

PHILOSOPHY (PHIL)

PHIL 101. Introduction to Philosophy. (4 Credits)

Most college age students have heard the names of Plato, Aristotle, Aquinas, Descartes, Kant, and Nietzsche, among many other famous philosophers. This first course in philosophy introduces students to the nature of philosophy, some of its major figures, and some of philosophy's central areas of concern, especially those of metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics. Students learn about philosophical method and argument, and how to articulate and defend their own philosophical judgments.

Tags: PI

PHIL 103. Philosophy and Scientific Inquiry. (4 Credits)

What can philosophy contribute to the sciences and the sciences to philosophy? This course explores the interplay between these two disciplines. We approach these questions through the lens of the history of philosophy as it interacts with the emergence of the sciences as a distinctive form of inquiry. Each arises from the common human impulse to offer an account of the world of experience. The development of philosophy reveals a dynamic synergy between these disciplines, one that bears upon the substance of the claims forwarded by each. Exploring this synergy reveals a common strategy for discerning the underlying, often hidden, nature of the world in which we live. This shared approach to inquiry produces a unified project of trying to explain the whole of reality.

Tags: PI, SIP

PHIL 105. Race & Justice. (4 Credits)

An introduction to philosophy and racial diversity in the United States, focusing on justice, mercy, and racialization practices. Topics include conceptions of justice and mercy, racialization, individual and structural racism, whiteness, intersectionality, and the concept of race.

Tags: DUS, PI

PHIL 106. Global Philosophy. (4 Credits)

This course offers an introduction to philosophy with a special emphasis on the non-Western traditions. While many introductory philosophy courses cover the philosophical tradition that stems from Greek thought, there are a number of other important multicultural contributions to the pursuit of wisdom not typically covered in the received philosophical canon. This course, therefore, will attempt to cover the metaphysics, epistemological, and ethical contributions of the Indian, Chinese, African, Jewish, Islamic, and Greek philosophical traditions.

Tags: GP, PI

PHIL 107. Food and Philosophy. (4 Credits)

Is a burrito a sandwich? Is there such a thing as an ideal diet or a perfectly cooked steak? Are Christians morally permitted to eat a diet that harms plants, animals, ecosystems, and themselves? How can scientific research and data inform the decisions we make about eating sustainably? Everyone eats several times a day, and most people have lots of questions concerning our food and food systems. But few people take the time to think hard about what food is, what it is for, and how we ought to enjoy it. This course offers an introduction to the discipline of philosophy by way of the topic of food and informed by scientific research and data.

Tags: PI, SIP

PHIL 205. Ethics & Society. (4 Credits)

How do I know if an action is right or wrong, and how can I explain my judgment to others and defend it against criticisms? What is my role as a Christian citizen in seeking to influence my society about moral matters of importance to all? What is the common good and how do we promote it? How should we understand the controversial issues of sexuality, property, economic and gender justice, legislating morality, capital punishment, drugs, euthanasia, abortion, the needy, and the environment? How should our nation deal ethically with other nations and their citizens? This course will engage students in critical thinking about important issues in the application of ethics to social issues.

Tags: PI

PHIL 206. Philosophy and Spiritual Formation. (4 Credits)

An introduction to philosophical, anthropological, and sociological topics relevant to spiritual formation. All Christians are faced with a perennial set of questions related to their development as citizens of God's kingdom. This course aims to provide the resources (both philosophical and social scientific) to help students begin developing answers to questions pertaining to becoming a virtuous person, living the good life, forming an identity, belonging to a community, maintaining Christian beliefs, and determine what practices are appropriate manifestations of such beliefs.

Tags: PI, SI

PHIL 212. BioMedical Ethics. (2 Credits)

An interdisciplinary consideration of ethical issues in the biological and health sciences with an emphasis on those related to medicine, such as genetic engineering, end of life issues, autonomy, infanticide, abortion, human experimentation, cloning, and the relevance of social and economic variables in medical care. (Open to Wheaton College Summer Institute students only)

PHIL 216. Philosophy of the Arts. (2 Credits)

Examines philosophical issues in the arts, such as the nature of creativity, the categories of "art" versus "non-art" and "high" versus "low" art, the responsibility of the artist to the community, the role of art in society, and the relationships between art and religion.

PHIL 217. Philosophy of Art. (4 Credits)

This course provides an introduction to some of the core questions in the philosophy of art. Questions covered include: What counts as art? How do we decide which cultural objects are, and are not artworks? Why should we care about art? Does art have the capacity to reveal non-trivial truths about the world? And, are different art forms valuable for different reasons? In addition to these more traditional questions, we will consider what attitude - if any - Christianity encourages toward art. Note: This course does not fulfill the entire VPA theme and covers only the domain of visual arts.

Tags: PI, VPAV

PHIL 222. Souls & Brains. (4 Credits)

Given what we now know about the brain thanks to advances in neuroscience, should we still believe in souls? How should contemporary research on the brain inform our thinking about consciousness, the emotions, freedom, morality, religious experiences, the afterlife, and thinking itself? This introductory philosophy course explores these questions and others like them, guided both by classic philosophical readings and by contributions from various biological and psychological subfields.

Tags: PI, SIP

PHIL 226. Asian Philosophy. (2 Credits)

Philosophical traditions in the East have developed simultaneously with those in the West, albeit until recently with little demonstrable influence on one another. Philosophical systems arising within Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism represent fascinating alternatives to those associated with the Hellenic, Roman, and Christian worlds. In this course we will study philosophies of the East, paying close attention to their roots in the corresponding religious systems of Asia and their ongoing relationship to those traditions. We will view them in the comparative light of both Western philosophical thought and the Hebrew-Christian religious tradition.

PHIL 227. Asian Philosophy. (4 Credits)

Philosophical systems arising within Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism represent fascinating alternatives to those associated with the Hellenic, Roman, and Christian worlds. This course will involve substantive engagement with the primary philosophies of the East, paying close attention to their roots in the corresponding religious systems of Asia and their ongoing relationship to those traditions. In the spirit of "all truth is God's truth," we will view them in the comparative light of both Western philosophical thought and the Hebrew-Christian religious tradition.

Tags: GP, PI

PHIL 241. Suffering. (4 Credits)

"If God were good, He would wish to make His creatures perfectly happy, and if God were almighty, He would be able to do what He wished. But the creatures are not happy. Therefore God lacks either goodness, or power, or both." That, C.S. Lewis writes, "is the problem of pain, in its simplest form." This course addresses that problem, using Lewis' Problem of Pain as our stepping off point and then enriching our theological and philosophical horizons through readings from, e.g., Rudolph Otto, J. L. Mackie, Alvin Plantinga, Roderick Chisholm, William Rowe, and Marilyn McCord Adams.

Tags: PI

PHIL 243. Intro To Logic. (2 Credits)

This course teaches students to identify, analyze, and assess the sorts of arguments one encounters in philosophical texts and in everyday life, such as op-ed pieces, policy papers, and political writing. The course places special emphasis on constructing and refining arguments in order to draw appropriate conclusions in support of one's own beliefs. Classical syllogistic arguments and other formal argument structures receive attention, as do the common fallacies of reasoning. This is an excellent course to enhance your critical thinking and writing abilities.

PHIL 244. Symbolic Logic. (2 Credits)

This sequel to PHIL 243 focuses on the form or structure of valid deductive arguments, and the simple and compound sentences that form them. It analyzes the rules of deductive inference, replacement rules, and how to translate ordinary English sentences into their symbolic equivalent. Proving the validity or invalidity of arguments in Sentential Logic, Predicate Logic, and Quantified Predicate Logic comprises a major portion of the course. Like math courses, this class has problems and proofs that students will work through in class and as homework. Prerequisite: PHIL 243 or permission of instructor.

PHIL 245. Logic. (4 Credits)

An introduction to both informal and formal logic, with attention to developing the skills necessary for describing and analyzing the phenomena and information and ideas students will invariably confront. The course seeks to develop a keen number sense along with the mathematical skills of analysis in concert with critical reading and writing. Direct application is made to both philosophical and theological areas of inquiry. (Students registering for PHIL 243 will take the first quad of this course).

Tags: AAQR

PHIL 247. Philosophic Topics with Contemporary Relevance. (2 Credits)

A study of a contemporary topic or issue in philosophy. Suitable for non-majors. (This course does not fulfill the PI tag.) Topics include: Death and the Meaning of Life, Emotions, Religious Experience, Love & Friendship, Philosophy of Gender.

PHIL 248. Philosophic Topics with Contemporary Relevance. (4 Credits)

A study of a contemporary topic or issue in philosophy. Suitable for non-majors. (This course does not fulfill the PI tag.) Topics include: Love & Friendship, Philosophy of Gender, Philosophy & Film.

PHIL 251. Global Justice. (4 Credits)

People around the world suffer hunger, oppression, from poor health, and many other causes. Is this merely misfortune or is it injustice? We will consider the main issues of global justice, such as whether one can speak of justice in a global context rather than simply within societies, the role of international human rights, the proper response to global economic inequalities, the morality of international conflict, and international environmental justice.

Tags: GP, PI

PHIL 255. Existentialism. (4 Credits)

This course provides an introduction to existentialism through the writings of thinkers like Soren Kierkegaard, Fyodor Dostoevsky, Friedrich Nietzsche, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Albert Camus. In keeping with the movement itself, this course is heavily interdisciplinary, including both literary and philosophical texts, and thinkers from both the Christian and the atheistic intellectual traditions. Topics covered include: the nature of human freedom and creativity, the relation of religion to morality, and the meaning of existence.

PHIL 257. Gender and Being Human. (4 Credits)

The feminist movement has been among the most significant intellectual and cultural movements in the United States in the last century, and the last several decades have seen the conversations re-ignited with new questions about the nature of gender more broadly. This course will focus on classic philosophical questions about the nature of human beings, with specific focus on the relevance of various answers to our understanding of gender. We will read both classic philosophical texts and contemporary feminist and gender theorists. We will look particularly at the history of how feminism has developed in the United States since the Seneca Falls Convention and how it has contributed to more recent discussions of gender, but we will do so in explicit dialogue with perennial philosophical debates about what it means to be human.

Tags: DUS, PI

PHIL 281. Philosophy & Postmodernity. (2 Credits)

People often think there is something called "postmodernism." There isn't. Instead, there are various postmodern thinkers, some of whom turn out to be people with a deep Christian faith. In this course, we read some of the (in)famous figures, such as Jacques Derrida and Richard Rorty. But we will also read the Jewish thinker Emmanuel Levinas and Jean-Luc Marion and Jean-Louis Chrétien, who are deeply Christian in their thinking and have radically changed the philosophical landscape. Prerequisite: PI course

PHIL 304. Bioethics. (4 Credits)

An interdisciplinary consideration of ethical issues in the biological and health sciences with an emphasis on those related to medicine, such as genetic engineering, end of life issues, autonomy, infanticide, abortion, human experimentation, cloning, and the relevance of social and economic variables in medical care.

Tags: PI, SIP

PHIL 305. Environmental Ethics. (4 Credits)

An interdisciplinary consideration of environmental issues, exploring scientific understanding of these issues and the philosophical foundations and application of ethics to result in environmental stewardship in terms of personal and corporate responsibility. Completing a Scientific Practice (SP) course is strongly recommended.

Tags: PI, SIP

PHIL 311. History of Philosophy - Ancient and Medieval. (4 Credits)

This course traces the philosophical conversation that began in Greece and elsewhere over 2,500 years ago and intersected with all three major monotheistic faiths, from its origins up through the beginning of the "modern" era. Students will study primary philosophical texts and think through a range of perennial philosophical questions arising from them, concerning fundamental reality, the problem of universals, human nature, societal justice, faith and reason, freedom of the will, God's nature, and many more. They will develop the abilities to analyze texts critically and to articulate and defend their own views on the issues just mentioned.

Tags: HP, PI

PHIL 312. History of Philosophy - Modern & Contemporary. (4 Credits)

This course, like PHIL 311, is dedicated to an overview of Western philosophy. In this semester, we look at modern and contemporary philosophy, beginning with the Renaissance rejection of scholasticism, moving through 17th and 18th century rationalists and empiricist, the Kantian synthesis, 19th century responses to Kant, and several major 20th century schools, including phenomenology, logical positivism, analytic philosophy, and pragmatism. Prerequisite: PI course or permission of instructor.

PHIL 315. Philosophy of Religion. (4 Credits)

Is there a God, and if so, what is he like? Can God's existence be established by philosophical argument? These are among Western philosophy's oldest questions. The philosophy of religion course explores philosophical concerns arising out of theism in general and Christian theism in particular. Topics include: the reasonableness of belief in God, God's nature, the problem of suffering, the problem of divine foreknowledge and human freedom, religious experience, religious pluralism, and more. Course readings touch mainly on contemporary authors, though students also read many historically important figures.

Tags: PI

PHIL 318. Philosophy of Law. (2 Credits)

What is law? What separates law from mere orders backed by threats? Ought judges to "make" law, or only to interpret it? Is punishment justified, and if so, for what purpose? When should people be held responsible for their actions? What rights should defendants have? What goals of justice should the law serve? Are ordinary moral obligations suspended for the lawyer in performance of his or her duties? These are a few of the questions arising out of the attempt to understand the nature and role of law and legal systems in society.

PHIL 319. Political Philosophy. (2 Credits)

Examines some of the major issues and concepts in political philosophy, including political authority, freedom and coercion, civil disobedience, and justice, as construed in the liberal, Marxist, communitarian, and feminist traditions.

PHIL 323. Chinese Political Thought. (4 Credits)

What is a "state" and what is "human nature"? Does one have an obligation or responsibility to the state and, conversely, do rulers owe anything to their people? How ought a state relate to individual or communal ethics or social custom, if at all? In this course, we will seriously consider—from a distinctly Christian perspective—how various pre-imperial (771-221 BCE) Chinese political thinkers like Confucius, Mencius and Xunzi, among others, have addressed these questions and the degree to which we find these arguments persuasive (or not) as they bear both on Christian faith/practice as well as on the world. Through dialogue and writing, students will develop their ability to compare and critically (though charitably) assess disparate articulations of the relationship between the state, individuals, and communities across the history of classical Chinese political thought. Further, students will cultivate a nuanced view of classical Chinese political thought—and the lasting legacy it has had on the global church, particularly in Asia and the Asian diaspora—as well as formulate their own political and philosophical opinions on the varied, and often contradicting, conceptions of the relationship between political entities and the people they aspire to govern.

Tags: GP, PI

PHIL 328. Business Ethics. (2 Credits)

Corporations and the economy in the US and elsewhere are reeling from the effects of an unprecedented series of moral scandals. What ethical guidelines must be put in place to reestablish confidence in the integrity of business? Some of the questions are: is it ethical to pay bribes in foreign countries, or to go along with their treatment of people when those ways are seen as unjust in our society? What are the ethical obligations of truth telling in the context of business negotiations or advertising? What rights do employees have, and how can businesses best respect these rights? What is the proper place of capitalistic institutions in a just society? What is 'fair treatment' for women and minorities in business? In this course, we will have a brief survey of basic ethical concepts and general moral theory, and then discuss a variety of ethical issues that arise in the areas of business and work. The general orientation will be towards an integration of the theoretical with the practical. Taught jointly with the Business Economics and Philosophy Departments. Prerequisite: ECON 211.

PHIL 331. Science & Christian Belief. (4 Credits)

This course looks at the nature of scientific reasoning, and how philosophers of science answer questions of knowledge and reality, with specific interest in the post-positivist, post-modern critiques of scientific presumption to knowledge. Special attention is devoted to the sometimes-troubled relationship between science and Christian belief, as these arise from contemporary accounts of the origins of the cosmos and evolutionary theory. This is an excellent course for science majors and philosophy double majors, though it does not presume any specific knowledge or even competency in the sciences. Prerequisite: PI course.

PHIL 341. Nature of Persons. (4 Credits)

Starting with P.F. Strawson's seminal work on the reactive attitudes, this course explores what it means to be a created person by working through various interpretations and crucial questions concerning our reactive attitudes (e.g., Is distinctively human life possible without these attitudes? Should we quench our retributive attitudes?), which prompts us to follow Harry Frankfurt in posing questions about the structure of created personhood, and then leads us to conclude the course with questions from Charles Taylor and Richard Rorty about the world of persons. Additional readings from, e.g., Gary Watson, Nietzsche, Rawls, Dennett, and Camus.

PHIL 347. Topics in Philosophy. (2 Credits)

A study of a contemporary philosopher or philosophical development of cross-disciplinary importance. Suitable for non-majors who have already taken a PI course. Topics include: Feminist Theory, Religious Epistemology, Language and Thought.

PHIL 348. Topics in Philosophy. (4 Credits)

A study of a contemporary philosopher or philosophical development of cross-disciplinary importance. Suitable for non-majors who have already taken a PI course. Topics include: Feminist Theory, Religious Epistemology, Language and Thought.

PHIL 349. Christian Political Thought. (4 Credits)

See PSCI 349.

PHIL 365. Classical and Medieval Political Thought. (4 Credits)

See PSCI 365.

PHIL 366. Modern Political Thought. (4 Credits)

See PSCI 366.

PHIL 447. Advanced Topics in Philosophy. (2 Credits)

A study of the debates and discussion in a significant area of contemporary philosophy. Suitable for philosophy majors or those having taken at least one semester of the history of philosophy (PHIL 311, 312). Topics include: Virtue Ethics, Philosophy of Mind, Free Will/Determinism, Contemporary Ethics. Prerequisite: PHIL 311 or 312.

PHIL 448. Advanced Topics in Philosophy. (4 Credits)

A study of the debates and discussion in a significant area of contemporary philosophy. Suitable for philosophy majors or those having taken at least one semester of the history of philosophy Prerequisite: PHIL 311 or 312. Topics include: 448-1. (Section 1) "Epistemology" Surely, among the most distinctive features of humans are their cognitive powers and the knowledge they make possible: historical, empirical, apriori, interpersonal, moral, and religious knowledge, among others. Epistemology, or the theory of knowledge, explores knowledge and related intellectual goods such as understanding, rationality, and experiential acquaintance. It investigates human intellectual powers, the extent of their reach, and whether these powers must follow a particular method or be trained to certain intellectual habits to be used to greatest effect. Typical questions asked by epistemologists include: What are the nature and limits of human knowledge? What conditions must we satisfy in order to know or to have justified belief? What intellectual virtues characterize excellent intellectual agents? Do the arguments of skeptics show that we don't have knowledge or justified belief? While this course focuses on more contemporary discussions, we will also discuss the epistemologies of many historically significant philosophers; 448-2. (Section 2) "Contemporary Metaphysics." This course takes a careful look at a number of pressing (and enduring) philosophical issues. We begin with the methodological question of realism and truth: Can we in fact discern the hidden nature of reality? If so, how? We then look at various proposals as to the nature of persons, including questions of mind and body, free will and determinism, and personal identity. In addition to a fairly comprehensive survey of such topics as these, we will spend some weeks near the end of the semester looking at book-length treatment by a contemporary philosopher focusing in one or the other of these areas.; 448-3 (Section 3) "Ethical Theory" The nature of ethical theory is a vigorously contested issue in philosophy today, and one that has very significant practical implications for society. What is the status of the moral principles of the Hebrew-Christian moral tradition? Can they be defended and argued on the basis of reason and common human experience, or are they only "house rules" for those particular communities that have religious allegiances? Can we still talk today of a "common morality", accessible in principle to all people in society, that can be the basis of law and policy? Should ethical reflection be conducted in terms of action guiding precepts or ideals of moral character? Are questions of right and wrong capable of being decided on rational grounds? How, if at all, can rival moral judgments be established as true over competitors? How are moral principles to be applied in concrete situations? Such questions are but a few of those that arise in moral philosophy, questions that have occupied a great part of the energies of the West's leading philosophers since Socrates. This course is an advanced undergraduate seminar course in ethical theory.

PHIL 454. Historical Seminar. (2 Credits)

Explores the writings of key historical figures from the following four periods in the history of philosophy: ancient, medieval, modern, and 19th century or contemporary philosophy. Each semester offers a different historical seminar, with all four periods being offered on a regular rotation. Prerequisite: PHIL 311 or 312.

PHIL 455. Historical Seminar. (4 Credits)

Explores the writings of key historical figures from the following four periods in the history of philosophy: ancient, medieval, modern, and 19th century or contemporary philosophy. Each semester offers a different historical seminar, with all four periods being offered on a regular rotation. Prerequisite: PHIL 311 or 312.

PHIL 456. German Historical Seminar. (2 Credits)

Explores the writings of key German historical philosophers. Requires reading texts in German, although discussion and papers may be done in English. Common topics include: Kant, Hegel, Nietzsche, Heidegger's Being and Time, and Gadamer's hermeneutics. Prerequisite: PHIL 311 or PHIL 312. See PHIL 454.

PHIL 457. German Historical Seminar. (4 Credits)

Explores the writings of key German historical philosophers. Requires reading texts in German, although discussion and papers may be done in English. Prerequisite: PHIL 311 or PHIL 312. See PHIL 455.

PHIL 494. Philosophy Capstone: Revisiting the Good Life. (2 Credits)

In this course philosophy majors in their final year at Wheaton revisit questions concerning the good life that they initially encountered in their First Year Seminar, informed now by their studies in the liberal arts, and especially by their training as philosophers. Questions concerning human well-being or the highest human good have been perennial philosophical concerns, and students in this course will interact with voices in the historical and contemporary debates among philosophers on these issues. The goal will be to better understand the way their training in philosophy bears upon their spiritual growth and development, as well as their vocations as scholars, workers, and Christians. Prerequisite: PHIL 311/PHIL 312, must be in last year at Wheaton.

General Education: SHAR

PHIL 495. Independent Study. (1 to 4 Credits)

Guided reading and research for the advanced student.

PHIL 496. Internship. (2 or 4 Credits)

Independent study on philosophical issues related to internship or employment experience. Requires department approval of student's proposal. Graded pass/fail. Prerequisite: junior or senior standing with Philosophy major.

PHIL 497. Independent Study in German Philosophy. (1 to 4 Credits)

Guided reading and research of German philosophical texts for the advanced student. Prerequisite: PHIL 311 or 312.

PHIL 499. Honors Thesis. (4 Credits)

An independent philosophical project requiring original research and/or argumentation, developed in a scholarly paper and culminating in an oral examination. By application only.