PHILOSOPHY

Connecticut Hall, 203.432.1665
http://philosophy.yale.edu
M.A., M.Phil., Ph.D.

Chair
Verity Harte

Director of Graduate Studies
Zoltán Szabó (C301, 203.432.1669, zoltan.szabo@yale.edu)


Assistant Professors Robin Dembroff, Daniel Greco, John Pittard

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 ADMISSIONS REQUIREMENT
Scores from the GRE General Test are required.

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 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 completed 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.

MASTER’S DEGREES

M.Phil. See Degree Requirements under Policies and Regulations.

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 567b, 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 570b, Epistemology  Keith DeRose
Introduction to current topics in the theory of knowledge. The analysis of knowledge, justified belief, rationality, certainty, and evidence.

PHIL 602a / CPLT 699a / GMAN 603a, Heidegger’s Being and Time  Martin Hagglund
A systematic, chapter-by-chapter study of Heidegger’s Being and Time, arguably the most important work of philosophy of the twentieth century. All the major themes of the book are addressed in detail, with a particular emphasis on care, time, death, and the meaning of being.

PHIL 613a, History of Analytic Philosophy  Paul Franks
A study of the problems and methods of early analytic philosophers, including Frege, Russell, Moore, Wittgenstein, and the Logical Positivists. Problems such as realism, a priori propositions and convention, logic and meaning, empirical knowledge, verification and truth. Methods of analysis deploying formal notations, and studies of ordinary and scientific uses of language.

PHIL 626a, Cognitive Science of Morality  Joshua Knobe
Introduction to the emerging field of moral cognition. Focus on questions about the philosophical significance of psychological findings. Topics include the role of emotion in moral judgment; the significance of character traits in virtue ethics and personality psychology; the reliability of intuitions and the psychological processes that underlie them.

PHIL 627b, 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 642a, Language and Power  Jason Stanley and Jack Balkin
An investigation into the way language shapes our social world, drawing on readings from feminist theory, critical race theory, formal semantics and pragmatics, political psychology, and European history.

PHIL 650b, The Problem of Evil  Keith DeRose
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 652a, History of Early Modern Ethics  Stephen Darwall
The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were an unusually fertile period in philosophical ethics. Among other things, thinkers of the period attempted to work out and investigate a distinctive ethical conception, the idea of morality and its distinctive demands or obligations. We investigate major and some lesser-known figures, including Hobbes, Francis Hutcheson, Hume, Bishop Joseph Butler, Rousseau, Kant, Adam Smith, and Bentham. The main topics include the nature of moral obligation and moral motivation, whether morality can be based on reason or sentiment, and the relation between the right and the good.

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 672a / PLSC 611a, Recent Work on Justice  Thomas Pogge
In-depth study of one contemporary book, author, or debate in political philosophy, political theory, or normative economics. Depending on student interest, this might be a ground-breaking new book, the life's work of a prominent author, or an important theme in contemporary political thought.

PHIL 664b, Justice, Taxes, and Global Financial Integrity  Thomas Pogge
This seminar studies the formulation, interpretation, and enforcement of national and international tax rules from the perspective of national and global economic justice.

PHIL 695a, Philosophy of Mind and Artificial Intelligence  Daniel Greco
In this course, we draw on readings from philosophy, computer science, and some science fiction to explore foundational issues in the philosophy of mind and artificial intelligence. Topics include the following: Could a suitably programmed computer be intelligent? In particular, is passing the Turing test sufficient to establish that a computer is intelligent? Does it make sense to talk of uploading one's consciousness to a computer as a method for increasing one's life span? Can consciousness be explained in physical terms?

PHIL 696a / CLSS 796b, Plato's Gorgias  Verity Harte
Plato's Gorgias contains the most sustained and dramatic encounter between Socratic philosophical conversation and rhetoric. This encounter sets the stage for some of Plato's richest philosophical reflections on moral psychology and on the philosophy of philosophy. The course focuses on careful reading of the Gorgias with a view to engaging these philosophical topics. All readings are in translation, though a Greek reading group may be added for interested and suitably qualified students. Engaged, active student participation is expected. Class discussion typically starts from student questions circulated in advance. Prerequisite: some background in ancient philosophy.

PHIL 697a, Knowledge and Action  Michael Della Rocca
An examination of central themes in recent philosophy of action with attention to parallels between knowledge and action. Themes to be covered include: the metaphysics of action; causal vs. non-causal theories of action; deviant causal chains in philosophy action and deviant justificatory chains in theory of knowledge; the analysis of knowledge; the nature of intention; teleology and action; knowledge-first views and action-first views; regresses and circles in theory of knowledge and philosophy of action. Attention is given to the questions: is the theory of action possible, and is the theory of knowledge possible?

PHIL 698b, Acrasia: Ancient and Modern  David Charles
The goal of the seminar is to investigate accounts of weakness of the will (in Greek: akrasia, literally lack of control) offered by historical philosophers such as Plato, Aristotle, and Augustine and by more recent thinkers such as Donald Davidson, David Pears, Michael Bratman, and Richard Holton. This discussion raises problems about intentional action, the will, and rationality. We also consider some recent psychological work on self-control and addiction. Prerequisite: graduate-level work in philosophy. No language requirement.

PHIL 705a, First-Year Seminar  Michael Della Rocca 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  Zoltán Szabó
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. Enrollment limited to twenty-five. Self-scheduled examination.

PHIL 724a / CLSS 724a, Choice and the Voluntary in Aristotelian Ethics  Brad Inwood and David Charles
The class reads, analyzes, and discusses central texts from Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics and Eudemian Ethics dealing with the themes of voluntary action and choice. It also addresses the reception of Aristotle's theory and its relationship to questions of free will. 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.
PHIL 742b / LING 671b, Philosophy of Language  Jason Stanley

The course focuses on the relationship between philosophy and linguistics. It is aimed at graduate students in both departments who are interested in exploring the different ways questions are approached in the two fields and in developing the skills for cooperative research. We start with three foundational debates of the twentieth century: Quine vs. Carnap on ontological commitment, Russell vs. Strawson on reference, and Ayer vs. Geach on expressivism. The remainder of the class is divided into two parts: the philosophy of semantics and the philosophy of pragmatics. The first part covers the topics of reference and quantification, tense and modality, intentionality, and compositionality. The second deals with context and content, force and mood, implicature, and common ground. The core of the course is a manuscript written jointly with Rich Thomason, which will be supplemented with classic papers in the philosophy of language.

PHIL 750a or b, Tutorial  Zoltán Szabó

By arrangement with faculty.

PHIL 751b, Causation in Modern Philosophy  Kenneth Winkler and Michael Della Rocca

Hume wrote that “there are no ideas, which occur in metaphysics, more obscure and uncertain, than those of power, force, energy or necessary connexion.” This is a very discouraging observation, if true, because as Hume also observed, in metaphysics it is “every moment necessary” to treat of them. This seminar examines how causation (and the closely related notions of natural law, nature, explanation, intelligibility, and miracle) figure in the thinking of several early modern philosophers, chosen from among Descartes, Malebranche, Spinoza, Leibniz, Berkeley, Hume, and Shepherd. Each week we look closely at a range of primary texts, usually with the guidance of some recent secondary literature, chosen to exhibit a variety of approaches to the primary material. Although we are seeking to understand each of the philosophers on their own terms, we expect to be thinking as well about the relationships among them. Each was closely attentive to at least some who came before: Malebranche and Spinoza responded to Descartes; Leibniz to Descartes and Malebranche; Berkeley and Hume to Malebranche; and Shepherd to Berkeley and Hume. We also examine more general questions. Was there, for example, a gradual but remorseless shift from a “demanding” conception of causation, according to which genuine causes should render their effects intelligible, to a more relaxed and distinctively modern conception, according to which a causal explanation need do no more than fit events into familiar patterns – patterns that the mind may find utterly opaque, however familiar experience has made them? If so, was this a good thing or a bad thing: a clarifying advance or an unfortunate loss? Are there good reasons for viewing ordinary causes as mere “occasions,” upon which God exerts a uniquely efficacious will? Can we say that God “concurs” with the operation of so-called secondary causes without suggesting that those causes have no power of their own? Do bodies and finite minds incorporate “natures” that are responsible, at least in part, for what they do (or seem to do)? Or are the effects we ascribe to them the work of laws that in some way lie beyond them? What exactly are the “laws of nature”? Are they the arbitrary decrees of the author of nature, or inescapable rational necessities? If bodies and minds differ as radically as Descartes (for example) contended, how (if at all) do they interact? Can bodies be the causes of our sensations and ideas? What is an explanation? How do scientific explanations differ from the ones that might be offered in metaphysics? Are miracles best understood as violations of the laws of nature? If so, how are they possible? The seminar begins with a brief study of Francisco Suárez’s early modern reworking of the Aristotelian or Thomistic theory of causation – a theory that our philosophers thought they had surpassed. Prerequisite: prior study of the history of philosophy.

PHIL 753b, Philosophy of Conversation  Zoltán Szabó and Timothy Williamson

Conversation has its own norms: the norm that one should pay attention, the norm that one should answer questions, the norm that one should allow one’s interlocutor to express objections, and many others. There is some variation across cultures, languages, and contexts, but there is also a surprisingly high level of uniformity in what these norms are. Conversational norms are social: they go well beyond the norms governing individual speech acts, and they are not derivable from general norms of rationality. Grice’s Logic and Conversation attempted to account for them on the basis of the assumption that conversations are based on a shared understanding of the goal of the talk exchange and a shared desire to achieve this goal. Grice’s approach has been criticized in the literature both because the assumption seems false for many actual conversations, and because even if it were true it would account only for a small subset of conversational norms. The aim of this course is to investigate whether there is a better comprehensive theory of conversational norms. Readings include work on social norms, conventions, and discourse – mostly from philosophers, but also from social theorists and linguists. Open to all graduate students. Undergraduates can be admitted on the basis of individual requests.