

Proposed Philosophy Major Changes 1/2017

Current Class Offerings:

Major Issues
Intro to Logic
History of Philosophy 1: Ancient/Medieval
History of Philosophy 2: Modern/Contemporary
Ethics (WI)
History of Political Philosophy
Philosophy of Science
Philosophy of Religion (WI)
World Religions

The current major “Narrative”/“Trajectory” assumes that students decide to major in philosophy after Major Issues and then take historical surveys (HOP 1&2) before diving into subject areas. Along the way, students are required to write a great deal for at least 1 class. The subjects that we deliver also point to particular areas in which we deem valuable for philosophy majors. What is notable is the absence of traditionally dominant philosophy sub-disciplines, namely, epistemology and metaphysics (not that I’m complaining).

Proposed Changes:

Major Issues
Intro to Logic (focus on legal reasoning)
History of Philosophy 1: Ancient/Medieval
History of Philosophy 2: Modern-Existentialism (any more is too much to do)
Ethics (Keep as WI but offered every other year)
History of Political Philosophy (I’m thinking *Canon and its discontents* and going global)
Philosophy of Science (epistemology class? Environmental ethics? technology?)
Philosophy of Religion (Keep as WI but offered every other year)
World Religions

Philosophy of Art (pairs well with CVCMS majors) (every other year)
Topics in Global Philosophy (maybe too specific but could work well with Spanish/Hist)
Philosophical Themes of Gender (or something on Gender. It’s needed and I can’t teach

it)

YEAR A

HOP I (JB)
Political Thought (JB)
Phil of Religion (CMS)

Ethics (JB)
HOP II (JB)
PHIL of Gender (CMS)

YEAR B

Logic (JB)
Global PHIL (JB)
CMS?

PHIL of SCI (JB)
PHIL of ART (?)
CMS?

Changes to the major have to be minimal because of HLC oversight. We have 10 credits to work with. My proposal is essentially adding 2 new classes and taking an older experimental class and making it a standard. We already offer fewer classes than the major requires and making philosophy majors take Methods as their capstone when they've been undertaking very different set of courses from other majors offered in the department.

Rationale for Changes:

Finding ways to make philosophy offerings work for students who are in other majors and for other departments. I also think that, given my last talk with Edwin, the desire is for a philosophy program that is socially focused and works as a strong supplement to the other majors that are the focus of the school at the time. The difficulty we face is that we need to develop (or maintain) an identity that is not swayed by academic trends while paying attention to changes in the world and cultures students both exist within and will be entering into. This has always been the challenge but we shouldn't double down on "universals" for the sake of avoiding having to change.

As we phase out sociology, some of the key materials and ideas can be incorporated into courses focusing on social and political thought, thus preserving essentials.

Class by Class Details:

Logic:

Don't do it online. Students need more interaction to do it well. Shift in focus from bare-bones skills to legal reasoning will make it pair well with another class that is offered in CVCMS (Persuasion and Argumentation) which might make a great cross-listing candidate. This class is hard but it is also something that all pre-law students have to take. Tailoring it more towards those ends only serves the students better.

History of Political Thought:

Make the class *The Canon and its Discontents*. The Canon would be the early part of the class and would be Plato, Aristotle, Social Contract Theory, and Rawls. The rest of the class would focus on critiquing these ideas. It would be a more global focus and incorporate political critiques and innovations from non-western places. So, Fanon, Dussel, Said, etc.

Philosophy of Science:

Bernico has convinced me that this class is important. The continued existence of CORE 302 makes me think otherwise. However, it presents three unique opportunities to meet the needs of our students. 1) It could act as an epistemology class. Sure, the focus is on science, but so much of the canon of phil/sci is focused on viable theories of truth and knowledge. This would be by far the easiest and most boring way to do the class. 2) Environmental ethics. Focus on ecology, understanding of nature, geoengineering, etc. 3) Technology. Look at media technology, incorporate post-heideggerian philosophy of technology, talk about the internet and stuff.

Philosophy of Art:

General aesthetics course. Gen Ed eligible. Make attractive to students in creative fields who are also A&S BAs. Nothing special other than we don't do aesthetics but assume a lot about it in our creative classes. Lisa Sharpe has volunteered to team-teach it which would be very interesting but I have no idea what it would look like team-taught.

Topics in Global Philosophy:

Like I said, it's perhaps a bit too specific and I feel bad leaving out other "ethnic studies" areas of philosophy like Africana and Asian thought but I think this particular class would fit with other initiatives the college is attempting to get off the ground. The continued relationship with Nicaragua, Mexico, Costa Rica, Brazil, and DR means that this would be a class that is both timely and works with other areas like Spanish/Cross-Cultural studies. It also allows us to do philosophy from a post-colonial perspective. I'd run it like a history survey and incorporate film and/or literature into it.

Philosophical Themes of Gender:

We have a significant number of women in the department and it is where we are growing the most. We also have not had an actual gender studies class for a while (if ever). This class is needed especially in the current political climate. It could become a signature Smerick class...