COURSE DESCRIPTION

The three main themes that will be covered during the course are:

- **Ethics**: We will discuss the problem of moral relativism and ask whether it is possible for us to reach agreement about right and wrong. We will focus on the ethical theories of utilitarianism and deontology as two possible candidates for such agreement. We will also look at the relation between theories of ethics and the theory of evolution and consider game theoretical explanations for ethical beliefs.

- **Culture**: Culture is largely a matter of the institutions that a society adopts. Political institutions, specifically, play a large role in how we define citizens, how we understand and evaluate rulers and the rule of law, and how we think about the distribution of scarce resources. We will deal specifically with contemporary theories of justice. We will discuss the work of John Rawls, Robert Nozick, Amartya Sen, Martha Nussbaum and Thomas Pogge. We will also look at recent trends in African political philosophy, focussing especially on the questions of reparations and international justice.

- **Science**: we will look at how scientific evidence can be relevant to philosophical questions (in ethics, society, and scientific practices) through assessing the case of race. We begin by looking at the history of race in the literature and how different ideas about race have come about in various societies, then we look at the ‘scientific turn’ in racial thinking which culminates in contemporary scientific theories of race, and end with how scientific evidence bears on the question of race in its social context. The general approaches to theories of race we will be using to interrogate these questions are biological realism and social constructivism.

DAY PROGRAMME

**Class times are as follows: 09:00 – 11:00, 11:30 – 13:00 & 14:00 – 16:30**

Day 1: Introduction and ‘What is Philosophy?’ Ethics, part one (Susan Hall).

Day 2: Ethics, part two (Susan Hall).

Day 3: Institutions and Culture (Gerrit Schaafsma)

Day 4: The Nature of Science (Phila Msimang)

Day 5: Test and discussion of ideas at the intersection of science and ethics (JP Smit).

EVALUATION

Evaluation: One open book test on 17 July and one essay to be submitted on 19 July. The test will count 50% of your mark, the essay 45% and class participation 5%.

Plagiarism:

Please note that plagiarism in any form is regarded as a serious offence and will result in penalties. All written assignments must be uploaded onto Turnitin via Moodle. Students are also required to sign a plagiarism declaration.