PHILOSOPHY

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The Philosophy major prepares students to reflect critically and creatively on questions concerning the nature of things, the scope and limits of human understanding, and the principles of value and right action. The aim of the major is to address these questions wherever they arise, whether in the philosophical tradition, in other disciplines and practices, or in everyday life. Our courses are designed to encourage depth in thinking, rigor in argument, clarity in writing and speaking, and the widest possible view of whatever subject matter we take up.

COURSES FOR NONMAJORS AND MAJORS

Introductory philosophy courses, numbered 100 through 199, are open to all students and have no prerequisites.

COURSE NUMBERING

Courses numbered 100 through 199 are introductory and have no prerequisites. Courses numbered 200 through 399 are intermediate. Some have prerequisites; others do not, and may be taken as a student’s first course in philosophy, though such a student should consult the instructor first. In general, it is a good idea to take a broadly based course in any area of philosophy before taking a specialized course. Courses numbered 400 through 499 are seminars. These advanced courses are intended primarily for juniors and seniors, though other students may be admitted with the instructor’s permission. Undergraduates should be sure they have enough background to take such a course, including previous work in the same area of philosophy. Students with questions should consult the instructor.

PREREQUISITES

Standard major Prerequisite to the standard major are two introductory or intermediate philosophy courses.

Psychology track Prerequisite to the major in the psychology track are two courses in philosophy or psychology.

REQUIREMENTS OF THE MAJOR

The standard major The major requires twelve courses (including the prerequisites and the senior requirement) that collectively expose students to a wide range of philosophy and philosophers. The Philosophy curriculum is divided into three broad groups: history of philosophy; metaphysics and epistemology; and ethics and value theory. In history of philosophy, majors are required to take (a) either PHIL 125 and 126 or both terms of Directed Studies (DRST 003, 004), and (b) an additional, third course in history of philosophy. Majors are encouraged to take PHIL 125 and 126 as early as possible; these courses may be taken in either order. Majors must also complete two courses in metaphysics and epistemology, two courses in ethics and value theory, and a course in logic (such as PHIL 115), the last preferably by the fall of their junior year. Majors must also take two seminars (either or both of which can be counted toward one of the group requirements) and satisfy the senior requirement as described below.

All courses in Philosophy count toward the twelve-course requirement. With approval from the director of undergraduate studies (DUS), courses offered by other departments may be counted toward the major requirements, though no more than two such courses will normally be allowed.

Specific regulations for the group requirements are as follows:

1. Some introductory courses do not count toward any group requirement. Other courses count toward a group requirement unless they are otherwise designated.

2. Courses automatically count toward the group under which they are listed in this bulletin. In rare cases, a course will be designated as counting toward a second group, although no single course can be counted by the same student toward two group requirements. In addition, students may petition to have a course count toward a group other than the one under which it is listed in this bulletin, though the presumption will be against such petitions.

3. Courses taken in other departments and applied to the major will not normally count toward a group requirement. Students may petition for credit toward a group requirement, though the presumption will be against such petitions.

The psychology track The psychology track is designed for students interested in both philosophy and psychology. Majors in the track must take seven courses in philosophy and five in psychology, for a total of twelve, including the prerequisites and senior requirement.

The seven philosophy courses must include (a) two courses in the history of philosophy, usually PHIL 125 and 126 or DRST 003 and 004, (b) a course in logic, such as PHIL 115, preferably by the fall of the junior year, (c) two seminars, one of which may be in the Psychology department, with the approval of the DUS, and (d) at least two courses at the intermediate or advanced level that bear on the intersection of philosophy and psychology, at least one of which must be a philosophy seminar. Courses satisfying (d) must be approved by the DUS. The five psychology courses must include PSYC 110 or its equivalent. Each major must also satisfy the senior requirement as described below.

Credit/D/Fail No more than one course taken Credit/D/Fail may be counted toward the major, with the permission of the DUS. This applies to both the standard and the psychology tracks.
SENIOR REQUIREMENT

The senior requirement is normally satisfied by completing a third philosophy seminar. Students taking a seminar to satisfy the senior requirement are expected to produce work superior in argument and articulation to that of a standard seminar paper. To this end, students taking a seminar for the senior requirement must satisfy additional requirements, which may include (a) additional readings, (b) submission of a complete draft of the final paper by the eighth week of the term that will then be significantly revised, and (c) one-on-one or small-group meetings with the instructor to discuss class material, the additional readings, and drafts in preparation. The specific nature of these additional requirements will vary from seminar to seminar, so students planning to satisfy the requirement with a third seminar should express that intention to the instructor at the beginning of the term, so the instructor can explain the work that will be required.

In special cases, students may meet the senior requirement through either a one-term or a two-term independent project supervised by an instructor (PHIL 490, 491). Students must petition to fulfill the senior requirement through an independent project, and approval is not guaranteed. Applicants must submit a proposal to the DUS, in consultation with an appropriate supervisor, by the end of the term prior to beginning the independent study.

ADVISING

Each major should, by October 1 of the junior year, secure the agreement of a member of the Philosophy department to serve as adviser for the year. The adviser aids the student in choosing courses and in planning for the senior year. All senior majors must have their schedules signed by the DUS.

Other majors involving philosophy Majors in Mathematics and Philosophy and in Physics and Philosophy are also available. Students interested in philosophy and psychology should also consider the major in Cognitive Science.

REQUIREMENTS OF THE MAJOR

Prerequisites Standard track — any 2 intro or intermediate phil courses; Psychology track — any 2 courses in phil or psych

Number of courses Both tracks — 12 term courses, incl prereqs and senior req

Specific courses required Standard track – PHIL 125 and 126, or DRST 003 and 004; Psychology track – PSYC 110 or equivalent

Distribution of courses Standard track — 3 courses in hist of phil (incl PHIL 125 and 126, or DRST 003 and 004), 2 in metaphysics and epistemology, 2 in ethics and value theory, and 1 in logic; 2 phil sems; Psychology track — 7 courses in phil, as specified; 5 courses in psych

Substitution permitted Standard track — 2 related courses in other depts, with DUS permission

Senior requirement Both tracks — a third sem in phil, or a one- or two-term independent project (PHIL 490, 491)

FACULTY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY


Assistant Professors Robin Dembroff, Daniel Greco, John Pittard

Introductory Courses

* 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 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 115a, 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 192a / RLST 107a, Metaphysics and Modernity  Nancy Levene
This course surveys concepts and controversies in and among select works of philosophy, theology, and literature. The focus is twofold: on reading works in view of their own principles, thus on questions of truth and interpretation, and on histories of the ideas, thus on questions of origin, change, and story. What and when is metaphysics? What and when is modernity?  HU

HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY

PHIL 125a / CLCV 125a, Introduction to Ancient Philosophy  Verity Harte
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  Kenneth Winkler
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 135b / RLST 166b, Classical Arabic Philosophy  Frank Griffel
Close reading of primary texts from the Arabic philosophical tradition c. 750–1300, with attention to the major arguments and underlying assumptions of each author. The translation movement via al-Farabi, Ibn Sina (Avicenna), al-Ghazali, Maimonides, and others; the philosophical textbooks of Muslim madrasa education.  

* PHIL 130a / EDST 135a, 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?  

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HU

PHIL 177b / AFAM 198b / CGSC 277b / EDST 177b / EPR&E 494b, Propaganda, Ideology, and Democracy  Jason Stanley
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 propaganda by social movements to address democracy’s deficiencies; the legitimacy of propaganda in cases of political crisis.  

HU

Intermediate Courses

HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY

* PHIL 202a / RLST 277a, Existentialism  Noreen 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 203a / EALL 312a, Ancient Chinese Thought  Michael 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

PHIL 204a / GMAN 381a, 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 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

METAPHYSICS AND EPISTEMOLOGY

PHIL 267b, Mathematical Logic  Sun-Joo Shin
An introduction to the metamathematics 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 269b, The Philosophy of Science  Mark Maxwell
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 270b, Epistemology  Keith DeRose
Introduction to current topics in the theory of knowledge. The analysis of knowledge, justified belief, rationality, certainty, and evidence.  HU

PHIL 271b / LING 271b, 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 281a, Infinity  Zoltán Szabó
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.  QR, HU

* PHIL 309b / CGSC 319b / PSYC 319b, 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.  HU, SO

* PHIL 310b, 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

ETICS AND VALUE THEORY

* PHIL 338b, Happiness and Misery  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 Thomas Nagel. We also consider some recent psychological work on related topics. Enrollment priority is given to junior and seniors.  HU

Seminars

* PHIL 452b / ANTH 452b / RLST 452b, 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, poetry, and film.  HU

HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY

* PHIL 402a / GMAN 227a / HUMS 330a / LITR 330a, 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 410b / EALL 308b / HUMS 305b, Sages of the Ancient World  Michael Hunter
Comparative survey of ancient discourses about wisdom from China, India, the Near East, Egypt, Greece, and Rome. Topics include teaching, scheming, and dying.  HU

* PHIL 413a, History of Analytic Philosophy  Paul Franks
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, and verification and truth. Methods of analysis that deploy formal notations; studies of ordinary and scientific uses of language.  HU

* PHIL 414a, 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

* PHIL 495b, 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. Taught seminar-style, engaged, active student
participation is expected. Class discussion typically starts from student questions circulated in advance. Prerequisites: A course in ancient philosophy (such as PHIL 125 or Directed Studies Fall Philosophy) and at least one additional course in philosophy. HU

* PHIL 498b, Acrasia: Ancient and Modern  David Charles
The goal of this seminar is to investigate the accounts of weakness of the will (in Greek: *acrasia*, 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 the nature of intentional action, the will and rationality. We also consider some recent psychological work on self-control and addiction. Priority is given to juniors and seniors. HU

METAPHYSICS AND EPistemology

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. QBS, HU

* PHIL 442a, Language and Power  Jason Stanley and Jack Balkin
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. Prerequisite: one philosophy course; a basic course in logic would be helpful. HU

* PHIL 493a, 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? Prerequisites: Two PHIL courses. HU

ETHICS AND VALUE THEORY

* PHIL 450b / EP&E 478b, 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 452a, History of Early Modern Ethics  Stephen Darwall
An examination of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century ethical philosophy, including Hobbes, Hutcheson, Hume, Butler, Rousseau, Kant, Smith, and Bentham. HU

* PHIL 455b / EP&E 334b, 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 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). Prerequisite: a course in moral philosophy. HU

* PHIL 457a / EP&E 235a / PLSC 283a, 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 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. HU

Tutorial and Senior Essay Courses

* 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 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-
A 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.

GRADUATE, DIVINITY, AND LAW SCHOOL COURSES THAT COUNT TOWARD THE MAJOR

Some Graduate, Divinity, and Law School courses are open to qualified undergraduates with permission of the instructor and the director of graduate studies or the dean or registrar of the Divinity or the Law School. (See "Courses in the Yale Graduate and Professional Schools" in section K of the Academic Regulations.) With permission of the director of undergraduate studies, relevant Graduate, Divinity, and Law School courses may count toward the major. Course descriptions appear in the Graduate, Divinity, and Law School bulletins.