

The Department of Philosophy
Spring 2022 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).

- **PHL 100.001 – MWF 10:00am-10:50am, Eric Solis**
- PHL 100.002 – MWF 11:00am-11:50am, Eric Solis**
- PHL 100.003 – MWF 2:00pm-2:50pm, Adam Arico**
- PHL 100.004 – MWF 3:00pm-3:50pm, Adam Arico**
- PHL 100.005 – TR 11:00am-12:15pm, Mark Pickering**
- PHL 100.006 – TR 12:30pm-1:45pm, Mark Pickering**
- PHL 100.007 – TR 3:30pm-4:45pm, Mark Pickering**

PHL 100.001 & 100.002 Course Description: Philosophy is often described as a question-driven or problem-driven discipline. And appropriately so, since philosophical inquiry often involves asking difficult questions, and formulating complex problems. But philosophers don't ask questions and formulate problems just for their own sake. They do this in hopes of finding answers and solutions. This course is an introduction to philosophy. Hence, in this course, we will be taking a close look at some of the most significant philosophical questions and problems that have arisen throughout the course of history. We will also examine some of the most important solutions to the problems, and answers to the questions. We will talk about the existence or nonexistence of God, knowledge and reality, free will, the nature of morality, and personal identity. This course requires no prior courses in philosophy, and should be of equal interest to students who intend to pursue other majors.

PHL 100.003 & 100.004 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.

PHL 100.005, 100.006 and 100.007 Course Description: In this course we will examine questions like the following. Can God's existence be proven or disproven? How do we get knowledge? What are minds? Are you the same person you were ten years ago? Do you have free will? What is the supreme principle of ethics?

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

- **PHL 104.001 – MWF 1:00pm-1:50pm**

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 (c) a course participation grade.

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

HONORS PHILOSOPHICAL INTRODUCTION TO DEDUCTIVE LOGIC

PHL 106 – Dr. Torin Alter

- **PHL 106.001 – MWF 10:00am-10:50am**

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 and *University Honors* designation.

PHILOSOPHICAL INTRODUCTION TO DEDUCTIVE LOGIC

PHL 195 - Dr. Torin Alter

- **PHL 195.001 – MWF 10:00am-10:50am**

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)
(IN) PHL 195.901 – ONLINE (DISTANCE LEARNING)

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 Epicurean 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: Discussion participation, and 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 – Eric Solis

- PHL 211.001 – MWF 1:00pm-1:50pm

Course Description: This course provides an introduction to some of the most important philosophical ideas, texts, and figures of Ancient Greece and Rome. We will read and discuss a selection of philosophical masterpieces, many of which are literary masterpieces as well, and have exercised an unparalleled influence on the subsequent course of Western Philosophy. Authors to be discussed may include Plato, Aristotle, the Epicureans, Stoics, and Skeptics, as well as some earlier pre-Socratic thinkers. We will be considering the views of these authors on a number of issues, many of which continue to be influential today. These may include their views on ethics, politics, psychology, epistemology, physics, metaphysics, rhetoric, and philosophical method. This course requires no prior courses in philosophy, and should be of equal interest to students who intend to pursue other majors.

Prerequisites: None

Requirements:

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

EARLY MODERN PHILOSOPHY

PHL 212 – Dr. Seth Bordner

- **PHL 212.001 – MWF 9:00am-9:50am**

Course Description: This course will look at the main figures and intellectual developments of the early Modern period of philosophy. We will proceed chronologically, starting with Descartes's seminal *Meditations on First Philosophy* and tracing two very different branches of influence from there to what are often called the Rationalist and Empiricist schools. Other figures of note will be Locke, Leibniz, Berkeley, Hume, and Kant.

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– Dr. Stuart Rachels

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

- **PHL 221.001 – MWF 11:00am-11:50am**

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 and *University Honors* designation.

MEDICAL ETHICS

PHL 223

- **PHL 223.001 – MWF 10:00am-10:50am, Dr. Stuart Rachels**
PHL 223.002 – TR 2:00pm-3:15pm, Dr. Jennifer Gleason
PHL 223.003 – TR 3:30pm-4:45pm, Dr. Jennifer Gleason

(continued)

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.

POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

PHL 230 – Dr. Luke Hunt

- **PHL 230.001 – MWF 9:00am-9:50am**

Course description: An examination of the nature of political society, purported justifications of the modern state, the problems of state legitimacy and political obligation, anarchy, the nature of social justice, the case for democratic government, and issues in international political philosophy. This examination will include an analysis of the pluralistic nature of institutions, society, and culture by considering the roles of categories such as class, ethnicity, gender and sexuality, disability, and religion—as well as the role social diversity plays in shaping attitudes and values regarding appreciation, tolerance, and equality of others.

Prerequisites: None

Requirements (tentative): Exams and homework

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

PHILOSOPHY AND THE LAW

PHL 240 – Dr. Stephen Davey

- **PHL 240.001 – TR 9:30am-10:45am**

Course Description: It is one thing to be able to say what the law is, and another thing entirely to be able to say what The Law is. That is to say, if we want to know what the laws of the land say, we can read our constitution, or look up particular statutes, or just ask a lawyer. But if we want to know about the nature of the law – what sort of authority does it have, and where does that authority come from; what is the relation between the law and morality; what criteria must a rule or principle meet before it earns the status of law – we have to do some philosophy. In this course, students will read and critically assess some of the most influential historical and contemporary efforts to do just that. We will consider these questions and more: What is the law? What is the relationship between the law and morality? How should judges interpret the law? On what grounds are we justified in punishing criminals? What does it mean to be legally responsible? What are legal rights? What are contracts, and how do they produce legal obligations? What is property, and what does having property entitle me to? Can a legal system fail? What happens then?

Prerequisites: None

(continued)

Requirements: Tentative

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

PHILOSOPHY OF SPORT

PHL 256 – Dr. Seth Bordner

- **PHL 256.001 – MWF 11:00am-11:50am**

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. Chase Wrenn

- **PHL 260.001 – TR 11:00am-12:15pm**

Course Description: This course is organized around two central philosophical questions. What is the place of the mind in nature? And what is the place of nature in the mind? The first question raises issues about the nature of thought and consciousness and the relationship of our minds to our bodies. Are our minds non-physical spirits, or are they somehow identical with our brains or with things our brains do? The second question raises issues about our knowledge of the world around us. What qualifies as a good reason to believe something? What's the difference between what we know and what we have good reason to believe? And how is knowledge possible at all, if we can never rule out every possible sort of error? The course includes a close study of René Descartes' *Meditations on First Philosophy*, which tries to give answers to both the framing questions of the course. We then survey more contemporary answers to this question, with a strong emphasis on analyzing arguments.

Prerequisites: None

Requirements: Reading and writing assignments, class attendance, three exams

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

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

SPECIAL TOPICS: PHILOSOPHY OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

PHL 290 – Dr. Adrian Erasmus

- **PHL 290.001 – TR 9:30am-10:45am**

Course Description: Artificial intelligence is ubiquitous, from providing online shopping recommendations to assisting in the diagnosis of disease. This course introduces students to the philosophy of artificial intelligence. How do we define artificial intelligence and related concepts such as machine learning and neural networks? In what sense do we understand ‘intelligence’ when speaking about artificial intelligence. Can artificial intelligence ever surpass human intelligence? Are we able to explain the inner workings of artificial intelligence models? What are the ethical concerns related to artificial intelligence? This course will familiarize student with important philosophical issues that arise through the continuing development of AI. It will help students to critically engage with past and current philosophical views about how we interact with AI, the moral implications of its use, and concerns regarding the future of AI in society.

Prerequisites: None

Requirements: TBA

Core Curriculum:

INTRODUCTION TO ETHICS

PHL 292

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

- **PHL 292.001 – MWF 2:00pm-2:50pm, Dr. Stuart Rachels**
PHL 292.002 – MWF 10:00am-10:50am, Dr. Seth Bordner
PHL 292.003 – TR 11:00am-12:15pm, Dr. Holly Kantin
PHL 292.004 – TR 12:30pm – 1:45pm, 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.*

BUSINESS ETHICS

PHL 294 – Dr. Stephen Davey

- **PHL 294.001 – TR 2:00pm-3:15pm**

Course Description: “Doing business” is something that permeates much of our lives. As customers, as members of a community, as employees, and perhaps as employers and regulators, we constantly stand in business-relevant relations to others for which it is important to ask, “Am I doing this well?” In this course, we will learn about the major theories in normative ethics, and consider how each might be brought to bear on a variety of moral questions that we must answer in the course of doing business. We will evaluate in turn the moral relationships between the company and its (i) consumers, (ii) employees, and (iii) community. Topics will include: fiduciary duties to shareholders, corporate social responsibility, deception and manipulation in advertising, the moral limits of markets, consumer privacy and data security, at-will employment, fair hiring practices and fair pay, the importance of meaningful work, sweat shop labor, and corporate political activity.

Prerequisites: None

Requirements: TBA

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

LAW AND MORALITY

PHL 341 – Dr. Luke Hunt

- **PHL 341.001 – MWF 11:00am-11:50am**

Course Description: This course explores the philosophical underpinnings of four fundamental areas in the law school curriculum: Contract, Property, Tort, and Criminal Law. Landmark cases from each area will be examined, focusing upon philosophical analysis and moral evaluation of the law. Course readings will consist primarily of summaries of legal case opinions.

Prerequisites: One prior PHL class with a B or better.

Requirements: Proficiency in writing.

Core Curriculum: This course carries an *HU* designation and a *W* designation.

PHILOSOPHICAL ISSUES IN INTERNATIONAL LAW

PHL 343 – Dr. Rekha Nath

- **PHL 343.001 – MW 3:00pm-4:15pm**

(continued)

Course Description: This course explores philosophical issues concerning international law. We begin by considering the circumstances under which violence may be legitimately used in the international arena. What constitutes a just cause for war? What limits are there on how a war ought to be fought? We consider ethical issues pertaining to terrorism, torture, revolutionary activity, and humanitarian intervention. Following this, we examine how the international community ought to allocate responsibility for wrongful acts of violence. Throughout our exploration of these topics, we will engage with questions about the role that international legal bodies—such as the United Nations and the International Criminal Court—ought to play in addressing these issues. In the latter half of the course, we turn to issues concerning the nature and significance of state sovereignty. We consider ethical dimensions of international rules about refugees and border control, ecological and health issues, as well as property rights to territory and natural resources. Then, we shift our focus to normative analysis of economic globalization, with a focus on international structures regulating intellectual property and trade. Along the way, we will engage with debates about the status of international law. For instance, we consider which agents, if any, have the authority to make and to enforce international laws. We will also address concerns about cultural sensitivity. In particular, we look at whether moral evaluation of international norms, which are frequently couched in the terminology of human rights, can avoid the charge of Western cultural imperialism.

Prerequisites: You are required to have taken one philosophy class prior to this one at the 200-level or above. If you do not meet this requirement, you must obtain special permission from the instructor.

Requirements: TBA

Core Curriculum: This course is three credit hours and carries an *HU* designation and a *W* designation.

PHILOSOPHY AND EVOLUTION

PHL 387 – Dr. Richard Richards

- **PHL 387.001 – TR 2:00pm-3:15pm**

Course Description: The “Darwinian Revolution” – the acceptance and development of evolutionary theory - is one of the most significant intellectual events in recent human history. It is significant partly because it has changed the way we understand the world and the processes that operate within it. This ultimately has implications for our conception of human nature and our understanding of human psychological, social, cultural and conceptual processes, as well as knowledge, ethics and the arts. Writing proficiency within this discipline is required for a passing grade in this course.

Prerequisites: None

Requirements: TBA

Core Curriculum: This course carries an *HU* designation and a *W* designation.

NEUROETHICS

PHL 422 – Dr. Benjamin Kozuch

- **PHL 422.001 – W 3:00pm-5:30pm**

(continued)

Course Description: Due to advances in psychopharmacology and brain imaging, scenarios resembling those of science fiction may soon be upon us: Medications that enhance our memory, cognition, or happiness could

be widely available in the near future, and advances in neuroimaging promise to allow the detection of lying, mental illness, or even level of intelligence. Technologies like these bring a host of ethical questions in their wake, ones pertaining to privacy, justice, and authenticity to self. Issues such as these are what compose the field of Neuroethics, and will be what we look at in this class.

Prerequisites: None

Requirements: TBA

Core Curriculum: This course carries an *HU* designation and a *W* designation.

SEMINAR IN MEDICAL ETHICS

PHL 423 – Dr. Holly Kantin

- **PHL 423.001 – TR 9:30am-10:45am**

Course Description: This writing intensive course provides an in-depth examination of some of the central ethical issues encountered by physicians and other medical professionals. Students will acquire breadth in the field of medical ethics as well as engage in an in-depth examination of specific issues. Possible topics include: the prescription opioid epidemic, the physician-patient relationship, the role of physicians and other medical professionals, end-of-life decision-making (e.g., advance directives, do not resuscitate orders, palliative care, the definition of death), beginning of life decision-making (e.g., the ethics of abortion, genetic counseling, prenatal screening), and the ethics of clinical research.

Prerequisites: None

Requirements: TBA

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

PHILOSOPHY OF MENTAL HEALTH

PHL 488 – Dr. Jennifer Gleason

- **PHL 488.001 – TR 11:00am-12:15pm**

Course Description: The course will examine the nature of mental health and mental disorder. What is health? How does it differ from illness? We will then consider the further question of what makes an illness mental as opposed to physical. We'll also consider if mental disorders occur naturally, or if they are socially constructed. Finally we'll consider the relationship between mental disorder and mental dysfunction. Our discussions of these topics should provide insight into the way we treat patients and structure health care.

Prerequisites: A grade of B- or better in a PHL course at the 200 level or above.

Requirements: TBA

Core Curriculum: This course carries an *HU* designation and a *W* designation.