

The Department of Philosophy
Spring 2023 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 100.005 – TR 9:30am-10:45am, Mark Pickering**
- **PHL 100.006 – TR 11:00am-12:15pm, Mark Pickering**
- **PHL 100.007 – TR 2:00pm-3:15pm, Mark Pickering**

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.

CRITICAL THINKING

PHL 104 – Dr. Adam Arico

- **PHL 104.001 – MWF 1:00pm-1:50pm**
- **PHL 104.002 – MWF 2:00pm-2:50pm**

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 – Dr. Seth Bordner

- **PHL 211.001 – MWF 11:00am-11:50am**

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: TBA

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**

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. Rekha Nath

- **PHL 230.001 – TR 11:00am-12:15pm**

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, the war on drugs, homelessness, education and socioeconomic inequality.

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 2:00pm-3:15pm**

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

Requirements: Tentative

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.

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 8:00am-9:15am, Dr. Holly Kantin**
- **PHL 292.004 – TR 9:30am-10:45am, 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 12:30pm-1:45pm**

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: None

Requirements: Proficiency in writing.

Core Curriculum: This course carries a **W** designation.

SPECIAL TOPICS (WRITING INTENSIVE): TRUTH

PHL 392 – Dr. Chase Wrenn

- **PHL 392 – TR 2:00pm-3:15pm**

Course Description: This course surveys recent philosophical work on the nature and value of truth. We survey the four main kinds of theories of the nature of truth—epistemic theories, correspondence theories, deflationary theories, and pluralist theories—and consider how each approach fares at explaining objectivity and the value of truth, as well as how adequately it captures the idea that a claim is true if and only if things are as it says they are. Writing proficiency within this discipline is required for a passing grade in this course. This course includes a relatively high degree of explicit work on developing your writing skills, both generally and in application to philosophical issues. Recommended previous coursework: Introduction to Logic, Mind and Nature, Early Modern Philosophy.

Prerequisites: At least 2 previous philosophy courses

Requirements: Proficiency in writing.

Core Curriculum: This course carries 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, although previous coursework in ethics will be helpful

Requirements: TBA

Core Curriculum: This course carries a *W* designation.

PHILOSOPHY OF OPPRESSION

PHL 430 – Dr. Rekha Nath

- **PHL 430.001 – T 3:30pm-6:00pm**

Course Description: In this course we will study philosophical issues concerning oppression. We take up questions about how we should understand social categories such as race and gender. For instance, what does it mean to belong to a certain race, or to be a *man* or *woman*? We consider the nature of oppression, working to understand what the hallmarks of oppressive relations are, and we engage in an in-depth exploration of different forms of contemporary oppression. In particular, we will devote significant attention to three specific forms of oppression: racism, sexism, and sizism. In each of these cases, we will survey different views concerning how these different forms of oppression manifest themselves as well as what sorts of remedies they might call for. We will consider proposals for institutional remedies. We will also consider questions of responsibility—such as whether victims of oppression have a responsibility to resist the oppressive circumstances they face—and questions concerning what forms of civil disobedience might be justified to combat oppression. This course can count towards the Jurisprudence specialization via request through the department secretary.

Prerequisites: You are required to have taken at least two philosophy classes prior to this one, including 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 carries a *W* designation.

SEMINAR ON LAW: LEGAL & PHILOSOPHICAL PROBLEMS IN POLICING

PHL 440 – Dr. Luke Hunt

- PHL 440.001 – MWF 9:00am-9:50am

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. The course also examines various conceptions of the police identity (hero, warrior, guardian, and so on), and the extent to which those conceptions are justified.

Prerequisites: None

Requirements: TBA

Core Curriculum: This course carries a **W** designation.

NEURAL BASIS OF CONSCIOUSNESS

PHL 462 – Dr. Benjamin Kozuch

- PHL 462.001 – W 3:00pm-5:30pm

Course Description: Consciousness is one of the last great mysteries. Recent years have seen the use of neuroscientific methods to try to understand consciousness, in hopes that this approach succeeds where others failed. This course surveys and analyzes current neuroscientific and philosophical approaches to studying consciousness, the goal being to integrate the two as much as possible. Topics covered include: the relationship between visual consciousness and bodily action; whether higher-order thought is necessary for consciousness; the use of brain lesions in consciousness research; the relationship between attention and consciousness. Writing proficiency is required for a passing grade in this course. A student who does not write with the skill normally required of an upper-division student will not earn a passing grade, no matter how well the student performs in other areas of the course.

Prerequisites: None

Requirements: TBA

Core Curriculum: This course carries a **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 a **W** designation.

PHILOSOPHY OF MEDICINE

PHL 489 – Dr. Adrian Erasmus

- **PHL 489.001 – TR 12:30pm-1:45pm**

Course Description: Medicine is one of our most important institutions. Given its central role throughout our lives, its significance cannot be overstated. Despite its practical aims, medicine is replete with conceptual commitments and theoretical assumptions. Its methods rely on causal reasoning, inductive inference, and contentious views of what constitutes best evidence. And medical research is carried out in a complex political, economic, and value-laden context. This course examines these intricate conceptual, methodological, and normative aspects of the practice of medicine.

Prerequisites: None

Requirements: TBA

Core Curriculum: This course carries a **W** designation.

SPECIAL TOPICS: WAR ON SCIENCE

PHL 492 – Dr. Richard Richards

- **PHL 492.001 – MW 3:00pm-4:15pm**

Course Description: Over the last few years we have been told repeatedly to “follow the science,” particularly with respect to the coronavirus pandemic. But little has been said about what it might mean to “follow the science.” In this class we will explore *how* we should follow the science, in light of our best theories about science – its method, logic, psychology, incentives and social structure. We will also look at the forces that can prevent us from following the science: the sloppiness, bias, corruption and fraud within science; the religious dogmas that sometimes oppose science; the theories of language and literature used to undercut science; and the political ideologies that deny or manipulate the science. Along the way we will look philosophically at a variety of scientific debates about hot button topics which *may* include: responses to the pandemic, climate change, fat consumption and chronic diseases, vaccine safety, Lysenkoism, genetically modified foods, evolution and creationism, theories of human nature, and more.

Prerequisites: Contact Lesley Perkins (lperkins@ua.edu) for an override

Requirements: TBA

Core Curriculum: This course carries a **W** designation.