

PHI 101 - Basic Issues in Philosophy

This course is an introduction to a wide variety of philosophical issues. We will engage problems in metaphysics (the theory of reality), ethics and politics (the theory of right and good), and epistemology (the theory of knowledge). And we will consider the development of these issues in the history of philosophy.

A variety of class formats is central to the course. While there will be some lecture (as is appropriate), there will also be class discussion, possibly "Roundtable" discussions, panel debates or oral presentations. Required graded assignments include several argumentative papers and one or two exams. As with most humanities courses, grades in this course are largely earned through careful completion of written assignments.

Students are expected to be serious about learning something and open to becoming involved in significant philosophical inquiry.

PHI 104 - Ideal of Democracy

The purpose of The Ideal of Democracy is to think seriously and critically about the nature and moral justification of democracy and democratic institutions. Conceptions of democracy that are explicit or implicit in the civic traditions and diverse cultures in the United States will provide the primary basis for discussion, though some attention will also be paid to the origins and history of democracy and to its practice in other societies. Students will be introduced to the methodology of moral reasoning and to various conceptions of the person and of human nature that underlie ethical ideals relating to democracy. They will also see how to interpret and integrate work done in a variety of disciplines (e.g., law, economics, political science, history) that bears on the resolution of the fundamental moral questions concerning the justification of democracy that provide the unifying focus for the course. They will also be expected to think in a reasoned way about what their own responsibilities are as citizens in a democratic society.

PHI 112 - Language, Logic and Math

This is a course in modern symbolic logic. The fundamental objective of the course is to provide you with the abilities with which to understand and to apply the principles of formal reasoning. Not only are these principles essential to rational discourse, they are the basis of both mathematical reasoning and (symbolic) computation. Among the issues to be explored are: the nature of arguments, statements, truth, and formal systems; the relation between language (formal and natural), signs, and the world; logical relations and properties; deduction vs. induction; and techniques for evaluating arguments.

PHI 201 - Epistemology, Metaphysics, Mind and Language

Introduction to contemporary issues in metaphysics and epistemology and related issues in philosophy of mind and language.

PHI 202 - Sex, Values, Human Nature

This course gives students an opportunity to examine in detail some contemporary issues surrounding sex, gender and sexuality. The course begins by exploring how two quite different approaches to human nature—biological determinism and social constructionism—set about explaining facts about sex, gender and sexuality. So we will raise such questions as whether, for instance, men are biologically determined to be more sexually aggressive than females, or if gender differences like this one can instead be explained by facts about how our society is structured. Having examined two quite different theories about these matters, we will then go on to see how they might affect our answers to some normative questions about sex, gender and sexuality. Should there be gay marriage? What should we do to prevent sexual violence? Should there be legal restriction of pornography? What kinds of sexual activities should be considered immoral? We will explore how accepting a particular theory of human nature might influence the answers we give to normative questions like these.

PHI 205 - Philosophy Of Language

Language plays a central role in our lives, and a central role in philosophy. It is, perhaps, what makes us more than mere beasts. We use language to communicate our thoughts, and to make claims about the world. But what is language and how does it work? In this course, we will explore several issues in the philosophy of language, including some of the following: How do words get their meanings? How do names manage to refer to objects (e.g., how does the name 'Lincoln' manage to refer to the man, Lincoln?); What is the relationship between meaning and communication? What is the relationship between language and thought? What is truth? Are there "analytic" truths: sentences that are true in virtue of what they mean? What does it mean to say that a term is vague, and how does vagueness affect meaning and communication? What does it mean to say that language is conventional?

PHI 208 - Buddhist Philosophy

In this course we will examine the origins and development of Buddhist thought. The Buddha made three substantial claims about the nature of the world: that all human existence involves suffering, that there is no such thing as a self, and that everything that exists is impermanent. We will begin by analyzing these claims, assessing the arguments advanced in their support, and examining their bearing on the Buddha's proposed solution to the problem of suffering, the path to Nirvana. We will then investigate several later developments in Buddhist philosophy, including the two major schools of Indian Mahayana Buddhism, as well as Zen Buddhism. We will examine the answers given by these schools to further questions about the ultimate nature of reality and how knowledge of reality is obtained. A major focus of the course will be the following question: Why do Buddhists take doing philosophy to be crucial to solving the problem of suffering?

PHI 222 - Philosophy and Christian Theology

When language is used to profess a Christian world view, the resulting statements are Christian theology. A great many different Christian theologies have been produced by different people. In this course we will take a philosophical look at some of the common ideas and themes found in these Christian statements. Our goal will not be to decide which are the best, or which are true. Rather, the goal will be to explore how philosophy can shed light on theology, and how philosophical analysis can raise important issues about theology. For example, we can look at how some versions of Christian theology imply that non-Christian religions are worthless, while other versions do not have that implication. And, we can explore the question of what Christian theology might be based on.

PHI 224 - Meaning & Religious Belief

Each normal adult person at a given time has a set of attitudes towards life—ways of seeing his or her place (or lack of it) in the grand scheme of things—ways of thinking or refusing to think about mortality. These attitudes, or ways of thinking, do not operate merely at the intellectual or cognitive level, but rather constitute both a basis for cognitive understanding of the world as well as a way of being—an overall ethos, if you will.

In this course we will examine in detail the general character of religious ways of thinking in relation to religious ways of being—that is, religious ethos—and explore how one might responsibly think about and evaluate such ways. We do not explore in any substantial way various world religions, but rather we examine how to think about religious perspectives, how to understand their complexity and force, how to look at a religious perspective “from the inside”, how to begin to evaluate what point of view—religious or antireligious—it would be reasonable to take. Thus, in this course, we examine one of the most central aspects of life for a human being.

PHI 233 - Contemporary Western Moral Theories

This course is intended to provide students who are familiar with the major figures in the history of Western moral philosophy (Aristotle, Kant, Mill, etc.) with a survey of the central thinkers and developments in this field since 1900. The course is divided into two broad sub-topics: recent work in normative ethics (that part of moral philosophy concerned to develop specific theories of right conduct and value) and recent work in meta-ethics (that part of moral philosophy concerned with systematic philosophical reflection on the nature of morality and its relationship both to other branches of philosophy and to other fields of human knowledge beyond philosophy).

PHI 236 - Values and the Environment

Philosophical examination of selected moral and social issues involving humans, nonhumans, and the environment, e.g., animal rights, resource distribution, environmental racism. From a philosophical perspective, fundamental value questions about the environment fit within two broad areas identified by the following two questions: (1) What is a suitable ethic to define the relationships between humans

and the nonhuman environment? and given this ethical framework, (2) What are the implications for ethical relationships among humans? Addressing the first question requires that students investigate three fundamental questions: what does it mean to have moral standing, who/what has moral standing, and are traditional moral theories (designed to prescribe how humans should interact with each other) sufficient or applicable to explain human and nonhuman interactions? Under question 2 fall a variety of issues such as: environmental racism, equity in distribution of resources, permanent sovereignty over natural resources and other property rights issues, and obligations to future generations. In considering any of these issues, students would examine standard moral positions. After becoming familiar with these basics, students would be asked to reconsider an appropriate response to the issues at hand in light of alternative environmental ethics explored in response to question 1. This helps students recognize the significant differences in practice of adopting alternative environmental ethics - a major step toward determining the best environmental ethic to adopt.

PHI 238 - Rights and Wrongs

This is a course in applied ethics. That means we emphasize the application over the interpretation, defense, and criticism of ethical principles. We are thus freed up to consider more complicated ethical issues than usual, more complicated situations to which ethical principles apply. In this course we concentrate on ethical issues concerning social or distributive justice (as opposed to criminal or retributive justice). These are issues concerning the justice of our basic institutions and practices--the state, the law, and the economy. We will focus on economic institutions: so-called "free" markets, free trade, corporate capitalism. And on the mainstream media--television, newspapers, and magazines. Each of these institutions, or their current practice, raises serious questions about the justice of our society.

PHI 251 - Visions of the Self

Human beings have an insatiable desire to understand the universe around them. Yet what is the nature of the cognitive agent who is capable of these inquiries? For thousands of years poets, philosophers, and theologians have drawn on the introspective data of experience in order to understand the nature of "self". In the Modern period, we know there are rich and complex mechanisms lying well below the surface which introspection reveals. Thus the study of the self has emerged as a major enterprise incorporating a huge variety of data, data drawn from both the "inside" – what it "feels like" to be a person–, and the "outside" – from external points of view such as those characterizing the social and physical sciences. This course is an in-depth study of philosophical issues surrounding these various modes of inquiry. We will draw upon philosophically relevant data arising in fields as diverse as cognitive, experimental, and clinical psychology, literature, psychiatric medicine, neurophysiology, computer science and artificial intelligence, and philosophy itself. This inquiry will confront students with puzzling questions that have wide-ranging practical implications, both personally and socially, including: What is the Mind? Is it a kind of mental stuff, is it physical or is it fundamentally computer software? What is the proper theory of "personal identity"? What makes the 80 year-old woman "the same person" as the three year old toddler? What is the philosophical significance (ethical, metaphysical, etc.) of certain mental and physical disorders (e.g. multiple personality, dementia, body-

alienation, commissurotomy)? What properties must something possess to be a “person”? Could a machine or an animal or an alien be a person? Are “persons” self-contained, atomistic agents or does the integration of the self so depend on connections to other selves that the drawing of boundaries between selves becomes problematic? To what extent do the various conceptions of the self lead to different accounts of our moral and social responsibility to ourselves and others?

PHI 255 - Modern Philosophy

In this course we will examine the origins and development of the three major movements that dominate modern philosophy in the 17th and 18th centuries--rationalism, empiricism, and Kant's transcendental philosophy. We will look at the intellectual and cultural backgrounds of these movements, for instance the way in which the growth of modern science influenced the developments of these philosophical traditions. Our chief focus, though, will be on the philosophical systems themselves, and the answers they give to a range of questions in metaphysics and epistemology. We shall be subjecting the arguments of such major modern philosophers as Descartes, Hume, and Kant to intensive analysis and criticism. Out of this should emerge a clearer understanding of the philosophical underpinnings of our modern view of what the world is like and how we come to know anything about it.

PHI 270: Existentialism

An introduction to existentialism. Figures include Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Sartre, Heidegger, and others. Topics include authenticity, freedom, meaning, power, and others.

IDS 254: Religions And Cultures

A critical examination of diverse religious discourses and literacies and how they construct and reflect identity based on cultural differences.

IDS 265: Introduction to Cognitive Science: Computers, Minds, Brains, and Robots

This course will introduce students to the interdisciplinary field of cognitive science, a research area dedicated to explaining how minds and other kinds of intelligent systems work. This field draws on work from computer science, neuroscience, psychology, philosophy, linguistics, anthropology, robotics and education. Contemporary developments in cognitive science have provided exciting new ways to explore fundamental questions about the nature of minds (human and animal) and how they work. It is also at the center of research into artificial intelligence and robotics.

Cognitive science provides an excellent opportunity for expanding students' understanding of human knowledge and learning, for providing insights into numerous technological breakthroughs that are changing our world, as well as providing a context in which to explore philosophical questions related to issues of "personhood" and the moral and social consequences of cognitive science research. These

questions include: How can you tell if a creature has a mind? How does the brain "learn"? Can a machine be a person? How do we "perceive" the world? Why is language a special feature of creatures with minds? Could your mind be "transferred" into a robotic body? Does artificial intelligence research pose dangers comparable to those of atomic bombs?