

The Department of Philosophy
Spring 2024 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 2:00pm-2:50pm, Eric Solis**
- **PHL 100.002 – TR 9:30am-10:45am, Stephen Davey**
- **PHL 100.003 – TR 11:00am-12:15pm, Mark Pickering**
- **PHL 100.004 – TR 2:00pm-3:15pm, Mark Pickering**

PHL 100.001 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, the problem of evil, knowledge and reality, free will, the nature of morality, personal identity, and existential issues. This course requires no prior courses in philosophy, and should be of equal interest to students who intend to pursue other majors.

PHL 100.002 Course Description: Philosophers get excited about things they don't understand. This provides a lot of material, as there are puzzles and unanswered questions in most every facet of our lives. In this class, students will be introduced to a variety of questions that have received great attention from philosophers, and to some of the most influential historical and contemporary attempts to address them. They will learn to analyze philosophical theories and arguments, and to construct their own answers to these difficult questions with a measure of creativity and rigor. We will cover a broad range of topics in metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, and the philosophy of mind.

PHL 100.003 and 100.004 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 3:00pm-3:50pm**

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.

This course is part of the Mind - Brain concentration

PHILOSOPHICAL INTRODUCTION TO DEDUCTIVE LOGIC

PHL 195 - Dr. Torin Alter

- **PHL 195.001 - MWF 11:00am-11:50am**

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 proofsystem, 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.

This course is part of the Mind - Brain concentration

ANCIENT PHILOSOPHY

PHL 211 - Eric Solis

- **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 Sceptics, 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 – MW 4:00pm-5:15pm**

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.

MEDICAL ETHICS

PHL 223

- **PHL 223.001 – MWF 10:00am-10:50am, Stuart Rachels**
- **PHL 223.002 – MWF 11:00am-12:15pm, Stuart Rachels**
- **PHL 223.003 – TR 2:00pm-3:15pm, Jennifer Gleason**
- **PHL 223.004 – TR 3:30pm-4:45pm, 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 9:30am-10:45am**

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: Exams and homework

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

This course satisfies a requirement for the Ethics and Medical Ethics minors and the Jurisprudence concentration.

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.

SPECIAL TOPICS: ARISTOTLE

PHL 290 – Eric Solis

- **PHL 290 – MWF 10:00am-10:50am**

Course Description: Few can claim to have invented a science. Aristotle invented two (logic and zoology). Even on subjects which he is not the inventor, however, Aristotle's investigations are vast, and his influence on subsequent generations is enormous. In this class we will study a selection of Aristotle's works. Special attention will be paid to each work in its own right, but also in relation to others. We will discuss a range of subjects – theoretical, practical, and productive alike. Particular topics to be discussed may include nature, the soul, knowledge, morality, politics, rhetoric, poetry, and 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: NA

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 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.

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 a *W* designation.

PHILOSOPHICAL ISSUES IN INTERNATIONAL LAW

PHL 343 – Dr. Rekha Nath

- **PHL 343.001 – TR 11:00am-12:15pm**

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 a *W* designation.

LEGAL REASONING

PHL 349 – Dr. Mark Pickering

- **PHL 349.001 – TR 9:30am-10:45am**

Course Description: This course covers the kinds of reasoning peculiar to the law from a philosophical perspective. Understanding these concepts is important not only to aspiring lawyers, but also to anyone wishing to understand, evaluate, and challenge the claims lawyers, judges, and legislators make. Topics may include rules, precedent, authority, analogy, the common law, legal realism, statutory interpretation, judicial opinions, and burdens of proof.

Prerequisites: Successful completion of one PHL class with at least a B.

Requirements: TBA

Core Curriculum: NA

SEMINAR IN MEDICAL ETHICS

PHL 423 – Dr. Holly Kantin

- **PHL 423.001 – TR 9:30am-10:45am**

Course Description: Everyone has an interest in being healthy and having access to good medical care. As such, everyone has an interest in the ethical practice of medicine and medical research, and in the fair distribution of medical goods. In this writing intensive course, we will examine central principles that guide biomedical ethics and examine select ethical controversies in depth. Possible topics include the definition of death, pain management and the prescription opioid epidemic, unexplained medical symptoms and patient reports of “medical gaslighting”, end-of-life decision-making, procreative choices, patient autonomy and its limits, the scope of medical practice and the duties of physicians, the physician-patient relationship, and conscientious objection in medicine.

Prerequisites: While there are no prerequisites, previous philosophy courses are recommended. Students with no previous philosophy courses do not require permission to enroll but are encouraged to contact the instructor to discuss the expectations for the course.

Requirements: TBA

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

LEGAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL PROBLEMS IN POLICING

PHL 446 – Dr. Luke Hunt

- **PHL 446.001 – 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:

Requirements: TBA

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

EPISTEMOLOGY

PHL 470 – Dr. Chase Wrenn

- **PHL 470.001 – TR 12:30pm-1:45pm**

Course Description: In the 17th century, Rene Descartes imagined he might be the victim of a demon that tricked him into thinking the world was very different from the way it actually is. In the 21st century, internet algorithms individually tailor what information we're exposed to, without much concern for accuracy. For us, no less than for Descartes, it makes sense to wonder what we should believe and what we could possibly know. In this course, we'll discuss the possibility of knowledge, the nature of justified or reasonable belief, and the social dimensions of knowledge, including issues about testimony, epistemic justice, and what it means to have reasonable beliefs in an increasingly customized and polarized world.

Prerequisites: PHL 106 or PHL 195, plus at least one other philosophy course

Requirements: TBA

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

This course is part of the Mind - Brain concentration

PHILOSOPHY OF MEDICINE

PHL 489 – Dr. Richard Richards

- **PHL 489.001 – TR 2:00pm-3:15pm**

Course Description: It is difficult to overstate the significance of medicine, in that it affects each of us from birth through death; or the complexity of medicine, in that it involves scientific, conceptual, economic, ethical and philosophical issues. We will here look at some of these issues from a philosophical standpoint: 1) the ways that we conceptualize health and disease and why that matters; 2) the patterns of reasoning associated with medical thinking, including evidence base medicine and consensus conferences; 3) the challenge posed by evolution to how we think about medicine, health and disease. 4) We will also look at some of the philosophical issues raised by the COVID pandemic, including the use of epidemiological models in public policy. Writing proficiency within this discipline is required for a passing grade in this course.

Prerequisites:

Requirements: TBA

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

This course is part of the Philosophy and Medicine concentration

