PHILOSOPHY (PHIL)

* PHIL 088a, The Philosophy of Transformative Experience  Laurie Paul
Going to college, fighting in a war, having a baby, being spiritually reborn, betraying your lover, emigrating to a new country— all of these are experiences that can transform you. By transforming you, they change you, and in the process, they can restructure the nature and meaning of your life. Exploring the epistemic structure of transformation can help us to understand the special and distinctives ways that new experiences can form and change us, and how this relates to how we make life choices, both big and small. This course explores the philosophical concept of transformative experience, focusing on the many ways this concept fits with contemporary philosophical issues in epistemology and metaphysics. We also explore connections to current research in psychology, cognitive science, and behavioral economics on empathy, morality, choice, and the self, in conjunction with discussions of the way that many real world experiences can be transformative. Enrollment limited to first-year students. Preregistration required; see under First-Year Seminar Program.  HU

* PHIL 091a, Philosophy of Games  Mark Maxwell
In this class, we critically discuss a variety of puzzles that arise when thinking about games. Just what are games, anyway? And, how can thinking in terms of games help us understand the world? The notion of ‘game’ is a topic of interest in its own right, but games can also serve as as a model and metaphor for other parts of the world, including life as a whole and the exploration of other philosophical debates. As such, the study of games serves as an entry point to a number of topics of potential interest, rather than just an in-depth study of one topic. Enrollment limited to first-year students. Preregistration required; see under First-Year Seminar Program.  HU

PHIL 105b, Strong Men: Ties Between Patriarchy and Fascism  Robin Dembroff and Jason Stanley
Fascist and patriarchal politics are intertwined. Why? In this course, we examine systems of gender inequality and far right nationalism from a philosophical perspective in order to more fully understand the intimate connections between them.  HU

PHIL 115a, First-Order Logic  Zoltan Szabo
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 126.  WR, HU

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

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 176a, Death  Shelly Kagan
There is one thing I can be sure of: I am going to die. But what am I to make of that fact? An examination of a number of issues that arise once we begin to reflect on our mortality. Consideration of the possibility that death may not actually be the end. Are we, in some sense, immortal? Would immortality be desirable? An attempt to get a clearer notion of what it is to die. And, finally, an evaluation of different attitudes to death. Is death an evil? Is suicide morally permissible? Is it rational? In short: how should the knowledge that I am going to die affect the way I live my life? Authors include Fischer, Perry, Plato, and Tolstoy.  HU

PHIL 182b / CGSC 282b / PSYC 182b, Perspectives on Human Nature  Joshua Knobe
Comparison of philosophical and psychological perspectives on human nature. Nietzsche on morality, paired with contemporary work on the psychology of moral judgment; Marx on religion, paired with systematic research on the science of religious belief; Schopenhauer paired with social psychology on happiness.  HU

PHIL 204b / GMAN 381b, Kant’s Critique of Pure Reason  Paul Franks
An examination of the metaphysical and epistemological doctrines of Kant’s Critique of Pure Reason. Prerequisite: PHIL 126 or DRST 004.  HU

* PHIL 206a / RLST 210a, Nietzsche, Religion, History  Nancy Levene
An exploration of Nietzsche’s concepts of religion and history and of his thinking in a broad historical arc up to the present. Course material includes texts by Nietzsche and selections from philosophies, theologies, and works of art that invite dialogue with his ideas.  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 269a, The Philosophy of Science  Daniel Greco
Central questions about the nature of scientific theory and practice. Factors that make a discipline a science; how and why scientific theories change over time; interpreting probabilistic claims in science; whether simpler theories are more likely to be true; the laws of nature; whether physics has a special status compared to other sciences; the legitimacy of adaptationist thinking in evolutionary biology.  HU

PHIL 270a, Epistemology  Keith DeRose
Introduction to current topics in the theory of knowledge. The analysis of knowledge, justified belief, rationality, certainty, and evidence.  HU

PHIL 271a / LING 271a, Philosophy of Language  Jason Stanley
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 276a / PHIL 310a, Metaphysics  Robin Dembroff
Examination of some fundamental aspects of reality. Topics include time, persistence, modality, causation, and existence.  HU

PHIL 286b / CGSC 275b / LING 275b, Pragmatics  Laurence Horn
Speakers often mean things they don’t say, but how does a hearer figure out what the speaker meant? Which sentences are designed to change the world rather than just to represent it? How are sentences used to mean different things in different contexts? Pragmatics explores the relations between what is said and what is meant, focusing on how speech acts and the principles of “street logic” — presuppositions and implicatures — help speakers and hearers shape the landscape of a conversation. No formal prerequisites, but some familiarity with linguistics or philosophy of language will help on some of the readings.  SO  RP

* PHIL 310a / PHIL 276a, Metaphysics  Robin Dembroff
An examination of central questions in metaphysics from historical and contemporary perspectives. Topics include ontological categories; the nature and existence of universals; the fundamental types of particulars and whether they can persist through change; the realism or antirealism debate. Prerequisites: PHIL 115 or 267, and either DRST 003, 004 or PHIL 125, 126.  HU

* PHIL 361a / ENGL 248a / HUMS 430a / LITR 483, 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 424a / GMAN 382a / JDST 217a, Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit  Paul Franks
A close reading of sections of one of the major works in post-Kantian philosophy. Themes include varieties of scepticism and responses to scepticism; the relationship of epistemology to questions concerning 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 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. Two previous philosophy courses, including some exposure to Kant and German Idealism, through either DRST 004 or PHIL 126 or PHIL 214 or PHIL 261. Students are particularly encouraged but not required to take PHIL 261 before taking this course.  HU

* PHIL 425b, 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.  QB, 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

* PHIL 450a / EP&E 478a, The Problem of Evil Keith DeRose
The challenge that evil’s existence in the world poses for belief in a perfectly good and omnipotent God. The main formulations of the problem of evil; proposed ways of solving or mitigating the problem and criticism of those solutions. Skeptical theism, the free-will defense, soul-making theodicies, and doctrines of hell. HU

* PHIL 459a, Philosophy of Citizenship Staff
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 either political philosophy or ethics. HU

* PHIL 462b / EP&E 362b, 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? HU

* PHIL 465b / EP&E 480b, 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. HU

* PHIL 468a, 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. HU

* PHIL 480a, Tutorial Paul Franks
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, The Senior Essay Paul Franks
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 493b / ANTH 428b / RLST 428b, Neighbors and Others Nancy Levene
This course is an interdisciplinary investigation of concepts and stories of family, community, borders, ethics, love, and antagonism. Otherwise put, it concerns the struggles of life with others – the logic, art, ethnography, and psychology of those struggles. The starting point is a complex of ideas at the center of religions, which are given to differentiating “us” from “them” while also identifying values such as the love of the neighbor that are to override all differences. But religion is only one avenue into the motif of the neighbor, a fraught term of both proximity and distance, a contested term and practice trailing in its wake lovers, enemies, kin, gods, and strangers. Who is my neighbor? What is this to ask and what does the question ask of us? Course material includes philosophy, anthropology, psychology, fiction, and film. HU