PHILOSOPHY

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http://philosophy.yale.edu
M.A., M.Phil., Ph.D.

Acting Chair
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Assistant Professors Robin Dembroff, Manon Garcia

FIELDS OF STUDY
The department offers a wide range of courses in various traditions of philosophy, with strengths and a well-established reputation in the history of philosophy, ethics, philosophy of law, epistemology, philosophy of language, and philosophy of religion as well as other central topics.

SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS FOR THE PH.D. DEGREE
1. In the first two years all students must complete a total of twelve term courses. Graduate courses are grouped: (1) metaphysics, theory of knowledge, philosophy of mind, philosophy of language, philosophy of science; (2) ethics, aesthetics, philosophy of religion, political philosophy, philosophy of law, and theory of value; (3) history of philosophy. No more than six of the twelve and no fewer than two courses may be taken in each group. At least one of the twelve courses taken must be logic (unless the logic requirement is satisfied in some other way), and this course does not count toward the required minimum of two within any of the three categories.
2. Two qualifying papers must be submitted, one in the history of philosophy, the other in another distribution area. These papers must be more substantial and professional than an ordinary term paper.
3. Approval of the dissertation prospectus is expected before the end of the sixth term. Upon completion of all predissertation requirements, including the prospectus, students are admitted to candidacy for the Ph.D. Admission to candidacy must take place by the end of the third year of study.
4. Students in Philosophy typically teach in the third, fourth, and sixth years.
5. In addition to the twelve required philosophy courses, before the dissertation defense students must take at least one class that is not listed in philosophy on a subject that is relevant to their research.
6. The dissertation is expected to be submitted in the end of the fifth to sixth year.

CLASSICS AND PHILOSOPHY COMBINED PH.D. PROGRAM
The Classics and Philosophy Program is a combined program, offered by the Departments of Classics and Philosophy at Yale, for students wishing to pursue graduate study in ancient philosophy. Suitably qualified students may apply for entry to the program either through the Classics department for the Classics track or through the Philosophy department for the Philosophy track.

Applicants for the Classics track of the combined program must satisfy the general requirements for admission to the Classics graduate program, in addition to the requirements of the Classics track of the combined program. Details of the Classics track of the program are available online at https://classics.yale.edu/research/ancient-philosophy/classics-and-philosophy-joint-program.

Applicants for the Philosophy track of the combined program must satisfy the general requirements for admission to the Philosophy graduate program, in addition to the requirements of the Philosophy track of the combined program. Details of the Philosophy track of the program are available online at http://philosophy.yale.edu/graduate-program/classics-and-philosophy-program.

The combined program is overseen by an interdepartmental committee currently consisting of Verity Harte, David Charles, and Brad Inwood together with the director of graduate studies (DGS) for Classics and the DGS for Philosophy.

PHILOSOPHY AND PSYCHOLOGY COMBINED PH.D. PROGRAM
The Philosophy and Psychology Program is a combined program, offered by the Departments of Philosophy and Psychology at Yale. Students enrolled in the program complete a series of courses in each discipline as well as an interdisciplinary dissertation that falls at the intersection of the two. On completing these requirements, students are awarded a Ph.D. either in Philosophy and Psychology, or in Psychology and Philosophy.
Students can be admitted into the combined program either through the Psychology department or through the Philosophy department. Students must be accepted into one of these departments (the "home department") through the standard admissions process, and both departments must then agree to accept the student into the combined program.

Students can be accepted into the combined program either (a) at the time they initially apply for admission to their home department, or (b) after having already competed some course work within the home department. In either case, students must be accepted into the combined program by each department.

Students in the combined program complete two-thirds of the course requirements of each of the two disciplines, then write a qualifying paper and a dissertation that are fully interdisciplinary. For more details about the program requirements, see http://philosophy.yale.edu/graduate-program/philosophy-and-psychology-combined-phd-program.

M.A. (en route to the Ph.D.) An M.A. degree is awarded to students after completion of seven term courses with an average grade of High Pass.

Please see the Philosophy website for information on the program: http://philosophy.yale.edu.

COURSES

PHIL 567a, Mathematical Logic I  Sun-Joo Shin
An introduction to the metatheory of first-order logic, up to and including the completeness theorem for the first-order calculus. An introduction to the basic concepts of set theory is included.

PHIL 570a, Epistemology  Keith DeRose
Introduction to current topics in the theory of knowledge. The analysis of knowledge, justified belief, rationality, certainty, and evidence.

PHIL 601a, Skepticism: Historical and Recent  Michael Della Rocca
An examination of the various styles of skeptical arguments and of responses to skepticism in the early modern period (seventeenth and eighteenth centuries). Some attention also to comparisons between skepticism in this period and skepticism in contemporary philosophy, in ancient philosophy, and in non-Western thought. Figures to be discussed include Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz, Astell, Hume, Sextus Empiricus, Zhuangzi, and Nagarjuna.

PHIL 624a, Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit  Paul Franks and Hugo Havranek
A close reading of sections of one of the major works in post-Kantian philosophy, currently receiving renewed attention within analytic philosophy. Themes discussed include varieties of skepticism and responses to skepticism; the relationship of epistemology to questions concerning the structures of social practices of reasoning; the historical character of reason; the relationship between natural processes and social developments; the intersubjectivity of consciousness; and the possibility of a philosophical critique of culture. Attention is paid both to commentaries that focus on historical development and to approaches that view historical narratives as allegories whose deeper meaning may be formulated as a logical or semantic theory.

PHIL 625b, Topics in Epistemology  Keith DeRose
A survey of some recent work in epistemology, with an emphasis on connections between formal approaches to epistemology and traditional epistemological questions. We explore the power and limitations of Bayesian approaches to epistemology; the relationship between credence on the one hand, and belief and knowledge on the other; higher-order knowledge and probability; and other topics.

PHIL 626b, Computability and Logic  Sun-Joo Shin
A technical exposition of Gödel's first and second incompleteness theorems and of some of their main consequences in proof theory and model theory, such as Löb's theorem, Tarski's undefinability of truth, provability logic, and nonstandard models of arithmetic.

PHIL 634b, Ancient Moral Psychology  David Charles
The aim of the seminar is to examine Aristotle's discussion of the psychology of ethical virtue and of ethical failing, as exemplified by akrasia and various forms of vice, and to compare it with later discussions of similar topics, some ancient and some contemporary. The goal of the seminar is to answer two questions: Did Aristotle develop a distinctive account of ethical motivation that resists analysis into two distinct, independently defined, components (such as reason or intellect and desire)? If so, does it withstand criticism from writers who analyze ethical motivation in terms of reason and/or desire (as two independently defined components)? In addressing the second question we consider criticisms of, and alternatives to, Aristotle's account as developed in some Stoic sources, by David Hume and by some contemporary writers (such as John McDowell and Christine Korsgaard). No knowledge of Greek is required.

PHIL 637a, Philosophy of Mathematics  Sun-Joo Shin
We take up a time-honored debate between Platonism and anti-Platonism, along with different views of mathematical truth, that is, logicism, formalism, and intuitionism. We read classical papers on the subject. Why do we need the philosophy of mathematics? This question could be answered toward the end of the term.

PHIL 639b, Modal Logic  Sun-Joo Shin
Basic philosophical concepts and logical tools underlying different modal systems, mainly focusing on necessity and possibility. Topics include propositional logic and its natural deductive system; modal operators and development of the simplest natural deductive system;
extensions of the basic propositional modal system; intensional semantics; a diagrammatic method to check validity or invalidity; and quantified modal logic (QML). These topics lead to interesting philosophical issues and several nonstandard logical assumptions.

PHIL 641b, Philosophy of Simone de Beauvoir  Manon Garcia
Simone de Beauvoir’s The Second Sex is a benchmark feminist text. But its philosophical claims—and her other philosophical works—were overshadowed for much of her life for personal and professional reasons. For much of the twentieth century she was seen as derivative of her companion, Jean-Paul Sartre, and her work was given partial and problematic English translations that obscured their original richness. The recent publication in English of Beauvoir’s student diaries and philosophical works has shown her work in new light. Through a thorough reading of her philosophical works and a selection of her feminist and literary works, this seminar is an in-depth, systemic study of de Beauvoir’s philosophy, establishing her contributions to post-Kantian continental philosophy as well as to feminist philosophy.

PHIL 650a, The Problem of Evil  Keith DeRose and Miroslav Volf
The evils of our world can seem to present strong reasons for disbelieving in the existence of God. This course examines the main forms that this problem for theism takes, and some of the proposed ways of solving, or at least mitigating, the problem.

PHIL 653b, Good and Will  Michael Della Rocca
An exploration of the nature of moral reasons, the sources of normativity, the nature of good, and related topics in philosophy of action. Focus on the (alleged) distinction between theoretical and practical reason, the (again alleged) distinction between world-mind and mind-world directions of fit, the (again alleged) distinction between internal and external reasons, and theories of good. Authors to be covered include Anselm, Murdoch, Foot, Adams, Nagel, Michael Thompson, Strawson, Korsgaard, and Williams.

PHIL 655b, Normative Ethics  Shelly Kagan
A systematic examination of normative ethics, the part of moral philosophy that attempts to articulate and defend the basic principles of morality. The bulk of the course surveys and explores some of the main normative factors relevant in determining the moral status of a given act or policy (features that help make a given act right or wrong). Brief consideration of some of the main views about the foundations of normative ethics (the ultimate basis or ground for the various moral principles).

PHIL 659a, Philosophy of Citizenship  Jeremy Lent
For many of us, citizenship seems to amount to little more than voting and paying taxes. Our identities as family members, friends, classmates, colleagues, and so on are often far more salient than our identities as members of political units. But citizenship presents many significant philosophical questions and problems. In this course, we read and assess some of the most interesting arguments about what morality requires, permits, and forbids us to do as citizens. The questions we explore include whether there is a moral duty to obey the law; how morality bears on voting, paying taxes, and philanthropy; whether patriotism is a virtue; and whether it is morally permissible or perhaps even obligatory to ignore politics. Overall, we seek to decide if citizenship is a more consequential component of our identities than we often imagine. Prerequisite: a course in political philosophy or ethics.

PHIL 665b, Recent Work in Ethical Theory  Stephen Darwall
A study of recently published works on ethics and its foundations. Issues include the grounds of normativity and rightness, and the role of the virtues.

PHIL 668a, Metaethics  Stephen Darwall
A study of moral theorizing and moral discourse. The linguistic role of words like good, bad, right, and wrong; whether propositions that use these terms can be true or false. What ethical claims mean, if anything, and what kinds of reasoning or evidence might justify such claims.

PHIL 669b / LING 675b, Pragmatics  Laurence Horn
Context-dependent aspects of meaning and inference. Speech act theory, presupposition, implicature. Role of pragmatics in the lexicon and in meaning change. The semantics-pragmatics distinction from different perspectives; the position of pragmatics in linguistic theory.

PHIL 677b / WGSS 677b, Feminist Philosophy: Theories of Sex, Gender, and Sexual Orientation  Robin Dembroff
This course surveys several feminist frameworks for thinking about sex, gender, and sexual orientation. We consider questions such as: Is there a tenable distinction between sex and gender? Between gender and sexual orientation? What does it mean to say that gender is a social construction, or that sexual orientation is innate? What is the place of politics in gender and sexual identities? How do these identities—and especially resistant or transgressive identities—impact the creation and revision of social categories?

PHIL 692b, Metaphysics Meets Cognitive Science: Objects, Causation, Time, and Self  Laurie Paul and Brian Scholl
The premise (and promise) of cognitive science is that we will come to understand ourselves better by integrating the insights and contributions from multiple fields of inquiry. This interdisciplinary project has been especially vibrant when it has explored the intersection of philosophy and psychology (for example, when work in ethics integrates empirical work from moral psychology, or when work in the philosophy of mind integrates neuroscientific studies of consciousness). But cognitive science has interacted far less with the study of metaphysics—the philosophical exploration of topics such as time, causation, and possibility. This may seem surprising, since there has been a great deal of fascinating empirical research on the mental representations and cognitive processes involved in such topics. This seminar attempts to bridge this gap, exploring potential interactions between these fields. In particular, we explore the possibility of a “cognitive metaphysics,” in which each field is enriched by consideration of the other. How might metaphysical theories raise questions or identify concepts of interest to working cognitive scientists? How might empirical studies from cognitive science on the nature of seeing and thinking contribute to the study of metaphysics? Topics likely include the ways in which we understand the nature (in both
the mind and the world) of space, time, objects, events, causality, persistence, and possibility. We also consider some more particular topics, such as the asymmetry between past and future experience, the apparent backwards causation in the context of Newcomb’s puzzle, and why the present seems special. A previous course in philosophy or psychology is presumed.

PHIL 705a, First-Year Seminar Shelly Kagan and Daniel Greco
Required of and limited to first-year students in the Philosophy Ph.D. program. Topic varies from year to year. Preparation for graduate work. Reading, writing, and presentation skills.

PHIL 706b, Work in Progress I Laurie Paul
In consultation with the instructor, each student presents a significant work in progress, e.g., a revised version of an advanced seminar paper or a dissertation chapter. Upon completion of the writing, the student presents the work in a mock colloquium format, including a formal question-and-answer period.

PHIL 715b, Philosophy of Law: Normative Jurisprudence Gideon Yaffe
This course concerns philosophical topics that arise in connection with particular areas of law. Such topics include the justification of criminal punishment; discrepancy in punishment of attempted and completed crimes; the relevance of ignorance of the law to criminal responsibility; self-defense and other forms of preventive violence; the rationale for double-jeopardy restrictions; the conception of justice of import to tort law; the concepts of causation and intention in tort law; the relationship between promises and contracts; the fundamental rationale for property rights; the grounds for and nature of the individualization of the reasonable person standard; the rationale for variations in standards of proof across areas of law. A selection of such topics are examined through consideration of both philosophical essays written about them and legal materials that bear on them. PHIL 703 is a companion to this course. The two together comprise a literacy course in the philosophy of law. They can be taken in either order or separately. Neither is a prerequisite for the other, but students seeking a strong background in philosophy of law are encouraged, but not required, to take both. Self-scheduled examination or paper option.

PHIL 723b, Metaphysics and Epistemic Self-Trust John Pittard
A consideration of arguments that purport to show that some worldview or metaphysical outlook is rationally incompatible with epistemic self-trust (either in general, or in some important domain like morality). Possible topics include skeptical worries posed by contemporary cosmological theories, by causal determinism, by atheistic and theistic multiverse theories, by materialist accounts of mind, by Darwinian evolution, and by theistic responses to the problem of evil. We also consider whether God might face irresolvable skeptical worries.

PHIL 731b, Theological Predication and Divine Attributes John Pittard
An exploration of philosophical debates concerning the nature of theological language and the nature of God. Topics include theories of analogical predication, divine simplicity, God’s relation to time, divine impassibility, the nature of God’s love, divine freedom, the compatibility of foreknowledge and human freedom, and theories of providence.

PHIL 750a or b, Tutorial Stephen Darwall
By arrangement with faculty.

PHIL 758a, The First Person Laurie Paul
This seminar is on the topic of the first person, with a view to considering the relation of this topic to spatial perception, agency, the sense of presence, bodily and mental properties, modal reasoning about the self, imagination, perspectival thought, perceptual content, and related topics. We discuss both philosophical writing and empirical and/or computational work relevant to the philosophical issues. Open to graduate students in the Department of Philosophy and to others with permission of the instructor.

PHIL 760a, Language and Convention Zoltan Szabo
It is nonnegotiable that language is conventional, but it is up for grabs what language and convention are supposed to be. So, despite consensus that in some sense and to some extent language is a convention, it is far from clear what this apparent agreement amounts to. We try to get clearer about that during this seminar. The seminar has four main parts. We begin with a conception of convention and language advocated by David Lewis, which provides the background for further discussion. The second part explores the influential idea of the logical positivists that some truths are true by convention: we discuss the early debate between Carnap and Quine on analyticity and subsequent attempts to defend and clarify the notion of analyticity. The third part is about the conventionality of linguistic meaning. We focus on three issues: whether reference is constrained by naturalness in a way that makes word meaning not entirely conventional, whether conventional meaning outstrips what is relevant to truth–conditional content, and whether assertion and other speech acts are conventional. In our final two meetings we explore two debates between conventionalists and their opponents—one about color and the other about modality. Open to all philosophy graduate students. Undergraduates and graduate students from other fields may join with explicit permission from the instructor, which will be granted only to those with sufficient background.

PHIL 763a / CLSS 834a, Friendship and Egoism: Nicomachean Ethics 9 Brad Inwood and David Charles
The class reads, analyzes, and discusses book 9 of Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics, dealing with the nature of the self, the place of friendship in the good life, and the balance between one’s commitments to social and intellectual activities. This is a core course for the combined Ph.D. program in Classics and Philosophy. Open to all graduate students in Philosophy or Classics who have suitable preparation in Attic Greek and some prior knowledge of ancient philosophy. Others interested in taking or attending the class must have prior permission of the instructors. Undergraduates are not normally admitted.
Metaphysicians want to describe the catalog of what exists and how those things relate to each other. But how should we go about doing that? Historically, metaphysics has heavily relied on a priori methods, such as conceptual analysis and thought experiments. In this course, we examine these a priori methods, as well as more recent “modeling” approaches to metaphysics. We also discuss the place of normativity and human interests in metaphysical methodology, critique notions of metaphysical objectivity, and examine new methodological frameworks, such as dynamic systems modeling, genealogical analysis, and conceptual engineering.