PHILOSOPHY (PHIL)

* PHIL 022a, Philosophy of Masculinities  Robin Dembroff
What is masculinity? What relationships does it bear to femininity, misogyny, and homophobia? To race? To biological sex? This course examines these and other questions related to masculinity from a philosophical perspective. The course develops students’ understanding of masculinity as a cultural product that changes across context and time. It pays particular attention to the ways that masculinity is socially policed and reinforced, rather than a “natural” expression of male sex. Through combinations of academic and popular texts, students critically examine language surrounding masculinity (e.g., “real man”, “bromance”), interlocking relationships between masculinity and other social features, such as race/ethnicity and class, social mechanisms that reproduce masculine norms (e.g., misogyny), and forces that challenge these norms (e.g., trans and queer identifications). From this groundwork, students consider the influence of masculinity on main fields of philosophy, such as epistemology, philosophy of science, ethics, and metaphysics, as well as the prospects for non-hierarchical, non-“toxic” forms of masculinity. Enrollment limited to first-year students. Preregistration required; see under First-Year Seminar Program.  HU

PHIL 115b, First-Order Logic  Kenneth Winkler
An introduction to formal logic. Study of the formal deductive systems and semantics for both propositional and predicate logic. Some discussion of metatheory.  QR

PHIL 125a / CLCV 125a, Introduction to Ancient Philosophy  Brad Inwood
An introduction to ancient philosophy, beginning with the earliest pre-Socratics, concentrating on Plato and Aristotle, and including a brief foray into Hellenistic philosophy. Intended to be taken in conjunction with PHIL 116.  WR, HU

PHIL 126b, Introduction to Modern Philosophy from Descartes to Kant  Keith DeRose
An introduction to major figures in the history of modern philosophy, with critical reading of works by Descartes, Malabranche, Spinoza, Leibniz, Locke, Berkeley, Hume, and Kant. Intended to be taken in conjunction with PHIL 125, although PHIL 125 is not a prerequisite.  HU

PHIL 128b, Philosophy, Gender, and Patriarchy  Robin Dembroff
This course provides an introductory survey of issues that arise in philosophy of gender and sexuality. We discuss topics concerning the metaphysics of gender and sexual orientation (such as biological essentialism vs. social constructivism); the nature of patriarchy and masculinity; bias and epistemic injustice; sexual harassment and violence; intersectionality; and feminism.  HU

PHIL 130b / EDST 135b, Philosophy of Education  Jason Stanley
An introduction to the philosophy of education. In this course, we read classical texts about the nature and purpose of education, focusing ultimately on the question of the normative shape and form of education in liberal democracy. What is the difference between education and indoctrination? What is the proper relation, in a liberal democracy, between civic education and vocational education? What shape or form should education take, if it is to achieve its goals? How, for example, is the liberal ideal of equality best realized in the form and structure of an educational system? Authors include Plato, Rousseau, Du Bois, Washington, Stanton, Dewey, Cooper, Woodson, and Freire.  HU

PHIL 175b, Introduction to Ethics  Shelly Kagan
What makes one act right and another wrong? What am I morally required to do for others? What is the basis of morality? These are some of the questions raised in moral philosophy. Examination of two of the most important answers, the theories of Mill and Kant, with brief consideration of the views of Hume and Hobbes. Discussion of the question: Why be moral?  HU

PHIL 178b, Introduction to Political Philosophy  Thomas Pogge
A survey of social and political theory, beginning with Plato and continuing through modern philosophers such as Rawls, Nozick, and Cohen. Emphasis on tracing the development of political ideas; challenges to political theories.  HU

PHIL 179a, Life  Shelly Kagan
Examination of elements that may contribute to a good life, including the question of which truly have value and why. Factors to consider in choosing a career; the significance of the decision whether to have children; the value of education; the importance of love and accomplishment.  HU

* PHIL 202a / RLST 277a, Existentialism  Norreen Khawaja
Introduction to key problems in European existentialism. Existentialism considered not as a unified movement, but as a tradition of interlocking ideas about human freedom woven through the philosophy, religious thought, art, and political theory of late modern Europe. Readings from Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Heti, Lukács, Gide, Heidegger, Fanon, Sartre, de Beauvoir, Cesaire.  HU

PHIL 203b / EALL 212b, Ancient Chinese Thought  Mick Hunter
An introduction to the foundational works of ancient Chinese thought from the ruling ideologies of the earliest historical dynasties, through the Warring States masters, to the Qin and Han empires. Topics include Confucianism and Daoism, the role of the intellectual in ancient Chinese society, and the nature and performance of wisdom.  HU
Philosophy (PHIL)

* PHIL 205b / EALL 213b / HUMS 292b / RLST 211b, Philosophy, Religion, and Literature in Medieval China  Lucas Bender
Exploration of the rich intellectual landscape of the Chinese middle ages, introducing students to seminal works of Chinese civilization and to the history of their debate and interpretation in the first millennium. No previous knowledge of China is assumed. Instead, the course serves as a focused introduction to Chinese philosophy, religion, and literature.  HU

PHIL 214b, The Philosophies of Hegel and Schelling  Paul Franks
The competing versions of absolute idealism developed by Hegel and Schelling in the early 1800s. The relationships between philosophy and a history that culminates in modernity, and between philosophy and religion; the possibility of absolute knowledge and systematicity; the role of kabbalah in philosophy.  HU

PHIL 223b / RLST 133b / SAST 258b, Indian Philosophy: Beginnings and Foundations  Aleksandar Uskokov
In this course, we introduce prominent themes that preoccupied the doctrinal communities of Ancient India — Brahmanism, Buddhism, and Jainism. These include first principles (or their absence), notions of personhood and soul (or their absence), the human good, and the means by which this human good is known. The primary objective is to survey in some depth philosophical ideas in Ancient India as they were advanced not by systematic philosophers but rather in foundational texts such as the Upanisads, the epics, and the Buddhist sutras. We occasionally read modern writings that attempt to engage the sources in their wider philosophical significance while keeping in mind their historical context. Knowledge of Indian languages is not required.  HU

* PHIL 227b / ENGL 268b / HUMS 254b / LITR 463b, Literature and Philosophy, Revolution to Romanticism  Jonathan Kramnick
This is a course on the interrelations between philosophical and literary writing beginning with the English Revolution and ending with the beginnings of Romanticism. We read major works in empiricism, political philosophy, and ethics alongside poetry and fiction in several genres. Topics include the mind/body problem, political ideology, subjectivity and gender, and aesthetic experience as they take philosophical and literary form during a long moment of historical change.  WR, HU

PHIL 263a, Skepticism, Faith, Evidence, and Rationality  Keith DeRose
A study of the rationality of everyday, scientific, philosophical, and religious beliefs, through critical readings of the works of some major early modern philosophers, Descartes, Berkeley, Hume, and Reid, together with writings of recent decades in both religious epistemology and general epistemology. Evidentialist and conservative approaches to the roles of faith and evidence in our governing of our fundamental beliefs are investigated and compared.  HU

PHIL 267a, Mathematical Logic  Sun-Joo Shin
An introduction to the metatheory of first-order logic, up to and including the completeness theorem for the first-order calculus. Introduction to the basic concepts of set theory. Prerequisite: PHIL 115 or permission of instructor.  QR

PHIL 271a / LING 271a, Philosophy of Language  Zoltan Szabo
An introduction to contemporary philosophy of language, organized around four broad topics: meaning, reference, context, and communication. Introduction to the use of logical notation.  HU

* PHIL 274a / GMAN 254a / JDST 335a / RLST 249a, Jewish Philosophy  Paul Franks
Introduction to Jewish philosophy, including classical rationalism of Maimonides, classical kabbalah, and Franz Rosenzweig’s inheritance of both traditions. Critical examination of concepts arising in and from Jewish life and experience, in a way that illuminates universal problems of leading a meaningful human life in a multicultural and increasingly globalized world. No previous knowledge of Judaism is required.  WR, HU

PHIL 281a, Infinity  Mark Maxwell
The idea of infinity. Traditional and contemporary versions of the paradoxes of space, time, and motion, as well as the paradoxes of classes, chances, and truth. Some elementary arithmetic, geometry, probability theory, and set theory.  QB, HU

* PHIL 304b / ECON 302b, Homo Economicus and Human Irrationality  Daniel Greco and Larry Samuelson
The aim of the course is to build up a sufficiently strong foundation in the philosophy of science to allow students to critically assess the challenge posed to the rational choice framework in social science by evidence of human irrationality. Readings are drawn from philosophy, economics (including behavioral economics), and psychology. Prerequisite: ECON 121 or two prior courses in philosophy.  HU, SO

* PHIL 311a / RLST 303a, The End of Metaphysics  Nancy Levene
Exploration of metaphysics in light of the supposition that it is at an end. Readings from classics and critics in philosophy, religion, and literature.  WR, HU

PHIL 326b / RLST 402b, The Philosophy of Religion  John Pittard
The relation between religion and ethics, traditional arguments for the existence of God, religious experience, the problem of evil, miracles, immortality, science and religion, and faith and reason.  HU

* PHIL 395a / CGSC 395a, Junior Colloquium in Cognitive Science  Joshua Knobe
Survey of contemporary issues and current research in cognitive science. By the end of the term, students select a research topic for the senior essay. Enrollment limited to Cognitive Science majors. ½ Course cr

* PHIL 410b / PSYC 410b, The Self Over Time: Psychological and Philosophical Approaches  Paul Bloom and Laurie Paul
What makes someone the same person over time? Philosophers and psychologists have long been fascinated by identity and the nature of the self. Philosophers ask: are there really such things as individuals who endure over time, from cradle to grave? Or is this an illusion
– is a single life nothing but a string of related individuals? If so, is it rational to value who you are now over who you might become in the distant future? In any case, how can someone undergo profound change yet remain the same person? Psychologists explore beliefs and inclinations. What is our natural understanding of personal identity and the self, and how does this change through development? How does this understanding connect to how we think about moral responsibility, love, gratitude, and guilt? What can neuroscience and cognitive science tell us about the nature of a persisting self? In this course, we explore the nature of personal identity and see what happens when philosophy meets psychology. While the course begins with introductory material, we quickly get to contemporary debates of real interest.

Prerequisite: Some background in Psychology, Philosophy, or related disciplines. Permission of instructor is required.

* PHIL 411b, Early Modern Philosophy of Language  Zoltan Szabo and Kenneth Winkler
Early modern contributions to the philosophy of language. Topics include the nature of signs, ideas as sources of meaning, the formation of propositions, truth, necessary truth, inference, and logical form. Readings from works by Arnauld and Nicole, Locke, Leibniz, and Berkeley; contemporary philosophical reception in the writings of Chomsky, Davidson, and their critics. HU

* PHIL 416a, The Philosophy of Spinoza  Michael Della Rocca
An in-depth study of Spinoza’s philosophy. Readings from his Ethics, political writings, Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect, letters, and other works. Spinoza’s metaphysics and his views on philosophy of mind, teleology, action, and emotion. Some attention to methods for interpreting works in the history of philosophy. HU

* PHIL 418a / GMAN 377a / HUMS 451a / LITR 306a, Karl Marx's Capital  Paul North
A careful reading of Karl Marx’s classic, Capital volume 1, a work of philosophy, economy, and critical social theory that has had a significant global readership for over 150 years. During our work with the book, we also make reference to Capital volume 2, as well as interpretations by influential readers. This is a Franke Seminar in the Humanities at the Whitney Humanities Center. Students who enroll in the seminar will also attend special weekly colloquia with visiting scholars. HU

* PHIL 421a, John Rawls  Thomas Pogge
This seminar offers a close study of Rawls’s principal writings. It explores how his thinking evolved in communication with contemporary debates in philosophy, political science, law, and economics. And it probes the suitability of his mature conception of justice in regard to the role Rawls intended this conception to play in the 21st century United States. Featuring ample feedback on written and oral work, this seminar is meant to prepare students for future graduate work at a top institution. Prerequisites: Two courses with substantial normative content. HU

* PHIL 425a, Topics in Epistemology  Keith DeRose
Survey of recent work in epistemology, with an emphasis on connections between formal approaches to epistemology and traditional epistemological questions. Bayesian approaches and their limitations; the relationship of credence to belief and knowledge; higher-order knowledge and probability. Prerequisite: a course in epistemology, or with permission of instructor. HU

* PHIL 427b, Computability and Logic  Sun-Joo Shin
A technical exposition of Gödel’s first and second incompleteness theorems and of some of their consequences in proof theory and model theory, such as Löb’s theorem, Tarski’s undefinability of truth, provability logic, and nonstandard models of arithmetic. Prerequisite: PHIL 267 or permission of instructor. QR, HU

* PHIL 434a, Disagreement and Higher-Order Evidence  John Pittard
Investigation of the epistemic significance of disagreement. Whether one can reasonably maintain confident belief in the face of disagreement with apparently qualified thinkers; recent responses to that question from conciliationists and anticonciliationists. Related issues in the theory of rationality. HU

* PHIL 437a, 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. Students read classical papers on the subject. Why do we need the philosophy of mathematics? This question could be answered toward the end of the semester, hopefully.

  none  HU

* PHIL 439b, 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 non-standard logical assumptions. Prerequisite: basic knowledge of deductive systems. HU
appropriate moral response to this history? This turns out to be a complex and difficult question, or set of questions, which we explore. The history of chattel slavery and its long legacy, even to the current moment, is a history of almost unimaginable injustice. What is the *PHIL 462a / EP&E 362a, The Morality of Reparations*

- Roles of matter and form in a substance or artefact? Our general goal is to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the hylomorphic account and explore the question of identity over time, change and generation. It has also been used to address mind-body problems, taking the body as a whole as the stuff of the mind. The idea has been employed by Aristotle and by several recent writers, such as David Wiggins, Kit Fine and Kathrin Koslicki to answer questions about identity over time, change and generation. It has also been used to address mind-body problems, taking the body as matter and the mind as form. The specific questions to be investigated include: (a) What is a form? Is it best understood in terms of structure, capacity, activity...?; (b) What is the relation between form and matter in a substance and artefact?; (c) What are the causal roles of matter and form in a substance or artefact? Our general goal is to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the hylomorphic account of substances and artefacts. Priority given to seniors and juniors in philosophy or classics. *PHIL 462a / EP&E 362a, The Morality of Reparations*  Stephen Darwall

- The history of chattel slavery and its long legacy, even to the current moment, is a history of almost unimaginable injustice. What is the appropriate moral response to this history? This turns out to be a complex and difficult question, or set of questions, which we explore...
in this course. Some of these are issues of philosophical theory, however, of “nonideal theory,” where the questions concern not what is ideally just, but what responses are called for by historical injustice. But there are also important empirical historical issues concerning the precise character of the injustices and who, and what institutions, were complicit in them. We examine, as best we can, the history of chattel slavery and its long legacy: the white reaction to what Du Bois called “black reconstruction,” racist violence and terror, and decades of white supremacy, including segregation in all its forms and, most recently, mass incarceration. Ultimately, however, our questions are philosophical. What response does justice require to this history and of whom is it required?  

* PHIL 464b / PLSC 291b, Justice, Taxes, and Global Financial Integrity  Thomas Pogge  
Study of the formulation, interpretation, and enforcement of national and international tax rules from the perspective of national and global economic justice. Previous courses in one or two of the following: law, economics, political science, or political philosophy.  

* PHIL 472b / GMAN 314b / PLSC 309b, Contemporary Critical Theory  Seyla Benhabib  
Frankfurt School and Critical Theory focuses on a number of unresolved questions such as pragmatic Kantianism; modernity and post-colonial theory; the idea of progress; critiques of surveillance capitalism and neo-liberalism. Readings from Habermas, Honneth, Fraser, A. Allen, Jaeggi and others. Prerequisite: Directed Studies or two or more advanced courses in modern political philosophy.  

* PHIL 475b, Ethics and the Future  Shelly Kagan  
Decisions we make now may affect whether human life will continue on earth or not, or what the quality of that life will be like. This means that the existence and nature of hundreds of trillions of lives (a conservative estimate) may hang in the balance. Arguably, then, our highest moral priority should be to ensure that human life continues, and at an acceptable level of well-being. The view that this should be our overriding moral concern has been dubbed “long-termism.” The seminar is devoted to examining this position, and exploring the moral assumptions that lie behind it. Prerequisite: A previous course in moral philosophy.  

* PHIL 480a or b, Tutorial  Daniel Greco  
A reading course supervised by a member of the department and satisfying the following conditions: (1) the work of the course must not be possible in an already existing course; (2) the course must involve a substantial amount of writing, i.e., a term essay or a series of short essays; (3) the student must meet with the instructor regularly, normally for at least an hour a week; (4) the proposed course of study must be approved by both the director of undergraduate studies and the instructor.  

* PHIL 490a or b and PHIL 491b, The Senior Essay  Daniel Greco  
The essay, written under the supervision of a member of the department, should be a substantial paper; a suggested length is between 8,000 and 12,000 words for one-term projects, and between 12,500 and 15,000 words for two-term projects. Students completing a one-term project should enroll in either 490 in the fall or 491 in the spring. Students completing a two-term project should enroll in both 490 and 491. The deadline for senior essays completed in the fall is December 5; the deadline for both one- and two-term senior essays completed in the spring is April 21.  

* PHIL 499b / CLCV 320, Before Socrates  Brad Inwood  
The origins of Greek philosophy lie in the period before Socrates and Plato. The so-called Presocratics set up many of the questions developed by Plato: the nature of being, the structure of matter, human knowledge and its limitations, causation, etc. Three of the most important early Greek thinkers are studied in this course: Heraclitus, Parmenides, and Empedocles. Knowledge of ancient Greek is not required. Prerequisites: PHIL 125, CLCV 125 or the fall semester of Directed Studies Philosophy.    

WR, HU