Philosophy (PHIL)

Courses

PHIL 3000 Plato’s Metaphysics (4 Credits)
A systematic study of Plato’s Middle and Late Period Dialogues that focuses on his arguments for the existence of abstract objects and the development of Plato’s theory of Forms. Prerequisite: At least Junior standing or permission of instructor.

PHIL 3003 Plato’s Theory of Knowledge (4 Credits)
A systematic investigation of Plato’s treatments of knowledge throughout the dialogues with a focus on the theory of recollection, Forms as objects of knowledge, the relationship between the Forms and perceptual experience, and the challenges posed by notions of true and false belief. Prerequisites: At least Junior standing or permission of instructor.

PHIL 3010 Great Thinkers: Aristotle (4 Credits)
A study of Aristotle’s central theories and doctrines. Prerequisite: junior standing or instructor’s permission.

PHIL 3023 Great Thinkers: Maimonides: Politics, Prophecy and Providence (4 Credits)
Using “The Guide for the Perplexed” as our central text, we explore the complex philosophical ideas of Moses Maimonides (1135-1204), one of the central figures in medieval philosophy and Jewish thought. Our study includes analyses of his ideas on principles of faith, human perfection, intellectual vs. “imaginational” approaches to truth, pedagogy and politics, reasons for the commandments, the nature of God and divine will, the limits of human knowledge, the mechanics of prophecy, and the parameters and implications of providence. Cross listed with RLGS 3023 and JUST 3023. Prerequisite: junior standing or instructor’s permission.

PHIL 3024 Maimonides: Greek, Islamic, and Christian Encounters (4 Credits)
Using the “Guide of the Perplexed” as our central text, we explore the complex philosophical ideas of Moses Maimonides (1135-1204), a central figure in the history of philosophy and in the history of Jewish thought. In this course, we examine in depth the relationship between Maimonides’ core ideas and various Greek, Muslim and Christian thinkers, including: Aristotle, Plotinus, al-Farabi, Avicenna (Ibn Sina), al-Ghazali, Averroes (Ibn Rushd), and Aquinas. Topics to be explored include: what is “metaphysics?”; God’s unity and essence as existence itself; the mystery of knowing and not knowing God (including a consideration of God’s ways as well as “negative theology”—viz. the extent to which we do not know God); God as pure intellect; the nature of the cosmos and the “separate intellects”; creation vs. eternity vs. emanation: philosophical and religious perspectives on the origins of the universe and implications for “living in the world with/out God.” In our study, we will also address the methodological implications of cross-religious and cross-language analyses, and how to spot and address (in your own work and in the work of others) tacit cultural biases at play in the interpretive process. Cross listed with JUST 3024 and RLGS 3024. Prerequisite: Junior standing or instructor’s permission.

PHIL 3050 Great Thinkers: Hume (4 Credits)
A detailed study of Hume’s “radical” empiricism and its impact on contemporary analytic philosophy. Prerequisite: junior standing or instructor’s permission.

PHIL 3061 Kant’s Ethics/Aesthetics/Politics (4 Credits)
A study of Kant’s “value theory” and its historical significance. Prerequisite: junior standing or instructor’s permission.

PHIL 3062 Kant’s Epistemology and Logic (4 Credits)
A study of Kant’s theory of knowledge, logic and related issues. Prerequisite: junior standing or instructor’s permission.

PHIL 3063 Kant on Religion (4 Credits)
A study of Immanuel Kant’s major writings on religion and their subsequent influence on theology and the philosophy of religion. Prerequisite: junior standing or instructor’s permission.

PHIL 3070 Great Thinkers: Hegel (4 Credits)
Hegel’s “Phenomenology,” later system and place in the history of modern philosophy. Prerequisite: junior standing or instructor’s permission.

PHIL 3075 Marxism (4 Credits)
This course is a survey in the theoretical and political work influenced by the writings of 19th century philosopher and economist, Karl Marx. The course covers both the historical traditions in Marxism in the 19th, 20th, and 21st century as well as the geographical traditions of these time periods in France, Germany, England, Italy, Russia, China, and America. It is not necessary that students have a prior background in Marx’s work, but it is highly recommended. Cross listed with ECON 3075.

PHIL 3090 Great Thinkers: Heidegger (4 Credits)
Study of “Being and Time” and related essays by a major 20th-century philosopher. Prerequisite: junior standing or instructor’s permission.

PHIL 3092 Great Thinkers: The Later Heidegger (4 Credits)
Study of the works of Heidegger after 1930. Prerequisite: junior standing or instructor’s permission.

PHIL 3101 Great Thinkers: Kierkegaard (4 Credits)
Each year, the philosophy department offers at least two courses in great thinkers. Specific figures may vary from year to year. Cross-listed with RLGS 3102. Prerequisite: 10 hours of Philosophy at the 2000 level or permission of instructor.
PHIL 3111 Contemporary Continental Philosophy: The Figure of the Migrant (4 Credits)
The 21st century has been described as the century of “people on the move” by UNHCR High Commissioner Antonio Guterres. Some 11 million people are refugees worldwide, fleeing political violence and/or persecution at home; whole more than 20 million are internally displaced within the borders of their own countries. Accordingly, the figure of the migrant/refugee has emerged as one of the most important, if not the most important, political figures of contemporary continental philosophy. Despite differences in philosophical orientation, thinkers such as Gilles Deleuze, Judith Butler, Jacques Ranciere, Julia Kristeva, Alain Badiou, and Jacques Derrida have all written at length on the centrality of the figure of the migrant for contemporary political thought. Not only does the figure of the migrant define the people of our time, according to many of these authors, it also defines a positive political way forward. This course thus provides not only a survey of the different traditions in contemporary European philosophy over the last twenty years (post-structuralism, deconstruction, neo-classicism, post-Marxism, third-wave feminism) but also offers a thematic look at the politico-philosophical figure of the migrant and other issues related to migration (human rights, borders, camps, sovereignty, territory, nomadism, and resistance).

PHIL 3120 Metaphysics (4 Credits)
In the course of this study, we will cover a broad range of philosophical topics falling within metaphysics, philosophy of language, philosophy of science, and epistemology. Prerequisite: junior standing or instructor's permission.

PHIL 3130 Knowledge Problems (4 Credits)
Problems in the foundations and justifications of claims to knowledge. Prerequisite: junior standing or instructor's permission.

PHIL 3146 Great Thinkers: Levinas (4 Credits)
Emmanuel Levinas (1906-1995), famous for his arresting and original idea of “ethics as first philosophy,” is an important figure in the histories of phenomenology, metaphysics, and theology. In this course, we set out to explore Levinas' insights on ethics, alterity, and infinity, including the connection of his ideas to Plato, Descartes, Kant, and Husserl, as well as his critical responses to Heidegger and his positive contributions to Derrida. In this course, we will explore Levinas’ two major works, Ethics and Infinity and Otherwise Than Being or Beyond Essence, as well as a number of shorter writings—including material from his Talmudic commentaries. Themes to be covered include: Being, Goodness, Risk, Ethics, Alterity, Transcendence, Law, Judaism, Gift, Forgiveness, Politics, Theology, and Justice. This course is cross-listed with JUST 3146.

PHIL 3150 Metaphysics of Matter: Theory-Building from Science to Philosophy to Theology (4 Credits)
What is matter? How do we make sense of philosophical discussions of an “X I know not what”? Of a “nothing” which is something? Of a “pure potency” that lacks any actual characteristics? In what sense does matter mark the very limits of human theorizing, and how do theories of matter reveal differences (or similarities) between the methods of theorizing that we use in physics, metaphysics, and theology? In this course, we work to understand the metaphysics and metametaphysics of matter, focusing on a number of views of matter as well as on methodological questions of what it means to theorize about matter in (1) scientific, (2) philosophical, and (3) theological contexts. Drawing on theory ranging from ancient physics and cosmology to contemporary metametaphysics, philosophy of science, and philosophy of language, we engage in close readings of ancient, medieval, and modern texts to challenge the ways we theorize about matter (and theory itself) in the history of philosophy. Requires junior standing or higher.

PHIL 3152 Philosophy Meets Mysticism: A Greek, Jewish and Islamic Neoplatonic Journey (4 Credits)
Neoplatonism is a unique genre—somewhere between philosophy and mysticism. In this course, we investigate some of the leading themes of Neoplatonism, tracing the Greek ideas of Plotinus (the third century “father of Neoplatonism”) into later Jewish and Islamic textual traditions. As part of our journey, we will investigate a host of philosophical writings, including the Theology of Aristotle and the Liber de Causis, as well as works by Plato, Plotinus, Proclus, Ibn Tufayl, Avicecenna, Isaac Israeli, Solomon Ibn Gabirol, and Abraham Ibn Ezra. Themes to be covered include emanation and creation, apophatic discourse, divine desire, the theological significance of imagination, inward reflection and the call to virtue. Prerequisite: junior standing or instructor's permission. Cross listed with JUST 3152.

PHIL 3175 Morality and the Law (4 Credits)
A systematic study of various elements of the relation between law and morality. Are we obligated to obey every law the government enacts? Why? If we do have an obligation to obey the law, are civil disobedients like Martin Luther King, Jr. justified in disobeying the law? Are immoral laws, laws at all, or must a law connect with some higher moral truth to have any authority? To what extent is it morally permissible for the law to restrict our personal freedoms? To what extent is it morally permissible for the law to enforce morality in general? If it is not permissible for the law to enforce morality, do we incur any obligation to obey the law? Prerequisite: junior standing or instructor's permission.

PHIL 3176 Advanced Topics in Philosophy of Law: Rights, Legal Institutions, and Justice (4 Credits)
A critical examination of rights claims and an exploration of those rights claims that ought to affect legal institutions. What are rights? How are they justified? How do various different rights claims conflict with each other? Does a theory or rights help provide a justified theory of criminalization? Are there any rights we have just in virtue of being human? How does the concept of human rights apply to issues such as international law, the right to life and whether human rights require a right to democracy?

PHIL 3178 Metaethics (4 Credits)
This course systematically and critically examines the metaphysical, semantic, and epistemic issues central to the study of metaethics. Do moral properties exist? If so, how are they related to natural properties? Do moral properties exist independent of human agency, or do we construct morality? If moral properties exist, how can we come to have justified belief about them? Is it possible to know that a moral belief is true? Doesn’t the phenomenon of widespread, intractable disagreement about moral matters establish that there are no objective moral truths? Is the process of gaining scientific knowledge really that different from the process of gaining moral knowledge? Prerequisite: junior standing or instructor's permission.
PHIL 3179 Virtue Ethics (4 Credits)
Virtue ethics purportedly provides a distinct approach to moral deliberation, moral reasoning, moral decision-making, and moral justification. This course is a systematic study of the nature of virtue ethics, the nature of a virtue, and the alleged superiority of virtue ethics over its more familiar consequentialist and deontological alternatives. We also study various responses to the following questions: Have moral psychologists generated any valuable studies on the nature of virtue? What virtues ought we to endorse? At least Junior standing required or permission of the instructor.

PHIL 3180 Socratic Ethics (4 Credits)
A study of Plato's early dialogues in order to discern the ethical views of the historical Socrates. Prerequisite: junior standing or instructor's permission.

PHIL 3185 Philosophy of Action and Agency (4 Credits)
Wittgenstein once asked, "What is left over if I subtract the fact that my arm goes up from the fact that I raise my arm?" Understanding the difference between mere happening and an intentional action became central to the philosophical investigation of action and agency in the 20th century. In this course we examine this distinction and why it should matter to us. Our topics include intentional action, the causal theory of action, the metaphysics of action, agent causation, basic action, acting and trying to act, intentions, weakness of will, strength of will, and mental action. Requires junior standing or permission of instructor.

PHIL 3201 Wittgenstein, Quine, and Kripke on Necessity and a Priori Knowledge (4 Credits)
A study of Wittgenstein, Quine, and Kripke on the nature of necessity, a priori knowledge and their relation to understanding philosophy. Prerequisite: junior standing or instructor's permission.

PHIL 3210 Philosophy of Movement (4 Credits)
Everything is in motion. Yet, philosophers have consistently considered motion to be a derivative or secondary form of being. Why? What are the political and metaphysical consequences of marginalizing motion in the history of philosophy? The aim of this class is to read the history of philosophy with a unique focus on the status of movement and motion from the ancient to contemporary period.

PHIL 3211 Contemporary Pol Philosophy (4 Credits)
This class focuses primarily on the philosophical problems generated by thinking about political authority and justice. We discuss the nature of political authority, justice, rights, equality and the role of property in a modern state.

PHIL 3215 Modern Jewish Philosophy (4 Credits)
Prerequisite: junior standing or instructor's permission. Cross listed with JUST 3215.

PHIL 3450 Phenomenology and Theology (4 Credits)
Cross listed with RLGS 3455. Prerequisite: junior standing or instructor's permission.

PHIL 3455 Philosophy and 9/11: Sovereignty in Traumatic Times (4 Credits)
Philosopher's responses to the attacks on 9/11/2001, leading into philosophical study of the connections between trauma and modern assertions of political sovereignty. Prerequisite: junior standing or instructor's permission.

PHIL 3460 Nietzsche & the Death of God (4 Credits)
This course involves an intensive reading and discussion of Friedrich Nietzsche's 'Thus Spake Zarathustra,' together with relevant associated materials, especially 'The Gay Science.' Prerequisite: junior standing or instructor's permission. Cross listed with RLGS 3460.

PHIL 3465 Derrida and Postmodernism (4 Credits)
Cross listed with RLGS 3465. Prerequisite: junior standing or instructor's permission.

PHIL 3466 Contemporary Continental Philosophy (4 Credits)
A critical study of current trends in European philosophy, focusing on such thinkers as Deleuze, Badiou, Zizek, Meillassoux, or Laruelle. Prerequisite: junior standing or instructor's permission.

PHIL 3610 Advanced Topics in Philosophy, Psychology, and Cognitive Science (4 Credits)
This course provides an advanced survey of conceptual and methodological issues that lie at the intersection of philosophy, psychology, and cognitive science. More specifically, our main goal is to engage in a critical discussion of how the study of the mind requires an interdisciplinary approach that integrates empirical findings with conceptual and philosophical theorizing. Cross listed with PSYC 3610. Prerequisites: PSYC 1001 and junior standing (or instructor approval).

PHIL 3618 Philosophy of Biology (4 Credits)
A survey of conceptual issues that lie at the intersection of biology and philosophy: the central concepts of evolutionary theory (such as natural selection, fitness, adaptation and function), the relation of biology to other "lower" sciences (can it be reduced to physics and chemistry?), whether there are genuine scientific laws in biology, and the relation between biology and other fields like cognitive science and ethics. At least Junior standing required.
PHIL 3620 Philosophical Perspectives on Economics and Social Sciences (4 Credits)
This course provides an advanced survey of conceptual and methodological issues that lie at the intersection of philosophy, economics, and the social sciences. More specifically, the main goal is to engage in a critical discussion of how sciences such as psychology, sociology, and neuroscience can challenge and modify the foundations and methodology of economic theories. The course is structured around three broad modules. After a brief introduction, we begin by discussing the emergence of rational choice theory which constitutes the foundation of classical and neoclassical economics and present some paradoxical implications of expected utility theory. The second module focuses on the relationship between economics and psychology. More specifically, we examine the emergence of behavioral economics, the study of the social, cognitive, and emotional factors on the economic decisions of individuals and institutions and their consequences for market prices, returns, and resource allocation. Finally, the third module focuses on the implications of neuroscience on decision making. We discuss some recent developments in neuroeconomics, a field of study emerged over the last few decades which seeks to ground economic theory in the study of neural mechanisms which are expressed mathematically and make behavioral predictions.

PHIL 3699 Proseminar in Philosophy (4 Credits)
Philosophy is a diverse discipline with various subfields, most of which are becoming increasingly specialized and methodologically autonomous. Specialization is often (rightly) perceived as an indicator of disciplinary progress and intellectual development. However, it is important that students of philosophy pursue breadth as well as depth. The goal of this course is to provide an overview of a series of seminal texts in philosophy, from a variety of subfields, epochs, and traditions. Each weekly meeting is devoted to the presentation, analysis, and discussion of a text that any student of philosophy should read at some point in her or his career. Requires junior standing or instructor's permission.

PHIL 3700 Topics in Philosophy (1-4 Credits)
Prerequisite: junior standing or instructor's permission.

PHIL 3701 Topics in Philosophy (1-4 Credits)
Prerequisite: junior standing or instructor's permission.

PHIL 3702 Topics in Philosophy (1-4 Credits)
Prerequisite: 10 hours of Philosophy at 2000 level or permission of instructor.

PHIL 3703 Topics in Philosophy (1-4 Credits)
Prerequisite: 10 hours of Philosophy at 2000 level or permission of instructor.

PHIL 3704 Topics in Philosophy (1-4 Credits)
Prerequisite: 10 hours of Philosophy at 2000 level or permission of instructor.

PHIL 3991 Independent Study (1-8 Credits)

PHIL 3992 Directed Study (1-10 Credits)

PHIL 4991 Independent Study (1-10 Credits)

PHIL 4992 Directed Study (1-10 Credits)

PHIL 4995 Independent Research (1-10 Credits)

PHIL 5300 Philosophy Colloquium (4 Credits)

PHIL 5400 Cultural Theory Colloquium (1-5 Credits)