

PHILOSOPHY FALL 2024

Beginning Philosophy

PHIL 2300-001	11:00 - 12:20	TR	Dr. Anna Ribeiro
PHIL 2300-002	12:30 - 1:50	TR	Dr. Zara Amdur
PHIL 2300-003	11:00 - 11:50	MWF	Dr. Angela Curran

An Introduction to Philosophical thinkers, ideas, and methods.

----Fulfills core curriculum Language, Philosophy, and Culture requirement. ----

Logic

PHIL 2310-001/701	11:00 - 12:20	TR	Dr. Joseph Gottlieb
PHIL 2310-D01	ASYNCHRONOUS	ONLINE	Dr. Christopher Hom

This is an introduction to symbolic logic via the study of sentential and predicate logic. Topics to be discussed include analyzing arguments, translating ordinary English sentences into a formal language, the methods of truth tables, truth trees, and natural deduction in sentential and predicate logic.

----Fulfills core curriculum Mathematics requirement. ----

Introduction to Ethics

PHIL 2320-002	11:00 - 12:20	TR	Dr. Thomas Byrne
PHIL 2320-003	12:00 - 12:50	MWF	Doug Westfall
PHIL 2320-004	1:00 - 1:50	MWF	Doug Westfall
PHIL 2320-H01	9:30-10:50	TR	Dr. Jeremy Schwartz
PHIL 2320-D01	ASYNCHRONOUS	ONLINE	Dr. Justin Morton

Discussion of moral problems and theories of morality. Includes the application of philosophical techniques to issues of contemporary moral concern.

----Fulfills core curriculum Language, Philosophy, and Culture requirement. ----

Meaning and Value in the Arts

PHIL 2340-001	2:00 - 2:50	MWF	Dr. Angela Curran
PHIL 2340-002	10:00 - 10:50	MWF	Dr. Angela Curran
PHIL 2340-D01	ASYNCHRONOUS	ONLINE	Dr. Francesca di Poppa

Introduction to philosophical questions raised across the arts, including such topics as the nature of art, ways of interpreting and evaluating works of art, and the different between popular art and high art.

----Fulfills core curriculum Creative Arts requirement. ----

World Religions and Philosophy

PHIL 2350-001	2:00 - 2:50	MWF	Dr. Michael Schon
PHIL 2350-002	1:00 - 1:50	MWF	Dr. Michael Schon
PHIL 2350-D01	ASYNCHRONOUS	ONLINE	Dr. Justin Morton

This course is a study of seven major world religions: Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, Islam, Judaism, and Christianity. We will study the doctrines and practices of each of these religions; then, for each religion, we will critically examine some element of doctrine or practice to see if it can be justified.

----Fulfills core curriculum Language, Philosophy, and Culture requirement. ----

----Fulfills core curriculum Multicultural requirement. ----

Honors Seminar in Humanities Justice and Tragedy: Ancient and Modern

HONS 3301-H01	9:30 -10:50	TR	Dr. Howard Curzer
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The theme of this course will be variations and transformations of the concept of JUSTICE. Roughly speaking, justice has two branches: (a) distribution of goods within a society or smaller group, and (b) distribution of punishments for wrongdoing. Justice has two spheres: (c) divine justice, and (d) human justice. Justice is a feature of two sorts of entities: (e) it is a character trait, and (f) a characteristic of social structures. In this course, justice will be studied via two genres: (g) philosophy texts, and (h) theater performances. The course will move between two eras: (i) the ancient world, and (j) the modern world.

----Satisfies Honors requirement----

----Counts toward Philosophy major and minor requirements----

Classical Greek Philosophy

PHIL 3301-001

3:30 -4:50

TR

Dr. Zara Amdur

Look out the window, you see trees, rocks, grass. What are those things made of? Prefiguring modern science, many ancient Greek natural philosophers, often called pre-Socratics, thought that all these separate things were made of some underlying matter. In making this claim, they substituted reason and observation for the mythological narratives of earlier thinkers. Our class will begin by reflecting on the relationship between myth and reasoned argumentation (“logos” in Greek, from which we get the word “logic” and all the “-ology” words). Next, we will turn to Plato’s texts. In those, Plato’s teacher and protagonist Socrates criticizes the materialist orientation of earlier thinkers and offers his own controversial “logos” that focuses on ethics more than nature. Plato will not have the last word. In the final third of the class, we will further develop this conversation about the relationship between nature and living well by focusing on Plato’s most famous student, Aristotle. In the end, Aristotle will offer us a compelling understanding of happiness and the good life—one that you will consider in relation to your own life. In short, we will consider how ancient Greek ontology, epistemology, and natural philosophy influenced their understanding of what it means to be a person and live well. Along the way, we will become better readers—and, maybe even, better people.

Social Epistemology

PHIL 3311 - 001

11:00-12:20

TR

Dr. Amy Flowerree

In an age of rapidly advancing technological development (ChatGPT, TikTok algorithms, relentless targeted advertising, and the promise of AI) it is hard to know what to believe. As social beings, we rely on others to form our beliefs about the world. And this dependency makes us vulnerable to misinformation, fake news, and conspiracy. Social media makes it possible for fake news to trend internationally within minutes. How do we distinguish fake from fact? What effect does pervasive false information have on our information ecosphere? Is it ever rational to believe conspiracy theories? What responsibilities do we have as individuals to form beliefs in a responsible way? How can we know anything?

This is a class in social epistemology. Our particular focus will be epistemic pathologies: misplaced trust and doubt, fake news, conspiracy theories, and misinformation. We will examine these phenomena through the lens of social media, the attention economy, and algorithmic bias.

Political Philosophy

PHIL 3320 - 001

2:00 - 3:20

MW

Dr. Justis Koon

Political philosophy investigates what makes a society just or unjust, how we should understand the relationship between the individual and the state, and what obligations we collectively owe to the poor and disadvantaged. For the first third of the semester, we'll study a family of views that fall within the liberal tradition, including social contract theory, libertarianism, conservatism, and utilitarianism. Next, we'll turn to views which reject or challenge political liberalism, including (time permitting) Marxism, anarchism, aristocracy, populism, feminism, and anti-racism. We'll conclude by looking at different perspectives on two pressing political topics – whether freedom of speech should be restricted to limit the spread of hatred and misinformation, and whether a capitalist or socialist economic system is better-positioned to combat the threat posed by climate change. Over the course of the semester, we'll study classic figures like Hobbes, Locke, Marx, and Mill, in addition to more contemporary work.

Biomedical Ethics

PHIL 3322-001

11:00 - 11:50

MWF

Kirsi Teppo

PHIL 3322-002

12:00 - 12:50

MWF

Kirsi Teppo

PHIL 3322-003

2:00-3:20

TR

Dr. Justis Koon

PHIL 3322-004

11:00 - 12:20

TR

Dr. Justis Koon

Is abortion always immoral? Is euthanasia? Are these morally permissible under certain circumstances, or maybe always? Everyone has an opinion about this. But there is a big difference between feeling a certain way about abortion, or euthanasia, or stem cell research, and having a philosophically informed opinion. This class will offer you the tools to be a philosophically informed participant in some of the most important debates in bioethics today.

Environmental Ethics

PHIL 3325-001

10:00 - 10:50

MWF

Doug Westfall

PHIL 3325-D01

ASYNCHRONOUS

ONLINE

Doug Westfall

We will discuss the conceptual and moral questions surrounding human population and consumption of resources, loss of biodiversity and wilderness areas, and human use of nonhuman animals by focusing on questions like: Since we probably can't live without harming the environment in some way, is there a way to reduce or offset that harm? How do we decide between competing harms? Is there a moral justification for eating meat? What do we do if our obligations to present and future people conflict? A surprising variety of questions are inextricably linked to environmental concerns and we will try to understand the implications of various positions by using the concepts and methods of inquiry introduced in this course. You will be encouraged to explore and refine your own positions by familiarizing yourself with some contemporary arguments in these areas and making a recommendation for action with your final assignment.

Philosophy of Cognitive Science

PHIL 3335-001

2:00 - 3:20

TR

Dr. Joseph Gottlieb

This course is an introduction to the philosophy of cognitive science. Cognitive science is the interdisciplinary study of the mind. It includes fields such as psychology, neuroscience, philosophy, computer science, anthropology, and linguistics. Our focus will be on mental representation, perception, consciousness, concepts and concept possession, memory, and the nature of psychological architecture. We will have cause to examine not just the foundational philosophical literature, but also various experimental studies.

----Counts toward Cognitive Science minor----

Ethics

PHIL 4320-001

12:30 -1:50

TR

Dr. Jeremy Schwartz

In the class, we will investigate the question, "how should I live?" by looking at various philosophical answers that have been proposed. Rather than surveying a range of authors, I have selected a representative of various approaches, and we will study each of these authors in depth. The authors selected are known for the depth of their vision and their clarity. We will read, *Hare's Moral Thinking*, *Korsgaard's Self-Constitution*, *Hursthouse's On Virtue Ethics*, and *Murdoch's Sovereignty of the Good*.

Philosophy of Language

PHIL 4331-001

9:30 - 10:50

TR

Dr. Christopher Hom

How does language relate to the world? How do we manage to use words to talk about things? What is the relationship between the words we use and the thoughts that they express? These are the central questions for this course. Along the way, we will explore the concepts of meaning, truth, and belief. We will begin by investigating the work of Frege and Russell on the meaning of proper names. According to them, the relationship between a name and the object it picks out is mediated by descriptive information. The differences between these two competing approaches will be brought out in our discussion of propositions and belief reports. We will go on to examine further implications of direct reference theories for meaning and thought. Other related topics in the course include: truth and meaning, the role of contemporary linguistics, pragmatics and context, metaphor, and pejorative words.

----Counts toward Cognitive Science minor----

Great Figures in Phil: Substance in Aristotle and Spinoza

PHIL 4341-001

2:00 - 3:20

MW

Dr. Francesca di Poppa

The concept of substance that made its way through the history of Western philosophy has its roots in Aristotle's distinction between what exists by itself (basically, 'stuff') and what exists in something else (basically, properties). This distinction was discussed and articulated in various ways through the Middle Ages and the Renaissance to account for a variety of being: physical and non-physical, finite vs. infinite, dependent vs. unconditional. In the 17th century, Spinoza posited that only one substance exists-- God or Nature-- and everything else is a "mode" of this substance.

But what does it mean for me, you, our cell phones, our thoughts and emotions, to be "modes" of a single reality? How can a substance be both physical and non-physical? And why did Spinoza think that this was a plausible solution to problems plaguing the traditional definition of substance?

We will start with Bayle's scathing criticism of Spinoza in the late 17th century; then, we will jump back to Aristotle's theory of substance and take a look at its philosophical role and the problems that it opened for later philosophers. We will then move to Spinoza's Ethics and ask ourselves whether Spinoza deserves Bayle's scathing criticism.

GRADUATE COURSES - FALL 2024

Seminar in Logic

PHIL 5312-001 10:00 - 11:20 MW Dr. Joel Velasco

This is a course in philosophical logic. Example topics that might be covered include: Semantics and proof theory for first order logic; some (minimal) metatheory; conditionals, conditional probability, and counterfactuals; modal logic; other forms of non-classical logic.

Contemporary Aesthetics

PHIL 5314-001 11:30 - 12:50 MW Dr. Anna Ribeiro

How and when did art begin, and why? Are cave paintings art? Is body ornamentation art? Are religious and other didactic plays, paintings, and songs art? Is the concept 'art' a modern Western construct? How do we define 'art'? What kinds of things are symphonies, novels, movies and dance performances—concrete, abstract, or some other kind? What are aesthetic properties such as beauty, and how do they relate to the other properties of an object or event? What is an 'aesthetic experience', and do we ever have those? When we interpret works of art, must we always defer to the artist's own interpretation if we are to be correct? How do we evaluate one work of art as better than another—are there correct criteria of evaluation? Why do we value art at all? We will discuss these and other questions as we consider particular art forms and art works and read philosophical works on these topics from the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. This is a reading- and writing-intensive course.

Seminar in Ethics

PHIL 5320-001 4:00 - 6:50 W Dr. Thomas Byrne

Non-consequentialism and Consequentialism. In this seminar we will first work through the foundations of non-consequentialist and consequentialist moral theory. We will then turn to recent debates concerning those foundations. Likely topics include: the nature of rights (and what they count for, if anything); the consequences of our actions (can we ever have more than an inkling as to what they truly are?); whether there are any temporal or geographical limits on our spheres of moral concern; action under risk or uncertainty or indeterminacy; and so on.

Seminar in Metaphysics

PHIL 5340-001

4:00 - 6:50

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Dr. Michael Schon

This seminar will explore issues related to modality. We'll explore the nature of necessity/possibility directly as well as the nature of essence. We'll also look at topics related to this. Here is a list of possible topics (exact topics TBD): the essentiality of origin, the necessary *a posteriori*, strong necessities, material objects, and properties.

Great Figures in Phil: Plato and Mengzi

PHIL 5341-001

12:30 - 1:50

TR

Dr. Howard Curzer

At about the time when Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle were founding Western philosophy in ancient Greece, Confucius, Mengzi, and Laozi were founding Eastern philosophy in ancient China. The two philosophic traditions feature surprising similarities, but there are interesting differences as well. We will try to grasp some of the starting points of each tradition through a comparison and contrast of the moral theories of Plato and Mengzi.

These two figures have lots in common. Plato and Mengzi were the first system-builders in their respective traditions. They both wrote dialogues rather than essays. They were both concerned with the nature of virtue and the methods of virtue-acquisition. On the other hand, they grounded their systems in different ways, wrote dialogues in different styles, offered different lists and descriptions of virtues, and offered different methods of virtue-acquisition.

Sem. In Teaching & Writing

PHIL 5350-001

2:00 - 3:20

TR

Dr. Amy Flowerree

This is a class for first year graduate students. It is designed to equip students with the professional skills necessary to succeed in various aspects of academic philosophy: teaching, reading, writing, and applying to PhD programs. These skills will be developed through rigorous and careful study of the core concepts, arguments, and texts in contemporary Epistemology.