PHILOSOPHY

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http://philosophy.yale.edu  
M.A., Ph.D.

Chair  
Paul Franks

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Associate Professors Daniel Greco, John Pittard

Assistant Professors Robin Dembroff, Lily Hu, Jacob McNulty

FIELDS OF STUDY

The department offers a wide range of courses in various traditions of philosophy, with strengths and a well-established reputation in the history of philosophy, ethics, philosophy of law, epistemology, philosophy of language, and philosophy of religion as well as other central topics.

SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS FOR THE PH.D. DEGREE

1. In the first two years all students must complete a total of twelve term courses. Graduate courses are grouped: (1) metaphysics, theory of knowledge, philosophy of mind, philosophy of language, philosophy of science; (2) ethics, aesthetics, philosophy of religion, political philosophy, philosophy of law, and theory of value; (3) history of philosophy. No more than six of the twelve and no fewer than two courses may be taken in each group. At least one of the twelve courses taken must be logic (unless the logic requirement is satisfied in some other way), and this course does not count toward the required minimum of two within any of the three categories.

2. Two qualifying papers must be submitted, one in the history of philosophy, the other in another distribution area. These papers must be more substantial and professional than an ordinary term paper.

3. Approval of the dissertation prospectus is expected before the end of the sixth term. Upon completion of all predissertation requirements, including the prospectus, students are admitted to candidacy for the Ph.D. Admission to candidacy must take place by the end of the third year of study.

4. Students in Philosophy typically teach in the third, fourth, and sixth years.
5. In addition to the twelve required philosophy courses, before the dissertation defense students must take at least one class that is not listed in philosophy on a subject that is relevant to their research.

6. The dissertation is expected to be submitted in the end of the fifth to sixth year.

CLASSICS AND PHILOSOPHY COMBINED PH.D. PROGRAM

The Classics and Philosophy Program is a combined program, offered by the Departments of Classics and Philosophy at Yale, for students wishing to pursue graduate study in ancient philosophy. Suitably qualified students may apply for entry to the program either through the Classics department for the Classics track or through the Philosophy department for the Philosophy track.

Applicants for the Classics track of the combined program must satisfy the general requirements for admission to the Classics graduate program, in addition to the requirements of the Classics track of the combined program. Details of the Classics track of the program are available online at https://classics.yale.edu/research/ancient-philosophy/classics-and-philosophy-joint-program.

Applicants for the Philosophy track of the combined program must satisfy the general requirements for admission to the Philosophy graduate program, in addition to the requirements of the Philosophy track of the combined program. Details of the Philosophy track of the program are available online at http://philosophy.yale.edu/graduate-program/classics-and-philosophy-program.

The combined program is overseen by an interdepartmental committee currently consisting of Verity Harte, David Charles, and Brad Inwood together with the director of graduate studies (DGS) for Classics and the DGS for Philosophy.

PHILOSOPHY AND PSYCHOLOGY COMBINED PH.D. PROGRAM

The Philosophy and Psychology Program is a combined program, offered by the Departments of Philosophy and Psychology at Yale. Students enrolled in the program complete a series of courses in each discipline as well as an interdisciplinary dissertation that falls at the intersection of the two. On completing these requirements, students are awarded a Ph.D. either in Philosophy and Psychology, or in Psychology and Philosophy.

Students can be admitted into the combined program either through the Psychology department or through the Philosophy department. Students must be accepted into one of these departments (the “home department”) through the standard admissions process, and both departments must then agree to accept the student into the combined program.

Students can be accepted into the combined program either (a) at the time they initially apply for admission to their home department, or (b) after having already competed some course work within the home department. In either case, students must be accepted into the combined program by each department.

Students in the combined program complete two-thirds of the course requirements of each of the two disciplines, then write a qualifying paper and a dissertation that are fully interdisciplinary. For more details about the program requirements, see http://
philosophy.yale.edu/graduate-program/philosophy-and-psychology-combined-phd-program.

MASTER’S DEGREE

M.A. Students who successfully complete the course requirements of their program with an average grade of High Pass will be awarded the M.A. degree.

Please see the Philosophy website for information on the program: http://philosophy.yale.edu.

COURSES

PHIL 508b, Advanced Introduction to Aesthetics  Staff
This course offers an introduction to philosophical aesthetics through a survey of the most important texts the field’s history. We begin with ancient philosophy, in particular Plato and Aristotle. Here, we focus on the question of the nature and value of the arts, their relationship to other branches of knowledge and human activity, and, finally, their ethical and political implications. Then we read eighteenth-century Enlightenment authors Hume and Kant, where our focus concerns the rationality of aesthetic judgments. In particular, we consider uniquely modern anxieties concerning “the standard of taste.” Can our attitudes towards works of art credibly claim universality and objectivity? Or are they instead reflections of our own utterly contingent historical situation? Moving forward, we turn to the nineteenth century and consider approaches which, in some way, break with Enlightenment rationalism. We begin with Hegel’s explicitly historicist and communitarian approach to aesthetics and the philosophy of art, focusing on his conception of the role of art in society, as well as his “end of art” thesis. We also consider the numerous currents of thought that flow into Nietzsche’s Birth of Tragedy: romantic irrationalism, aestheticism, pessimism, and philhellenism. When we finally turn to the twentieth century, we pursue the afterlife of some of these questions, not only in philosophy but also in theory and criticism. Some attention in this final unit is paid to phenomenology and existentialism, Marxism, pragmatism, modernism in the arts, the crisis of representation, the arts and technology, and new artistic media like photography and film. This course is for graduate students in philosophy. All others should speak with the professor about whether the course is suitable for them.

PHIL 512a, Aristotle’s Philosophy of Mind and Action  David Charles
The main aim of the course is to understand and assess central aspects of Aristotle’s psychological theory, in particular those concerned with perception, memory, and action. We also consider his discussion of the relation between psychological and physical states, processes and properties.

PHIL 515a, Truth and Relativism  Zoltan Szabo
Recent philosophical work on relativism and the relationship between truth and objectivity. The possibility of objective truth; rational disagreement; relativism and moral and scientific truth; bases for taking a stand on objectivity’s limits.

PHIL 528b, Nozick’s Anarchy, State, and Utopia  Shelly Kagan
2024 marks the fiftieth anniversary of Robert Nozick’s contemporary classic Anarchy, State, and Utopia (ASU). ASU is a brilliant and challenging defense of libertarianism — the view in political philosophy that nothing more extensive than a minimal state is morally justified — and it is filled with original, witty, and thought-provoking
arguments on a wide range of topics in moral and political philosophy (to list just a few: the nature of well-being, the basis of rights, the state of nature, animal ethics, property rights, free markets, distributive justice, the nature of coercion, self-defense, and what utopia might be like). The seminar is devoted to reading ASU in its entirety and evaluating its various arguments. Even those who reject Nozick's conclusions – maybe especially those who do so – can profit immensely from working through Nozick's views. Prerequisite: a previous class in moral philosophy or political philosophy.

**PHIL 547b, Pleasure in Plato and Aristotle**  Verity Harte
Pleasure is a central topic of moral psychology. This course focuses on certain central questions and the answers given them by philosophers of Classical Greek antiquity: What is pleasure? Where and how does it fit in animal and human psychology? Where and how does it fit in a good human life? Is pleasure a good, the good, or something else entirely? The main philosophers in focus are Plato and Aristotle, but the hedonist theories of Epicurus and of the Cyrenaic school are points of comparison and contrast. Our reading is supplemented by appropriate material from modern philosophical and psychological discussions of pleasure and of hedonism. All readings in translation. The course is aimed at graduates and advanced undergraduates (seniors and juniors) in philosophy or classics. Priority is given to these students for enrollment if necessary. All participants must have taken at least one prior course in the history of ancient philosophy and at least one other prior course in philosophy. Auditors are expected to attend all seminars, complete all reading assignments and participate in class discussion, but not to complete writing assignments.

**PHIL 553a, Practical Reasoning and Metaphysics**  Michael Della Rocca
An examination of the metaphysical underpinnings of central concepts in the philosophy of practical reasoning. Among the concepts to be investigated are: action, reasons for action, irrational action, intention, the good, the right, virtue, and direction of fit. Exploration of the near-universal dogma that theoretical reasoning and practical reasoning are distinct. Skepticism about the possibility of practical reasoning is taken seriously. Authors discussed include: Anscombe, Korsgaard, Foot, Schapiro, Williams, Michael Smith, Bratman, Frankfurt, Davidson, and Thompson. Prerequisite: two courses in philosophy.

**PHIL 567a, Mathematical Logic I**  Sun-Joo Shin
An introduction to the metatheory of first-order logic, up to and including the completeness theorem for the first-order calculus. An introduction to the basic concepts of set theory is included.

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

**PHIL 575a, Kant's Transcendental Dialectic**  Eric Watkins
In the “Transcendental Dialectic”, which forms the bulk of the second half of the Critique of Pure Reason, Kant presents a powerful and sustained critique of traditional metaphysics, one that calls into question claims concerning God, freedom, and the immortality of the soul, among other things. In this seminar, we attempt to understand Kant's conception of metaphysics, how he criticizes these metaphysical
claims, and what contemporary significant these criticisms have for the practice of metaphysics today. Prerequisite: previous coursework in philosophy.

PHIL 604a, Leibniz  Michael Della Rocca
A close examination of Leibniz’s vast, intricate, and still poorly understood philosophical system. Topics to be explored include substance, necessity, freedom, psychology, teleology, and the problem of evil. Attention to relevant philosophical and theological antecedents, including Spinoza, Descartes, Suarez, Aquinas, and Aristotle. Attention also to Leibniz’s relevance to contemporary philosophy.

PHIL 620b, Philosophy of Quantum Mechanics  Alexander Meehan
An examination of philosophical and theoretical issues raised by quantum mechanics. Topics include the measurement problem, superposition, nonlocality, the various “interpretations” of quantum mechanics, and the status of quantum probability. Along the way, we also touch on broader questions about the aim of scientific theory and the norms governing scientific theory choice.

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

PHIL 627b, Computability and Logic  Sun-Joo Shin
A technical exposition of Gödel’s first and second incompleteness theorems and of some of their main consequences in proof theory and model theory, such as Löb’s theorem, Tarski’s undefinability of truth, provability logic, and nonstandard models of arithmetic.

PHIL 637a, 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. We read classical papers on the subject. Why do we need the philosophy of mathematics? This question could be answered toward the end of the term.

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

PHIL 650b, The Problem of Evil  Keith DeRose
The evils of our world can seem to present strong reasons for disbelieving in the existence of God. This course examines the main forms that this problem for theism takes, and some of the proposed ways of solving, or at least mitigating, the problem.

PHIL 655a, Normative Ethics  Shelly Kagan
A systematic examination of normative ethics, the part of moral philosophy that attempts to articulate and defend the basic principles of morality. The bulk of the course surveys and explores some of the main normative factors relevant in determining the moral status of a given act or policy (features that help make a given act right or wrong). Brief consideration of some of the main views about the foundations of normative ethics (the ultimate basis or ground for the various moral principles).
PHIL 657b / PLSC 611b, Recent Work on Justice  Thomas Pogge
In-depth study of one contemporary book, author, or debate in political philosophy, political theory, or normative economics. Depending on student interest, this might be a ground-breaking new book, the life’s work of a prominent author, or an important theme in contemporary political thought.

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

PHIL 669b / LING 675b, Pragmatics  Laurence Horn
Context-dependent aspects of meaning and inference. Speech act theory, presupposition, implicature. Role of pragmatics in the lexicon and in meaning change. The semantics-pragmatics distinction from different perspectives; the position of pragmatics in linguistic theory.

PHIL 677a / WGSS 677a, Feminist Philosophy: Theories of Sex, Gender, and Sexual Orientation  Robin Dembroff
This course surveys several feminist frameworks for thinking about sex, gender, and sexual orientation. We consider questions such as: Is there a tenable distinction between sex and gender? Between gender and sexual orientation? What does it mean to say that gender is a social construction, or that sexual orientation is innate? What is the place of politics in gender and sexual identities? How do these identities—and especially resistant or transgressive identities—impact the creation and revision of social categories?

PHIL 684a, Teleology and Mechanism  Paul Franks
Examination of teleology, with special emphasis on Aristotle, Kant, Schelling, and Hegel, as well as recent discussions of invisible hand explanations, which explain the appearance of purposiveness. Additional exploration of conceptions of mechanism, both in the history of modern philosophy and science, and in recent debates about so-called new mechanical philosophy.

PHIL 703b, Philosophy of Law: Analytical Jurisprudence  Scott Shapiro
This course examines a variety of historically influential responses to basic questions concerning the nature of law and the difference (if any) between law and morality. Readings include works by legal positivists, natural lawyers, legal realists, and critical legal scholars. PHIL 715 is a companion to this course. The two together comprise a literacy course in the philosophy of law. They can be taken in either order or separately. Neither is a prerequisite for the other, but students seeking a strong background in philosophy of law are encouraged, but not required, to take both. Self-scheduled examination or paper option.

PHIL 705a, First-Year Seminar  Keith DeRose and Laurie Paul
Required of and limited to first-year students in the Philosophy Ph.D. program. Topic varies from year to year. Preparation for graduate work. Reading, writing, and presentation skills.

PHIL 706a, Work in Progress I  Jason Stanley
In consultation with the instructor, each student presents a significant work in progress, e.g., a revised version of an advanced seminar paper or a dissertation chapter. Upon
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completion of the writing, the student presents the work in a mock colloquium format, including a formal question-and-answer period.

**PHIL 737a / CLSS 737a, Early Greek Philosophers**  Verity Harte and Brad Inwood
A study in the original language of a selection of early Greek philosophers, with special focus on the Eleatics in light of their influence on later Greek philosophy. We will attend to the sources for these philosophers and to their philosophical interpretation. Open to all graduate students in philosophy or classics who have suitable preparation in ancient Greek and some prior knowledge of ancient philosophy. Others interested in taking or attending the class must have prior permission of the instructors. Undergraduates are not normally admitted.

**PHIL 739b, The Cognitive Significance of Small Experience**  Laurie Paul
We explore, in detail, the philosophical importance of “small experiences”: experiences of some feature of the world that we would normally think of as the backdrop to real experience. Attention to the nature of small experience involves heightened attunement to a feature of our surroundings, bringing the significance of this feature into sharper relief. Attending to small experiences disrupts one’s typical modes of perception. It can give one a fresh ability to attend to details, to appreciate the new, but also to notice absences and to apprehend the texture of those absences. The precise nature of each element or detail is noticed, assessed, and perhaps even celebrated. Importantly, this can change one’s cognitive orientation. Accompanying this change in cognitive orientation is a change in temporal consciousness: short events can seem longer. Time can be experienced differently. To implement this idea, we undertake a case study in Japanese aesthetics: the construction of temple gardens. We are particularly interested in studying the type of balance, contrast, and change exhibited by relationships between plants, objects, and the layout and structure of temple gardens that is on display at change of season. We use this case study to explore a range of philosophical ideas involving the nature of consciousness, aesthetic revelation, and the cognitive import of perceptual experience. Assessment is based on class participation, an in-class presentation, and a final paper.

**PHIL 750a, Tutorial**  Staff
By arrangement with faculty.

**PHIL 766b, Imagination**  Laurie Paul and Timothy Williamson
This course explores philosophical questions about the nature of the imagination, with an emphasis on aspects of its metaphysics and epistemology.

**PHIL 850a, Prospectus Tutorial**  Sun-Joo Shin
Prospectus tutorial for Philosophy Ph.D. students.