

Philosophy (PHIL)

PHIL 201. World Philosophy. 3 Hours.

An introduction to indigenous philosophical traditions from Africa, the Middle East, the Americas, and Asia. The course will examine the different responses these traditions have to metaphysical and epistemological questions: of the fundamental nature of reality; of the nature of the world and cosmos, and of the human place therein; and of what counts as, and how we can acquire, knowledge or wisdom. The approaches we find in these traditions will be compared and contrasted with the approaches typically found in Western philosophical traditions.

PHIL 202. Asian Philosophy. 3 Hours.

An introduction to the philosophical traditions of South and East Asia, focusing on India, China, and Japan. The course will examine the different understandings these traditions have of the human condition, what practices each considers to be central to living 'the good life,' and how these answers differ from those typically found in Western philosophical traditions. Social, ethical, and aesthetic questions will be emphasized throughout the course.

PHIL 203. Problems of Philosophy. 3 Hours.

An exploration of philosophy through analysis and discussion of selected philosophical texts and problems. Sample topics include the relation of mind and body, free will and determinism, moral relativism and moral truth, and the nature of knowledge and belief. Emphasis is placed on oral and written communication skills. Open only to freshmen and sophomores during the regular semesters; open to all students in the summer sessions.

PHIL 204. Introduction to Ethics. 3 Hours.

An introduction to moral philosophy that exposes students to major ethical theories and problems. Utilitarianism, duty-based ethics, virtue ethics, and the relationship between morality and religion are sample topics. Examples are drawn from areas including history, politics, medicine, media, and personal relationships.

PHIL 205. Philosophy of Food. 3 Hours.

An exploration of how food relates to major areas of philosophical inquiry, including metaphysics, epistemology, aesthetics, ethics, and political theory. Topics include the nature of food, food as art, biotechnology, the ethics of eating animals, human rights and food safety, cultural identity, and the politics of global food distribution and production.

PHIL 206. Reasoning & Critical Thinking. 3 Hours.

A course aimed at developing the student's ability to evaluate arguments and other informative prose and to construct arguments with greater cogency and effectiveness. The course employs only a minimal amount of formal logic.

PHIL 207. Philosophy of Sport. 3 Hours.

An examination of the key debates in the philosophy of sport. Emphasis is on the metaphysics of sport and the ethical and conceptual issues that arise within sports, including, but not limited to, cheating, sportsmanship, violence and the challenges of gender, sex, and racial equity.

PHIL 208. Ethics & Animals. 3 Hours.

The course provides a survey of ethical issues central to human-animal relations. It focuses on key moral debates in the field of animal ethics, including, but not limited to, the use of animals for food, fur, various forms of entertainment, and scientific research.

PHIL 209. Symbol Logic. 3 Hours.

An introduction to the techniques of modern symbolic logic with an emphasis on ordinary language applications. Topics include categorical logic, statement logic, and predicate logic. Additional topics vary and may include modal, deontic, and non-classical logics.

PHIL 210. Bio-Medical Ethics. 3 Hours.

A survey of ethical issues that arise in connection with research, medicine, and biotechnologies. Topics such as right to healthcare, research on human subjects, euthanasia, abortion, cloning, genetic selection, disabilities, and the biomedical enhancement of human capacities will be examined. Students will be trained in philosophical ethics and argumentation, and the resources medical professionals need to ethically assess difficult questions.

PHIL 214. Philosophy in Practice. 3 Hours.

An introduction to philosophy with an emphasis on applying philosophical theories in practice. Traditional philosophical readings are paired with project-based learning to enable students to employ philosophy to guide their ethical decision-making, explore the meanings and implications of their relationship to society and the larger world, and practice intentional living. Practices studied may include: Socratic inquiry into the good life; phenomenological observation and consulting; phenomenological and hermeneutic interviewing research; and philosophical counseling.

PHIL 215. Environmental Ethics. 3 Hours.

An exploration of the challenges presented by the ethical analysis of environmental issues. The course explores both the theoretical and practical aspects of these issues.

PHIL 216. Social & Political Philosophy. 3 Hours.

An introduction to some of the most influential theories of Western social and political thought. Topics include the nature and legitimacy of political authority and democracy, the role of morality in society, the duties and responsibilities of citizens, and the challenges of diversity and inclusion. Multicultural and feminist perspectives are components of the course.

PHIL 222. Human Nature. 3 Hours.

An examination of selected classical and modern conceptions of the human being. Aristotle, Darwin, sociobiology, and our relation to other animals are among topics explored.

PHIL 230. Gender, Race and Science. 3 Hours.

An examination of issues arising at the intersection of feminist philosophy, philosophy of race, and the history and philosophy of science. The primary goal of this course is to come to a deeper and more critically reflective understanding of both the history of the concepts of race and gender and the various roles that these concepts continue to play in contemporary science.

PHIL 280. Selected Topics in Philosophy. 1 to 4 Hours.

Selected topics in Philosophy at the introductory or intermediate level.

PHIL 292. Philosophy for Children. 3 Hours.

A study of the theory and practice of doing philosophy with children at the pre-secondary level. Course involves supervised work facilitating philosophical inquiry with students in elementary school classrooms.

PHIL 300. Philosophical Methods. 3 Hours.

Development of highly valued skills in active reading, clear writing, and respectful dialogue. Students will learn: how to analyze and annotate texts; how to clarify terms, questions, and claims; how to compare theories and consider opposing views; how to write and revise philosophical prose, and how to give and respond to feedback. Philosophical texts that explain, elicit, and/or exemplify these skills with readings that range from ethics to metaphysics to political philosophy will be examined.

PHIL 301. Philosophy of Law. 3 Hours.

An introduction to basic issues in the philosophy of law, such as methods of legal reasoning, the relation between legal norms and moral values, and the scope and foundations of rights. Seminal concepts of concern to law are discussed, including liberty, justice and punishment. Readings include classical and contemporary essays in jurisprudence, studies of specific US and international cases, and selected Supreme Court decisions.

PHIL 302. Philosophy of Science. 3 Hours.

Examine the methods, aims, and limits of scientific inquiry, with special attention to the evaluation and construction of arguments. Explore the logic of scientific explanation and the nature of scientific laws, theories, and change.

PHIL 303. Feminist Philosophy. 3 Hours.

A study of contemporary feminist thought with an emphasis on the variety of responses to women's lived experiences. Topics may include gender socialization, the nature of (gender) oppression, sexuality and sexual violence against women, popular culture and self-image, abortion, and pornography. This course may count toward the theory requirement of the Gender Studies Program.

PHIL 304. Philosophy through Literature. 3 Hours.

A discussion and analysis of classical and contemporary philosophical issues as they are presented in selected works of literature, with attention to the question of how philosophical ideas are conveyed through this alternative medium. Topics include: political philosophy; responsibility, free will, and determinism; the nature and purpose of humanity; and the meaning of life.

PHIL 305. Philosophy of Race. 3 Hours.

What is race and how is it socially constructed? What is racism and why is racism morally wrong? This seminar introduces students to the philosophy of race through a survey of central theoretical analyses and debates. Topics may include the metaphysical status of race, the relationship between the concepts of race and racism, the subjectivity or the experience of race, and the examination of possible models for addressing racism and racial injustice.

PHIL 309. Metaphysics and Epistemology. 3 Hours.

Explores the differences and relationships among metaphysical questions (What is there? What is the ultimate nature of reality?) and epistemological questions (What is knowledge? What can we know?). In epistemology, topics include the nature and limits of knowledge and reasonable belief, sources of justification, and varieties of skepticism. In metaphysics, topics include causation, the nature and existence of free will, the relationship between mind and body, and personal identity.

PHIL 310. Philosophy of Art. 3 Hours.

An examination of philosophical issues concerning the creation and appreciation of works of art. Examples for study will be drawn from painting, sculpture, music and other visual, literary and dramatic arts. Topics may include art and morality, the definition of the concept of art, the nature of artistic value, the expression of emotion in art, and the relation between art and truth.

PHIL 311. Principles of Ethics. 3 Hours.

A study of the major systems of ethical thought, both ancient and modern, and their development. Emphasis is on the critical examination and reevaluation of those systems in light of contemporary social developments.

PHIL 312. Language, Truth & Ethics. 3 Hours.

An in-depth study of the issues surrounding the ethical norms associated with interpersonal communication. The course will explore the views of philosophers from different times and traditions on such topics as truth and truthfulness; lying, misleading, and other forms of deception; secrecy, trust, and promise-keeping. The overall aim of the course will be to articulate an account of the ethics of speaking and communication that is adequate to the complexity of the matter.

PHIL 315. Philosophy of Love and Sex. 3 Hours.

A seminar on the nature and morality of love, sex, and their social meanings. Topics to be discussed may include, but are not limited to, familial love, marriage, homosexuality, prostitution, pornography, erotic love, and sexual objectification. Emphasis is on the study of how gender norms inform our understanding of the controversies surrounding these topics.

PHIL 316. Mind, Bodies, and Selves. 3 Hours.

Examines the concepts of minds, bodies, selves and the relationships among them through an exploration of issues at the intersection of philosophy of mind, psychology, neuroscience, and ethics paying special attention to scientific claims regarding mental health and mental illness.

PHIL 322. Decision Theory and Philosophy. 3 Hours.

An introduction to decision theory and its applications to philosophical issues in epistemology, philosophy of religion, ethics, and political philosophy. Decision theory is a set of principles, concepts and methods that attempts to answer questions like: What does it mean to act rationally? How should uncertainty and risk factor into decision making?.

PHIL 333. Chinese Philosophy. 3 Hours.

An in-depth study of the notions of personhood, human nature, moral responsibility, and social justice as they are developed in the major traditions of classical Chinese thought. Readings may include texts from the Confucian, Daoist, Neo-Confucian, and Buddhist traditions. Knowledge of Chinese language is not required for this course.

PHIL 335. Buddhist Philosophy. 3 Hours.

An in-depth study of key concepts in Buddhist philosophy, including personhood, karma, rebirth, and the nature of reality, as developed within Buddhist traditions of India and Tibet. Particular emphasis is placed on arguments used by Buddhist thinkers to advocate or critique philosophical positions held by others, both Buddhist and non-Buddhist.

PHIL 340. Philosophy of Medicine. 3 Hours.

This course will provide a study of the practice of medicine through an examination of its fundamental concepts and values, such as the nature of health and disease, the phenomenology of illness, the goals of medical practice, and the roles of individual autonomy and communal interest.

PHIL 342. Philosophy of Religion. 3 Hours.

An examination of the meaning of religious beliefs and of arguments about their truth or falsity. The course focuses on religious beliefs about God and includes some discussion of different ideas of God within the Western tradition. This course may count toward requirements for the major in Religion.

PHIL 345. Philosophy of Language. 3 Hours.

An exploration of major themes in the philosophy of language, especially as they have developed in the 20th and 21st centuries. Topics may include the nature of language; meaning and reference; metaphor and other non-literal uses of language; and the philosophical implications of contemporary research in linguistics and cognitive psychology.

PHIL 347. Epistemology. 3 Hours.

An introduction to central topics in epistemology including the nature, sources, and structure of scientific, moral, and religious belief, justification, and knowledge as well as skeptical challenges to their legitimacy.

PHIL 348. Metaphysics. 3 Hours.

An introduction to concepts and issues in metaphysics, such as the mind-body problem and the nature of the basic entities that constitute the universe. The course includes a consideration of differing positions on these issues and gives students the opportunity to develop, articulate, and defend their own positions.

PHIL 351. Ancient Western Philosophy. 3 Hours.

An exploration of ancient Western philosophical thought. Topics include the nature, purpose, and best life of persons; justice; the nature and order of the physical world; and the nature of truth. Emphasis is on discussion of primary texts drawn from pre-Socratic fragments and from the works of Plato, Aristotle, and select Hellenistic and Roman philosophers.

PHIL 352. Early Modern European Philosophy. 3 Hours.

A historical survey of the rise of modern European philosophy in its cultural setting during the 17th and 18th centuries. Emphasis is on the study of selected primary texts, from Descartes to Hume, in relation to the philosophical, religious, and scientific thought of their day.

PHIL 354. Existentialism. 3 Hours.

A survey of ideas and authors in the existentialist tradition. The course examines core ideas of existential philosophy such as freedom, authenticity, anxiety, absurdity, and awareness of death as developed by thinkers like Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Jaspers, Marcel, Heidegger, Sartre, and Beauvoir. Selected films and literary works may supplement written texts.

PHIL 380. Selected Topics in Philosophy. 1 to 3 Hours.

Seminars on selected topics in Philosophy offered on an occasional basis.

PHIL 401. Political Epistemology. 3 Hours.

Seminar on recent scholarship in the field. Topics include belief polarization and enclave deliberation, fake news and disinformation, echo chambers and epistemic bubbles, trust and expertise, norms of testimony and social media, identity-expressive discourse and empirical assertion, and the epistemic value of democracy.

PHIL 443. Kant and 19th Century Philosophy. 3 Hours.

A survey of the development of 19th-century philosophy beginning with Immanuel Kant. The course examines Kant's legacy in subsequent thinkers such as G.W. F. Hegel, Karl Marx, Soren Kierkegaard, and John Stuart Mill. Issues for discussion include the role of human cognition in constituting reality, the rational basis of faith, the nature of individual liberty, and socio-economic determinants of belief.

PHIL 444. Philosophy of Biology. 3 Hours.

An exploration of conceptual and methodological problems in biological science. Topics include nature of species, concepts of function and adaptation in biology, the relationship between evolution and morality, and the notion of gender and race as biological categories. Students will reflect critically on scientific practice and the place of science in a broader context.

PHIL 445. Phenomenology. 3 Hours.

An exploration of the phenomenological movement in philosophy focused on thinkers such as Husserl, Heidegger, Arendt, Merleau-Ponty, and Gadamer. The course examines core ideas of phenomenology such as intentionality, embodiment, the life-world, the critique of the theoretical knowing, and the subjectivity of consciousness. Selected poetry and short films may be used to supplement written texts.

PHIL 450. Senior Directed Study. 3 Hours.

A course of individualized directed study in which the student prepares a written paper (typically a revised and expanded version of earlier work) and makes an oral presentation on the paper topic. Required of all students majoring in philosophy. Normally to be completed in the fall of the senior year.

PHIL 470. Independent Study in Philosophy. 1 to 3 Hours.

A course in which the student pursues independently, under the guidance of a member of the department, a specific philosophical topic of interest.

PHIL 480. Advanced Topics in Philosophy. 1 to 4 Hours.

Selected topics in Philosophy at the advanced level.

PHIL 500. Honors Course. 3 Hours.

At the discretion of the faculty, students may undertake a six-hour independent course of study in the senior year in order to broaden their educational experience within their major area of study. Students must meet specific GPA standards and arrange a faculty sponsor. The honors course criteria are outlined in the Academic Honors portion of the catalog.