

The Department of Philosophy
Fall 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 100.001 – MWF 9:00am-9:50am, Dr. Mark Pickering**
- **PHL 100.002 – MWF 11:00am-11:50am, Dr. Mark Pickering**
- **PHL 100.003 – MWF 2:00pm-2:50pm, Dr. Stephen Davey**
- **PHL 100.005 – MWF 3:00pm-3:50pm, Dr. Stephen Davey**
- **PHL 100.006 – TR 2:00pm-3:15pm, Eric Solis**

PHL 100.001 & 100.002: We will examine historical and contemporary arguments intended to answer questions like the following. Can God's existence be proven or disproven? Does all knowledge come through the senses? Can machines think? Does personal identity persist through change? Can one have free will if determinism is true? What is the supreme principle of ethics?

PHL 100.003 & 100.005: 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 100.006: 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.

Prerequisites: None

Requirements (tentative): Varies from section to section; contact instructor for details.

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

CRITICAL THINKING

PHL 104 – Dr. Adam Arico

- **PHL 104.001 – TR 12:30pm-1:45pm**
- **PHL 104.004 – 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

- **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.

This course satisfies a requirement for any Philosophy major.

PHILOSOPHICAL INTRODUCTION TO DEDUCTIVE LOGIC

PHL 195 – Dr. Chase Wrenn

- **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.

This course satisfies a requirement for any Philosophy major.

ANCIENT PHILOSOPHY

PHL 211 – Eric Solis

- **PHL 211.001 – TR 11:00am-12:15pm, Eric Solis**

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

This course satisfies a requirement for any Philosophy major.

EARLY MODERN PHILOSOPHY

PHL 212 – Dr. Seth Bordner

- **PHL 212.001 – TR 9:30am-10:45am, Dr. Seth Bordner**

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.

This course satisfies a requirement for any Philosophy major.

MEDICAL ETHICS

PHL 223.001 – Dr. Stuart Rachels

- **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.

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

PHL 223.002 & 003 – Dr. Jennifer Gleason

- **TR 2:00pm-3:15pm – Dr. Jennifer Gleason**
- **TR 3:00pm-4:45pm – Dr. Jennifer Gleason**

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.

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

PHL 223.900(M)/902(D) – Dr. Adam Arico (online)

- **PHL 223.900 – ONLINE (MAIN CAMPUS)**
PHL 223.902 – 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.

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

POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

PHL 230 – Dr. Rekha Nath

- **PHL 230.001 – TR 9:30am-10:45am, Dr. Rekha Nath**
PHL 230.002 – TR 11:00am-12:15pm, 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: 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. Luke Hunt

- **TR 9:30am-10:45am, Dr. Luke Hunt**

Course Description: Should laws about sex and pornography be based on social conventions regarding what is offensive? Are emotions reliable guides for human behavior and what the law should be? This course examines the nature of the law and its relation to morality, with a special emphasis on whether emotions such as shame and disgust should be the basis for criminalization and punishment. The course draws upon a rich variety of philosophical, psychological, and historical references—from Aristotle to Freud—and on legal examples as diverse as the trials of Oscar Wilde, the Martha Stewart insider trading case, and recent controversies about free speech on campus. The course themes will be linked to several "doctrinal digressions" in tort, contract, property, criminal, and constitutional law.

Prerequisites: None

Requirements: Tentative

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

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

MIND AND NATURE

PHL 260 – Dr. Benjamin Kozuch

- **PHL 260.001 – MWF 9:00am-9:50am, Dr. Benjamin Kozuch**

Course Description: This course is framed around two questions. First, what is the place of the mind in nature? Second, what is the place of nature in the mind? The first question is a form of mind/body problem, which concerns the relationship between mental phenomena such as consciousness and the physical world. The second question is a part of the epistemology, the philosophy of knowledge, and concerns the nature and scope of human knowledge.

Prerequisites: None

Requirements: TBA

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

This course satisfies a requirement for the Mind-Brain concentration.

PHILOSOPHY, PSYCHOLOGY AND NEUROSCIENCE

PHL 261 – Dr. Benjamin Kozuch

- **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.

SPECIAL TOPICS: PLATO

PHL 290 – Eric Solis

- **TR 9:30am-10:45am, Eric Solis**

Course Description: Few have had a more profound impact on a discipline than Plato has had on philosophy. Our purpose in this class is gain a better understanding of Plato's philosophical thought and writings. We will read a selection of dialogues from the early, middle, and late period of Plato's philosophical career. Special attention will be paid to each dialogue in its own right, but we will also consider the development of Plato's thought across dialogues. Topics to be discussed may include (but are not limited to) life and death, the soul, the nature of reality, knowledge, virtue and happiness, rhetoric and persuasion, love, law, political expertise, and constitutional design. 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 can be used (by request) to satisfy a requirement for the Jurisprudence concentration.

INTRODUCTION TO ETHICS

PHL 292

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

- **PHL 292.001 – TR 8:00am-9:15am, Dr. Holly Kantin**
PHL 292.002 – TR 9:30am-10:45am, Dr. Holly Kantin
PHL 292.003 – MWF 10:00am-10:50am, Dr. Stuart Rachels
PHL 292.004 – MWF 11:00am-11:50am, Dr. Stephen Davey
PHL 292.005 – 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.*

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

PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE

PHL 386/486 – Dr. Adrian Erasmus

- **TR 12:30pm-1:45pm, Dr. Adrian Erasmus**

Course Description: Science serves an important role in society, from satisfying our interest in the nature of reality to informing technological advancements and public policy. This course will cover some of the main topics in philosophy of science: the demarcation of science and pseudoscience, scientific methods, the nature of evidence, scientific progress, scientific realism and antirealism, and the role of values in science. 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: Successful completion of at least two PHL courses or permission of the instructor

Requirements: Writing proficiency

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

This course satisfies a requirement for the Philosophy and Medicine concentration.

SPECIAL TOPICS: PROBABILITY & DECISION MAKING

PHL 390 – Dr. Ted Poston

- **MWF 1:00pm-1:50pm, Dr. Ted Poston**

Course Description: Uncertainty is a fundamental and unavoidable feature of daily life. Agents must reason and act in an uncertain world. To do so intelligently, they need to deal with and reason about this uncertainty. This course discusses modeling and reasoning about uncertainty, going from purely qualitative notions (an event is either possible or it is not) to quantitative notions such as probability (an event has probability .8). We will learn different rules for making decisions under ignorance, given uncertainty, and in competition with others. Moreover, we will focus on how to think about group decisions and social theory. 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: Successful completion of at least two PHL courses or permission of the instructor

Requirements: Writing proficiency

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

SPECIAL TOPICS: DEATH & DYING

PHL 392 – Dr. Seth Bordner

- **TR 11:00am-12:15pm, Dr. Seth Bordner**

Course Description: If, as Bertrand Russell said, philosophy is about asking and answering “ultimate questions,” nothing is a more philosophical topic than death and dying. Since Socrates, philosophers have tried to understand what death is and how we should think and feel about it. This course will examine arguments about the nature, value, and meaning of death, whether immortality would be a good thing, as well as some of the practical aspects of planning for death (one's own or another's). 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: Successful completion of two PHL courses or permission of the instructor

Requirements: Writing proficiency

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

This course satisfies (by request) a requirement for the Medical Ethics minor and the Philosophy and Medicine concentration.

THE SCIENCE OF ETHICS

PHL 426 – Dr. Richard Richards

- **TR 2:00pm-3:15pm, Dr. Richard Richards**

Course Description: Usually science and ethics are taken to be about different things: science is concerned with the facts - how things are; ethics is concerned with value - how things should be. But science has increasingly come to study ethics itself: the grounds and foundation of our ethical thinking and practices in evolution, moral psychology, social psychology and human behavioral ecology. While many philosophers think these scientific investigations of human ethics cannot tell us how we should live, what we should do and what is morally good or bad, others think we can use science to inform our ethics, in part by uncovering our biases and correcting our errors in how we think about ethical questions and topics. In this class we will begin with traditional approaches to ethics based on reason, intuition and faith, then turn to challenges to these approaches based on evolutionary thinking, psychology and human ecology. We will be looking at evolutionary ethics, moral psychology and social psychology, behavioral ecology and economics, referencing thinkers from Aristotle, Hume, Smith, Mill, Darwin and Marx to de Waal, Haidt, Sowell and more. 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: Successful completion of at least two PHL courses or permission of the instructor

Requirements: Writing proficiency

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

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

SEMINAR ON LAW: JUSTIFICATION OF CRIMINAL PUNISHMENT

PHL 440 – Dr. Mark Pickering

- **MWF 2:00pm-2:50pm, Dr. Mark Pickering**

Course Description: Is criminal punishment justified? If so, how? We will consider historical and contemporary arguments as well as retributivist, consequentialist, and mixed arguments. 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: Successful completion of at least two PHL courses or permission of the instructor

Requirements: Writing proficiency

Core Curriculum: This course carries a *W* designation

This course satisfies a requirement for the Jurisprudence concentration.

TICKING TIME BOMBS

PHL 442 – Dr. Luke Hunt

- **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. 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: Writing proficiency

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

This course satisfies a requirement for the Jurisprudence concentration.

SPECIAL TOPICS: ANCIENT POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

PHL 492 – Eric Solis

- **MWF 11:00am-11:50am, Eric Solis**

Course Description: Ancient political philosophy as a discipline was invented by Plato, reinvented by Aristotle, and reworked and reframed by later thinkers. As a distinct genre, it involves serious thinking about issues such as the nature and purpose of laws and institutions, the concepts and ideals by which political life ought to be arranged, the relationship between ethics and politics, and the benefits and shortcomings of different forms of government. In this seminar, we will think carefully about these sorts of issues in their own right, and in the broader context of ancient philosophy, history, and culture. We will examine the thought of particular figures individually, and in relationship to one another. Some prior experience in philosophy or related fields (classics, history, political science) is recommended. 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: Successful completion of at least two PHL courses or permission of the instructor

Requirements: Writing proficiency

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

This course satisfies (by request) a requirement for the Ethics and Medical Ethics minors and the Jurisprudence concentration.