Phil/WS 393 is a 100% online course. This page is intended to let you know something about the nature of the course in advance, so that you can see whether 1) you are able to take the course, and 2) whether you really want to take it. (You might not.)

And ... there are a number of people on the waiting list, who also want to take the course. I will make sure that they read the "Warnings and Requirements" also, so they might be convinced out of it too. But first, I want to try to talk you out of it first. Here are your Cautions:

**Caution #1 (a very serious caution): Don’t expect an easy course.**

If you think that an online course is a way of getting the same credit for less work, *don’t take this course*. You will do at least as much work in this course as any of my face-to-face courses (possibly more).

I have taught this course around 5 times in the online format (and just as many times in face-to-face courses) so I'm getting used to the differences in attitudes that online courses elicit from students. Most of the classes (and the students) did very well – a lot of very creative thought, research, and online conversation during the semester. However, one fact is a problem in online courses. It is this:

A surprisingly large number of students in online-Phil-393 have just “disappeared” in the middle of the semester, taking an F for the course. I’ve taught at UHH for many years, and this usually happens for maybe 2-3 students per semester per course. The first semester I taught Phil 393 online, 6 students out of 21 who were officially enrolled just disappeared and took Fs for the course. It was terrible, and I almost stopped teaching the course online.

I was very happy that the following year things improved. But things have still varied a lot. STILL -- too many students simply disappear from the class (although not as many as that first semester). The problem is, I believe, that many students take the course *only* because they believe that an online course will be easier than an in-class course.

*That is a big mistake.*

It is especially a mistake because online courses do not have the same face-to-face relationship between professors and students (I believe). It just seems easier to cut assignments and exams, and not worry about the consequences, when you don't see the professor face-to-face regularly.

So be aware of this: Online courses are dangerous. It's too easy to skip assignments and fail to keep up with the online work (listening to the podcasts and
reading the assignments). If you're tempted to cut classes, you'll be extra tempted to cut online podcasts and assignments. And things will pile up for an online course even worse than they will for a face-to-face course.

So be ready for two to three hours per week of required online listening and watching, and several more hours of reading assignments and response assignments (e.g. writing comments on the coursework). If you're not ready for that, take a face-to-face course where the professor can keep track of you.

**Caution #2: Prerequisite: a previous course in Philosophy:**

This course carries a prerequisite of "previous work in Philosophy." This prerequisite is not automatically enforced by the enrollment process, for reasons that are too complicated to explain. But you are still required to either have taken a previous course in college-level Philosophy, or ask your professor to admit you to the class without that prerequisite.

Ok, I'll give you all permission to enter the course without the prerequisite but only if you recognize that you may get in real trouble by taking it. The problem is that Philosophy courses concentrate not on discussing Topic X, but rather on discussing "our concept of" Topic X. For example, a course in "ethics" will not discuss what is morally right and wrong so much as "our concepts of" what is right and wrong.

If you've taken a Philosophy course, then you'll know what to expect. But if you have not, you may find yourself completely bewildered. And don't come crying to me!!! I'm the guy who told you that you should have taken a Philosophy course previously! If you're not sure about your ability to think about concepts rather than "real things," then you should go back and take a course in Philosophy that will give you those skills. By the time the exam rolls around, it will be too late.

**Caution #3: WS**

If you’re taking the course only because it was listed as a course in the Women’s Studies program, please read this section seriously. This is not an average WS course. Some people who expected an ordinary WS course have been disappointed in the course. The same is true of people who expected an ordinary Philosophy course, I have to admit. I do think that it is a valuable course (and so do most students who take it). But it is unusual.

The reason that this is a Women's Studies crosslisted course is that at about half of the authors of the articles in the Syllabus are writing from a feminist perspective. Women's Studies was maturing, as an academic field of study at just the time that Normality Studies (and Disability Studies) were starting up. Feminist arguments were very important to the growth of Normality Studies, and they still are important.
But you will not see as strong a concentration on the problems of women alone in this course that you will see in more typical Women's Studies courses. What you will see are examples of how feminist theories have contributed to other ways of studying human culture -- without the perspectives contributed by our feminist authors (Sontag, Wendell, West & Zimmerman, Goering, Goodman, Fausto-Sterling, etc.) our understandings of normality would not be as advanced as they are. But, still, these feminist authors are not primarily talking about women as opposed to men in these writings. They are talking about all people in a feminist way.

Caution #4: Technical requirements:

Members of this course will need high-speed internet access in order to complete the course. Most of the “contact hours” between you and me will be in the form of podcasts, which means (to me) audio recordings of lectures. Some will be “solo” lectures, with just me and the microphone. Some will be recordings of lecture-discussions, in front of live classes in previous semesters. In addition, quite a lot of the class will involve online videos of various kinds. Some will be clips from TV shows, or movies, or documentaries. These will break up the boredom of listening to Amundson talking away to his microphone. However, they will involve pretty large files, up to 100 megabytes of content per week. (This is not such a big deal these days. 8 years ago, when I first started doing this course online, it was a very big deal.)

If you have high-speed internet at home, things will be easy. If you are enrolled at UHH and can get to campus without much trouble, you can do the downloads there. You may want to use a USB drive (or whatever you want to call it) to copy the files on campus and then carry them home to view/listen to at your home computer. If you want to do all the work on campus, you should carry a set of earphones.

You will be expected to participate actively in the course by posting regular “Discussion” posts online. These will (mostly) not be graded, but they will count towards your participation in the course, which will be one factor in your grade. So you will have to keep up with the schedule, which means regular downloads, readings, and online postings.

If you live in a remote location, and you have only dial-up internet access, and you are unable to visit UHH or any other location with high-speed internet access for at least several hours per week, then you must drop this course. Just like some Math courses require students to purchase high-tech calculators, this course requires you to have access to high-speed internet. This is an official notification. Do not take this course if you do not have the required technology. I’m sorry about this, but it’s just a fact of life.

The exams for the course are all in essay format. They are not timed (except that you must get them in by the deadline, which is typically one week), and they are “open book.” (That sounds funny to me.) You will also be required to write regular, short “Discussion” posts, and participate in other online activities. But only downloading the weekly “lectures” and videos really require high-speed connections.
More information will be on the syllabus, and in the first week’s lecture. I'll do part of the first lecture by video, just so that you get an idea what I look like (if you haven’t already had a class with me, or met me otherwise).