

Philosophy Spring 2025

Beginning Philosophy

Fulfills the Language, Philosophy, and Culture requirement

We all want to live a good life. But what is a life well lived? Some of us want lots of money. Others want success. Others want to play video games or watch Netflix all day long. How do we find out what is best? Philosophers have been grappling with this question for thousands of years. It takes us into many directions, including the question as to what makes us human, how we should make moral choices, whether we are free to choose, what we should believe, what love is, and what it is to be a person. We will tackle these in turn, concluding the course with perhaps the biggest question of all: what is the meaning of life?

PHIL 2300-002	Michael Schon	Mon, Wed, Fri	10:00 - 10:50 am
PHIL 2300-003	Michael Schon	Mon, Wed, Fri	11:00 - 11:50 am
PHIL 2300-004	Anna Ribeiro	Tue, Thur	11:00 - 12:20 pm
PHIL 2300-H01	Amy Flowerree	Tue, Thur	2:00 - 3:20 pm

Logic

Fulfills Core Curriculum Math requirement
Counts towards Cognitive Science minor

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.

PHIL 2310 - 001	Joseph Gottlieb	Tue, Thur	9:30-10:50 am
PHIL 2310 - D01	Christopher Hom	ONLINE	ASYNCHRONOUS

Introduction to Ethics

Fulfills the Language, Philosophy, and Culture requirement

This class will examine questions like: Can personal choices be truly right or wrong? Are there things or acts that should appropriately be referred to as good or evil? Is there a right way to live, and why should I live that way? Do I have obligations towards other people and if so, what are they? How should I think about conflicts between my self-interest and my responsibility to others? We will consider skeptical positions before turning to examine competing answers regarding these questions.

PHIL 2320-004	Howard Curzer	Tue, Thur	12:30 - 1:50 pm
PHIL 2320-001	Doug Westfall	Mon, Wed, Fri	12:00 - 12:50 pm
PHIL 2320-002	Doug Westfall	Mon, Wed, Fri	1:00 - 1:50 pm
PHIL 2320-D01	Justin Morton	ONLINE	ASYNCHRONOUS

Meaning and Value in the Arts

Fulfills Creative Arts Requirement

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 difference between popular art and high art.

PHIL 2340-001	Angela Curran	Tue, Thur	9:30 - 10:50 am
PHIL 2340-002	Angela Curran	Tue, Thur	11:00 - 12:20 pm

World Religions And Philosophy

Fulfills the Language, Philosophy, Culture and Multicultural Requirement

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. For example, we will critically examine the doctrines of karma and reincarnation, the doctrine of monotheism, the problem of evil, and the doctrine of the incarnation.

PHIL 2350-D01	Justin Morton	ONLINE	ASYNCHRONOUS
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Ethics of Technology, Data, and AI

Over the past three decades, technology has radically reshaped human life. This class explores the ethical ramifications – and the downsides – of this revolution. How do large corporations use data-mining algorithms to spy on us? How is social media being used to influence our purchases and our political choices? Are we training an entire generation of children to be addicted to their phones? How do we balance the value of free speech against the perils of echo chambers, hatred, and misinformation? And, finally – what new dangers are posed by the rise of artificial intelligence?

PHIL 3300-001	Justis Koon	Tue, Thur	2:00 - 3:20 pm
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Modern European Philosophy 1600-1800

This course will survey some of the most important philosophical texts in the modern era of the Western tradition of philosophy with an emphasis on the development of metaphysics and epistemology during this era. The writings of philosophers such as René Descartes, Princess Elisabeth of Bohemia, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, John Locke, Lady Masham, George Berkeley, David Hume, Lady Mary Shepherd, Immanuel Kant, and a few other philosophers from this era will be studied and critically assessed through the progress of the course.

PHIL 3303-001	John De Poe	Tue, Thur	3:30 - 4:50 pm
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Existentialism and Phenomenology

- What unites the existentialists is not their individual philosophies, but the nature of the problems that they set out to explore. We will discuss the following themes:
- Primacy of Individuals: Traditional philosophy, modern science, and the industrial revolution have reduced people to an abstraction. Existentialists maintain that the truths of human existence cannot be known through detached observation and contemplation, but must be inwardly appropriated through the experience of personal involvement growing out of one's own passionate concern.
- Critique of Reason: If reason is but part of human nature, rational fulfillment alone is not enough for a complete and authentic life. Moreover, the investigation of reality cannot be left to logic and reason alone.
- Authenticity: The inauthentic person never acquires a distinctive individual identity, but simply plays a part, acts out an assigned role, unquestioningly follows a pattern of behavior given by society. The authentic person seeks self-awareness and chooses to actualize a true self, discovered through introspection.
- Boundary Situations: Suddenly there comes a moment when a direct awakening is inescapable. Inauthenticities and illusions are exposed. Typical boundary situations include chance, choice, guilt, and especially death. Typical responses include alienation, nothingness, and dread.

PHIL 3304-001	Howard Curzer	Tue, Thur	9:30 - 10:50 am
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Philosophy of Law

The United States Supreme Court regularly sends down decisions that engage broad popular interest. Beside the Court's decision on the question of presidential immunity from criminal liability in *Trump v. United States* and its reproductive rights decision in *Dodds v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*, the Court has lately addressed cases concerning voting rights, same-sex marriage, transgender rights, affirmative action, and immigration policy. Decisions in each of these areas tend to be viewed by the public as highly controversial and have generated a broad spectrum of political and personal responses. Equally controversial is the question of how we are to best understand *the rule of law* in relation to such decisions: What is the rule of law, and what might be its importance here in the US? However, popular political positions on all these questions rarely reflect an understanding of the nature of law and legal systems, or a familiarity with the Court's reasoning in relevant previous cases, or even a superficial acquaintance with philosophically and legally reasonable ideas of justice, privacy, or liberty. This course will try to remedy some of these gaps in understanding, first by studying the nature of law and its relation to morality and then by turning our focus to justice, privacy, and liberty as they specifically arise in Supreme Court cases this term and in recent history.

PHIL 3321-H01	Daniel Nathan	Tue, Thur	11:00 - 12:20 pm 12:30 - 1:50 pm
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Biomedical Ethics

This course will survey a range of topics in biomedical ethics, while also serving as an introduction to philosophical thinking and methodology. Sample questions include: Should parents be allowed to choose the genetic characteristics of their children? Should consenting adults be allowed to sell their organs? How do the rights of fetuses weigh against those of pregnant persons? Is it permissible for doctors to help patients end their lives?

PHIL 3322-001	Krisi Teppo	Mon,Wed,Fri	11:00 - 11:50 am
PHIL 3322-002	Krisi Teppo	Mon,Wed,Fri	12:00 - 12:50 pm
PHIL 3322-003	Krisi Teppo	Mon,Wed,Fri	1:00 - 1:50 pm
PHIL 3322-H01	Justis Koon	Tue, Thur	11:00 - 12:20 pm

Philosophy of Religion

If God exists, then God is all knowing, all powerful, and morally perfect.

- If God is all powerful, then God can eliminate all evil.
- If God is all knowing, then God knows that evil exists.
- If God is morally perfect, then God must want to eliminate all evil.
- Evil exists.
- So....?

In this class, we will go over ancient, early modern, and contemporary discussions of the problem of evil, and whether the existence of evil is consistent with the notion of an infinitely perfect God.

PHIL 3324-001 **Francesca di Poppa** **Mon,Wed** **11:00 - 12:20 pm**

Environmental Ethics

Should I have kids? Can I eat a burger without feeling guilty? Is my sweet minivan destroying the planet? Should I trade it in for a Prius? Given that we can't live without harming the environment in some way, what is a morally defensible approach to navigating our relationship with the planet and our obligations to future generations. In this class we will explore and refine our positions on these, and other, questions.

PHIL 3325-001 **Doug Westfall** **Mon,Wed,Fri** **10:00 - 10:50 am**
PHIL 3325-D01 **Doug Westfall** **ONLINE** **ASYNCHRONOUS**

Philosophy Of Science

Counts towards Cognitive Science minor

This course will address several central questions in philosophy of science. For example: What's the difference between scientific investigation and non-scientific investigation? How are scientific beliefs and theories justified? What is the goal of science? How is scientific progress made? How are theories related to observations? What is a scientific explanation? What is a law of nature? Does science provide knowledge of unobservable entities?

PHIL 3330-001 **Michael Schon** **Mon,Wed** **2:00 - 3:20 pm**

Feminist Philosophy

People disagree about what feminism is. Our class will begin with this disagreement before asking questions, such as: What is sexism? How does it relate to misogyny? Does sexism or misogyny affect our sexual ethics? What forms do gendered oppression take? How do other aspects of one's social and political identities change gendered oppression? Are the characteristics and attitudes usually described as feminine desirable or merely oppressive? Can they function as grounds for resistance? What is gender, anyway? As we think through these and similar issues, we will hear about the theories and lived experiences of many particular women, including Sandra Bartky, Marilyn Frye, Kimberlé Crenshaw, and Audre Lorde.

PHIL 3332-001 **Zara Amdur** **Tue, Thur** ~~**12:30 - 1:50 pm**~~
11:00 - 12:20 pm

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Philosophy and Literature

Poems, stories, and plays are among our most ancient forms of artistic expression, and they exist in every culture. But what makes a string of words a poem or a novel as opposed to just plain conversation or a news article or work memo? Defining what counts as literature is not easy, even if we generally have no difficulty recognizing a literary work. Relatedly, what counts as fiction as opposed to nonfiction? Is a memoir fiction or nonfiction? Another question literary works raise is this: we all know that some things are material objects (a chair) while others are abstract entities (the number 2). A literary work is obviously not identical with the printed book that records it: when we break a chair, we no longer have that chair, but the concept of chair continues to exist. Likewise, when we burn a copy of a book, or delete its audio file, the work itself is not lost. So it seems that a literary work is something abstract, like the number 2. However, whereas Shakespeare created Sonnet 116 in England in the early 1600s, no one invented the number 2; it is what philosophers call a 'universal', eternal and unchanging and without location. So are literary works more like chairs? Other questions we may ask regarding literary works are: How do we interpret them? How do we evaluate them? Is it irrational to feel emotions for fictional characters? Do we acquire knowledge by reading poems or novels that we could not have acquired by other means? What is the value of poems and stories and plays? In this course we will discuss these and other questions about literature as they have been investigated by contemporary philosophers as well as Plato, Aristotle, David Hume and others, testing their theories against actual literary examples.

PHIL 3341-H01

Anna Ribeiro

Mon, Wed

2:00 - 3:20 pm

Metaphysics

Metaphysics is the study of what there is and what it's like—at a fundamental level. In this class, we'll examine a handful of metaphysical topics, likely including... (i) What makes you you: is it your body (would you still exist if I transported your personality into another body) or your mind (would you still exist if all your memories and mental abilities were erased and replaced with different ones—with mine, perhaps) or something else? (ii) What is it to have free will? (And Do we have it?) (iii) What sorts of things exist? On my desk, right now, there's a lego car (made of seven pieces), a computer, a mug, and a coaster under the mug: how many different things are there on my desk? Ten (the seven pieces of lego, the computer, the mug and the coaster)? Four (the car, the computer, the mug and the coaster)? Three (the car, the computer and the mug+coaster composite)? Millions of things? Some other number? Does it matter? (iv) I bought a broom twenty years ago and I've replaced its head four times and its handle twice ... is it still the same broom that I bought all those years ago?

PHIL 4340-001

Thomas Byrne

Tue, Thur

11:00 - 12:20 pm

Graduate Courses Spring 2025

Studies In Greek Philosophy

This seminar will focus on the theory of reality Aristotle presents in the central books (VII-IX) of his work, *Metaphysics*. We will pay particular attention to Aristotle's hylomorphic theory, which explains that familiar objects in the world are composed of matter and form. We aim to understand Aristotle's concept of form and a related concept, essence, and how he uses these ideas to explain the unity of an object at a time and over time. The topics to be examined will include Aristotle's rejection of Plato's theory of Forms, whether forms are universal or individual, and whether Aristotle's view of reality is inherently gendered. In the final weeks of the class, we will explore several key metaphysical concepts present in his biological writings.

PHIL 5301

Angela Curran

Mon

4:00-6:50 pm

Studies in Modern Philosophy (1600-1800)

If God exists, then God is all knowing, all powerful, and morally perfect.

- If God is all powerful, then God can eliminate all evil.
- If God is all knowing, then God knows that evil exists.
- If God is morally perfect, then God must want to eliminate all evil.
- Evil exists.
- So....?

In this class, we will go over ancient, early modern, and contemporary discussions of the problem of evil, and whether the existence of evil is consistent with the notion of an infinitely perfect God.

PHIL 5302

Francesca di Poppa

Mon, Wed

2:00-3:20 pm

Seminar in Ethics

Have you ever wondered what morality is, what makes moral claims true, or how any of our moral beliefs can be justified? These questions belong to the field of metaethics, which investigates the nature of moral facts, moral language, and moral knowledge. In the first half of the course, we'll survey the six main perspectives on meta-ethics: non-naturalism, naturalism, the error theory, relativism, constructivism, and non-cognitivism. Next, we'll look at recent scientific and philosophical work on how morality evolved in our pre-modern ancestors, and discuss evolutionary debunking arguments, which claim that the evolutionary history of morality poses a serious challenge to the view that morality is objective or mind-independent. Time permitting, we'll conclude with a brief unit on continental metaethics, which explores how morality is the product of history, economics, and culture.

PHIL 5320

Justis Koon

Mon, Wed

12:30 - 1:50 pm

Philosophical Psychology

This is a course in the philosophy of perception. Our primary topic will be the classic *problem of perception*: roughly, given the possibility of perceptual illusion and hallucination, what is the nature of perception? We will examine in detail four different theories of perception, each of which gives a different answer to this question: sense-datum theory, adverbialism, representationalism, and naïve realism.

PHIL 5331

Joseph Gottlieb

Tue, Thur

12:30-1:50 pm

Seminar in Feminist Philosophy

This class will focus on two themes: gender and oppression. As we will learn, different feminist philosophers theorize gender, oppression, and the relation between the two differently. In order to illuminate these differences, we will ask questions such as: What is sexism? How does it relate to misogyny? How do other aspects of one's social and political identities change gendered oppression? What is gender, anyway? The course will begin by discussing the metaphysics of gender, before discussing oppression and gendered subordination. Along the way, we will read the work of many influential feminist thinkers, including Simone de Beauvoir, Judith Butler, Sally Haslanger, Talia Mae Bettcher, and Kimberlé Crenshaw.

PHIL 5332

Zara Amdur

Tue, Thur

3:30 - 4:50 pm

Seminar in Philosophy of Language

The seminar will focus on how contemporary theories of meaning account for expressive aspects of language. Expressive language includes insults (e.g. 'jerk'), exclamations (e.g. 'oops'), swear words (e.g. 'f**k'), racial epithets (e.g. the N-word), honorific terms (e.g. 'sir'), and evaluative terms (e.g. 'honorable'). Along the way, we will consider various issues such as the internalism-externalism distinction, the semantics-pragmatics distinction, nominalism about meaning, expressivism, context-sensitivity, social dimensions of language, appropriation, and how (or whether) norms are linguistically represented. Requirements include a seminar presentation, a presentation commentary, a short paper, and a longer, research paper.

PHIL 5333

Christopher Hom

Wed

4:00 - 6:50 pm