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 040b, Ethics of Data Science  Lily Hu
This course focuses on the ethical questions raised by the growing domain of "data science." Data-based algorithmic systems are increasingly taking the helm of decision-making processes that significantly impact our lives. These tools range from affecting the mundane—the online advertisements we are shown—to the life-altering—the criminal justice verdicts we receive. In the past several years, many scholars as well as activists, journalists, and policymakers have begun to consider the various ways that the widespread adoption of these systems can lead to prickly social problems. Some of the challenges these systems bring, you’ve likely heard of: concerns about unfairness and discrimination; about privacy and surveillance. Others have received less popular attention but still bear on the preceding moral questions: When is it permissible to use statistical inferences to make decisions about individuals? What are the benefits and dangers of using certain social categories, e.g., racial categories, in data collection and eventual model-based decision-making? The umbrella term "data science" in this course encompasses also algorithmic and machine learning decision systems. Enrollment limited to first-year students. Preregistration required; see under First-Year Seminar Program.  HU

PHIL 115a, First-Order Logic  Staff
An introduction to formal logic. Study of the formal deductive systems and semantics for both propositional and predicate logic. Some discussion of metatheory.  QR  0 Course cr

PHIL 118a / RLST 127a / SAST 261a, Buddhist Thought: The Foundations  Staff
This class introduces the fundamentals of Buddhist thought, focusing on the foundational doctrinal, philosophical, and ethical ideas that have animated the Buddhist tradition from its earliest days in India 2500 years ago down to the present, in places such as Tibet, China, and Japan. Though there will be occasional discussion of the social and practical contexts of the Buddhist religion, the primary focus of this course lies on how traditional Buddhist thinkers conceptualize the universe, think about the nature of human beings, and propose that people should live their lives. Our main objects of inquiry are therefore the foundational Buddhist ideas, and the classic texts in which those ideas are put forth and defended, that are broadly speaking shared by all traditions of Buddhism. In the later part of the course, we take up some of these issues in the context of specific, regional forms of Buddhism, and watch some films that provide glimpses of Buddhist religious life on the ground.  HU  0 Course cr

PHIL 125a / CLCV 125a, Introduction to Ancient Philosophy  Staff
An introduction to ancient philosophy, beginning with the earliest pre-Socrates, concentrating on Plato and Aristotle, and including a brief foray into Hellenistic philosophy. Intended to be taken in conjunction with PHIL 126.  WR, HU  0 Course cr

PHIL 126b, Introduction to Modern Philosophy from Descartes to Kant  Michael Della Rocca
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  0 Course cr

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  0 Course cr

PHIL 177a / AFAM 198a / CGSC 277a / EDST 177a / EP&E 494a, Propaganda, Ideology, and Democracy  Staff
Historical, philosophical, psychological, and linguistic introduction to the issues and challenges that propaganda raises for liberal democracy. How propaganda can work to undermine democracy; ways in which schools and the press are implicated; the use of
Aristotle, Augustine, Kant, and Mill and by more recent thinkers such as Bernard Williams, Philippa Foot, Christine Korsgaard, and

The goal of the course is to investigate and assess the accounts of happiness and misery offered by historical philosophers such as Plato, miracles, immortality, science and religion, and faith and reason.  

PHIL 264b / JDST 272b / PHIL 295b / RLST 295b, Al-Ghazali and Maimonides  

The lives and thought of the philosopher theologians Al-Ghazali and Maimonides. Comparison of their lives and writings, focusing on their integration of Aristotelian philosophy into the theology of Islam and Judaism.  

PHIL 267b, Mathematical Logic  

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.  

* PHIL 272a, Philosophy of Mind  

Daniel Greco  
A survey of contemporary issues in the philosophy of mind, including arguments for and against materialism and accounts of intentional states, qualitative states, and mental causation.  

PHIL 281a, Infinity  

Staff  

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. Prerequisites: Four courses in a combination of economics, philosophy, economics (including behavioral economics), and psychology.  

* PHIL 284a, The Will, Agency, and Free Choice  

Robert Stern  
Some philosophers have celebrated the will's capacity for choice, making it central to human freedom. On the other hand, other philosophers have argued that the free agent does not use the will to choose, as often there is only one rational course of action, and thus no space for choice within the will, which must simply follow the intellect—otherwise the agent is acting against reason and hence unfreely, and if the agent is acting irrationally, they cannot be responsible either. This course focuses on this debate (sometimes characterized as a debate between voluntarism and intellectualism), considering the arguments on both sides, and whether a satisfactory solution can be found. The debate has a long history, which provides the background to the course, and thus focuses on work by thinkers such as Augustine, Luther, Leibniz, Kant, Hegel, Nietzsche, Sartre, and Murdoch. We do not follow their writings in chronological order, but trace out various conceptual connections on this issue that can be found in their works. We do consider how the debate connect to related issues in philosophy of religion, ethics, and metaphysics.  

PHIL 290b / EVST 219b, Philosophical Environmental Ethics  

Stephen Latham  
This is a philosophical introduction to environmental ethics. The course introduces students to the basic contours of the field and to a small number of special philosophical problems within the field. No philosophical background is required or expected. Readings are posted on Canvas and consist almost entirely of contemporary essays by philosophers and environmentalists.  

* PHIL 295b / JDST 272b / PHIL 264b / RLST 295b, Al-Ghazali and Maimonides  

Frank Griffel  
The lives and thought of the philosopher theologians Al-Ghazali and Maimonides. Comparison of their lives and writings, focusing on their integration of Aristotelian philosophy into the theology of Islam and Judaism.  

* PHIL 304b / ECON 302b / EP&E 364b, Choice Theory and its Critics  

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. Prerequisites: Four courses in a combination of economics, philosophy, and psychology.  

* PHIL 305b / CGSC 313b / PSYC 313b, Philosophy for Psychologists  

Joshua Knobe  
Introduction to frameworks developed within philosophy that have applications in psychological research. Principal topics include the self, causation, free will, and morality. Recommended preparation: a course in philosophy or psychology.  

* 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.  

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.  

* PHIL 338b, Happiness and Tragedy  

David Charles  
The goal of the course is to investigate and assess the accounts of happiness and misery offered by historical philosophers such as Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, Kant, and Mill and by more recent thinkers such as Bernard Williams, Philippa Foot, Christine Korsgaard, and

PHIL 178a, 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.  

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.  

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Thomas Nagel. We also consider some recent psychological work on related topics. Enrollment priority is given to junior and seniors.

HU

* PHIL 361a / ENGL 248a / HSHM 476a / HUMS 430a / LITR 483a, Thought Experiments: Connecting Literature, Philosophy and the Natural Sciences  Paul Grimstad

The course looks closely at the intersection of literature, philosophy and natural science through the lens of the thought experiment. Do thought experiments yield new knowledge about the world? What role does narrative or scene setting play in thought experiments? Can works of literary fiction or films function as thought experiments? Readings take up topics such as personal identity, artificial intelligence, meaning and intentionality, free will, time travel, the riddle of induction, “trolley problems” in ethics and the hard problem of consciousness. Authors may include Mary Shelley, Plato, Albert Einstein, Franz Kafka, H.G. Wells, Rene Descartes, Kazuo Ishiguro, Rivka Galchen, Alan Turing, Hilary Putnam, as well as films (The Imitation Game) and television shows (Black Mirror). Students should have taken at least one course involving close analysis of works of literature or philosophy.  WR, HU

PHIL 367a, Renaissance Philosophy  Paul Franks

Can inherited tradition be a source of wisdom and/or knowledge? Under what conditions does tradition need renewal or rebirth in a Renaissance? Descartes begins one version of modernity by doubt both tradition and sense perception. He eventually restores sense perception on a new basis, but never returns to the question of tradition. Nevertheless, he uses traditional ideas, and his contemporaries took themselves not to be starting from scratch but rather to be renewing the wisdom of ancient Greek Platonism, ancient Israelite kabbalah, and ancient Egyptian Hermeticism. Can this project of Renaissance be vindicated? Is it opposed to modernity, or does it give rise to alternative conceptions of modernity. Figures studied include Gemisthos Plethon, Marsilio Ficino, Pico della Mirandola, Giordano Bruno, Nicholas Cusanus, Henry More, Ralph Cudworth, Abraham ha-Kohen Herrera, and Anne Conway. Prerequisites: Some exposure to modern philosophy, e.g., Directed Studies, or PHIL 126.  WR, HU

* PHIL 385b, Critical Perspectives on the Canon  Stephen Darwall and Moya Mapps

How should we engage with canonical philosophers, like Hume and Kant, when their writings are riddled with racist and sexist claims and theories? And what about relatively recent writers, like John Rawls, whose “ideal theory” of justice seems blind to the fact of racial and gender oppression? We engage Kant’s and Rawls’ writings, tackling these questions head on. We also read scholarly treatments of Kant’s racism and sexism and how we should approach his writings in light of it. We study also critiques of Rawls along race and gender lines–Charles Mills’s brief for “nonideal” moral and political theories that attempt to come to terms with racial injustice and Susan Moller Okin’s gender-based critique of Rawls. Finally, we consider as well how Mills and Okin make use of Rawlsian ideas in their own constructive accounts. Students should have at least one prior college-level philosophy course, ideally in a relevant subfield: ethics, history of philosophy, feminist philosophy, or philosophy of race.  HU

* PHIL 385b / ENGL 289b / HUMS 388b / LITR 389b / RLST 380b, Philosophies of Life  Nancy Levene

Study of works that challenge and provoke philosophies of life – how to live, what to live for, what life is. The point of departure is a selection of writings from the Hebrew Bible and moves from there to modern philosophical and literary re-imaginings and alternate realities. What are questions to which a philosophy of life is the reply? Insofar as a philosophy of life is itself a question, what is the repertoire of replies offered in our texts? What is your reply? Readings from the Bible (Genesis, Job), Shakespeare, Spinoza, Diderot, Kierkegaard, Woolf, Camus, Baldwin, Marilyne Robinson, and Achille Mbembe.  WR, HU

* PHIL 395a / CGSC 395a, Junior Colloquium in Cognitive Science  Staff

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 402b / GMAN 227b / HUMS 330b / LITR 330b, Heidegger's Being and Time  Martin Hagglund

Systematic, chapter by chapter study of Heidegger’s Being and Time, arguably the most important work of philosophy in the twentieth-century. All major themes addressed in detail, with particular emphasis on care, time, death, and the meaning of being.  HU

* PHIL 408b, The Ethics of Marx, Kierkegaard, and Nietzsche  Stephen Darwall

Marx, Kierkegaard, and Nietzsche were united by their critical attitude toward morality. Yet each had an ethical philosophy, even if it was only implicit, as in Marx. Moreover, there are themes that run through the thought of all three, though they differ profoundly from one another. For example, all three think and write in response to Kant and the German Idealists, Hegel and Fichte. And all three develop the idea of freedom, which was so important to Kant and post-Kantian Idealists. This course is an intensive study of the ethics of Marx, Kierkegaard, and Nietzsche: each in its own right, in comparison with each other, and in the context of the history of moral philosophy in the modern period, including up to the present time. One course in philosophical ethics advisable.  HU

* PHIL 414a, Mind in Modern Philosophy  Kenneth Winkler and Bridger Ehli

Study and discussion of a range of philosophical problems that arose or intensified in the early modern period and persist in the present day. Among the themes we consider: dualism; perception; representation (particularly representation of an external world); and personal identity. Readings in both early modern and present-day sources. Prerequisite: PHIL 126 or equivalent study.  HU

* PHIL 419b, Descartes  Michael Della Rocca

An examination of Descartes as a founder of the modern world picture. Consideration of all his major works. Prerequisites: two courses in philosophy.  HU
Discrimination. Enrollment in both courses is strongly encouraged but not required.

We explore various kinds of relations that figure into different types of explanations and the relata that figure in those explanatory relations. Examples of such relations include causal relations, constitutive explanations, functional explanations; examples of relata in those explanations include events, variables, properties, social kinds. This then sets us up to consider a set of (social) scientific, legal, and normative claims that such relations include causal relations, grounding relations, supervenience relations; examples of relata in those explanations include events, variables, properties, social kinds. This then sets us up to consider a set of (social) scientific, legal, and normative claims that rely on these explanations, which are the focus of a related course, Explanatory Relations in Normative, Legal, and Empirical Analysis of Discrimination. Enrollment in both courses is strongly encouraged but not required.

* PHIL 425b, Topics in Epistemology  Keith DeRose and Timothy Williamson
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

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.  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.  QB, 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 444a / WGSS 432a, Social Ontology  Robin Denbrioff
Study of conceptual and methodological foundations of social ontology, as well as particular topics within social ontology, such as the nature of gender and race. Prerequisites: at least one, but preferably two philosophy courses.  HU

* PHIL 445b / LING 376b, Implicature and Pragmatic Theory  Laurence Horn
This seminar explores theoretical and experimental approaches to conversational and conventional implicature. We examine the role that pragmatic inference plays in the determination of what is said and of truth-conditional content in neo-Gricean pragmatics and relevance theory as well as considering arguments for and against the grammatical view of scalar implicature. Our investigations draw on evidence from linguistic diagnostics, corpora, and a range of experimental studies on the acquisition, processing, and patterning of scalar implicature, negative strengthening, and exhaustivity in focus constructions. Finally, we review current work on the effects of discourse context, politeness considerations, and lexical semantics in constraining when and how pragmatic inferences are drawn. Prerequisite: At least one course in semantics, pragmatics, or philosophy of language; or permission of instructor.  SO, RP

* PHIL 457b / EP&E 235b / PLSC 283b, Recent Work on Justice  Thomas Pogge
In-depth study of one contemporary book, author, or debate in political philosophy, political theory, or normative economics. Focus varies from year to year based on student interest and may include a ground-breaking new book, the life’s work of a prominent author, or an important theme in contemporary political thought.  HU

* PHIL 458a, Morality and Evolution  Stephen Darwall
Ever since Darwin’s On the Origin of the Species, the question of evolutionary theory’s implications for our understanding of morality and of ourselves as moral beings has been pressing. In recent years, several philosophers have argued that evolution undermines the possibility of moral knowledge and, perhaps, there being facts of moral right and wrong. In this course, we investigate evolutionary theory’s implications for morality. We begin with questions about the nature of morality (as we ordinarily understand it) and the fundamentals of evolutionary theory. The focus then shifts to philosophers who have argued for moral skepticism and forms of moral anti-realism on evolutionary grounds. Our third focus is on evolutionary theories that show a deep compatibility between evolution and morality. We finish with a metaethical account of morality that fits with one of these evolutionary theories, to see if it provides a plausible way of responding to the evolutionary critique. A prior course in ethics is helpful.  HU

* PHIL 462a, Varieties of Explanatory Relations  Lily Hu and Issa Kohler-Hausmann
We explore various kinds of relations that figure into different types of explanations and the relata that figure in those explanatory relations. Examples of such explanations include causal explanations, constitutive explanations, functional explanations; examples of such relations include causal relations, grounding relations, supervenience relations; examples of relata in those explanations include events, variables, properties, social kinds. This then sets us up to consider a set of (social) scientific, legal, and normative claims that rely on these explanations, which are the focus of a related course, Explanatory Relations in Normative, Legal, and Empirical Analysis of Discrimination. Enrollment in both courses is strongly encouraged but not required.  HU
* PHIL 464a / PLSC 291a, 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. HU

* PHIL 466a / GMAN 329a / JDST 348a, German Idealism and Religion  Paul Franks and Robert Stern

The philosophies of Kant and his German Idealist successors address a number of central questions in the philosophy of religion and also presuppose a religious background in their approaches to questions of general metaphysics, epistemology and ethics. In this course, we explore the relevant religious context both in works of Erasmus and Luther and also in the writings of the kabbalists of Safed, Christian kabbalah, and Jakob Boehme. We then read major works by Kant, Hegel and Schelling against that background. Other authors include Conway, Herrera, Jacob, Kierkegaard, Lessing and Mendelssohn. Issues considered include freedom of the will and determinism, pantheism and panentheism, infinity and finitude, knowledge and faith, love and law, commandment and antinomianism, love of God and love of neighbor. Some prior study of Kant and German Idealism is recommended. WR, HU

* PHIL 469a / GMAN 288a / HUMS 480a / LITR 482a, The Mortality of the Soul: From Aristotle to Heidegger  Martin Hagglund

This course explores fundamental philosophical questions of the relation between matter and form, life and spirit, necessity and freedom, by proceeding from Aristotle’s analysis of the soul in De Anima and his notion of practical agency in the Nicomachean Ethics. We study Aristotle in conjunction with seminal works by contemporary neo-Aristotelian philosophers (Korsgaard, Nussbaum, Brague, and McDowell). We in turn pursue the implications of Aristotle’s notion of life by engaging with contemporary philosophical discussions of death that take their point of departure in Epicurus (Nagel, Williams, Scheffler). We conclude by analyzing Heidegger’s notion of constitutive mortality, in order to make explicit what is implicit in the form of the soul in Aristotle. HU

* PHIL 480a, 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 487a, The Philosophy of the Ordinary and the Extraordinary  Jason Stanley

An investigation of the significance of ordinary life for philosophy, and of the relevance of the extraordinary — the philosophical, the religious, the aesthetic — to the everyday. Attention is paid to the supposed refutation of skepticism by appeals to ordinary language; the politics of speech-acts and of claims to ordinariness or extraordinariness; the aesthetics of film in relation to the everyday; modernist aspirations to transfigure the everyday and post-modernist attempts to debunk the extraordinary. Authors include J. L. Austin, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Stanley Cavell, Michael Fried, and Toril Moi, among others. Films are also be analysed. HU

* PHIL 490a, 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 494b, Topics in Kant  Thomas Pogge

Featuring some of the most important and difficult texts in philosophy, this seminar involves a close reading of Kant’s works from one subset of his philosophy. It also guides students to identify and engage with the most insightful secondary literature and to grapple with Kant’s arguments both orally and in writing. Each instantiation of the seminar selects readings according to student and instructor interests, with a focus for instance on Kant’s epistemology, centering around his Critique of Pure Reason, on his moral philosophy, as developed in his Groundwork and Critique of Practical Reason, or on his political philosophy and teachings about human progress. Students may take this seminar twice in consecutive years, provided a different set of Kant’s works is covered. Prerequisites: Two courses in the history of philosophy, or one such course with the instructor’s permission. WR, HU