

The Department of Philosophy
Fall 2021 Course Descriptions
336 ten Hoor Hall • 205-348-5942 • *philosophy.ua.edu*

INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY

PHL 100

Not open to anyone who has taken PHL 191 (Honors Introduction to Philosophy).

- **(FA) PHL 100.001 – MWF 10:00am-10:50am, Dr. Mark Pickering**
- **(FA) PHL 100.003 – MWF 11:00am-11:50am, Dr. Mark Pickering**
- **(FA) PHL 100.004 – MWF 2:00pm-3:15pm, Dr. Tim Butzer**
- **(FA) PHL 100.006 – TR 9:30am-10:45am, Dr. Torin Alter**
- **(FA) PHL 100.008 – TR 3:30pm-4:45pm, Dr. Adam Arico**

PHL 100.001 & 100.003 Course Description: In this course, you will learn about what philosophy is and how philosophers apply logic to philosophical problems. You will explore a variety of areas, including philosophy of religion, theories of knowledge, philosophy of mind, personal identity, freedom of the will, and ethics.

PHL 100.004 Course Description: This course will be an introduction to a series of philosophical puzzles. We will ask questions like: does God exist? If God does exist, why does God allow us to suffer? Can we be certain of anything? Can we trust our senses? Can we exist beyond the death of our physical body? While we may not find definite answers to any of these questions, we will be discussing some of the most influential positions and arguments about these questions that have been offered in the history of Western Philosophy.

PHL 100.006 Course Description: This course introduces students to the basic concepts, methods, and problems of philosophy. Students will learn about philosophical approaches to issues such as the existence or nonexistence of God, the relationship between the mind and body, the freedom of the will, and the nature of right and wrong.

PHL 100.008 Course Description: Survey of the main areas of philosophy, including epistemology, metaphysics, and ethics. Topics of discussion often include reality, truth and knowledge, the mind, free will, personal identity, and the nature of right and wrong. Offered in the fall and spring semesters.

Prerequisites: None

Requirements (tentative): Seven module exams, comprehensive final, regular in-class exercises.

Core Curriculum: This course carries an *HU* designation.

PHL 100.900(M) & 901(D) – Dr. Torin Alter

Not open to anyone who has taken PHL 191 (Honors Introduction to Philosophy).

- **(IN) PHL 100.900 – ONLINE (Main Campus)**

Course Description: This course introduces students to the basic concepts, methods, and problems of philosophy. Students will learn about philosophical approaches to issues such as the existence or nonexistence of God, the relationship between the mind and body, the freedom of the will, and the nature of right and wrong.

Prerequisites: None.

Requirements: Seven module exams, comprehensive final.
All work done on-line.

Core Curriculum: This course carries an *HU* designation.

CRITICAL THINKING

PHL 104 – Dr. Adam Arico

- (FA) PHL 104.002 – TR 12:30pm-1:45pm
- (FA) PHL 104.003 – TR 2:00pm-3:15pm

Course Description: Thinking critically does not come naturally to most of us; in fact, it is often contrary to our natural inclinations. In this course, we begin by looking at how human cognition typically operates, and why our psychology can often interfere with rational, critical thought. We will explore the basic features of human learning, memory, and reasoning, including common predispositions that often lead us to draw faulty conclusions, to arrive at mistaken judgments, and to make bad decisions.

Having identified some of the obstacles to and difficulties in behaving rationally and thinking critically, we will move on to the larger goal of the course: to better understand the structure of arguments and know how to critically assess them. This portion of the course will cover both inductive and deductive reasoning, as well as basic features of arguments, and will instruct you in identifying major fallacies, including ad hominem arguments, straw man arguments, appeal to irrelevant reasons, false dilemmas, etc. (see schedule for class meetings for more topics to be covered). Acquiring these skills will help you both better assess others' arguments and better construct your own.

Prerequisites: None

Requirements (tentative): (a) three in-class exams; (b) homework and writing assignments (d) a course participation grade.

Core Curriculum: This course carries an *HU* designation.

HONORS PHILOSOPHICAL INTRODUCTION TO DEDUCTIVE LOGIC

PHL 106.001 – Dr. Chase Wrenn

- (FA) PHL 106.001 – MWF 10:00am-10:50am, Dr. Chase Wrenn

Course Description: What is the difference between a good argument and a bad one? This course focuses on tools developed by philosophers and mathematicians for answering that question. In it, you will learn to use analytical methods such as the construction of proofs and countermodels to evaluate arguments. Along the way, you will explore and analyze influential arguments from the history of philosophy, including some concerning questions of value, ethics, and aesthetics. Philosophical arguments examined in this course may include Aquinas's arguments for the existence of God, Parmenidean arguments that change is impossible, Berkeley's argument for idealism, Descartes' Cogito argument, John Stuart Mill's "proof" of Utilitarianism, Kant's argument for the Categorical Imperative, Singer's argument for animal rights, the Stoics' argument that death is not to be feared, and more. The formal tools used in this class include the notation of sentential and predicate logic (with identity), truth tables, a natural deduction proof system, and the use of semantic countermodels.

Prerequisite: C- or better in MATH 100, or equivalent. Admission to UA Honors or a 28 ACT.

Requirements: Class attendance, discussion participation, up to seven tests. Course is self-paced and your grade is based largely on how many of the tests you pass by the end of the term.

Core Curriculum: This course carries an *HU* designation.

PHILOSOPHICAL INTRODUCTION TO DEDUCTIVE LOGIC

PHL 195 - Dr. Chase Wrenn

- **(FA) PHL 195.001 – MWF 10:00am-10:50am, Dr. Chase Wrenn**

Course Description: What is the difference between a good argument and a bad one? This course focuses on tools developed by philosophers and mathematicians for answering that question. In it, you will learn to use analytical methods such as the construction of proofs and countermodels to evaluate arguments. Along the way, you will explore and analyze influential arguments from the history of philosophy, including some concerning questions of value, ethics, and aesthetics. Philosophical arguments examined in this course may include Aquinas's arguments for the existence of God, Parmenidean arguments that change is impossible, Berkeley's argument for idealism, Descartes' Cogito argument, John Stuart Mill's "proof" of Utilitarianism, Kant's argument for the Categorical Imperative, Singer's argument for animal rights, the Stoics' argument that death is not to be feared, and more. The formal tools used in this class include the notation of sentential and predicate logic, truth tables, a natural deduction proof system, and the use of semantic countermodels.

Prerequisite: C- or better in MATH 100, or equivalent.

Requirements: Class attendance, discussion participation, up to six tests. Course is self-paced and your grade is based largely on how many of the tests you pass by the end of the term.

Core Curriculum: This course carries an *HU* designation.

PHL 195.900(D)/901(M) – Dr. Chase Wrenn

- **(IN) PHL 195.900 – ONLINE (MAIN CAMPUS), Dr. Chase Wrenn**
- **(IN) PHL 195.901 – ONLINE (DISTANCE LEARNING), Dr. Chase Wrenn**

Course Description: What is the difference between a good argument and a bad one? This course focuses on tools developed by philosophers and mathematicians for answering that question. In it, you will learn to use

analytical methods such as the construction of proofs and countermodels to evaluate arguments. Along the way, you will explore and analyze influential arguments from the history of philosophy, including some concerning questions of value, ethics, and aesthetics. Philosophical arguments examined in this course may include Aquinas's arguments for the existence of God, Parmenidean arguments that change is impossible, Berkeley's argument for idealism, Descartes' *Cogito* argument, John Stuart Mill's "proof" of Utilitarianism, Kant's argument for the Categorical Imperative, Singer's argument for animal rights, the Stoics' argument that death is not to be feared, and more. The formal tools used in this class include the notation of sentential and predicate logic, truth tables, a natural deduction proof system, and the use of semantic countermodels.

Prerequisite: C- or better in MATH 100, or equivalent.

Requirements: Class attendance, discussion participation, up to six tests. Course is self-paced and your grade is based largely on how many of the tests you pass by the end of the term.

Core Curriculum: This course carries an *HU* designation.

ANCIENT PHILOSOPHY

PHL 211 – Dr. Seth Bordner

- **(FA) PHL 211.001 – TR 9:30am-10:45am, Dr. Seth Bordner**

Course Description: This course will focus on the major themes of ancient Greek philosophy, from the earliest pre-Socratic philosophers, through Plato and Aristotle, to the later Epicureans, Stoics, and Skeptics. We will proceed chronologically and pay special attention to the systematic connections between metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics in each school of thought, as well as the development of later views in light of criticisms of earlier ones. The aim of this course is to provide students a reasonably comprehensive introduction to the main areas of Western analytic philosophy through an examination of some of the earliest systematic philosophies.

Prerequisites: None

Requirements: There will be three exams throughout the course; two mid-term exams and one final exam

Core Curriculum: This course carries an *HU* designation.

HONORS INTRODUCTION TO ETHICS

PHL 221.001 – Dr. Stuart Rachels

Open to Honors students only. Not open to anyone who has taken PHL 292 (Introduction to Ethics).

- **(FA) PHL 221.001 – MWF 10:00am-10:50am, Dr. Stuart Rachels**

Course Description: This course will focus on a dozen or so matters of personal and social importance. Topics include abortion, pornography, famine relief, affirmative action, gay rights, and the death penalty. We will concentrate on the reasons that bear on these issues. Our approach to these issues will serve as a model

for critical thinking in general. Our texts will be *The Elements of Moral Philosophy* (9th ed.) and *The Right Thing to Do* (8th edition)

Prerequisites: None.

Requirements: Grades will be based on four exams. Attendance will be taken each class, and an attendance policy will be enforced.

Core Curriculum: This course carries an *HU* designation.

MEDICAL ETHICS

PHL 223.001 – Dr. Stuart Rachels

- (HY) PHL 223.001 – MWF 11:00am-11:50am, Dr. Stuart Rachels

Course Description: This course is an introduction to some of the ethical issues involved in medicine. Topics include: physician-assisted dying; the allocation of organs and other scarce resources; abortion; stem cell research; and patient autonomy. Our main text will be Lewis Vaughn, *Bioethics: Principles, Issues, and Cases* (4th ed.) (Oxford University Press, 2020).

Prerequisites: None

Requirements: There will be three exams. Students will be required to attend every class meeting.

Core Curriculum: This course carries an *HU* designation.

PHL 223.900(M)/901(D) – Dr. Timothy Butzer (online)

- PHL 223.900 – ONLINE (MAIN CAMPUS)
PHL 223.901 – ONLINE (DISTANCE LEARNING)

Course Description: This class provides an introduction to the philosophical study of applied ethics by way of a discussion of topics related to the practice of medical and biological science. Topics of discussion will include abortion, stem cell research, cloning, the allocation of scarce or limited resources, animal experimentation, and patient autonomy, among others. Along the way, other important topics in moral philosophy will be discussed.

Prerequisites: None

Core Curriculum: This course carries an *HU* designation.

POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

PHL 230 – Dr. Rekha Nath

- (FA) PHL 230.001 – TR 11:00am-12:15pm, Dr. Rekha Nath
(FA) PHL 230.002 – TR 12:30pm-1:45pm, Dr. Rekha Nath

Course description This course serves as an introduction to central debates in political philosophy. The major questions we explore are the following: How can the coercive authority the government exercises over its citizens be justified? What does justice require in our society today? What role do democracy, freedom, rights and equality play in our understanding of a just society? Through the study of both historical and contemporary texts, we investigate these topics. We also consider how these issues bear upon debates in the contemporary American context concerning the following: restrictions on free speech, participation in the democratic process, homelessness, education and socioeconomic inequality.

Prerequisites: None

Requirements (tentative): Exams and homework

Core Curriculum: This course carries an *HU* designation.

SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY

PHL 234.001 – Dr. Rekha Nath

- (FA) PHL 234.001 – TR 2:00pm-3:15pm, Dr. Rekha Nath

Course Description: The government intrudes in the lives of citizens in many ways, and some of these intrusions seem legitimate while others do not. We will consider some of the following issues concerning the legitimacy of government interference. Should citizens enjoy an unrestricted right to bear arms, or are some gun control policies justified? Should society ban or heavily regulate the use of recreational drugs and other addictive substances? Should individuals be able to buy and sell sex? What role if any should the government play in deciding who may legally marry whom? We will also consider whether we have a moral reasons to avoid eating meat as well as to make an effort to reduce our carbon footprints. In addressing a range of controversial social and political issues, our focus in this course is normative. Through the careful consideration of different philosophical frameworks, our aim is to make progress in arriving at well-reasoned positions about how our society ought to be organized as well as what it means for individuals to live ethical lives.

Prerequisites: None

Requirements: Tentative

Core Curriculum: This course carries an *HU* designation.

PHILOSOPHICAL ISSUES IN CONSTITUTIONAL LAW

PHL 243 – Dr. Stephen Davey

- (FA) MWF 2:00pm-2:50pm, Dr. Stephen Davey

Course Description: We Americans take our Constitution very seriously. But most of us spend very little of our time thinking about what it is, what makes it special, how it ought to be interpreted, or what it means to “protect and defend” it. Well, this is your chance to fix that. This is a class all about constitutions: what they are, why they matter, how they (should) work, and how to use them. The semester is divided more-or-less into three units. After a brief introduction, we will begin with questions concerning the nature of law, and of constitutions more specifically. What is a constitution for, and how can/should it take shape in fulfilling that purpose? What are the ways in which a law can fail to serve its purpose? Is there a moral foundation for law’s legitimacy, or are laws binding purely because they are enshrined in the proper way? Next, we will survey the major theories of judicial interpretation. What principles should SCOTUS follow in settling hard cases? To what degree are justices bound by the original meaning of the Constitution, or by the framers’ intentions? Can they take liberties in applying core values to new circumstances in an evolving society? Finally, we will consider the status and scope of certain rights that have proved controversial, with an emphasis on the decisions and dissents in landmark cases.

Prerequisites: None

Requirements: Tentative

Core Curriculum: This course carries an *HU* designation.

PHILOSOPHY OF SPORT

PHL 256 – Dr. Tim Butzer

- (FA) PHL 256.001 – MWF 1:00pm-1:50pm, Dr. Tim Butzer

Course Description: This course is a survey of topics in the philosophy of sport. We will examine questions like: what is a sport? Are dance competitions or gymnastics examples of sports? Can esports be sports? We will also look at issues relating to ethics that crop up in philosophical discussions of sports: does one still count as playing the game while deliberately cheating? What, if anything, is wrong with athletes using PEDs in competitive sports? Should the use of performance-enhancing drugs be prohibited in sports? We will be reading and discussing philosophical arguments on these and other topics in the philosophy of sport.

Prerequisites: None

Requirements (tentative): Exams and class participation

Core Curriculum: This course carries an *HU* designation.

MIND AND NATURE

PHL 260 – Dr. Benjamin Kozuch

- (FA) PHL 260.001 – MWF 9:00am-9:50am, Dr. Benjamin Kozuch

Course Description: Though studied for millennia, consciousness remains a mystery. In this course, we take a critical look at philosophical and scientific attempts to account for the mind and consciousness, giving an emphasis to cognitive neuroscientific approaches. Among the topics covered are the mind-body problem, consciousness research in psychology, and contemporary theories of consciousness. The course starts by tracing the arc of both philosophical and scientific approaches to studying the mind, and culminates with an examination of how these two approaches have recently become entwined in present-day studies of consciousness.

Prerequisites: None

Requirements: TBA

Core Curriculum: This course carries an *HU* designation.

This course is part of the Mind - Brain concentration and Philosophy and Medicine specializations.

PHILOSOPHY, PSYCHOLOGY, AND NEUROSCIENCE

PHL 261 – Dr. Benjamin Kozuch

- (FA) MWF 11:00am-11:50am, Dr. Benjamin Kozuch

Course Description: While philosophy has traditionally been done from the armchair, our large and growing body of scientific knowledge has made this approach less tenable. More to the point, recent results in psychology and neuroscience have relevance to perennial topics in philosophy such as free will, rationality, ethics, and religion. As well, the philosophical knowledge accumulated over aeons on these topics continue to inform psychological and neuroscientific research into these areas. This class surveys the give and take between these fields that has occurred over the last few decades, with a keen eye to seeing how the cognitive sciences have helped further the debate over some of these often ancient philosophical issues.

Prerequisites: None

Requirements: TBA

Core Curriculum: This course carries an *HU* designation.

INTRODUCTION TO ETHICS

PHL 292

Not open to anyone who has taken PHL 221 (Honors Introduction to Ethics).

- (FA) PHL 292.001 – TR 8:00am-9:15am, Dr. Holly Kantin
- (FA) PHL 292.002 – TR 9:30am-10:45am, Dr. Holly Kantin
- (FA) PHL 292.003 – TR 11:00am-12:15pm, Dr. Seth Bordner
- (FA) PHL 292.007 – MWF 11:00am-11:50am, Dr. Stephen Davey
- (FA) PHL 292.008 – MWF 12:00pm-12:50pm, Dr. Stephen Davey

Course Description: This course is designed to give the students a broad introduction to the field of philosophical ethics. The primary aim is to acquaint students with the basic subject matter of ethics as it is studied within philosophy, a few central authorities and positions, and a feel for how philosophers engage with contemporary ethical issues in light of some of the historical influences on the discipline. We will read a variety of texts ranging from historical works on ethics generally to contemporary works focusing on specific moral issues. The hope is that students will develop an understanding and appreciation of how different ethical theories apply to particular cases, and how they might begin to engage in genuine ethical debates.

Prerequisites: None

Requirements: There will be three exams throughout the course; two mid-term exams and one final exam. In addition, there will be periodic, unannounced quizzes given in class to test your comprehension of the readings. These quizzes will be graded on a High Pass/Low Pass/Fail scale.

Core Curriculum: This course carries an *HU* designation. *This course is included in the Jurisprudence and Philosophy and Medicine specializations.*

PHILOSOPHY OF MIND

PHL 360 – Dr. Torin Alter

- (FA) TR 11:00am-12:15pm, Dr. Torin Alter

Course Description: What is the relationship between the mental and the physical? That is the central question in the philosophy of mind, and we will approach it from different angles. We will focus largely on consciousness and its place in nature. Most readings will be from the contemporary literature but some will be historical.

Prerequisites: Two philosophy courses or instructor's permission. (PHL 260 Mind and Nature is recommended but not required.)

Core Curriculum: This course carries a *W* designation, and so writing proficiency within the discipline of philosophy is

required for a passing grade in this course.

Requirements (tentative): two five-to-ten page papers, regular reading quizzes, and a final.

SPECIAL TOPICS IN PHILOSOPHY (WRITING INTENSIVE): KANT

PHL 392 – Dr. Mark Pickering

- (FA) MWF 1:00pm-1:50pm, Dr. Mark Pickering

Course Description: This course covers the two most influential areas of the philosophy of Immanuel Kant. First, we will cover Kant's transcendental idealism, the view that metaphysics properly understood is limited to the a priori conditions of the cognition of objects. Second, we will cover Kant's moral theory, according to which one should only act on a maxim that one can will as a universal law. We will read selections from the *Critique of Pure Reason*, *Prolegomena*, *Groundwork*, and *Critique of Practical Reason*.

Prerequisites: B or better in one PHL course. PHL 212 is recommended but not required.

Core Curriculum: This course carries a **W** designation, and so writing proficiency within the discipline of philosophy is required for a passing grade in this course.

Requirements: Participation, two papers, midterm exam and final exam.

SEMINAR ON LAW: LEGAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL PROBLEMS IN POLICING

PHL 440 – Dr. Luke Hunt

- (FA) TR 9:30am-10:45am, Dr. Luke Hunt

Course Description: This course examines the central philosophical problems that arise within the law of policing. Topics include police authority, legitimacy, and the problem of political obligation; the relationship between police discretion and the rule of law; human dignity and brutality in policing; and special problems in laws governing entrapment, the police's use of informants, and the police's use of surveillance and emerging technology.

Prerequisites: B or better in a 200-level course from the jurisprudence list* or instructor's approval, or an A- or better in any PHL class with a writing designation. *[PHL 292](#) or [PHL 221](#) or [PHL 230](#) or [PHL 234](#) or [PHL 240](#) or PHL 241 or PHL 242 or [PHL 243](#) or [PHL 256](#) Note from professor: a "B-" in the above courses is not sufficient

Core Curriculum: This course carries a **W** designation, and so writing proficiency within the discipline of philosophy is required for a passing grade in this course.

Requirements:

TICKING TIME BOMBS: PHILOSOPHY AND NATIONAL SECURITY

PHL 442 – Dr. Luke Hunt

- (FA) TR 11:00am-12:15pm, Dr. Luke Hunt

Course Description: As the “ticking time bomb” hypothetical typically goes, you are an intelligence agent or law enforcement officer who has detained the one terrorist with knowledge of how to prevent a large-scale attack. One may contort the hypothetical to make it as heart-rending as possible, but the ultimate question is whether you should torture the detainee in such an extreme scenario. These scenarios raise pressing practical and philosophical questions, but they need not be so extreme. This course examines the central legal and philosophical issues relating to national security, including terrorism, torture, the ethics of intelligence, the national security uses and risks of artificial intelligence, and the balance between security and liberty.

Prerequisites: Successful completion of at least 2 PHL courses.

Core Curriculum:

Requirements:

NEURAL BASIS OF CONSCIOUSNESS

PHL 462 – Dr. Benjamin Kozuch

- (FA) TR 2:00pm-3:15pm, Dr. Benjamin Kozuch

Course Description: Recent years have seen the use of neuroscientific methods to try to understand consciousness, in hopes that this approach succeeds where others have failed. This course surveys and analyzes current neuroscientific and philosophical approaches to studying consciousness, the goal being to integrate the two. Topics covered this semester will include: whether self-awareness is necessary for consciousness; the role of the prefrontal cortex in consciousness; the relationship between consciousness and bodily action; and theories of consciousness with minimal cognitive requirements.

Prerequisites: None

Core Curriculum: This course carries a **W** designation, and so writing proficiency within the discipline of philosophy is required for a passing grade in this course.

Requirements:

SPECIAL TOPICS IN PHILOSOPHY: MEDICAL KNOWLEDGE & ITS LIMITS

PHL 492.002 – Dr. Adrian Erasmus (Dr. Ted Poston)

- (FA) MW 3:00pm-4:15pm, Dr. Erasmus and Dr. Poston

Course Description: Medical knowledge has made great strides over the last 150 years. Yet the claims to specific medical knowledge far outstrip the available evidence. This course examines the rise of evidence-based medicine and its controversies, including debates about evidence hierarchies, the reliance on less than straightforward concepts such as placebo and masking, and the dismissal of mechanistic reasoning and medical expertise. The course also explores recent arguments from the ubiquity of small effect sizes in medicine, the extent of misleading evidence in medical research, the thin theoretical basis of many interventions, and the malleability of empirical methods to show that medical interventions are generally less effective than we are led to believe. The class will work through Howick's (2011) *The Philosophy of Evidence Based Medicine* and Jacob Stegenga's (2018) *Medical Nihilism*.

This course satisfies the Philosophy of Medicine course requirement for the Philosophy and Medicine specialized major and minor.

Prerequisites: None.

Core Curriculum: This course carries a **W** designation, and so writing proficiency within the discipline of philosophy is required for a passing grade in this course.

Requirements: