The Philosophy of Science

Instructor: Lester Kim
E-mail: lkim@fas.harvard.edu

In this course, we will tackle big questions concerning the nature of reality, the limits of human cognition, morality, and the meaning of life. In order to help our attempts to answer these questions, we will discuss important scientific discoveries and facts that will provide a deeper perspective into these issues.

Given Topics (not necessarily in this order):
1. Logic: syllogisms, negation, contrapositive, induction, deduction
2. Limits of science: provability, Cartesian and Humean criticisms
3. God: defining “God,” ontological argument, cosmological argument, teleological argument, the problem of evil, Deism, pantheism, agnosticism
4. Ethics: origins of altruism, naturalistic fallacy, origins of evil, utilitarianism, liberalism, libertarianism, Kantian metaethics, bioethics
5. Political philosophy: law, Hobbe’s Leviathan, Marxism, capitalism, democracy, economics
6. Nature of reality: relativity, quantum mechanics, string theory, determinism, indeterminism, the Big Bang, black holes, multiverse theory
7. Human mind: behaviorism, evolutionary psychology, emotions, cognition, sexuality, rationality, irrationality

References:
1. Meditations on First Philosophy by Rene Descartes
2. An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding by David Hume
3. Utilitarianism by John Stuart Mill
4. The Elegant Universe by Brian Greene
5. The Selfish Gene by Richard Dawkins
6. A Brief History of Time by Stephen Hawking
7. The Worldly Philosophers by Robert L. Heilbroner
8. The Human Mind by Steven Pinker
9. The Evolution of Desire by David Buss
10. Blink by Malcolm Gladwell