

PHILOSOPHY COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

PHIL 110: INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY (4)

This course is a general introduction to the main themes and problems in the academic study of philosophy. It covers a number of areas and authors so that the student gets some idea of the discipline as a whole. Open to first-year students. No prerequisite.

PHIL 120: CRITICAL THINKING (4)

An introduction to the skills and methods required for careful determination of whether we should accept, reject, or suspend judgment about different kinds of claims. Readings include philosophical texts, editorials, and stories, by which students learn to identify and assess arguments. Open to first-year students. No prerequisite.

PHIL 130: CURRENT EVENTS AND PHILOSOPHY (1)

Philosophy is not just an academic discipline. It is also a way of thinking that has broad and useful applications in our everyday lives. Accordingly, this course aims to bring philosophical reflection down to earth by using philosophical theories and concepts to interpret and to make judgments about current events. The course will also give students a chance to develop their own philosophical skills in an informal and colloquial setting. Can be taken no more than twice.

PHIL 150: SPECIAL TOPIC - DOES POPCORN EXIST? PHILOSOPHY THROUGH CINEMA (4)

Philosophy is not just an academic discipline. It is also a way of thinking that has broad and useful applications in our everyday lives. Accordingly, this course aims to bring philosophical reflection down to earth by using philosophical theories and concepts to interpret and to make judgments about current events. The course will also give students a chance to develop their own philosophical skills in an informal and colloquial setting. Can be taken no more than twice.

PHIL 150: SPECIAL TOPIC -- ETHICS AND PUBLIC POLICY (4)

Public policy decisions have to be made on a daily basis at the local, national, and international level. Whether the decision concerns redrawing voting district lines in a county, how to allocate medical resources within the state, or coordinating international anti-terrorism measures, public policy issues require us to think carefully about the morality of our decisions. This course explores the role of moral thinking in public policy discussions and how ethics informs policy. We will discuss current public policy issues such as immigration policy, stem cell research, economic policies related to the worldwide recession and more, and look at these from the perspective of at least three standard moral theories: virtue ethics, deontological ethics, and utilitarianism. No prerequisite. Open to first-year students.

PHIL 150: SPECIAL TOPIC – SOUL, BRAIN AND CONSCIOUSNESS (4)

There is an ancient issue in metaphysics over whether you and I are nothing but our material bodies, or, instead, that we are not material bodies at all, but immaterial souls. Bodies are destructible—your body will return to dust. Perhaps it could be resurrected, but would putting the parts back together bring back the very same person? On the other hand, an immaterial soul might not be destructible at all—we may be immortal to begin with and not need to be resurrected. This discussion continues in contemporary philosophy and science as the issue of what consciousness is—material or immaterial.

PHIL 170: PHILOSOPHY AND STAR TREK (4)

Introduction to philosophy, examining issues in metaphysics, ethics, and epistemology. No prior knowledge of Star Trek or philosophy required. Can androids and computers be persons—capable of thought? This relates to what we are: soul or matter, free-willed or determined, moral agents or non-responsible robots. Is time travel possible? How do we know what is real? Open to first-year students. No prerequisite.

PHIL 181: CONTEMPORARY MORAL ISSUES (4)

Philosophic analysis of current moral problems (e.g., medical ethics, abortion, euthanasia, capital punishment, and business ethics). Emphasis on the clarification of issues and competing lines of argument. Open to first-year students. No prerequisite.

PHIL 182: ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS (4)

This seminar explores the application of classical and modern moral theories to environmental issues. It includes an examination of current ecological theory as it relates to environmental science. Central topics include population growth, animal rights, environmental degradation, conservation of the biosphere, and responsibilities to future generations. Field trips are planned. Also listed as ES 182. No prerequisite.

PHIL 197F: FIRST-YEAR SEMINAR - ART: I KNOW IT WHEN I SEE IT (4)

Many philosophical questions surround artworks. What makes something a work of art? Do artworks have unique meanings, multiple meanings, or no meaning at all? Is there something called "aesthetic value," and how does it differ from other kinds of value? How should we treat the artist's intentions when evaluating a work? In this course, we'll consider classic and contemporary answers to these and many more questions. We will then test these answers in light of real engagement with art, artists, and the audience. How well do philosophical theories of art stand up to scrutiny in light of our actual artistic practices? The course will look at art across media and genre, including fiction, poetry, dance, painting, sculpture, music, film, and theater, and the class will visit museums and galleries and attend performances. Placement to be determined during the summer.

PHIL 197F: FIRST-YEAR SEMINAR – BIFF! BAM! KAPOW!: THE PHILOSOPHY OF SUPERHEROES (4)

In this class we'll consider thorny philosophical questions by looking at how they arise in the lives of superheroes. We'll scour comic books, TV shows and movies to find stories of superheroes that address questions of good and evil, moral responsibility, personal identity, the relationship between the individual and the state, human nature, and what it takes to be a superhero. We'll learn how these questions also apply to the lives of ordinary individuals, and we will explore special bonus content: Supervillains! Placement to be determined during the summer.

PHIL 197F: FIRST-YEAR SEMINAR - SOCRATES & HOMER... SIMPSON: PHILOSOPHY AND POP CULTURE (4)

Is *Family Guy* just a mindless way to spend half an hour each week, or does it hold the key to discovering the meaning of life? In this course we explore how persistent philosophical questions weave their way into films, television shows, bestselling books and other pop culture phenomena. We raise questions concerning free will and determinism, the existence of God, why we should be moral, the nature of the self, the relation of the individual to the state, and the limits of human knowledge, though *South Park*, the *Colbert Report*, *Harry Potter*, *House*, *The Office*, *Star Wars*, *The Daily Show*, *The Simpsons*, and more. Placement to be determined during the summer.

PHIL 201: ANCIENT PHILOSOPHY (4)

This course deals with the beginnings of Western philosophy among the Greeks, the great classical figures—Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle—and their successors, the stoics and epicureans. Although the perspective is mainly historical, considerable attention is paid to philosophical and practical issues such as the ultimate nature of the world, the nature of human beings, human happiness, and the nature of society. Open to first-year students with permission.

PHIL 202: EARLY MODERN PHILOSOPHY (4)

Study of the philosophical systems of important 17th- and 18th-century philosophers, including Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz, Locke, Berkeley, Hume, and Kant. Open to first-year students with permission.

PHIL 207: PHILOSOPHY OF ART (4)

Philosophical thinking about the creation and evaluation of art is called aesthetics. In this course, art works of every form—literary, plastic, musical, dramatic, and cinematic—are considered with a view to examining such questions as definition of art, standards of assessment, and moral issues facing the artist, audience, and the state. Open to first-year students with permission.

PHIL 208: FEMINIST PHILOSOPHIES (4)

This course offers students a comprehensive introduction to some of the important theories and texts produced by feminist philosophers over the past few hundred years. The course addresses liberal, Marxist, socialist, psychoanalytic, existentialist, and postmodern feminisms; it examines questions concerning equality, patriarchy, essentialism, gender, and mothering, as well as claims about the special moral and cognitive capacities of women or the feminine. Also listed as GWS 209. Open to first-year students with permission.

PHIL 211: SYMBOLIC LOGIC (4)

Study of the concepts in sound reasoning. Course goals include the basic grasp of three logics (propositional, Aristotelian, and predicate), and familiarity with the metatheory of propositional logic. Also listed as MATH 211. Open to first-year students with permission.

PHIL 220: ZOMBIES AND CONSCIOUSNESS (4)

You and I have conscious experience--we know what it is like to feel, to see, to smell. Could a computer possibly know that, or must computers be "in the dark," lacking conscious experience? Couldn't there even conceivably be a fully functional human brain/body (just like yours or mine) that was merely a consciousness-less machine? A metaphysical zombie. The answers to these, and related, questions bear on the question "Is consciousness just a physical process, or something else?", the contemporary heir to the traditional question "What are we: our bodies, or souls?" No prerequisite.

PHIL 223: PHILOSOPHY OF FICTION (4)

In this class we will be looking at a variety of theories of fiction, each of which attempts to answer a number of questions, including: What is a fictional character? Is there such a thing as truth in fiction? How do we as readers and writers of fiction relate to the fictional worlds of stories? How is it that the plight of a character in a novel, while make-believe, can evoke very real emotions? Open to first-year students.

PHIL 250: SPECIAL TOPIC – FOUNDATIONS OF LAW (4)

We assess philosophical/logical foundations allegedly underlying the very notion of law and of certain types of law. Some hold that law rests on moral foundations from the consent of the people, from God, or both. Do these views make sense? "No crime without a guilty mind (intent)" supposedly guides criminal law. But not all crimes require it. What justifies that disparity? Some laws allegedly are un-Constitutional, whereas some laws upholding "community standards" have been judged Constitutional despite being discriminatory. So, what should it mean to be Constitutional-- found "literally" in the Constitution, implied by the Framers intentions, or...? What does the notion of a right mean, for example in the right to free speech, the right to religious freedom, and in other alleged rights? These topics and many more. Also listed as PHIL 350. Open to first year students at the 250 level.

PHIL 250: SPECIAL TOPIC – LANGUAGE, MIND AND REALITY (4)

As human beings we organize and make sense of the world through the use of language. In this course we will attempt to understand the nature of language and its relationship to our minds and the world. We will try to answer questions such as: What is language? What is meaning? What is the connection between names in a language and the objects to which they refer in the world? How do we understand one another? Is it possible to think without language? We will read foundational works in the philosophy of language from the 19th century on, including those by Mill, Frege, Russell, Wittgenstein, Kripke and Putnam.

PHIL 250: SPECIAL TOPIC - PHILOSOPHY OF LAW

This course is an introduction to major philosophical issues in civil, criminal, and constitutional law. Among the topics of discussion are criminal responsibility, punishment, negligence, legal obligation, and civil liberties. We also examine basic legal concepts such as precedent, interpretation, and the adversary system. Readings consist of philosophical essays as well as influential judicial opinions. No previous background in law or philosophy is expected. Open to first-year students by permission.

PHIL 250: SPECIAL TOPIC - PHILOSOPHY OF MIND (4)

Can consciousness be explained in physical terms? In what sense can our intentional actions be “up to us”? What could identify a person over time as numerically the same person? Could a computer ever think or be conscious? How do you know that anyone besides yourself is conscious? These and other issues about mind will be covered. No prerequisites. Open to first-year students.

PHIL 250: SPECIAL TOPIC - PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE (4)

What is science? What distinguishes science from pseudo-science or religion? In what sense is science objective? Is scientific change a rational process? What are natural laws, and what do they describe? Is induction merely a type of habit or faith, as David Hume argued? These and other central issues about the nature of science will be covered. No prerequisites. Open to first-year students.

PHIL 250: SPECIAL TOPIC - ZOMBIES AND CONSCIOUSNESS (4)

Can consciousness be explained in physical terms? In what sense can our intentional actions be “up to us”? What could identify a person over time as numerically the same person? Could a computer ever think or be conscious? How do you know that anyone besides yourself is conscious? We'll cover these and other issues about consciousness. No prerequisite. Open to first-year students.

PHIL 252: ETHICS (4)

This course is a comparative and critical study of some of the major theories in the area of moral philosophy on basic conceptions that bear upon human conduct: the nature of morality and immorality, the standards of evaluation of right and wrong, and the relationship between morality and happiness. In applying moral reasoning, the course also investigates areas of moral controversy such as life and death, discrimination, and others. Open to first-year students with permission.

PHIL 253: BIOMEDICAL ETHICS (4)

In this course we explore ethical issues in medicine and biotechnology. Topics covered may include the ethics of abortion, euthanasia, physician-assisted suicide, stem cell research, cloning, the treatment of permanently comatose or vegetative patients, human and animal research, and the distribution of healthcare. Discussions of these topics involve our notions of a person, justice, consent, privacy, rights, and duties. Special emphasis is placed on the variety of ethical approaches to these questions. Open to first-year students.

PHIL 254: SOCIAL AND POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY (4)

Among the most important questions facing social-political thinkers today is that of the nature and purpose of government. In this course, we will examine the thought of ancient, medieval, early modern, and more contemporary thinkers in order to begin developing an answer to this question. Thinkers addressed will include Plato, Aristotle, Aquinas, Locke, Rousseau, Madison, Marx, and Goldman. Also listed as POLS 254.

PHIL 272: PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION (4)

Philosophers have studied the nature of religious faith and the language and rituals used to express it. They have also been concerned with finding rational grounds for justifying religious faith, proposing arguments and counter arguments. This course introduces the students to these concerns as well as the social and political issues surrounding religious dogma. Also listed as REL 272.

PHIL 275: ASIAN PHILOSOPHY (4)

This course examines the metaphysics (theories of reality), the epistemologies (theories of knowledge), the ethics and the logics of the philosophical-religious systems called Hinduism, Buddhism, Zen Buddhism, and Taoism. Some attention is given to their historical developments and practices. In addition, they will be compared to the views of Plato and other western philosophers. Readings include primary sources and contemporary analyses. No prerequisite.

PHIL 290: INDEPENDENT STUDY (2 or 4)

Independent study conducted below the advanced level. Application must be made with faculty prior to registration.

PHIL 302: EPISTEMOLOGY AND METAPHYSICS (4)

Questions of knowledge and the nature of being. Issues include: skepticism about the external world; skepticism about other minds; the problem in induction; the mind/body problem; the definition of knowledge; the analytic-synthetic distinction. Classic and contemporary readings. Prerequisites: PHIL 110, PHIL 201, PHIL 202, or permission.

PHIL 303: LITERARY HISTORY AND THEORY I (4)

Also listed and described as ENG 303. Prerequisite: sophomore standing or permission of instructor.

PHIL 304: 19TH-CENTURY CONTINENTAL PHILOSOPHY (4)

In this course, the central figures of 19th-century philosophy are introduced through a focused study of their principal texts and common concerns. Authors addressed include Hegel, Schopenhauer, Kierkegaard, Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud. We address questions concerning each author's view of human nature, truth, history, the self, culture, and the individual's relationship to society. Prerequisites: PHIL 202, PHIL 252, or permission.

PHIL 307: LITERARY HISTORY AND THEORY II (4)

Also listed and described as ENG 307. Prerequisite: ENG/PHIL 303 and junior standing, or permission.

PHIL 316: 20TH-CENTURY CONTINENTAL PHILOSOPHY (4)

Twentieth-century Europe has experienced an explosion of philosophical movements. We examine theories of existentialism, phenomenology, post-structuralism, and deconstruction. Authors addressed include Husserl, Heidegger, Sartre, Foucault, Lyotard, and Derrida. Prerequisites: PHIL 201, PHIL 202, PHIL 304, or permission.

PHIL 320: THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE (4)

Course material includes any of the following topics in the study of knowledge: definitions of knowledge, the problem of induction, skepticism about an external world, skepticism about other minds, and a priori knowledge. Questions raised include "What does it mean to know?," "Can we know anything about the future?," "Is there a world external to my mind?," and "Does all knowledge come from experience?" Recent literature on these topics will be emphasized. Prerequisites: PHIL 201 and PHIL 202 or permission.

PHIL 321: METAPHYSICS (4)

Course material includes any of the following topics in metaphysics: free will and determinism, the mind-body problem, the nature of consciousness, the philosophy of time and space, realism and anti-realism, and the nature of being. Questions raised include "What is the nature of time?," "What kinds of being does the world include?," "Are we genuinely free to choose our actions or is free will merely an illusion?," and "Am I a body, a soul, or something else?" Recent literature on these topics will be emphasized. Prerequisites: PHIL 201 and PHIL 202 or permission.

PHIL 350: SPECIAL TOPIC – FOUNDATIONS OF LAW (4)

We assess philosophical/logical foundations allegedly underlying the very notion of law and of certain types of law. Some hold that law rests on moral foundations from the consent of the people, from God, or both. Do these views make sense? "No crime without a guilty mind (intent)" supposedly guides criminal law. But not all crimes require it. What justifies that disparity? Some laws allegedly are un-Constitutional, whereas some laws upholding "community standards" have been judged Constitutional despite being discriminatory. So, what should it mean to be Constitutional-- found "literally" in the Constitution, implied by the Framers intentions, or...? What does the notion of a right mean, for example in the right to free speech, the right to religious freedom, and in other alleged rights? These topics and many more. Also listed as PHIL 250. Open to first year students at the 250 level.

PHIL 350: SPECIAL TOPIC - INTERMEDIATE LOGIC (4)

This course extends the methods introduced in MATH/PHIL 211 Symbolic Logic, particularly first-order predicate logic. Topics to be covered will include second-order predicate logic with identity, metalogic, and normal modal logic. Other topics may include proof theory and non-classical logics, such as intuitionistic, fuzzy, relevance and many-valued logics. Particular emphasis will be given to philosophical applications of logic. Prerequisite: PHIL 211 or MATH 211.

PHIL 350: SPECIAL TOPIC -- THE PHILOSOPHY OF FICTION (4)

We're all familiar with Sherlock Holmes, Hamlet, and Little Red Riding Hood. However, we rarely consider just what these names refer to. Are these characters no more than words on a page, are they ideas in our minds, or are they something more? In this class we will look at a variety of theories of fiction, each of which attempts to answer a number of questions, including: What is a fictional character? Is there such a thing as truth in fiction? How do we as readers and writers of fiction relate to the fictional worlds of stories? How is it that the plight of a character in a novel, while make-believe, can evoke very real emotions?

PHIL 350: SPECIAL TOPIC -- THE PHILOSOPHY OF LAW (4)

Philosophical examination of fundamental legal principles/theories, and problematic laws. Is there a moral obligation to obey the law? Why is ignorance of the law no excuse? Why does crime sometimes require a "guilty mind", other times not? Are there implicit rights in the Constitution, or "literal" meanings, or framers' intentions? What could justify anti-drug laws, death penalty laws, Patriot Act laws, Religious Freedom laws and other such controversial laws? Also listed as PHIL 250. Open to first year students at the 250 level.

PHIL 380: GREAT THINKERS IN PHILOSOPHY (4)

This course presents an in-depth and comprehensive examination of the work of a single important figure in philosophy. Detailed study of one or more of the texts by the selected person serves as the focus of the course. Those addressed include figures such as Plato, Hume, Nietzsche, Wittgenstein, de Beauvoir, and Russell. May be repeated once on rotation. Prerequisites: PHIL 201 and PHIL 202.

PHIL 390: INDEPENDENT STUDY (2 or 4)

Independent study conducted at the advanced level. Application must be made with faculty prior to registration.

PHIL 399: INTERNSHIP (4)

Application must be made with faculty prior to registration.

PHIL 470: SENIOR SEMINAR (2 or 4)

An annual seminar of discussion and research focused on the presentation and criticism of original essays. Required of senior majors and minors; not open to others except with permission.

PHIL 490: SENIOR HONORS THESIS (4, 4)

Required both regular terms and Short Term. Theses are evaluated and decisions made in Term 2. Open only to qualified philosophy majors. Does not count toward major requirements.