

PHIL 190-02 Kant (Spring 2015) – Matherne
Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) claimed that philosophy came down to four basic questions: What can I know? What ought I do? What may I hope? What is man? His answers to these transformed the trajectory of Western philosophy. From epistemology to metaphysics, ethics to aesthetics, religion to politics, Kant’s writings set a new agenda for how we approach almost every area of philosophy. Endeavoring to avoid both abstruse metaphysics and skepticism, Kant analyzed the nature and limits of ‘pure reason’ in all its various manifestations in the hopes of uncovering a wide range of philosophical truths. This was done not just in the hopes that we would come to better understand things as philosophers, but that we would come to live better lives.

In this course, we will trace the development of Kant’s thought in his so-called ‘critical period’ by looking at the Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics, the Critique of Pure Reason, the Groundwork to the Metaphysics of Morals, the Critique of Practical Reason, and the Critique of the Power of Judgment. We will cover topics in metaphysics, epistemology, morality, and aesthetics.